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**You Have to Find Yourself a Place:
Religion and the French-Canadian Songs of Departure for the United States**

Timothy J. LeBeau

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Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
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Canada

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Abstract

This project undertakes the study of a collection of French-Canadian folk songs arising from the experience of the emigration of French-Canadians to the United States in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The primary methodological tools employed in this study stem generally from the field of the history of religions, and specifically from the work of Charles H. Long. Religion here is understood as a mode of orientation that locates an individual or group meaningfully in the world in relation to ultimate reality. Religion can arise from situations of cultural contact and, therefore, is fundamentally important to issues of community and identity. As such, these songs articulate a mode of negotiating modernity that recognizes the homogenizing and silencing character of its discourse while simultaneously suggesting an understanding of human communities based on the recognition of the exchange of matter that served as the locus of the identity of Franco-Americans.

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During my work on this project, I have been fortunate to have been able to work with several excellent scholars. I thank my advisor, Dr. Robert Choquette for his wealth of knowledge and guidance, and for his patience. His high standards for historical and the casualness of my conversations with him over the past two years are more than appreciated. I would also like to thank Dr. Peter Beyer and Dr. Anne Valley from the University of Ottawa for their considerable and helpful feedback about Chapter One and for the discussions about the shape of my work in its early stages.

I owe much to Dr. Jennifer I. M. Reid at the University of Maine at Farmington, for giving me a solid foundation in Religious Studies from which to work from and for introducing me to the work of Charles H. Long. This project would not have come to fruition without her. Her continued advice and critical eye have undoubtedly made this thesis a stronger one.

I am grateful to my fellow student at the University of Ottawa, Marylène Jesseyca Bernier, for her invaluable help translating the Songs of Departure. This project would have been infinitely more difficult without her assistance.

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Introduction: The Stuff of Creation in Nineteenth Century French Canada

The nineteenth century was a period of radical change in Canada and the entire colonial world. New theories and applications of evolutionary thought, coupled with the widespread acceptance of industrial and urban centers as the defining quality of the Western, modern world, were utilized as justifications for the continued subjugation and exploitation of extra-European individuals and communities. As it had been throughout the colonial period, the bodies, energies, creativities of *others* were appropriated by Western merchants, intellectuals, and colonists in the name of civilization for the construction and maintenance of the European political and economic empires across the globe.¹ These global networks of movement, trade, violence, sex, and language served to reify the authority of the European powers as the center of the New World over that of the colonial periphery. But at the same time, these contact zones were also the basis of new human relationships; between the West and the indigenous, and between the indigenous communities themselves. It is from these boundary zones that definitions of the human being and human religiosity were explored and expressed by both the European colonists and by native communities.²

These threshold spaces were constantly being negotiated through series of material exchanges between the communities which made up the contact zone. In the context of the early French presence in North America, the form that some of these exchanges took included

¹Kees Bolle, *The Enticement of Religion* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002) 228.

²David Chidester, *Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in South Africa* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996) 21.

furs, guns, fish, brandy, sex, children, diseases, iron kettles.³ The initial experience of both native and European communities of the New World was that of the variety of new forms of materiality which entered their respective worlds. While the French economic and religious forays deeper into Canada were dependent upon native business partners, the boundaries between these communities was relatively fluid and based in large part on the mutual reciprocity of materials.⁴ With the founding of the colony of Quebec in 1608, relationships between Europeans and the native communities of Canada became increasingly unequal, the French engaging themselves in the creation of a Catholic colony spanning from sea to sea.⁵

The second half of the eighteenth century drastically altered the relationships of the French and the French-Canadians in North America. The British victory on the Plains of Abraham in 1759 and the end of the American Revolution in 1776 left French Canada in the control of one English-speaking Protestant power, and too close to another one which harbored expansionist aspirations.⁶ In this context French-Canadian society took on a distinct shape in relation to the other communities of North America. The language, activities, and definitions that had their origins in the intellectual and colonial traditions of Europe and the modes of being of the North American indigenous traditions – and the relationships which

³Jennifer Reid, "Missionaries, Merchants, and the Mi'kmaq: Issues of Exchange in Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth-Century Acadia." Pp. 5-11 in *Historical Papers 1993: Canadian Society of Church History*. 6.

⁴Robert Choquette, "French Catholicism Comes to the Americas," Pp. 131-242 in *Christianity Comes to the Americas*, Charles H. Lippy et al. (New York: Paragon House, 1992).177-179.

⁵Choquette, "French Catholicism..." 148.

⁶Choquette, "French Catholicism..." 230; Lucien Lemieux, *Histoire du catholicisme québécois 1, 1760-1839* (Montreal: Boréal, 1989) 26-32.

defined their exchanges – became the material from which French-Canadians made sense of the new world they found themselves in. This understanding became increasingly important during the nineteenth century as thousands of French-Canadians were forced to leave Quebec due to an economic crisis partially created by the country's push toward industrialization and the repealing of British preferential tariffs after the end of the Napoleonic Wars.⁷ Most of these immigrants and exiles made their way to Eastern Ontario and New England.

Beginning in the 1830's as a small trickle of individuals and some families, the rate of French-Canadian immigration to the United States grew to such a magnitude over the next one hundred years that it raised concern and fear among the Catholic clergy in Quebec and among the religious and secular leaders throughout New England. This movement continued until the end of the First World War, when the policies of the United States towards immigration and assimilation changed drastically and immigrants who made efforts to maintain their traditional patterns of life and the native languages ran the risk of being dangerously marginalized and demonized.⁸ The definition of American identity, or *Anglo-conformity*, was based on an implied Anglo-Protestant norm to the exclusion of all other communities, especially those such as the French-Canadians, who because of their proximity to Quebec appeared to have felt even less inclined to take on the citizenship of the United States.⁹

⁷Yves Frenette, *Brève histoire de Canadiens français* (Montreal: Boréal, 1998) 76.

⁸Jon Oplinger, *The Politics of Demonology: The European Witchcraze and the Mass Production of Deviance* (Sellinggrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1990) See especially Chapter 7: The Red Scare.

⁹Yves Roby, *Les Franco-Américains de la Nouvelle-Angleterre: Rêves et réalités* (Sillery, QB: Septentrion, 2000) 223.

Immigration prior to 1830 from Quebec to the United States had been a concrete reality, but it was only after this time that authorities in both Canada and the United States began to seriously take note of this movement. This new attention given to the maintenance of the border between Lower Canada and the United States was a product of the War of 1812. The religious, linguistic, and political differences that had marked the threshold between the two countries became more formidable boundaries, and the French-Canadians began to show greater support and loyalty for the British regime than they had previously. The War of 1812 had united most Canadians with the understanding that they were not Americans.¹⁰ A sermon delivered by Mgr. Plessis in 1814 prefigured the demonization of the United States that would help create an alienating atmosphere for the French-Canadian immigrants heading for the mill towns of New England. Connecting the French Revolution, the Napoleonic Wars, and the recent wars in North America, Plessis saw the roots of these violent outbursts as being "in impiety and in ambition," exemplified by the growing industrial republic of the United States.¹¹

The loci of the emigration of French-Canadians to New England ranged throughout the French-speaking populations of Canada, from New Brunswick to Eastern Ontario. These communities had a long musical tradition that had its roots in Medieval France, and the expectations, beliefs, and experiences of Canada, immigration, and the United States often became the subject of songs.¹² In 1996, Assumption College's *Institut français* published an

¹⁰Lemieux, 47.

¹¹Lemieux, 47.

¹²Donald Deschênes, "The Dream of a Better Life in the Songs of Departure for the United States." In *Steeple and Smokestacks: A Collection of Essays on the Franco-American Experience in New*

extensive collection of essays on the Franco-American experience in New England entitled *Steeple and Smokestacks*, edited by Claire Quintal. Included in this volume was an expanded and translated work by folklorist Donald Deschênes which is intended primarily as an introduction and an overview of a small collection of French Canadian and Franco-American folk songs – a total of twenty-seven songs, though Deschênes makes it clear that there are countless variations of these songs that he has not included, and that his collection makes no claims at being exhaustive – that take as their topic the immigration of French Canadians to the United States during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Perhaps the greatest strength of this essay was the inclusion of these songs, several accompanied by the transcription of the opening bars of music, in an appendix. The article by Deschênes that precedes the collection of Songs of Departure is intended as an overview, and provides only brief interpretive vignettes of the songs according to a typology that includes such categories as ‘Departure for a Better Life’, ‘Contrasts between Canada and the United States’, ‘Living Conditions’, and ‘Holiday Celebrations’, among others. Despite its consciously preliminary nature, one major deficiency with a typology of this nature becomes readily apparent. Aspects of French-Canadian religiosity are obscured, marginalized, or explained away as literary convention.

It is this problematic interpretive situation that serves as my point of entry into the hermeneutic theater – as it has been remarked that the hermeneutic venture begins with an apparent misinterpretation – that forms the basis of my methodological and theoretical procedures. In general, scholarly work in the United States on French-Canadian immigrants

and their Franco-American descendants has ignored or marginalized religious issues, as befits the widespread understanding of religion as a particular option in human life, a private intellectual endeavor instead of a experience rooted in community. But as many of these same works have attested, the French-Canadians of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries held Catholicism as their anchor of identity.¹³ It was through the various aspects and works of the Church that the French-Canadian came to know her or himself. The facts of being francophone and Canadian were important to the degree in which those realities related to and revealed the earthly role God had planned for them.

The appendix also includes the location and the date at which these songs were recorded or transcribed, the name of the person who was asked to sing or recall the song, and also a brief account of how that individual came to know the song. Additionally, if the song was culled from a pre-existing folklore collection, Deschênes provides the name and location of that archive and identification code for the song.¹⁴ Of the twenty-seven songs that make up the data for Deschênes' survey, I find that fourteen of them are pertinent for this present work. These songs were chosen because of where they were collected. These songs are noted by Deschênes to have been collected throughout the twentieth century primarily in Quebec, New Brunswick, and Ontario, with a few recorded in the states of Massachusetts and Maine.

¹³Gerard J. Brault, *The French Canadian Heritage in New England* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1986.) The method of this excellent text is to approach French-Canadians as an ethnic and social group and is representative of much of the work that has been done academically. The same communities appear quite different when the subject of study by theologians, who focus almost exclusively on their Catholicism. For an example of this latter approach see: Josaphat Benoit, *L'Âme Franco-Américaine* (Montreal: Éditions Albert Lévesque, 1935).

¹⁴Deschênes, "The Dream of..." 431-498.

During the Great Depression in the United States, the Works Project Association commissioned writers, photographers, and anyone else who was out of work to seek out immigrants and the elderly in an effort to record their life stories and their experiences in the country. In a disorganized manner, this was a cultural heritage project which produced a large number of tomes of personal histories, folk tales, and songs.¹⁵ In French Canada, similar tasks were begun in the nineteenth century. During this century, there was a growing interest in the history of New France, and newspapers and priests served to disseminate this new orientation to the French-Canadian identity.¹⁶ Several of the songs compiled by Deschênes appear to have been collected as a result of this burgeoning nationalism, recorded by priests across the province.¹⁷

Though some of the songs enjoyed a widespread popularity among the various French-Canadian immigrant communities, many had only a small localized audience. Despite this particularity, songs such as the ones to be found in Deschênes' collection were part of French-Canadian daily life, and some songs may have had hundreds of different localized variations.¹⁸ Almost all of the songs in Deschênes' collection had multiple recording sites, pointing to the fact that the songs enjoyed a notoriety across the entire geographic region of Ontario, Quebec, and New England. The issues they took up were creative responses to the

¹⁵ *The First Franco-Americans*

¹⁶Philippe Sylvain & Nive Voisine, *Histoire du catholicisme québécois 2, 1840-1898* (Montreal: Boréal, 1991) 28.

¹⁷Deschênes, "The Dream of..." For instance, "Working in the States" is noted as being recorded by Rev. Archange Godbout (453), Far Away from My Mother was collected by Fathers Chiasson and Boudreau (468), as was "The Sergeant Killed in Battle" (492).

¹⁸Deschênes, "The Dream of..." 432.

French-Canadian experience. This study will focus on the lyrics of the songs rather than the actual music, as not all of the songs have been preserved with their musical annotations. For the scope of this paper, the most important note about the music is that many of the songs have been composed 'to the tune of' popular folk songs from France and from Canada.¹⁹

¹⁹Deschênes, "The Dream of..." 447.

Chapter One – Music and Materiality: Religion and the Modern World

"Music is your own experience, your thoughts, your wisdom. If you don't live it, it won't come out of your horn." – Charlie Parker

Myth and North America

The Songs of Departure for the United States are the creations of people who for the most part have been denied a presence in the cultural memory of that country.¹ The French-Canadian immigrants who composed them have suffered their displacement and marginalization as a 'quiet presence' – their lives and work have been the silent spaces out of which New England, and indeed much of the country, came into being. The textile mills of New England, where on average at least 40 percent of the immigrant workers were French-Canadian, were where the cotton harvested by Southern slaves was worked into the material goods that financed the growth of the United States.² The French-Canadian population of some of these town was so great that Fall River Massachusetts was called the "third French city of America', after Montreal and Quebec" and Manchester, New Hampshire was known as "the most French city in the United States."³

And yet, like those enslaved on the plantations, these French-Canadian workers would never be able to buy the goods they produced. As a specific articulation of the French-Canadian experience of being denied a meaningful place in the space of the New World, the

¹All of the songs used in this project have been translated from French by Marylène Jesseyca Bernier and Timothy J. LeBeau.

²Dyke Hendrikson, *Quiet Presence: Histoires de Franco-Américains en New England* (Portland, ME: Guy Gannett Publishing, 1980) 49.

³Yves Frenette, *Les francophones de la Nouvelle-Angleterre, 1524-2000* (Montreal: INRS Urbanisation, Culture, et Société, 2001) 31.

Songs of Departure reveal meanings of both Canada and the United States that have been obscured by discourses of rationality, objectivity, and progress. Both countries had been understood in religious terms by their founders: the existence and struggle of New France was to ultimately result in the foundation of the New Jerusalem, while the actions of the English Puritans were to be taken as the exceptional model of perfect, holy living by the rest of the world.

For these earliest settlers and explorers, the economic benefits of the Americas were not necessarily separate from the religious meaning manifest in the New World. It is highly probable that Columbus considered the potential wealth of the lands he visited were important as far as they could finance the Christian war against the Muslim forces in Jerusalem, a war that had to be fought as one of the key steps towards bringing about the New Jerusalem on earth.⁴ In less than a year, the Puritans who were kept alive through their first hard winter in exile from England by a local Native American community, had taken it upon themselves to slaughter those very same people and steal the food from their winter stores.⁵ But the original language of freedom and destiny continued to be deployed as the central terms by which the Puritans and their descendants understood themselves. In their own undermining of their attempt to create a society built on freedom and tolerance, the Puritans set the pattern that would run like a tangible thickness throughout the history of the European presence in

⁴Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991) 70-72.

⁵George E. Tinker, *Missionary Conquest: The Gospel and the Native American Cultural Genocide* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993) See especially Chapter 2, John Eliot.

North America, shaping actions and thoughts across the continent.⁶ The space between the discourse and meaning of exceptionalism and the realities of burning villages and enslaved families is the space necessarily inhabited by the creative imagination of myth.⁷ The interpretive possibilities deployed by the communities involved in the material exchanges of the New World stemmed from their varied orientations toward reality. These orientations then, presented the potential creative responses and meanings to their experiences.

In other terms, this course of study makes room for a hermeneutic suspension of the truth claims of Canada and the United States. I would suggest that the Songs of Departure, originating from individuals and groups moving *between* two countries, two modes of being, reflect a liminal quality consonant with their place of origin. They do not represent a cohesive vision of either country nor their French-Canadian progenitors. Instead, they are concerned with the potential of what these French-speaking Catholics and places *could* be. Taken together the Songs of Departure reveal a mythic structure of reality. The tenets of French-Canadian *survivance* and American exceptionalism are confronted and explored in the Songs of Departure. In the process *survivance* and exceptionalism are revealed as myth. The meaning of myth that I am using here denotes a story about reality, one that is absolutely true and absolutely fictive: “[t]he myth is a symbolic ordering which makes clear how the world

⁶Sydney Mead, *The Lively Experiment: The Shaping of Christianity in America* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1963). See especially Chapter 1, The American People: Their Space, Time, and Religion.

⁷ I first encountered the phrase ‘myth of American exceptionalism’, denoting the American sense of chosenness that reveals an understanding of how Americans think of their role in the world and history, in a course by Reid entitled “Myth and America” in the Fall of 2000. It is important to note that the sense of exceptionalism, of being a city upon a hill, has not been articulated exclusively in the dominate arenas of discourse, but can also be seen in the slave uprising of Nat Turner, Mary Baker Eddy’s Christian Science, the genesis of Mormonism, and the speeches of Martin Luther King Jr.

is present for man.”⁸ *Survivance* and exceptionalism are stories that French-Canadians and Americans tell themselves about who they are and how they meaningfully inhabit the world. Though articulations of these myths have frequently obscured the religious nature of these modes of being, I would argue that it has only been the way of talking about the *sign* that has changed and not the sign itself, whether God, destiny, history, or freedom.

The Songs of Departure express the possibilities of being in North America in some meaningful fashion. Several exhibit understandings of Canada that are consonant with *la survivance*, while others express attitudes which take issue with the very foundational tenets of that hermeneutic. The manner in which I have grouped the songs in this study is based on the attitudes and meanings expressed within the text of each song. The first group of songs I will look at express an understanding of Canada as a good and bountiful mother, from whom the immigrants are far away. This discussion will focus on images of the Virgin Mary and of the French-Canadian mother, which were central to French-Canadian Catholicism in the nineteenth century. This sense of Canada, I suggest, coupled with the nativism of the United States, helped to create an experience of New England which was disjunctive and alienating.

The second major grouping of songs are those which take the United States and the mill towns of New England as their topic. The overarching theme of these songs is that of the United States as a place of suffering and exile, again consonant with the interpretation of that country found in the structures of *la survivance*. But here there can be found dissonant voices in songs which look on Canada as a place barely fit for animals. This departure reflects

⁸Charles H. Long, *Alpha: Myths of Creation* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1963) 14.

the multiple modes of being in North America, and points to the mythic nature of the identities of Canada and the United States. Contrary to the Songs of Departure which portray Canada as the only home for French-Canadians, these songs suggest that the United States too can be a place where they might lead meaningful lives. The price, however, is that Canada can no longer be considered home.

In the final chapter, I will examine one song in greater detail, suggesting that its very form can be seen as an alternate mode of understanding the human being in North America. "The Trip to Boston" is constructed in a fashion which is radically different from the other Songs of Departure. Beyond its structure, though, the song offers a commentary upon the other songs I will look at, the most striking of which is the characterization of the narrator, a female, who is a departure from the image underscored in *la survivance*. This song seems to stem from an experience of Canada and the United States not as two isolated geographic and political entities, but as long time neighbors and co-creators of the New World. Both are known by the narrator, and both provide vital aspects of her own self-understanding. Both, this song suggests, can be home.

Religion and the History of Religions

Buttressed primarily by the work of historian of religions Charles H. Long, but also drawing on the methods, theories, data of a range of interpretive fields and individuals, this work will attempt to situate these Songs of Departure for the United States in the broader context of the concrete realities of nineteenth century North America in order to come to an understanding of these songs as presenting the range of possibilities of what the United States

and Canada *could* be and the potential means of negotiating these realities by French-Canadian Catholics. Was the United States a land of easy work and high pay? Was Canada nothing more than pea soup and buckwheat? Or was the U. S. an amoral spiritual wasteland and Canada a land of God's own green fields? Proceeding in this fashion necessarily requires confronting the issue of who and how these French Canadian immigrants understood themselves to be, and therefore the problem of identity is central to my study.

Quebec of the nineteenth century found itself at the center of a socio-religious crisis that would produce dramatic and sometimes violent expressions of religious meaning not seen in Canada since the seventeenth century, that "age of mystics and martyrs."⁹ In the midst of the economic and political situation created by the repealing of the British Corn Laws and the growing pressure to force the English language on francophones throughout Canada, a nationalism that was both religious and political began to coalesce in Quebec. Ultramontane fervor spread through the French-Canadian parishes in the nineteenth century, just as the Protestant churches waxed with revivals and camp meetings. As Robert Choquette has recently pointed out, after the British Conquest, Catholicism had become the anchor of a self-conscious French-Canadian identity.¹⁰ More important than ever, Catholicism was equated not only with the French language, but also with the French-Canadian mode of being. The very land of Canada had disclosed itself to the French-Canadian imagination as a place set apart by God. It was for French-Canadians a locus of their identity. Farmers and *coureur de*

⁹Choquette, "French Catholicism..." 131-242. See especially Chapter 10: An Age of Missionaries, Mystics, and Martyrs.

¹⁰Robert Choquette, *Canada's Religions* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2004) 135.

bois could experience God's will through the very land they walked.¹¹ The Conquest in 1760 jeopardized the dream of Canada as the place in which the New Jerusalem would appear. The weight of this meaning seems to have reappeared in a renewed emphasis placed on the French language. In fact, for many people the name of Jesus Christ spoken in English was tantamount to the most grievous of sins.¹² Far from resulting in the assimilation of French-Canadians to the norms of British Protestant society, pressures from this government led to a reification of a French-Canadian Catholic sense of self.

This besieged Catholicism, which had been long forming throughout the French presence in North America, is what accompanied Quebec immigrants to the mill towns of New England. Perhaps more than a coincidence, the Virgin Mary had come to play a central role in the daily life of French-Canadians. A confraternity devoted to her had been organized in the seventeenth century, but popular devotion to both her and the Sacred Heart had emerged as dominant focuses of worship in nineteenth century French Catholicism, with several religious communities of men and women – such as the Oblates of Mary Immaculate and Sisters of the Assumption of the Holy Virgin – forming around her in the latter part of the century.¹³ Many orders such as these made their way to Canada during the second half of the nineteenth century and played a major role in the spread of devotion to the Virgin and

¹¹Choquette, *Canada's Religions*, 129.

¹²Claire Quintal, *Religion Catholique et appartenance Franco-Américaine: Franco-Americans and Religion: Impact and Influence* (Worcester: Institut français, 1993) ii.

¹³Choquette, *Canada's Religions*, 125.

the Sacred Heart in Quebec.¹⁴ In regards to the Songs of Departure, the Virgin is the central religious figure, called upon by mothers and workers, travelers and widows, to bring their requests for safety and salvation before God. Further, I suggest that the religiosity of the Songs of Departure exists beyond the explicit presence of religious figures. The songs articulate attempts to come to a meaningful understanding of a viable identity for French-Canadian Catholics in relation to their experiences of immigration, Canada, and the United States, and in this striving for meaning in an ultimate sense, the Songs of Departure express an orientation toward reality that is fundamentally religious.

Following the definition utilized by Charles H. Long, religion here is understood as a mode of orientation that locates the individual or group meaningfully in the world in relation to ultimate reality.¹⁵ It is through the experience of the forms of the world and that consciousness which arises from a confrontation which serves as the locus of the religious experience.¹⁶ It is through the experience of the hardness of stone, the vastness of sky, the cleansing and revitalizing nature of water that the human being comes to understand his or her place in the world in a meaningful fashion. The experience of transcendent reality manifested through the material structures of the world becomes the central organizing principle of meaning for

¹⁴Guy Laperrière, *Les congrégations religieuses. De la France au Québec 1880-1914*. vol. 1. (Sainte-Foy: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1996), 143.

¹⁵Charles H. Long, "Passage and Prayer: The Origin of Religion in the Atlantic World," in *The Courage to Hope: From Black Suffering to Human Redemption*, ed. Quinton Hosford Dixie and Cornel West (Boston: Beacon, 1999) 11.; Joachim Wach, *Types of Religious Experience* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1972 [1951]) 32.

¹⁶Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 1999). 39.

communities not only socially, but also temporally and spatially.¹⁷ It is that disclosure of the 'true' nature of the world that provides a group with an understanding of itself and its relation to the rest of the world. Religion, therefore, is fundamentally important to issues of community and identity.¹⁸

The religious imagination of matter is significant, then, not only for the individual, but also for the social body. Marcel Mauss has noted that forms of matter have served as instruments of exchange, and that this exchange is an activity that is fundamental to the recognition and maintenance of meaningful human definition.¹⁹ The gift exerts a "magical and religious hold over the recipient" that demands the creation and maintenance of a relationship based on the dynamics of mutual reciprocity.²⁰ Occurring at boundaries, exchange is necessary for the negotiation of the disjunctive experience of borders: religious, social, individual, and others. It is through the act and experience of the exchange of matter that both the individual and the community come to understand the place in the world which they meaningfully inhabit. But as Jennifer Reid has explained: "[r]efusal to enter into this

¹⁷Edward Relph, *Place and Placelessness* (London: Pion, Ltd., 1976) 1-5. Relph quotes Dardel: geography is "a means by which man realizes his existence insofar as the Earth is an essential aspect of his fate."

¹⁸Charles H. Long, *Significations: Signs, Symbols and Images in the Interpretation of Religion* (Aurora, CO: The Davies Group Publishers, 1999) 120.

¹⁹Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason For Exchange in Archaic Societies* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1990) 82.

²⁰Mauss, *The Gift*, 10.

reciprocal process with another human being is, in essence, a refusal to acknowledge the boundary and, consequently, to recognize the meaningful presence of that person.”²¹

The roots of the history of religions are generally located in the life and work of F. Max Muller, best known for his monumental *The Sacred Books of the East*. Like many German scholars during the second half of the nineteenth century, Muller had access to the fruits of the German Enlightenment and Romanticism and was enamored by India and Sanskrit. As against a particular strain of theological thought that considered knowledge of Christianity a sufficient base from which to undertake a study of the worlds ‘other’ religions, Muller advanced a practice that “understood its task as the comprehensive study of the meaning and nature of religion in the life of humankind.”²² And so despite his befuddlement that Sanskrit should be used to record myths, as far as he was concerned a disease of language, his insistence that all religions were just as worthy of study as Christianity marked a substantial departure from the traditional theological approach towards the worlds religions, and prepared a space for study that is vital to the contemporary scientific study of religion.

Fundamentally, what drove Muller in his work with Sanskrit, and what has driven scholars of religion throughout much of the history of the field has been the problem of origins. What was the earliest, most pure form of language? What constituted the earliest form of society? Did animism or fetishism, or even the totem, constitute the most primal

²¹Jennifer I. M. Reid, “ ‘Faire Place à une Race Métis’: Colonial Crisis and the Vision of Louis Riel.” Pp. 51-66 in *Religion and Global Culture: New Terrain in the Study of Religion and the Work of Charles H. Long* edited by Jennifer I. M. Reid (Lanham, MA: Lexington Books, 2003) 55.

²²Long, *Signification*, 16.

example of religion? Luckily for the first children of the Enlightenment, they found themselves, as a result of Europe's colonial enterprise, surrounded by communities that appeared to have gotten themselves 'stuck' in time and were quite clearly still living lives that were exactly the same as the earliest human communities. For the Western intellectual community, permeated by theories of evolutionism, distance in time found its correlate in spatial distance.²³ Matters were complicated further by the fact that much of the data used for these studies were collected, and sometimes interpreted, by those employed by the various colonial governments around the world, and these governments had certain economic and political stakes in just how the 'natives' were portrayed.²⁴

This situation allowed for the creation of certain types of academic questions that would have dire practical ramifications throughout the frontiers of the colonial world. Did every human being have religion? What was the status of those individuals and groups who apparently lacked even the most basic forms of a religious life? Were they even human? Could they be taught to be religious? And if not, was it acceptable that Europeans continued to make use of these godless beings as the chattel upon whose backs modernity would be brought into being? Attempting to uncover the origins of humanity in terms of the history of European civilization, Western scholars were part of an intellectual ferment that was often utilized as the justification for the objectification, exploitation, enslavement, and

²³Charles H. Long "Indigenous People, Materialities, and Religion: Outline for a New Orientation to Religious Meaning." Pp. 167-179 in Reid, *Religion and Global Culture*. 169.

²⁴Chidester, *Savage Systems*. Chidester's work shows this link between colonial interests, academic study, definitions of religion and human communities within the context of South Africa, though it is apparent that the dynamics he has revealed were present throughout the colonial world, and are still visibly active today. See F.E. Williams, *The Vailala Madness and the Destruction of Native Ceremonies in the Gulf District*, Papuan Anthropological Reports, no 4 (Port Moresby, 1923).

dehumanization of an unprecedented number of people the world over. At the same time these colonized people were, by those very same structures of oppression, put in contact not only with European academics, missionaries, traders, soldiers and colonists, but also with those other communities undergoing the colonial process. Throughout the nineteenth century and the first few decades of the twentieth, theories of the human being would continue to locate the origins of religion in time and space. These conceptions of religion would be limited to data collected on the margins of European influence, and often attempted to rationalize religion as a response to the experience of a manifestation of natural power, a lower step on the rung of civilized thought, the result of existential angst, or even the raw abuse of political and economic power.

Rudolph Otto steered a different course in his search for the origins of religion. His theory located the loci of the religious experience in human consciousness, and though he stated that only those who had experienced the 'numinous' could truly attempt to understand the dynamics of religion and religious expression, Otto was insistent that the experience of the holy was the same for every human being regardless of time or place.²⁵ The expressions and meanings of this experience were culturally determined, but the mode of consciousness that came into being as a result of such an experience was fundamentally the same for the first human being as it would be for the last. Furthermore, as against the rationalists and reductionists of his time, Otto's formulation of the religious experience as being *mysterium*

²⁵Rudolph Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (Oxford :Oxford University Press, 1958)10.

tremendum et fascinatum placed it outside the category of rationality. In fact, Otto suggested that a key element of the religious experience was its non-rational aspect.²⁶

It is one of those coincidences of history that the cultural ferment that had driven Muller and his fellow scholars to seek out the roots of the German race and culture, when manifest in one of the most horrific periods in a century filled to the point of bursting with horrific events, would be responsible for bringing the history of religions to North America. Carrying with him an intellectual tradition quite independent from that developing in the United States under the scholarship of William James and others, Otto's student, admirer, and critic, Joachim Wach, fled Germany as the Nazi war machine began its hungry sweep across Europe.²⁷ Universities across North America welcomed refugees such as Wach, who eventually found himself at the University of Chicago. In this, the complex relationship between the reality of the peoples and cultures of modernity and the academic study of religion is once again apparent.

Wach stressed the importance of hermeneutics for the study of religion, and the central role of community in the religious experience. This was a radical departure from Otto, whose data was drawn primarily from mystic traditions. Wach was concerned with the dynamic of the holy and how it served to form and orient communities toward a transcendent mode of reality.²⁸ Here, the meaning of religion was located in, and shaped by, the experiences of the community. It was more than a personal revelation of the divine.

²⁶Otto, 36.

²⁷Kees W. Bolle, "Religion, Global Culture, and the University." Pp. 27-37 in Reid, *Religion and Global Culture*, 28.

²⁸Joachim Wach, *Sociology of Religion* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1944).

The contribution of the scholarship of Mircea Eliade and Charles H. Long to this present work have already been noted, but there are some additional comments that I would like to make in the context of the history of the history of religions. In the work of Eliade, many of these issues raised by Wach, Otto, and Muller are not directly addressed, but they clearly make up the suppositions upon which he builds his morphology of religious expression. Again concerned with the religious consciousness, Eliade explored the *intentionality* of consciousness: consciousness *of* something. He located the founding moment of the religious experience in a realization of the material forms of the world by human beings.²⁹ This recognition served as the primary ordering of the world that made meaningful human life possible: the sacred and the profane.³⁰ But as with all of these above scholars, except for Wach, the data Eliade utilized in his studies consisted of the lives of archaic and non-Western communities. Though he did consider these modes of being to be of vital importance to the future of Western science and culture, he did not think that 'modern man' could be religious in the same fundamental way as these other communities. The forms of the world that had impinged themselves on the minds of archaic and non-Western peoples as manifesting a mode of ultimate reality had been, Eliade believed, obscured by the technological and social constructs of the West.³¹ The stars are not visible at night in New York City.

²⁹See again Eliade's *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, for an extensive exploration of this idea.

³⁰Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1987 [1957]). See especially Chapter IV: Human Existence and Sanctified Life.

³¹Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return or, Cosmos and History*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954) 154-155.

For Charles H. Long, this binary opposition only reified the colonial distinction between the primitive and the civilized, and in this distinction Long has seen the locus of a problem in the way the West has related to and acted in the world.³² Eliade's formulation of the religious imagination of matter, if it was to be a useful tool for the understanding of religion in modernity, had to take account of European colonialism and forms of human creativity that came into being as a result of that process. Perhaps the material structures of the world that had once served to meaningfully orient the being of humans were indeed obscured, demystified, or otherwise silenced, but through the movement, economy and technology of European colonialism new forms of materiality came into being, and it is in these new forms – new bodies, money, goods, writing, technology – that Long has discerned the locus of religious experience and the focus of religious studies in the modern period.³³

It is from this perspective that this present study proceeds, following Long's call for a *demythologized* approach to the history of religions.³⁴ An attempt to demystify and de-center the Western scientific tradition, methodologies stemming from this orientation would have much in common with myth. Though similar to Greenblatt's cultural poetics on one level, on another it is a call for a re-evaluation and restructuring of Western modes of knowledge production and categorization that is a response to a realization that the traditional operation of these structures cannot account in a meaningful fashion for a great range of the human experience and expression of the modern period. The language of the primitive and

³²Long, *Significations*, Chapter 6: Primitive/Civilized: The Locus of a Problem.

³³Long, *Significations*, Chapter 8: Cargo Cults as Cultural Historical Phenomena.

³⁴Long, *Significations*, 104.

the civilized, the rational and the irrational, has served to obscure the actual intimate and material relationships that were formed as a necessary part of the colonial ventures of the West.³⁵ This understanding is partially derived from Long's experience of Du bois' 'veil', "the twilight zones of half-light and quasi-physical infection inhabited by the semirealities of the modern Western world," that has constituted the meaning of the United States for African-Americans.³⁶

In a practical sense then, the language developed by the human sciences suffers from a confusion of meaning. It has been unable to make sense of the concrete realities of modernity, serving more to reify the silencing of those meanings. But this is the language of knowing in the West, and it should not be cast aside. Recent trends in the human sciences, often originating from scholars from countries that are former European colonial holdings, have suggested – and sometimes demanded – a redefinition of Western terms and theories. It is not enough to point to the 'bad faith' and 'bad knowing' historically located in Western scholarship; all good hermeneutics imply a reconstruction, a 'hermeneutics of memory' that follows the deconstruction of an apparent misinterpretation. Long turns to those communities that have been the West's *empirical other* and sees in their existence and their experience of the West a way to proceed.³⁷ Increased specialization has resulted in a multiplicity of

³⁵Long, "Indigenous People, Materialities, and Religion." 169.

³⁶Long, *Significations*, 121; Carolyn M. Jones and Julia M. Hardy, "From Colonialism to Community: Religion and Culture in Charles H. Long's *Significations*." in *Callaloo*, 36 (Summer 1998): 582-596.

³⁷Long, *Significations*, 135-137. For additional, independent calls for methodological restructuring and alternative solutions see: I. C. Jarvie, *The Revolution in Anthropology* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1964), and Patrick H. Hutton, "The History of Mentalities: The New Map of Cultural History." in *History and Theory*, 20 (1981): 237-259.

academic orientations, each with their own specific theories and methodologies developed to interpret specific aspects of the 'real'. The fluidity and multiplicity, the 'creolization' that is a necessary part of the daily life of those who have had to undergo European colonialism are clearly sustainable modes of being and knowing, yet they have been consistently marginalized and a denied a meaningful place alongside the modes of knowledge developed by the West. Since the earliest days of European colonization, these communities have served as the 'negative structure of concreteness' of the West: it has been through the confrontation and exploitation of the empirical others that the West has come to an understanding of itself and its place in the world. In this sense, these communities have been the *numen* of Western societies in the modern period.³⁸ This is a step towards a recognition of the role the other has played in the construction of the West, an exploration of why it has been and continues to be important for the other to be denied a meaningful existence alongside the West. It is still a search for origins, but a search undertaken with the understanding that origins in the modern period are never so easily found and designated, and they are always contested. Long calls for methodologies consonant with the lived reality of modernity. Or, as has recently been stated by another senior scholar in the history of religions: "The desire to find a complete theory is not what we need in the human sciences [...] the old thesis still holds true: a method is good only if it is proper for its object."³⁹

³⁸Long, *Significations*, Chapter 12, Freedom, Otherness, and Religion: Theologies Opaque; For a more thorough exploration of Long's formulation, see Tatsuo Murakami, "Asking the Question of the Origin of Religion in the Age of Globalization." Pp. 7-25 in Reid, *Religion and Global Culture*.

³⁹Bolle, *The Enticement of Religion*, 311.

From the hermeneutics developed from this history of the study of religion, coupled with its origin and role in the colonial enterprise of Europe, I propose to interpret the Songs of Departure for the United States. The French-Canadian immigrants, in their very act of movement from Quebec to New England had to undergo a process of cultural critique and reification: in a sense, they were engaged in a self-conscious process of defining their identity in relation to Canada and the United States. Central to this process was their understanding of themselves as Catholic francophones on a continent that was becoming increasingly Protestant and anglophone. The songs themselves harken back to France, as many of them are composed to the tune of traditional French songs, or contain lyrics that contain references or plays on traditional lines. But these have been recreated and reflect the realities and experiences of the New World. The songs are concerned with movement, with industry, and family, and the possibilities of the meaning of these topics in French-Canadian Catholicism.

Further, the total vision of these songs is not uniform, and as such, they outline the boundaries of the contingent nature of Canada and the United States as specific religious, political, social, and geographical realities. The recognition of this state and the exploration of the mythic nature of the way these countries have attempted to make sense of their roles in the world is the first step towards a new evaluation of the meaning of the New World for those communities that have had to undergo its 'discovery'. Proceeding in this manner is an attempt to follow Long's suggestion for an open discourse on the meaning and function of religion in the modern world: "[o]ne need only ponder the meaning of the *other* in the interpretation, description, and understanding of our data."⁴⁰

⁴⁰Long, *Significations*, 28.

Modernity, Geography, and Narrative

I would argue that in the case of those French-Canadians who made the conscious decision to leave their farms and friends – and sometimes their families– behind in Quebec to make the journey to the mill towns of New England, that this very act of movement, this very confrontation with and negotiation of the growing industrial urban centers of the United States, and their experience of being refused participation in the modes of material exchange that were fundamental to American definitions of meaning and *personhood*– were at an ontological level the loci of the emergence of a distinct identity whose earliest birth pangs can be discerned in the songs these individuals and communities sang to themselves as they moved across the landscape by foot and by train, and continued to sing to their children in the small, dark spaces of their homes in New England. For the mill operators and community leaders of New England, French-Canadians were a tolerated necessity of industry. French-Canadians often found themselves spatially located in these mill towns in ghetto-like *petit canadas*, communities composed entirely of immigrants from Quebec that operated more or less independently from the rest of the town. This separation allowed French-Canadians to maintain their sense of identity and also open shops to provide members of these communities with goods and services that were otherwise inaccessible or difficult to attain. Their difficulty arose more from the propagation and spread of French-Canadian stereotypes popular in New England than from a lack of goods. In the early years of the labor union in the factory towns of New England, French-Canadian immigrants sparked the ire of many other factory workers because they did not bother to join the unions or participate in labor strikes. Because of their

deference to authority – a much stressed element in French-Canadian Catholicism since the British Conquest in 1760 – they were often hired as strike breakers when other immigrant workers sought to increase their wages or secure shorter work days.⁴¹ Most English speaking Protestants simply did not want to deal with French speaking Catholics, or if they had to, the experience was usually made unpleasant for both parties.

It slowly became apparent to the French-Canadian immigrants that if they were to acquire even the most basic of necessities, such as church services performed in a language they could understand, that they would have to sacrifice much of what they held as central to their sense of self. They became American citizens, and though church services remained a central part of their lives, explicit religious practices now had to share time with factory work. Because of their easily identified accents and manner of dress, French-Canadians were often the targets of insults and physical abuse by other immigrant groups, predominately by those from Ireland, who often vied for parish space with the French-Canadians. The major disruption here was the same that could be found in Ontario at the time: French-Canadians wanted religious services in French with French-Catholic clergy, while the Irish felt that the English language should suffice, even in parishes that were predominately francophone. Even after French-Canadians made the decision to become citizens and learn English, they often became the target of anti-Catholic hatred. It is part of the popular knowledge throughout Maine that the Ku Klux Klan came to that state solely because of the presence of the large

⁴¹Philip T. Silvia, "Neighbors From the North: French-Canadian Immigrants vs. Trade Unionism in Fall River Massachusetts." Pp. 145-163 in *Steeple and Smokestacks: A Collection of Essays on the Franco-American Experience in New England*, edited by Claire Quintal (Worcester, MA: Institut français, 1996) 150.

communities of French-Canadians that formed in the cities of Auburn and Lewiston, not to mention those in the northern half of the state.

As the French-Canadian immigrants were, by definition, a people on the move, land and landscape – place and space – have been noted as being areas of primary concern in the *Songs of Departure*. Since geography plays such a central role, I have turned to the field of cultural geography – a field that has produced works surprisingly similar to those in certain sub-disciplines of religious studies. Cultural geography is concerned primarily with the ways human beings meaningfully inhabit and make use of the land. Of particular interest is the rise and dynamic of that peculiar mode of human habitation called the city, and its relationship to the surrounding socio-geographic area. In a work such as this present one, which proposes to examine human experience and expression in the context of colonialism and modernity, the centripetal and centrifugal power dynamic of the urban center must necessarily play a role.⁴² The question I seek to ask from this perspective, in terms of religion, is how or why one sign of authenticating power might impinge itself on the consciousness as *more* valid, more powerful than a different sign. Asked in another way, how did French-Canadians understand Canada in relation to the United States and vice versa? What did the imagination of these geo-political spaces mean to these immigrants, and how did this meaning influence their understanding of themselves?

⁴²In this I am especially influenced by Paul Wheatley, *The Pivot of the Four Quarters* (Chicago: Aldine-Atherton, 1971); Yi-Fu Tuan, "Sacred Space: Explorations of an Idea" in Karl W. Butzer, ed., *Dimensions of Human Geography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Department of Geography, 1978)84-99; and the aforementioned Relph, *Place and Placelessness*.

With the coming of the various schools of thought that have more or less been identified as aspects of a program of post-colonial studies, there has been an ever growing concern with narrative and the interpretation of culture. This trend, which can now be seen throughout the human sciences, is a movement away from claims to objective truth and toward the exploration of subjective realities, of discerning the lives and experiences that are obscured or silenced in the writing of colonial authorities and even in some academic studies.⁴³ This form of criticism refuses to see texts as separate from the cultural situation in which they were created, and also how they have influenced thought and action in the world after their creation. This method has usually been opposed to the more traditional interpretation of art works that proceed in a purely emic fashion – criticism internal to the text.⁴⁴ Both methods have much to offer to the scope of human understanding, and though they are not mutually exclusive, they have tended to exist as such. In exploring the Songs of Departure for the United States, I intend to borrow from both methods.

Drawing upon the work of Stephen Greenblatt, my understanding of the result of such an interpretation is as follows. By making the focus of this study the Songs of Departure I do not seek to create a work that can map out on a great scale the True Historic Events, but more along the lines of what Greenblatt terms a *poetics of culture*, the central concerns of which “prevent it from permanently sealing off one type of discourse from another or decisively separating works of art from the minds and lives of their creators and their

⁴³ The most outspoken, and well known of literary critics who have explored this mode of study was Edward Said, but I am also thinking of Octavio Paz, and Stephen Greenblatt, among others. In writing this section, I am influenced especially by the work of Greenblatt.

⁴⁴ This form of literary criticism is expertly explored by scholars such as Jeanette Winterson and George Steiner.

audiences.”⁴⁵ These songs are expressions of the *experience* of a specific space and time by specific communities. It is this mode of human creativity arising from and in response to a disjunctive situation that is my interest.

Finally, there is the issue of translation. Recent discussion about the manners and problems of translating transcriptions of oral performances have been epitomized by the works of Dell Hymes and Denis Tedlock. Though their methods are not mutually exclusive, they have tended to be viewed and used as separate camps of thought. Hymes’ method of translation is geared toward transcribed texts and uses a formal framework based on the meter and rhyme of measured verse, the exact specifics of which is admitted to vary from language to language. Hymes’ translations are also dramatic in nature and seek to be aesthetically attractive in both sound and visual, printed presentation.⁴⁶ Tedlock’s work, on the other hand, is more concerned with the ‘voice in oral performance’, and seeks to represent the stresses and pauses that make a story come vibrantly alive for an audience.⁴⁷ Both of these methods, I think, are necessary for good translations, though they are not the end of the process. A translation is necessarily a creative act that can never, with complete accuracy, render a text into a different language. Attempts to retain style or rhythm often result in a sacrifice of meaning, and in the case of my work, it is the meaning that I am primarily concerned with, though I do intend to remain as true to the original text as it appears possible.

⁴⁵Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980) 4-5.

⁴⁶Brian Swann, ed, *Coming to Light: Contemporary Translations of the Native Literatures of North America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994) xxviii.

⁴⁷Swann, *Coming to Light* , xxxviii.

Several of these songs are composed of a blending of both French and English, revealing their truly liminal, or creative, status, and therefore the slips and flips of meaning that occur in translation have been a living, constantly negotiated issue for these immigrant communities and even more so for Franco-Americans.⁴⁸

The latter part of the nineteenth century saw the elite population of immigrants from French Canada redefining their relationship with Canada, the United States, and with France. From this new orientation came the designation Franco-American. These elites made a bid that they were just as American as those whose ancestors had come to New England on the Mayflower.⁴⁹ Social politics seem to have had some influence in the adoption of this name, as the immigrants had for almost one hundred years been considered the unwanted children of the French-Canadian Catholic church. Franco-Americans by name proclaimed an identity with the United States and France, Canada appearing to have been forgotten somewhere in the 'dash.' In the twentieth century, it was indeed theologians and academics from France who gave the Franco-American communities much support towards claiming their own authenticity and even imagined for them a heroic past pointing towards a Providential future.⁵⁰

Today, most of the Franco-American community does not understand the French language. Those who do are counted among the elite, many professors at universities throughout New England. There are, however, extensive exchange and educational programs that link together the communities in New England, the Cajuns in Louisiana, Quebec, and

⁴⁸ A statement of this reality is expertly made by Franco-Ontarian Patrice Desbiens in his novel, *L'homme invisible: un récit/ The Invisible Man* (Sudbury, ON: Prise de parole, 1981).

⁴⁹Frenette, *Les francophones...*, 31.

⁵⁰Benoit, See especially his *Avant-propos*, 9-11.

even France. Established in 1968, the Massachusetts American and Canadian French Exchange Commission was designed to “establish, maintain, and develop cultural ties between French-Canadians and Franco-Americans, foster a special interest in the historical and cultural background of both groups [...] and [...] promote French language programs in the school of the Commonwealth.”⁵¹ Organizations such as these are fairly localized and have not garnered much public attention in New England. Another mode which Franco-Americans have utilized to learn French is self motivated. Small groups have actively sought out individuals with proficiency in the French language or with knowledge of the Franco-American presence in New England, and have thus begun to learn about the history and traditions of their ancestors.

It has seemed to me that most of the important and meaningful work done on these immigrants and Franco-Americans has been done in French. Most of the scholars in the field publish in both French and English, but the work in French appears to strike deeper into issues of meaning, identity, and history than the work produced in English. Even so, the paucity of research in either language warrants further attention. So this is in part an attempt to contribute to the relatively small amount of scholarship in English on the religiosity of French-Canadians. If the Franco-American community wishes its presence in the academy and in North America to no longer be a quiet one, no longer the shadow among the trees, it must speak more openly about issues that are vitally important to the understanding of the way Canada and the United States have been and have been experienced as particular times and spaces in the New World.

⁵¹Donald Moisan, “Massachusetts American and Canadian French Exchange Commission” Pp. 115-118 in *The French in New England, Acadia, and Quebec*, edited by Edward Shriver (Quebec: The New England-Atlantic Provinces-Quebec Center, 1973) 115.

Chapter Two – The Place Where I Come From: Visions of Quebec and French-Canadian Immigration

Sacred Space

If the Songs of Departure reveal a mythic structure of reality, how do they accomplish this task and what are the contours of this structure as it pertains to the experience of nineteenth century French Canadian immigrants to the United States? The most direct route in the interpretation of these songs from the vantage of the history of religions is to proceed with a textual analysis that seeks to discern the implicit religiosity – the orientation to the world – that inhabit the silent spaces within the actual words of the songs.¹ When the Songs of Departure are interpreted as being religious texts, the traditional concern with explicit religious content becomes secondary to the *ways* in which the world is organized and given meaning. The theoretical space created by this application of Charles H. Long's understanding of religion to the Songs of Departure allows for the exploration of alternative meanings of Canada and the United States forged in the experiences of individuals and communities that have been partners in the construction of these countries. The songs are a form in which these understandings are placed in a relational dialogue with each other that allows for a range of possible meanings of Canada and the United States to be read in their images, themes, and structures.

¹In this I am following Charles H. Long's essay "Silence and Signification" (in *Significations*, 61-70) where he applies Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* as a method for interpreting the history of European colonialism and the experiences and expressions that have arisen from that project. I wish to maintain this course while at the same time exploring the religious structures of nineteenth century North America that can be discerned in the way in which these Songs of Departure are shaped.

I wish to begin this study with the Songs of Departure which feature images of female figures. Explicit connections are drawn here between the ideal role of the mother and wife to the specific interpretation of Mary as archetypal mother found in the dominant discourse of nineteenth century French-Canadian Catholicism. In these songs, the image of Mary and motherhood is present in the description of the Canadian landscape, which offers the same potential of purity, comfort and fertility to be found in the image of French-Canadian women. From this, the composite understanding these songs present of Canada is, I suggest, one of a sacred space. Proceeding from Mircea Eliade's working out of the religious experience, the forms and structures of nature impinge themselves on human consciousness as capable of expressing manifestations of the divine, of the transcendent nature of reality.² An understanding of the world "is only achieved through an engagement with an a priori materiality, or rather, a world that precedes a human presence and upon which human life is predicated."³ This manifestation of the sacred – what Eliade terms a hierophany – performs an ordering function in the world, orienting individuals and communities towards a specific geographical location as a *center* of meaning:

This elementary notion of the place's becoming, by means of a hierophany, a permanent "centre" of the sacred, governs and explains a whole collection of systems often complex and detailed. But however diverse and variously elaborated these sacred spaces may be, they all present one trait in common: there is always a clearly marked space which makes it possible (though under very varied forms) to

²Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, 39.

³Philip P. Arnold, *Eating Landscapes: Aztec and European Occupation of Tlalocan* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 1999) 53. Arnold here is paraphrasing from M. Merleau-Ponty's work in *Phenomenology of Perception*.

communicate with the sacred.⁴

This determines how a region is to be utilized and meaningfully inhabited. As a 'center of the world' the proper shape and way of being in the world is modeled on the transcendent ordering of reality.⁵ By allowing for the communication between human beings and the divine, the center becomes a place of power, deploying meanings and possibilities outward into the social and geographic landscape.⁶ The working of the land through agriculture is one of the ways in which French-Canadians in the nineteenth century came to know themselves and their world. It was this relationship with the land that was stressed by the parish priests throughout the nineteenth century. "At church, they would hear their *curés* speak of noble Adam, first inhabitant of the world who began by growing a garden; they would hear of the shepherds who were the first to know of the birth of Jesus, unlike the rich magi who had come from the city and arrived late to worship the baby Jesus."⁷

The very beauty of the Canadian landscape was a revelation of the sacred: the presence of the Virgin Mary could be discerned by those 'with eyes to see' in the white snow of the winter and the blue rivers and lakes of the summer. In supporting and shaping French-Canadian families for three hundred years, Jacques Cartier's "Land that God gave to Cain"

⁴Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, 368.

⁵David Carrasco, *City of Sacrifice: The Aztec Empire and the Role of Violence in Civilization* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999) 235. Carrasco here comments on the work of cultural geographer Paul Wheatley, whose formulation of the archetype "is not only discovered, but also constructed; it reveals itself, but it is also mapped." See Wheatley, *The Pivot of the Four Quarters*, 416-417.

⁶Eliade, 369.; *The Encyclopedia of Religion* defines sacred space as "first of all a defined place, a space distinguished from other spaces. The rituals that a people either practice at a place or direct toward it mark its sacredness and differentiate it from other defined spaces."

⁷Benoît Lacroix, *La foi de ma mère* (Montreal: Bellarmin, 1999), 376.

must truly be a gift from the Lord in its unsurpassable beauty and fertility⁸ In Quebec, the majesty of God could be seen in every tree, he could be heard in the breath of every French voice, and he was called for help and comfort in prayer and song. The limits of this sacred space were marked by the boundaries of Quebec, and centered upon the parish and the voice of the *curé*.

Though rather dated, Chapter Three of Horace Miner's *St. Denis, A French-Canadian Parish*, entitled "The Society Upon the Land" magnificently lays out the geography of a parish. Taking St. Denis as a typical French-Canadian parish, Miner begins his study with the actual church building, which is located at a crossroads that marks the very center of the town.⁹ Shops, homes, and other buildings radiate outward east and west, agricultural land spreading north and south of the farms in the land concession system of *rangs*. Further, these directions are relative orientations, in the case of St. Denis, to the surrounding river and mountain range: "Altars in the church are designated as being on the northeast or southwest side; rooms in a house are similarly indicated; winds come from these directions."¹⁰ The parish is further delimited into quarters. "Each of the three most populous quarters of the parish has a cross erected beside the road and centrally located with respect to the limits of

⁸Choquette, "French Catholicism..." 142.

⁹ Tamara K. Hareven, *Family Time and Industrial Time* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982) 418, n. 16. The issue has been raised as to how representative St. Denis was of pre World War II rural communities in Quebec, but as Tamara K. Hareven has noted, Miner's work is still the only study of its kind. And so despite its flaws, it must still be relied upon with perhaps too much importance.

¹⁰Horace Miner, *St. Denis: A French-Canadian Parish* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1939) 50.

the quarter.”¹¹ Not only does this reveal the pervasive importance of geographic orientations to the sacred to the meaningful lives of human beings, it also demonstrates that there often exists a multiplicity of sacred centers, that serve to mark an orientation to and dialogue between the profane and sacred world, “because the nature of the sacred space admits the coexistence of an infinity of places in a single centre.”¹²

Jonathan Z. Smith has argued that in relation Mediterranean religions and the notions of religious persistence and change, the presence of two world-views must be taken into account; he terms these orientations *locative* and *utopian* visions of place.¹³ In expanding on his initial formulation of their dynamics, Smith defines locative as being “concerned primarily with the cosmic and social issues of keeping one’s place and reinforcing boundaries.”¹⁴ For Smith, this locative space becomes utopian, concerned with the breaking out, or breaking free, of boundaries, in contact situations where communities are made to feel “estranged and profoundly alien”¹⁵

Recently, David Carrasco has made several adaptations of this basic model to the context of forms of Christianity that have arisen out of the processes of European colonialism

¹¹Miner, 51.

¹²Eliade, *Patterns In Comparative Religion*, 378, 385. Eliade notes: “the ‘dynamics’ and ‘physiology’ of sacred spaces enable us to affirm the existence of an archetypal sacred place which can be ‘actualized’ through hierophanies and through the consecration of places everywhere (Pp. 385) Or, “any tree can become the Cosmic Tree.” (Pp. 384).

¹³Jonathan Z. Smith, *Map is Not Territory: Studies in the History of Religions* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978)

¹⁴Jonathan Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990) 121.

¹⁵Smith, *Drudgery Divine*, 133-134.

in the Americas. He suggests that between locative and utopian visions of place there is a “metamorphic vision of place [...in which...] the processes of change, improvisation, and places *which change through ritual improvisation* suggest something that is neither locative nor utopian.”¹⁶ Carrasco continues: “It is a vision of place in which change and transformation are the sustained patterns.”¹⁷ This is the space of the contact zone and the creative processes through which “dominated peoples *select and invent* from materials transmitted to them from both the dominant culture and their own indigenous traditions.”¹⁸ This vision of place is rooted in the materials and relationships of the contact zone, reflecting the mixing, blending, blurring, creolization of actively creative – improvisational – communities. A metamorphic vision of place points to both a locative and a utopian sense of place while being in between them.

For the course of this study, I am interested in an application of the term *indigenous* as it has been defined by Charles H. Long in recent years. He notes that there are two dimensions to the term that make it problematic: “first it is an element in the stylistics and formative languages of the modern West, and second, the term applies to the non-Western cultures that were encountered during the modern period of colonialism, mercantilism, and

¹⁶David Carrasco, “Jaguar Christians in the Contact Zone: Concealed Narratives in the Histories of Religions in the Americas.” Pp. 128-138 in *Beyond Primitivism: Indigenous Religious Traditions and Modernity*, edited by Jacob K. Olupona (New York: Routledge, 2004) 132.

¹⁷Carrasco, “Jaguar Christians...” 132. Here he is quoting from his work, *To Change Place: Aztec Ceremonial Landscapes* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 1998) 33.

¹⁸Carrasco, “Jaguar Christians...”, 130.

imperialism.”¹⁹ As a mobile valuational tool, the term indigenous designates those communities encountered during the European colonial enterprise and pulled into its economic and ideological orbit, only to be excluded from its structures of authentication.

As cultures of contact, the indigenous have marked the periphery for Western civilization. But in undergoing these processes, these cultures of contact “created other modes for the understanding of human life and community.”²⁰ It is from these alternate modes of understanding that the meaning of indigenous should not only be understood as referring to the human communities that existed prior to the ‘rise of the West’ but also as “the basis for a new epistemological stance in the world, [...not a...] dismissal of the Enlightenment orientation, but it means that this orientation cannot assume that it and its traditions [...] define the limits of human possibility.”²¹ As a hermeneutical epistemological tool, the indigenous occupies a space between the binary ‘primitive’ and ‘civilized’, and it is from this space that I wish to apply Carrasco’s use of the word to the experiences of French-Canadians in the United States. Throughout many of the *Songs of Departure*, the centers of Quebec are envisioned as being relocated to the peripheries of the industrial centers of the United States.

¹⁹Long, “Indigenous Peoples...”, 168. In a later article he clarifies: “On the one hand, ‘indigenous,’ from the Latin, means literally being born from within, which leads to the notion of being produced or living naturally in a particular region. In other words, ‘indigenous’ refers to what, in a conventional sense, we define as home [...] Things are not, however, quite so simple, for the term is called forth not by those cultures and peoples who are referred to when we use the term. It is, rather, occasioned by those typified by Alexander the Great and their progenies, the conquerors and imperialists – the Romans and modern Western culture, among others. The term indigenous is called forth within the structures of those who have chosen to understand the source of human value through the processes and practices of ‘not being at home’.” Charles H. Long “A Postcolonial Meaning of Religion: Some Reflections from the Indigenous World.”Pp 89-98 in *Beyond Primitivism: Indigenous Religious Traditions and Modernity*, edited by Jacob K. Olupona (New York: Routledge, 2004) 89.

²⁰Long, “Indigenous Peoples...” 178.

²¹Long, “Indigenous Peoples...” , 178.

Though their presence in North America is a result of the mercantile and colonial world system, in the nineteenth century French-Canadians were forced into a new relationship with that system, and their creative improvisations which arise out of that situation, such as the Songs of Departure, are expressions of the ambiguity of the notion of the center that is found in “those ‘primitive’ or ‘primal’ traditions of modernity.”²²

In explaining his sense of the ambiguity of the center, Long writes: “[t]here probably never has been a true center; rather, [...] we have had, more often than not, ‘wobbling pivots’.”²³ In the case of nineteenth century Quebec, the wobbling pivots can be seen in part in the movement of primacy away from the town parishes to the urban centers. As a “uniquely powerful magnet for migrants,” the United States appeared to be becoming the primary center of economic and bodily movement in the nineteenth century.²⁴ The sense of this radical reorientation neglects other possibilities – other pivots – of meaning that have existed alongside the magnetic pull of the United States; as early as 1842, Franco-American parishes were being established throughout New England.²⁵

In the opposing visions of Quebec which appear in the Songs of Departure, this space explored by Carrasco can lend helpful theoretical tools leading towards a clearer picture of the mythic structures of French-Canada and the United States. The liminal space in which

²²Long, “A Postcolonial Meaning of Religion....”, 95

²³Long, “A Postcolonial Meaning of Religion...” 95.

²⁴Felipe Fernandez-Armesto, *Millennium: A History of the Last 1000 Years* (New York: Scribner, 1995) 410.

²⁵Mason Wade, “The French Parish and *Survivance* in Nineteenth Century New England.” Pp. 163-189 in *The Catholic Historical Review* 36, no. 2 (July, 1950) 163.

these songs have been produced is analogous to a metamorphic vision of place. The songs repeatedly express the consciousness of the French-Canadian immigrants of having undergone a change. The image of Quebec as home, as Mother, was reified by French-Canadians who were *no longer there*. Heightening a sense of alienation and isolation, most of these songs envision the possibility of returning home only through a long and arduous process. While expressing the yearning to return to Quebec, these songs simultaneously maintain the existence of the boundaries that are at the heart of their disjunctive experiences of New England.

The existence of these songs – and in several cases the very manner in which they are constructed – are reflective of the world view of the contact zone. French-Canadians are not passively absorbed into the United States, but are active participants in the heterogeneous make-up of the country that has existed beneath and prior to the discourse of homogeneity – that of the melting pot and the American Dream. They are mutually involved in the continual process of re-making, reshaping the meanings, orientations, bodies, and geography of the United States. The shape of New England, economically, socially, politically, religiously and geographically, is due much to the presence of French-Canadian and other immigrant communities.²⁶

Mother Mary on the Move

²⁶Brault, xvi. Brault provides a map locating the major concentrations of Franco-Americans, the shape of which “is largely the result of a settlement pattern begun after the Civil War. It was clearly fixed by the turn of the century.”(xvi). What is most immediately visible from this map is that almost all of the major urban centers of the region around the year 1900 had populations where around 20 percent were descendants of French-Canadian immigration.

On the twenty-third of June, 1901, Louis-Adolphe Paquet gave a speech which was a crystalized expression of a mood that had been growing among the francophone Catholics of Quebec for over one hundred years. In this speech, Paquet located French-Canadians at the center of a divine plan not only for North America, but for the entire world. The entire history of the French presence in the New World had been guided by the hand of Providence; in the hierarchy of nations and races, the French of Canada were chosen by God as the "pioneers of civilization" and the "messengers of the ideal religion."²⁷

Much like the English Puritans and then the Americans, North America was for Paquet a sign of God's ultimate design for the world and a revelation of the immediateness of the culmination of that design.²⁸ The French-Canadian experiences of the continent were in every way proof of the important role they had played and were to continue to play in this spreading of Christianity and the evolution of civilization. A few decades later Henri Bourassa noted that "[i]f we allow the cult of language to weaken in ourselves, [...] we will undermine at its foundation all the work that the French civilization built over three centuries of efforts and sacrifices."²⁹ The rise of Christian civilization that had begun with the French in Europe was to reach its ultimate pinnacle with the French in Canada.

Paquet saw this history manifest in the daily lives of his fellow French Canadians. In

²⁷Paquet, Louis-Adolphe, "*La vocation de la race française en Amérique.*" Pp 56-60 in *Louis-Adolphe Paquet* edited by Yvan Lamonde (Montreal: Collection Classiques Canadiens, 1972) 57.

²⁸John Winthrop, "Reasons for Forsaking England." Pp. 25-35 in *The Puritan Tradition in America, 1620-1730*, edited by Alden T. Vaughan (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1972) 27.

²⁹Joseph Levitt, ed. *Henri Bourassa on Imperialism and Bi-culturalism* (Toronto: The Copp Clark Publishing Company, 1970) 153.

the way they worked the land, in the way they worshiped the Lord and followed the strictures of ultramontane Catholicism, in the way they had maintained their language and traditions though they were surrounded by British and Americans, the French-Canadians of Quebec were proof of God's continued activity in the world. "We stand in regard to all of America like the glorious emblem, the symbol, the ideal living of social perfection and of the true grandeur of nations."³⁰

As this sense of French Canada's unique position in the history of the world grew in the nineteenth century, new religious confraternities devoted to the worship of the Virgin Mary and the Sacred Heart gained widespread popularity among both men and women. Greatly influenced and strengthened by the arrival of religious orders who had been forced to leave France when the government enacted a series of educational and military laws designed to restrict, and eventually halt, the recruitment of new members to these orders, the devotions and religious orders highlighted Mary's role as pious mother and first teacher of Jesus and obedient wife of Joseph, and it was this image of motherhood that was presented to young French Canadians – both male and female – as being the image of the ideal woman.³¹ Being a Catholic mother in Quebec meant having a special relationship with the mother of God.³² This relationship was manifest in their social roles, defined in terms of their husbands (current or potential) and their children. Girlfriends and wives were Marys in the making.

³⁰Paquet, 60.

³¹Laperierre, *Les congregations religieuses...* 73, 92. Though the greatest number of members of religious orders did not begin to come to Canada until 1880, when many were expelled from France, and 1889, with the passing of the Military Law, there was a constant flow of missionaries from France to Canada beginning in the 1830's. See Laperierre 43-48.

³²Miner, 66.

Even more, each member of the family was understood to inhabit a role that corresponded to a member of the Holy Family. The father, therefore, was identified with Joseph, and as head of the family was understood to draw his authority directly from God.³³ This paralleling between families was extended to the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, so that the *curé* was understood as the father of his parishioners. Grandparents too, had their place in this sacred ordering of the family. On certain days in the holy calendar, the grandfather was even able to perform certain rituals that were normally exclusively the territory of the *curé*. On New Years day, for example, his grandchildren would gather before him to receive the sign of the cross on their foreheads and a blessing of good health and “eternal bliss when you pass on.”³⁴

It is this idea of the French-Canadian woman as she was presented in the religious language of the nineteenth century and her ideal relationship with other members of the family and her ability to *be* the very space of Canada that is important in the Songs of Departure. The image of the woman takes on the weight of having to reflect everything that the immigrant to the United States has left behind. At the very same time the woman stands as testament to the disjunctive nature of the immigrant experience while she points to tethers of continuity between the mill towns of New England and the farms of Quebec.

The most frequent images to appear in the Songs of Departure is that of the mother, or the girlfriend. Usually surrounded by an aura of longing and loneliness, in various ways these images are paralleled not only with Mary, but with the land of Canada itself, and are often understood as the symbols for the entire family. In fact, there is little thematic or

³³Miner, 66.

³⁴Brault, 18.

structural difference between the image of girlfriend and the mother. The recognition of Mary in the landscape of Canada can be seen in theologian Benoît Lacroix's 1999 text *La foi de ma mère*, as he quotes from his mother's diary. " 'It's not for nothing that our land is called Bellechasse.' With the Appalachians to the south the Laurentides to the north, so blue in the summer, so white in the winter 'the colors of the Virgin'." ³⁵

It is this complex of symbols surrounding the image of the woman in the Songs of Departure that I wish to examine first, as it provides a cohesive and broad expression of a particular interpretation of the meaning of Canada, while at the same time it opens a space for the further exploration of different, and sometimes contradictory, meanings of the country. As the archetypal model for all mothers, Mary watches over all devout French-Canadians and is called on by them in times of need and distress:

If the good God shall keep me
That I should go to Canada
I pray the Holy Virgin
So she does not abandon me
Holy Virgin Mary
Don't leave me
I hope one day soon to come
To die in your arms (III-c)

This stanza also reveals the structural conflation of Mary with Canada. Mary the good mother, as she is reconstructed through the hermeneutic of *la survivance*, becomes synonymous with Canada the good and bountiful provider of all things that the French-Canadians might need. According to Lacroix, the *habitants* would be told often by their *curé*

³⁵Lacroix, *La foi de ma mère* 187.

to "Trust in Mary [...] with her, all is possible."³⁶ And in a similar fashion, for the *habitant* understood that "[i]t's sacred, the land, even in winter [...] The land loves us. I love my land."³⁷ The presence of Mary could daily be seen in the beauty and productivity of the land. And the land, like Mary, was the focus of French-Canadian Catholicism in the nineteenth century. Through the ritual prayers and devotions to Mary and the yearly cycle of agricultural work, both served to delimit and mediate the boundary between human existence and the sign of the holy, and in this way French-Canadian *habitants* came to an understanding of their place in the world.

But as Quebec attempted to rapidly transform itself from an agriculturally based society to one of heavy industry based in urban centers, the *habitants* had little choice but to abandon subsistence farming and enter the growing capitalist market system. This meant increased crop specialization and investment in mechanized farming equipment in order to meet the new demands of urban population, and the only way that most farmers could afford this expensive machinery was through loans.³⁸ Due to a lack of controls on the lenders and the radical fluctuations in the prices of crops, many *habitants* were forced to sell their farmsteads and move away from their family parish and emigrate to the States.³⁹ Paul Wheately has noted that the development of this dynamic of economic ties between the city proper and the surrounding rural settlements, in which "the urbanized countryman [...] lives

³⁶Lacroix, 283.

³⁷Lacroix, 197.

³⁸ Yves Roby, "The Economic Evolution of Quebec and the Emigrant (1850-1929)." Pp. 7-19 in *Steeple and Smokestacks*, edited by Claire Quintal, 10-11.

³⁹Roby, "The Evolution..." 13.

in terms of the city but not in it, [...] is bound to the city [...] in an asymmetrical structural relationship that requires him to produce in one form or another a fund of rent payable to power brokers based, if not always resident, with the urban enceinte," is one of the primary ways in which an urban center becomes a "way of life" distinct from other modes of being in the world.⁴⁰

In a setting that was becoming increasingly urban and industrialized, the actual land of Canada was, for many, no longer capable of sustaining a meaningful existence; the amount of land each farmer needed to own in order to produce the amount of crops necessary to sustain the growing urban centers was prohibitively expensive.⁴¹ Many French-Canadians may have left Canada and their families to work in the United States, but Mary was always with these immigrants, not only in the Franco-American parishes, but also in the lumber camps and factories throughout New England. Mary's omnipresence in the lives of these immigrants served to maintain their sense of meaningful existence and reify the desire to return to Canada once they had made enough money. In the above song – more a hymn or prayer – the narrator's desire to return to Canada is predicated on God's will that the journey be made, but is paralleled with the concluding wish to die in Mary's arms. Either would mark the end of the narrator's life in the United States, and explicitly either would be a return home for the immigrant.

While Mary was present in the land the *habitant* and the immigrant were moving

⁴⁰Paul Wheatley, *Nagara and Commandery: Origins of the Southeast Asian Urban Traditions* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Department of Geography, Research Paper 207-2-8, 1983) 4.

⁴¹Roby, "The Evolution..." 14. Earlier in his essay, Roby quotes from the *Gazette des campagnes* of December 2, 1861: "What do you expect the farmer to do with money due in three months? [...] The land does not pay us off for a year and often after eighteen months of credit." (11).

through, passively the female figure in most of these songs must remain behind in Canada while the male figure travels to or is already working in the United States. The United States represents a fundamental break in *la survivance*'s definition of the French-Canadian identity, and in the songs, this disjunction takes the form of the male narrator leaving behind his mother or girlfriend. There is a sense that this split is unavoidable, – the most personalized symptom of the industrialization of North America – for as in the following stanza, even when given the opportunity to emigrate the female character actively refuses:

Good-bye, I'm leaving for America,
My loved-one, shall you come?
She said unto me, "No, no, she says,
I'll not go..." (V-a)

Not only does this recurrent theme point to the demographic reality that in general the majority of the immigrants were males who traveled by themselves or in small groups, it also creates a vital link between all that these people had left behind and all that they are now surrounded by. Single men by no means were the only immigrants, and more often than not the decision to leave Quebec was made by the wife or mother, and entire families did make their way south, both as a whole and in a succession of individuals as previous family members became established in a town or city.⁴² But in the songs that contain the mother or girlfriend image, the male narrator is on his own either reflecting back upon his time in Canada or he is just about to leave for the United States, often inhabiting a sorrowful, yet heroic, role. The sense of sacrifice attached to the emigration to the United States points to how important Canada and family was to the identity of the French-Canadian.

⁴²Roby, "The Evolution..." 17.

To be far from our family
 From our girlfriend, from our country
 And those we love so tenderly (IV-c)

This list of all that is being left behind by the immigrants contains all the facets of *la survivance*: family and land – the agricultural land of Quebec – linked together by the French language, and the hint of the Marian interpretation the female figure that points to the undergirding orientation of this Catholicism to the world. The hardworking farmers of the mythic agrarian golden age of the earliest French *habitants* of Quebec that formed the central image of *la survivance* were never far from their mothers, their wives, their girlfriends. The French-Canadian family of *la survivance* was large and, despite the difficulties of working the land, happy with their lot and respectful of their pastors.⁴³ An important source for the preservation and propagation of the French language and the Catholic faith, the very land of Quebec was revealed in the language of *la survivance* as the nurturing mother, given by God to his most elect children.⁴⁴ This Canada had been left behind by the immigrants, but the experience of the memory of the people and landscape of the country becomes a new source of their sense of who they are.

The space necessary for the recollection and reification of these memories is occasioned by an encounter with the material structures of the world. Each narrator has forced upon him the sense of *otherness* as he looks upon a field, a bird, the ocean. This is the cause of an experience of unease, of isolation, of intense lonely mortal humanness that sparks strong desires of longing for home, for mother or girlfriend. It is at one and the same time

⁴³Brault, 7.

⁴⁴Choquette, *Canada's Religions*, 247-248

an experience of stifling helplessness in a confrontation with the hardness of the world and a recognition of something potent in that hardness that points beyond the immediate. The vastness of a prairie not only elicits the consciousness of one's finite nature, it also discloses the existence of a sacred, and ultimate, dimension to reality.

Little bird, you are very lucky
 To fly where you want to
 If I had your wings
 Ah yes! I would fly
 To my love's knee
 Ah yes! There I would rest (IV-d)

When these lines are placed in relation to the following, the parallels between mother, girlfriend, and Canada begin to emerge more clearly.

Being in these prairies
 Looking all around
 A field bird
 Comes and makes me feel the pangs of longing
 Yet there is not the reason for my longing
 But to be abandoned
 Because it is my dear mother
 That I will be so far away from (III-b)

The impingement of the memory of mother and girlfriend upon the narrators is caused by their witnessing the flight of a bird. In the bird's ability to fly, there is a recognition of a form of freedom that the narrators feel is impossible for themselves in their current situations, they are forced to confront that situation as one of stagnation and crisis. Their thoughts are caught upon memories of Canada, and their lives in the United States are envisioned as incapable of creative productivity.⁴⁵ The resulting image presented of the United States in

⁴⁵ Images of the United States that occur in the Songs of Departure will be the subject of the following chapter, though it seems necessary for the purpose of comparison to make note of this important theme at this point.

relation to Canada is one that is antithetical to the possibilities of a meaningful human existence:

Far away from our mother, one could die of loneliness (VIII-b)

Canada, on the other hand, perches on the horizons of the narrators' thoughts as the cure to this illness. In the following lines, it does not seem to be going too far to suggest that the relief and salvation that is prayed for is deliverance from the United States back to Canada. This can be accomplished by both mother and God, as mother takes up the Marian role as the mediator between human beings and the divine. It serves to follow then that the landscape of Canada was also a point of mediation since Mary and the land appear to inhabit a similar relationship to each other as Mary does with all female figures, especially the mother.

Praying to our mother for relief
We have to pray to God for our salvation
Yes I cried for my poor mother (VIII-b)

As Mary, or the very being of *motherness*, Canada means the possibilities of life for the French-Canadian who is in the United States. Canada is open spaces and clean air, sunlight and good nights rest: the industry of the New England mill towns is nowhere to be found. The smoke and the heat, the sweat and the steam and the noise are just as incapable of finding a place in Canada as the female figure is of making her way south across the border. In this orientation to the world, the binary disjunction between Canada and the United States is virtually impermeable. The crossing is dangerous and not willingly undertaken. It is out

of necessity that the journey is made, and often results in physical suffering and mental anguish: to leave Canada, to leave ones mother, is to enter a space of seeming chaos that is such a paralyzing experience for the immigrant that "one could die." But it is this very confrontation with the otherness of the mills of New England that serves as the moment for the self-conscious creation and reification of an orientation to God, Canada, and the world that is distinctly that of the French-Canadian immigrant.

Green Fields and Warm Sun

"The sacred reveals absolute reality and at the same time makes orientation possible; hence it *founds the world* in the sense that it fixes the limits and establishes the order of the world."⁴⁶ The Songs of Departure point to the experience of these limits by French-Canadian immigrants, from beyond the boundaries. As will be explored below, the United States was often considered to be a land of exile that could pose a threat to human existence. It is from this land of exile that an image of Canada as a distant mother comes into being. But further, Canada becomes associated with all things growing, with all life and all possibilities.

In addition to existing as a memory of what has been left behind, Canada appears as a destination, a place to go when enough money has been made in the United States, or out of illness or desperation. Though the distance between the immigrants and their homes may have seemed impossibly large to them, movement back and forth across the border was relatively easy and occurred quite often.⁴⁷ In the summer, many families would return to their

⁴⁶Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1987) 30.

⁴⁷Brault, 1: "The migration was massive but of relatively short duration [...] Perhaps as many as half who came to the region during this period returned home."

farms to visit relatives or to work the land. In the winter, many young men made their way to the logging camps of Quebec and northern New England. And even those who spent most of their time at factory work in New England moved about not only from job to job in a given factory, but also from factory to factory, earning themselves the revealing title of *coureur de facteries*.⁴⁸

Soon unfortunately! March will end
 And the spring, it will be nice
 The good sun will melt the snow
 And our hard work will end.
 We will return to the village of Lamèque
 See our families and our loved-ones.
 We will return to our beautiful village
 And together, we will pass the summer (IX-g)

Cultural geographer Edward Relph has noted the importance of place to one's identity: "an authentic sense of place is above all that of being inside and belonging to your place both as an individual and as a member of a community."⁴⁹ The ability to return, or at least communicate, with family and friends in Canada aided in the maintenance of the immigrants sense of their own selves as distinct and meaningful.

One day, one of our brave gang
 Got sick. He had to leave.
 Each of us gave him a message,
 All are sad to see us separated:
 "Pay my respects to my family
 Go see my dear love
 Tell her that after this hard winter
 I hope to see her again (IX-e)

The end of winter marks the return home. Canada is always envisioned in these songs in the height of spring or summer, the months of warmth and life. And though white may be

⁴⁸Frenette, *Brève histoire*, 91.

⁴⁹Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, 65.

the color of Mary, the white of winter is only associated with her if it is a Quebec winter. Extending further the image of the United States as antagonistic to life, the winter there is cold and there is no sense that it possesses the ability to disclose an ultimate meaning to reality. Though the communities formed there are temporary, created out of necessity, they reinforce the reality that these individuals are not home, though they can serve as sources of mediation across the political borders of the countries. A man returning home due to an illness becomes a conduit of information from the immigrants at the periphery, to their families at the center, initiating a reciprocal relationship which negotiates the apparent concreteness of a geographical boundary and reifies communal ties.⁵⁰

As the songs dramatically render the relationship of French-Canadians to their families and homes, Canada stands out as being *more* real than the United States. None of the songs that paint an image of Canada as mother or fertile garden present the United States as a place where a sustainable existence might be possible. Canada is the place where the immigrants hope to return to either rejoin the family of their parents or begin a new one of their own. Or, "[h]uman places become vividly real through dramatization. Identity of place is achieved by dramatizing the aspirations, needs, and functional rhythms of personal and group life."⁵¹

First we must get on board
To get to St. Leonard
That is the place of my birth
There where I always stayed
We will buy a piece of land
That will be perfectly beautiful

⁵⁰Hareven, 115-116 "Geographic distance did not disrupt basic modes of kin cooperation but led, rather, to a revision of priorities and forms of assistance. Under certain conditions, migration strengthened kinship ties and led to new kin functions, which evolved as changing conditions dictated."

⁵¹Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspectives of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977) 178.

When we will be in Canada
Children will call us "Daddy!" (I-e,f)

The image of the female all but vanishes from the text when this song recounts time in the United States. The narrator's wife and children make one appearance in the song, in one of the stanzas that chronicle the family's movement from Canada. The children reappear in the concluding stanza, which is set in Canada. The presence of the wife, however, is marked only by silences; she is known by the existence of her children, and by the land that the narrator wishes to buy.

Children do not figure into the context of the United States in the songs which imagine Canada in terms of Marian symbols. There is no sense at all that any future is possible outside of Canada. As the above song makes explicit, the immigrants see procreative possibilities in Quebec. The structure of the song reveals the contours of a space that is to be meaningfully inhabited. The narrator's life after the United States begins with a return to the place of his birth, to his home. It is from this central point that the potentiality of a meaningful life becomes possible. He will buy a piece of land to work and on this piece of land he will help to raise a family, where his children will confirm his social role as the head of a family. It is this image of the *habitant* that was consonant with the originary, authentic, mode of being French-Canadian that was outlined in the myth of *la survivance*. The *habitant's* way of inhabiting and working gained authenticity by mirroring biblical lives.

To be a good *habitant*
One has to be a good worker (I-d)

Home could be found at the end of a quest, at the end of the months or years of working in the United States. But while away from their center of meaning, the immigrants felt the impingement of their own status as *other* upon their being. If considered from the perspective of a theory of ritual movement, the experience of the United States being dangerous to the life of one who spends too much time away from Canada, can be understood through the concept of liminality.

Travel of any kind is dangerous. Whether it is from one known location to another, or from one social status to a different one, the period of transition that exists betwixt and between these stable positions is chaotic.⁵² Fundamentally, these liminal spaces constitute the utter unmaking of the individual followed by the reconstitution of that person in his or her new identity.⁵³ For a time, the individual has no status – not human, but not non-human. Between neighbor and stranger, between child and adult, human beings have recognized the powerful and dangerous nature of the boundary, and have devised rituals to guide the individual or community through those border zones. The potentiality and creativity of the liminal space is necessary for the existence of human communities, but there is a danger that accompanies this space. It is impossible to remain in a liminal status: such an attempt would lead to destruction rather than creation, as the person or group of people would lose their status, their identity – they would no longer have a viable place in the larger social body, except at its margins.⁵⁴

⁵²Victor W. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (New York: Aldine Publishing Company, 1969) 95.

⁵³Arnold van Gennep *Rites of Passage*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 1960) 24.

⁵⁴Turner, *The Ritual Process*, 95.

I would suggest that this feeling of being caught between orientations to the world can be discerned in the way in which the Songs of Departure portray Canada and the United States. Canada as sacred space, as the meaningful center of French-Canadian life and identity, causes the demarcation of anything outside of that space as profane, as meaningless and perhaps even dangerous.⁵⁵ In the margins of this binary ordering of space are the immigrants, no longer only French-Canadian, but not American either.

Canada offers the possibility of relief from this feeling of alienation and stagnation. In the factory towns of the United States, meaning and direction was imparted in the course of the day through the ringing of the factory bell. "Each of the mills had its own bell tower [...] when the bells rang, it was time to go home. The people flocked out of the mills [...] nine thousand people trying to get out of those gates to get home as quickly as possible."⁵⁶ But in Canada, there would be no factories, no bells. There would only be the productive and good work of the *habitant* and his family, constrained only by the cycles of the seasons.

I don't hear the bells
From all around
I don't hear the bells
Calling us every morning (I-f)

This form of freedom of living one's life in accordance with the cadences of the natural world was advanced by the *curés* throughout Quebec in order to stem the tide of

⁵⁵Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 22.; Wheatley, *The Pivot of the Four Quarters*, 457: "[a place's] consecration signified its 'reality' and, therefore, sanctioned its habitation; but its establishment as an imitation of a celestial archetype required its delimitation and orientation as a sacred territory within the continuum of profane space. This could be effected only in relation to a fixed point, namely a village, city, or territory of the particular group, whence the sacred *habitable* necessarily took its birth (*unsanctified, that is 'unreal' territory being uninhabitable*), and whence it spread outwards in all directions." My italics.

⁵⁶Tommy Smith, a former superintendent at the Amoskeag mill, quoted in: Hareven, *Family Time and Industrial Time*, 13.

individuals and families moving to the cities and large towns of Canada and New England.⁵⁷

Once Canada was recognized by the immigrants as their only true home, they should be motivated to return to their families and their homes.

Oh! Give me back my clothes and my homeland
Keep your gold and let me go (VIII-f)

In the rejection of the valuational modalities of the modern market system, these lines simultaneously reify the tenets of *la survivance*. Quebec and the traditions of the *habitant*, the Catholic French-Canadian, come out ahead of the financial gain promised to be easily obtained in the factory town. The rest of this coda to a song about the dangers an immigrant faced while en route to the United States ends with the narrator lamenting that he has “cried far away from my mother” (VIII-f) and that the distance from her could lead him to die of loneliness. The attitudes of this song then, expressed what clergy throughout Quebec hoped to instill in their parishioners on Sunday mornings. The demonization of the United States in particular, and the material and moral manifestations of modernity in general, was mirrored by the interpretation of Quebec and the French-Canadian people as revelations of God’s divine activity on earth. The authenticity of one modality of being in the world came at the expense of the validity of another.

⁵⁷Lemieux, *Histoire du catholicisme Québécois*, 47.

Chapter Three – That's What I Want: The Cost of Coming to the United States

Don't Go to Canada

But there are other images of Canada to be found in the Songs of Departure. In these songs, the space of Canada does not disclose an ultimate order to reality. Instead, Canada is presented as the most profane space these immigrants can imagine. There is no longing to return home, no nostalgia for distant family, no Mary waiting to hear the prayers of the immigrants, arms wide in the beginning of a welcoming embrace. The United States, these songs declare, is the place to be, and images of Canada as primitive and unpleasant serve to reinforce this interpretation.

Contrary to the clerical language that was prevalent throughout the nineteenth century, these songs present an image of the United States that is not one of "a vast Sodom, where the French-Canadians lose their bodies and their soul."¹ A new French-Canadian orientation to the world is present in these songs, one where the sacred is defined in terms of individual freedom, economic security, material comfort, and technological progress. Though still manifest in the material forms of the world, these materialities are no longer just found in nature. It is the material forms that initiated and that were created in the process of European colonialism – and the intimate human relationships that occurred as a result of this movement around the globe – that point to new loci of the sacred, new modes of being human.²

The matter with this imagination of matter, though, is that the processes and

¹Sylvain, *Histoire du catholicisme Québécois*, 422.

²Long, *Significations*, 3.

relationships created in the colonial period have often been obscured by various discourses of progress and rationality.³ Governed by the language of European mercantilism and Enlightenment philosophies, the material exchanges that were the cause and the goal of the emigration from Quebec to the United States, allowed for the signification of human communities that exist on the margins of this system as empirical others. For Charles H. Long, the empirical other is “a cultural phenomenon in which the extraordinariness and uniqueness of a person or culture is first recognized negatively.”⁴ Instead of being recognized as joint members in the construction of the New World and as long time geographical neighbors, the immigrants from Quebec were identified as empirically other in the United States by their language and religion, modes of expression reified by the proximity of Quebec to New England.⁵

Long has suggested that the rise of the urban center in the modern period as the dominant mode of economic, political, religious, and geographical orientation has been implicitly involved in the creation and reification of the binary opposition between the categories and lived realities of primitive and civilized.⁶ The exploration of the uses and meanings of these terms have often been carried out in terms of the human communities which were encountered during the centuries of the European colonial enterprise. However,

³Long, *Significations*, ??

⁴Long, *Significations*, 90.

⁵See Calvin E. Amaron, *Your Heritage, or New England Threatened* (Springfield, MA: French Protestant College, 1891) for an extensive example of this type of signification, from an American Protestant theological perspective.

⁶See Long, *Significations*, Chapter 5 “Human Centers: An Essay on Method in the History of Religions” and Chapter 6 “Primitive/Civilized: The Locus of a Problem.”

an application of Long's understanding of the urban center and the dynamics of the primitive/civilized category to the context of nineteenth century French-Canadian immigration does have its benefits. The introduction of Horace Miner's 1939 study of a French-Canadian parish includes the following discussion:

Viewed in one light, the isolated peasant group is comparable with American Indian or native African societies. Even the political behavior of the people of St. Denis [...] suggests the dual divisions of some simpler folk. But to look at these *habitants* as another Melanesian or American Indian society would be, of course, to ignore the fact that they form part of the modern urbanized world [...] make some use of literacy, while the aborigine does not [...and...] peasant and city man constitute one single society that is organized in terms of status. Each is aware of the other.⁷

French-Canadians then, were understood to inhabit a unique place in relation to other human communities in the world. On the one hand "like other primitive or folk societies they have a definiteness of outline and a relative simplicity which facilitates the work of the reporter or student [...while...] on the other hand, being part of a literate nationality, these societies have each a recorded past."⁸ For the student of social change, French-Canadians provided the ideal source of data: they were caught, inextricably, between being a modern society while still possessing many vestiges of a primitive stage of being. They were, for the time being at least, frozen in the process of *becoming* modern.

Questions can be raised concerning the above distinction between the primitive and the civilized. Though not answered directly in this chapter, these questions constantly inform the shape of the discussion and also inform the way in which the songs will be interpreted.

⁷Miner, xiv-xv. This introduction is written by Robert Redfield.

⁸Miner, xvi.

How valid is literacy as a measure of civilization? Does it not seem likely that American Indians and Melanesians are *very* aware of their status in relation to the urban centers of the West? Are they not too members of the modern urbanized world, as the Ghost Dance and cargo cults testify?⁹ Must they not “of necessity admit of the impingement of the ‘other’ roving cultures upon them as a dimension of their identity[?]”¹⁰ With these categories suspended in a hermeneutics of suspicion, the gap between the French-Canadian status as modern, as ‘between’, or as primitive becomes blurred, just as the categories themselves do, calling into question their validity as useful methodological tools for the interpretation of human communities.

Participating in an agricultural mode of modernity, French-Canadian *habitants* were in continual, if not always frequent, contact with the urban centers of Quebec and New England.¹¹ They did not live in isolation from the city, but as the cities in the region grew in size and influence across all spheres of life, those French-Canadians who continued to farm found themselves tied tighter to the metropolitan centers. In the case of French-Canadians and the mill towns of New England, there are concrete examples of the centrifugal dispersion of the influence across the landscape and the resulting centripetal pull of bodies and materials into the center.

⁹ For contemporary studies on the Ghost Dance and the cargo cult phenomena, see: Raymond J. De Mallie, “The Lakota Ghost Dance: An Ethnohistorical Account,” Pp. 329-342 in *Religion and Culture in America*, edited by David G. Hackett (New York: Routledge, 1995).; Kenelm Burridge, *Mambu, A Melanesian Millennium* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970).

¹⁰ Long “A Postcolonial...”, 89.

¹¹ Roby, “The Economic...” 8. Here Roby warns that “It is customary, in certain circles, to represent the rural population of the nineteenth, and even the beginning of the twentieth centuries, as a closed world, turned in on itself and self-sufficient.”

In search of cheap and reliable labor to work the textile mills and factories of New England, representatives were sent to the towns and farms of Quebec. French-Canadians were considered the ideal labor force by many of the mills in New England. They were categorized by the management of many mills as “‘docile’, ‘industrious’, and ‘stable’” people who had large families and were willing to let their children work at young ages and did not participate in strikes.¹² Not only were mill agents sent to the Quebec countryside, some mills such as the Amoskeag, in Manchester, New Hampshire, took out advertisements in Quebec newspapers which contained photographs of the mill yard and elaborate descriptions of working conditions, extolling the benefits and opportunities awaiting those who came to work in the United States.¹³ As a result, French-Canadians quickly became one of the largest minority groups in New England, and often made up a critical majority of the labor force of mills throughout the region.¹⁴ The influential sway of the industrial centers then, pulled many French-Canadians into their orbits. Though they may have remained “so ethnic that you needed an interpreter to enter” the parts of towns known as *petits canadas*, where French-Canadians lived, several of the Songs of Departure suggest that immigrants from French Canada were increasingly influenced by a distinctly American vision of place.

The Songs of Departure which feature negative images of Canada and French-

¹²Hareven, 20.

¹³Hareven, 17.

¹⁴Frenette, *Brève histoire*, 84. He notes that by 1900, French-Canadians accounted for 10 percent of the population of New England; Hareven, 20. Concerning the majority status of French-Canadians in the mills, she comments that this “by no means gave the French Canadians a position of power, though they did fill a significant portion of the skilled and semiskilled jobs. The ranks of overseer and second hand were confined, by and large, to native-born Americans, English, Scottish, and second-generation Irish.”

Canadians point to attempts to overcome this marginal status by embracing the industrial mercantilist modes of authenticity spreading through the United States and Canada, while at the same time they pose critiques of *la survivance*'s image of a Marian and Edenic Quebec.

Don't go to Canada
Because there's poverty up there.
The way of Canada
Is to eat pea soup
And the Canadian way
Is to eat buckwheat.

And the people from the small village,
They live only on grass,
You see the creatures
Caged inside the fence
Picking the cotton shrub
To make breakfast. (XII-a, c)

Eating grass, living in small villages, fishing for catfish and sturgeon to make stews, French-Canadians in these songs are delusional when "they say it's good" (XII-b). For those immigrants who have accepted the valuational structures of the United States, the people of Quebec are sad, directionless primitives, flea-ridden and drunk. Working in the United States has allowed them to see their friends and family in Quebec as if the meaning of their lives was transparent. The immigrants in these songs look back on Quebec from the vantage of the United States and discover that the industrial centers, the cities and towns, contain the power to disclose more authentic ways of being human in a more authentic world than the Catholic Church in Quebec is able to do.

When May comes around
There comes the fleas
You see the ladies
At night by the candle light
Pushing in all directions

Looking tormented

And among our young boys
 Some are not so good.
 You see them at the *veillée*
 Getting together at night
 Around a flask
 Sucking the tip. (XII-d, e)

In the songs of the previous chapter, the image of a longed-after return to Canada was situated in the spring or the summer. It was these warm and fertile periods of time that offered the promise of a viable life for the immigrants. But in the above song, the Canadian spring has been transformed, and brings only the promise of fleas, of torment. Further, the social foundations of French-Canadian life are called into question. The *veillées* were social gatherings where stories were told, games were played, songs were sung, dances were danced, and the whole of the community was able to interact.¹⁵ It was at these gatherings that boys and girls of or nearing marrying age were given the opportunity to meet. They were, in essence, a space for the maintenance of family and local knowledge – a place where people could let the younger members of the community know who they were and where they had come from – and also a time that ensured the continued vitality of the community through the courtship rituals of dancing and an assortment of divination practices.¹⁶ In the towns of New England, the *veillée* was a constant source of cultural renewal, and they continued to play a central role in the lives of the immigrants there long after they had fallen out of fashion in

¹⁵Brault, 34.

¹⁶Brault, 34-35. Some of these divination practices performed by young women described by Brault include the pulling of petals from a daisy, while listing off possible lifestyle options such as “*religieuse, – vieille fille, – mariée.*” Brault writes that there were also methods to divine the initials of one's future husband, or tell the future in the peeled skin of an apple, or in a reflection on a moonlit pond.

Quebec and had become institutionalized as a spectator performance.¹⁷

But in “Don’t go to Canada”, the *veillée* becomes the focus of a critique of French-Canadian society. They are functions where the young men stand around a drink. This description is used to define the statement that the some of the boys in Canada are not so good. The boys are doing nothing – it seems as though they are only wasting time. Unproductive, they are portrayed in relation to the women of the preceding stanza who are tormented at night. In this case, the boys are not suffering, but they are engaged in nothing much at all in the evening, when they could be – the implication seems to be – working or bettering themselves or their families’ life. The meaning of the *veillée* in this song has become transparent: it has been stripped of its cultural importance and becomes another example of the confined and backward nature of French Canada in relation to the intense potentiality of the United States.

The work and life of the *habitant* is not the work of Adam, is not consonant with the shepherds who were the first to know of the birth of Jesus. In fact, the French-Canadians appear to be living as little more than animals in this song. “You see the creatures” (XII-c) living off of grass. They are unaware that they are fenced-in sheep or cows, content to graze on whatever might be in front of them. Though they do not know it at the moment, the people of Quebec are really unhappy living the traditional life of the *habitant*. Like caged animals – or like a prisoner in cage that sometimes marked the crossroads of Medieval Europe

¹⁷Barbara Leblanc and Laura Sadowsky, “La survivance par la chanson et la danse: Chéticamp, Nouvelle-Écosse et Waltham, Massachusetts.” Pp. 105-150 in *Vie Française: Le patrimoine folklorique des Franco-Américains*, edited by Claire Quintal (Quebec: Le Conseil de la vie française en Amérique, 1986).

– French-Canadians are here transmuted into a symbol used to mark the progress of civilization. The narrator uses Canada as a measurement of how far the immigrants to the United States have come from being rural farmers at the margins of city life, to being full members of the industrial revolution. The immigrants have attained a place in the sun, and from their new position, they see their former lives in Quebec as being primitive. This song suggests that knowing the true order of the world comes with emigration to the United States and the acceptance of its valuational structures of reality.

It is not just the life of the *habitant* that is critiqued by these songs. In a song titled “The Sergeant Killed In Battle,” the validity of the image of the father as head of the family is called into question. The narrator is a young man who wishes to marry, but the girl who has attracted his attention does not seem to live up to the standards of his father. The father takes up a broomstick and beats the boy, almost killing him. The act of violence becomes the occasion for the boy’s immigration to the United States, where he promptly joins the army to fight against the British.

The neighbor’s daughter,
Had a ‘compadre’ come see her
She was of his liking
So he asked her
When she wished to marry.
He spoke of this to her father
He took hold of the broomstick
He almost killed him.

“My father, if you beat me,
Yes, I will go
On board as a Bostonian
To fight against the English.” (XIV-a,b)

In his rejection of the social ordering and authority of the French-Canadian family, the boy's actions also suggest a critique of entire program of *la survivance*. The father, whose authority it must be remembered was understood as coming directly from God, exercises his right to have control over the marriage process of his child. The expression of this power takes the form of violence, at a level that is nearly deadly. His actions and the boy's response suggest a mode of being that can become antithetical to the possibility of life. In his decision to leave Canada, the boy's actions point to a search for liberty from the paternal structures of the Catholic tradition of French Canada. He embraces the new definitions of human freedom promoted in the American War of Independence and the French Revolution.¹⁸ He wished to have command over his own personal life, without recourse to the traditions of French Canada and the Catholic Church. Not permitted to marry whom he wants, he abandons Canada altogether to seek out a new existence in a different country, one that promises freedom from all forms of oppression for all of humanity. Instead of the God of *la survivance*, the boy sees unlimited possibilities in the God of the United States, the God under which all men were created equal.

The Lost Canadian

Liberty, according to Guildo Rousseau, was one of the first ideas associated with the United States to be written about in Quebec.¹⁹ Newspapers across the province made note

¹⁸Robert N. Bellah, "Civil Religion in America." Pp. 1-21 in *Daedalus: Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 96, no. 1(Winter, 1967). 9-10.

¹⁹Guildo Rousseau, *L'image des États-Unis dans la littérature Québécoise* (Sherbrooke: Editions Naaman, 1981) 30.

of this abstract notion that was spreading through the Thirteen Colonies in the 1770's. Liberty for all men, regardless of language, religion, and race. A liberty that was a divine right of all human beings. A liberty that was being held in check by a government an ocean away. The yoke of British oppression was to be cast off by her richest holdings in North America. Could not the same be done by the French-Canadians of Quebec?

The first concrete French-Canadian experience of the United States to be recorded in print, according to Guildo Rousseau, was of an American soldier.²⁰ This soldier and his compatriots were intimately linked with the idea of liberty. He was encountered by rural French-Canadians living along the Canadian border as he marched north to liberate Montreal and Quebec City from British authority. Sometimes this American was greeted as a savior and was welcomed into homes and given support in his war against the English. He would have played with the children, perhaps have smiled at an farmer's unwed daughter. He probably did not speak nor understand French, but his demeanor and his purpose made that unnecessary.

Bishop Briand had issued a decree that no French-Canadian should give aid to the invading armies from the south. He did this to show his support for the new British regime in the hopes that it would ensure the survival of the Catholic church and the French language in a country governed by Protestant anglophones.²¹ Most French-Canadians obliged their bishop and remained decidedly neutral. When the American rebels were driven back from the walls of Quebec City, those French-Canadians who had aided them were excommunicated or

²⁰Rousseau, . 53-58.

²¹Choquette, " French Catholicism..." 237.

forced to leave Canada.²² They had chosen to ally themselves to the wrong side and as traitors they left their families and homes to live in exile in the newly liberated United States of America.

The image of the American soldier would continue to be a potent symbol in the French-Canadian imagination of the United States. Returning to the song, "The Sergeant Killed in Battle", the soldier appears initially as a critique of the nineteenth century way of being French-Canadian, but as the song progresses, both the soldier and French-Canada are bracketed in a comparative suspension that reveals their mythic nature and hints at the possibility of a new way of being in the world. Though it is impossible to be certain, the conflict mentioned in the song is probably either that of the American Revolution or the War of 1812.

"My father, if you beat me,
Yes, I will go
On board as a Bostonian
To fight against the English."
To Boston he went:
"How many men fired away?"
Do you want to enlist me
As a soldier of war?

"Yes, we'll sign you up
If you want to be a good boy.
We will bring you
To the head of the army."
The saber on his side
And the pistol in hand,
François walked in front
Like a brave sergeant. (XIV- b,c)

²²Choquette, "French Catholicism..." 237.

The United States first appears in this song, then, as a position of critique against the structures of French-Canadian Catholicism, especially the emphasis placed on the role of the father. The United States is everything that Quebec is not, and the American soldier is presented as the pinnacle of this opposition, the embodiment of freedom and power as against the patriarchal traditions of the Catholic church. François chooses to become a soldier in the American army, leaving behind Canada, the church, and his family in search of a new identity and a new home in the United States. The song's initial idealization of the United States reflects back upon Quebec, imagining it as a stifling and painful place. François cannot marry the girl he wishes to, cannot have the life he desires for himself, cannot be free of the Church structures. The song suggests that in Quebec, François would have to obey his father, his future determined by the church with little room for his own desires. Confronted with Enlightenment ideas of the human being and the new definition of freedom written into the core of the American Revolution, suddenly the rituals and traditions of the Catholic church appeared backwards, perhaps even primitive.²³ The song places the boy in the midst of a sacrificial ritual outlined by several academics as central to the meaning of the United States and the process of its national self-understanding.²⁴

Given a gun and a sword, François is put in the front of a rank of soldiers, already a sergeant. In exchange for his language – he speaks the only English to be found in the song

²³Catherine L. Albanese, *America: Religions and Religion* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1992) 438-446. Albanese explores the American Revolution as the defining religious experience of the American identity, including the deification of leaders such as George Washington, the creation of the Great Seal, and the Declaration of Independence as a religious text. The Revolution, here, is the creation myth of the United States and the American people.

²⁴Albanese, 438-446, Bellah, 7.

–, his country, and his family, he is made an American soldier, the very image according to Rousseau, that was the manifestation of freedom and power. François' initial experience as a soldier in the American army appears to confirm the image of the United States present in the opening stanzas of the song, thereby reifying an interpretation of Quebec as hostile and unhealthy. His distinct background as a French Canadian is initially put to the side as he takes his place in the front of the army. He appears to have succeeded in making himself in the image of the liberated human at the core of the American Revolution.

Though François must engage in an act of warfare in order to be allowed access to the potentialities present in the United States, this physical conflict is presented as necessary, whereas the potential violence between father and son in Quebec is envisioned as irrational and oppressive. But the realities of the violence of war, the sacrifice necessary to be part of the American myth of exceptionalism, invade the song in the next stanza, as standing at the head of the army, François is wounded by the explosion of a grenade:

On the first strike
His jaw broke.
François fell down
People yelled 'Hurray'
But he got back up:
We cannot stop
For a wounded sergeant. (XIV-d)

He continues on in the battle, but his wound garners no sympathy. It is expected that soldiers in the front line will be injured, and his status as sergeant does nothing to differentiate him from anyone else in the army. The fact that it is his jaw that is broken is significant, as it was the French language and the French accent that predominately served to identify French-Canadian immigrants as other in the United States. The result of him joining the

American army and turning his back on Canada, the song suggests, is that he will not be able to completely go back to Canada and assume the life he once had. He has been literally marked by his experiences in the United States which will cause him to never be completely at home in Canada again.

François' injury points to the failure of the dream of the United States as a country of possibilities, and reinforces the image of it as dangerous to life itself. He had done all that was asked of him in order to be a "good boy", yet after the battle he does not stay in the United States. But François does not find comfort when he returns to Canada after the battle. Realizing that the United States was not the land of unlimited promise that he had once thought it was, he tells his father about how he was wounded in battle, and the result is:

François complained
To his dear and good father
That he was wounded in battle
by a grenade strike
"Didn't I tell you
That you would perish
By the gun.
Now there you are,
Pick yourself up as you can. (XIV-e)

Receiving no sympathy from his father, he is left to his own accord. He finds comfort in neither the United States or Canada, and the song ends with him in a space of exile, part of both countries yet belonging to neither one. The gun that François had taken up as a symbol of potentiality and the beginning of a new identity returns here as a warning of the dangers of modernity and the United States. The father's warning is a questioning of what the freedom sought by François actually was. Reflecting back on the violent beating that initiated François' departure for Boston, the violence of battle is now cast in the light of

irrationality. Wounded in battle, François was no different than any other soldier. Instead of gaining a new sense of self, he had been stripped of all personal identity, becoming just another casualty.

The resultant images of Canada and the United States in this song are images of hostility and exile. Though both countries are open to the possibility of sustaining a viable existence, this possibility is not accessible for the immigrant. The injury he sustains in the United States makes him leave the country, but François cannot go back to the life he once had after being wounded. It is interesting to note that the title of the song, as it is recorded in Deschênes' essay, is "The Sergeant Killed in Battle" and yet François does not suffer a physical death in the song. Rather, his death is a symbolic one. He has passed on to a place impossible for him to come back from. He cannot be at home with his family, and for whatever reason, the United States is not offered as potential space for a new home. Jaw shattered, he has become an outcast, and the only hope for moving out of this marginal status is that he pick himself up as he can. He is left to his own efforts, and so in a fashion he has actually achieved the independence that he had desired at the beginning of the song. He must completely make himself again out of the experiences and physical damage he suffered in the United States in order to be recognized again as a human being.

Streets of Gold and Electric Light

The United States was not a place of permanent exile in most of the songs, however. The advice about the United States is that the prospective immigrant should, "Turn around, don't go there," (I-b). Many of the songs open with the words "When I left Canada" or a

similar phrase, signaling the appearance of an authoritative narrator who has been to the United States and is now imparting important knowledge to others. This phrasing also displaces the songs in time, recalling atemporal origins of the current situation that the immigrants find themselves in while also serving as a reminder that there was something before the United States, and therefore something to look forward to *after* the States. It also suggests the recognition of a sign of authority and valuation that is not contained by the meanings of the United States, something that is other and prior to the industrial centers and the misery of the mill towns. For the French-Canadian who has decided to move to New England, the initial attitude is one of joy and hope:

When I left Canada
To go to the States
My heart was joyful
I was told that we wouldn't work hard
In the mills, in the fact'ries. (II-a)

The period of greatest immigration from Quebec to New England corresponds to the 'rising' of the United States. Expanding westward, Americans were engaged in a process of consolidating and propagating a national identity that found them at the center of history, as the people who had been chosen by God to enact his will on earth.²⁵ Americans were the citizens of a City Upon a Hill, and their actions were being watched by the entire world, setting the standards of being that were to be followed by all countries.²⁶ What exactly an American was, though, was open to debate. This mythic conception of the United States and

²⁵Bellah, 7.

²⁶John Winthrop, "A Modell of Christian Charity," Pp. 138-146 in *The Puritan Tradition in America, 1620-1730*, edited by Alden T. Vaughan (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1972) 146.

its history is similar to other societal myths, it is different in that it lacks an internal, ethnic cohesion: it excludes more than it includes. The general image of an American was based on a white, protestant, male image of humanity, but this image reflected only a minority of the lived realities of the peoples of the United States.²⁷

Though the writers of the Declaration of Independence recognized equality for all people as a divine right of humanity, and the Statue of Liberty waited with open arms to welcome the poor and the oppressed of the world, there exist alternate understandings and experiences of the United States underneath this language of inclusion and freedom. These other meanings have been voiced from within the “slash” and their obfuscation has been part of what Long has termed the *dynamics of concealment*, “the history of significations reflected in the delayed and distorted appearance of the colonized, signified, the ‘others’ in our epistemology.”²⁸ The “slash” is the one between ‘primitive’/‘civilized’, center/periphery, sacred/profane, and this space suggests the valuational nature of these terms, as well as alternative meanings to be found in their deployment and the experience of them.

The amount of first-hand accounts and scholarly work that testify to the exclusionary nature of the American myth of exceptionalism is too vast to recount here.²⁹ Despite the

²⁷Long, *Significations*, Chapter 9: Interpretations of Black Religion in America, 145-170.

²⁸Quoted in David Carrasco, “The Open City as the Stuff of Creation in *Texaco*.” Pp. 17-31, in *Journal for the Study of Religion*, 16, no. 2 (2003) 23.

²⁹Mary P. Ryan, “A Woman’s Awakening,” Pp. 147-166 in *Religion and American Culture* edited by David G. Hackett (New York: Routledge, 1995).; Vincent Harding, *There is a River* (New York: Vintage, 1983).; Henry Irving Tragle, *The Southampton Slave Revolt of 1831* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1971).; James Cone, *Martin and Malcolm in America* (New York: Orbis, 1992).; Jonathan D. Sarna, “Jewish-Christian Hostility in the United States: Perceptions from a Jewish Point of View.” Pp. 5-22 in *Uncivil Religion: Interreligious Hostilities in America.*, edited by Robert N. Bellah and Frederick E. Greenspan. (New York: Crossroads, 1987).

admonishments of the clergy, and warnings from French-Canadians who had already gone to the United States and were on their way back home, an estimated 850,000 people left Quebec for New England after 1850.³⁰ They expected to find work in the factories that was easy and paid well, and to be back in Canada in after earning a small fortune.

When I go back to Canada
I'll buy me a new Impala
A nice trailer, I swear
Three or four rooms of furniture.
I had a few *piasses* in my pocket
But in my head, I had rocks. (VII)

As this song attests, what the immigrants found was quite different than the image they had in mind. It is naivete or foolishness that has led this narrator to the United States. By working in the States, the narrator has concrete images of the better life he or she will have once back in Canada. The time in the States was to be transformative, allowing for a mode of existence that visually displayed the wealth possible in the United States, potentially creating something in between the life of the *habitant* and the American. But as the last line makes clear, the money and values of the mill towns were as “rocks” to the life the narrator could have had if he or she had never left Canada in the first place. The dream of a better life in the United States and the reality of the immigrant experience points to a story of the United States that is founded in the “slash.”

We've been seven years and a few months
In the States.
I didn't gather a fortune
Though I worked very hard
In the even after dusk

³⁰Yolande Lavoie, *L'Émigration des Québécois aux États-Unis de 1840 à 1930* (Quebec City: Éditeur officiel Québec, 1979) 45.

In the morning before dawn (I-d)

The imagined easy life is unattainable. The immigrants work all day, providing the energy and skill necessary to produce the goods that are the sole purpose of the mill. The time that was once measured for the French-Canadians in terms of a ritual and agricultural calendar has been subsumed under the terms of production and profit. Tied to the economic influence of the urban center, the immigrant soon realizes that he or she has entered an unbalanced relationship, the bonds of which grow ever tighter. There is little reciprocity – the giving of one's life earns barely enough money to buy a piece of meat for Sunday dinner. Whole families must enter the factory in order to earn enough money to support them. As a result, the family structure had to be altered. The father alone cannot provide for his family as he once could on his farm, and this tension points to the totality of the new way of life demanded by the industrial city.

Ah, the wife wants to argue:
Go sit down, don't bother me
You know well I wasn't paid (X-g)

Money becomes the central hub of the family, the very reason for its being in New England. Work must be done so that the immigrant family can earn enough money to buy lodging, clothing, and food, so that they might continue to work..³¹ From the understanding of work outlined by *la survivance*, French-Canadians in the United States worked hard, and from this work they did come to a new understanding of themselves and their world. In the Songs of Departure, this sense of the world of the factory is a critical one.

The first day of work

³¹Hareven, 69.

I tell you I was tired
 But when I woke up in the morning
 I couldn't eat,
 When I thought that in a half hour
 We would have to return to the mill. (II-b)

As with "The Sergeant Killed in Battle", the freedom promised in the founding documents of the United States and offered by the mill agents and advertisements, proves to be elusive. Instead, the factory work is physically debilitating, and psychologically oppressive. The narrator of the above song is not able to eat when he thinks about the work he is going to have to start soon. The narrator's life and meaning has become tied to the work in the factory. And this is only after one day! After months or years of work, the very bodies of the immigrants became testaments to the painful birth of industrial North America:

In the factories,
 I assure you its tough.
 They are closed in there
 For the whole day.
 When they come out at night,
 Oh! how sad it is to see them.
 Their faces are pale,
 It is hard for them to walk.(XI-b)

It must be remembered here that the Songs of Departure which feature images of Canada as home, that home is always pictured in terms of nature, community, fertility: spring and summer. This above image of factory life places it outside the realm of all these things, and reflects an initial confrontation with the reality of America as a different mode of being. The workers are inside all day long, and their faces are pale from being in the dark. The work that they must perform, over and over each day, is crippling. Unlike the image of work in Canada, the factory work is not conducive to the possibility of a viable life, and this is why

the above song opens with the following warning:

Don't do like the people
That go to the States,
Swimming in misery
And in shame.
At the sound of the bell,
Who knows when they'll get out!
Look at those poor people
How they are over there! (XI-a)

The bell becomes the central ordering principle of time for the inhabitants of the factory towns. In several other ways, the factory and its surrounding town constituted a radically different mode of being from Quebec, where it was the church and its steeple bell that ordered time as well as space. The factory buildings were specifically designed to inspire obedience and awe in the workers, reflecting a structure that could be considered somewhere between a church and a prison, with enormous bell towers, gates, and a large open yard.³² And like the churches of Quebec, the factories were the centers of towns. If not located in the exact geographical center of a town, they were still the economic, social, and political center, their organization reflecting the social planning of developers who were usually located in the larger urban centers of New England, such as Boston, Massachusetts or Hartford, Connecticut.³³ To this extent, they were extensions of the cities, envoys of industrialization and the urbanization of space, they were the contact zones of a utopian vision of an American time and space, and the multiplicity of other modes of being that constituted nineteenth century North America.

³²Hareven, 33.

³³Hareven, 10.

Further, the introduction of these factories into towns throughout New England was “in every place a harbinger of moral and intellectual improvement to the inhabitants of the vicinage, and the numerous operatives from remote and secluded parts of the country.”³⁴ This mission statement expresses the design of the factories that extends far beyond mere manufacturing. The very presence of the factories were to bring about a total environmental and social change among communities. As a central factor in this project, a conscious paternal relationship between the mill operators and the immigrant workers was designed to enforce a reciprocal, but unequal, network of material relationships. This paternalist structure of relationships placed the factory agent in the role of a father to the immigrants and their families, a position that the French-Canadians were particularly acquainted with in the context of their parish *curés*. This relationship sought to close the gap between family and factory time among the workers. Health care, housing, religion, food, and other aspects of daily life were carefully organized and ordered by the factory operative.³⁵ It was mandatory in most factories, such as the Amoskeag, that workers attend “some place of public worship on the Sabbath, when practicable.”³⁶

It is not just the Americans and their factories that are the cause of worry in the Songs of Departure.

The journey itself was fraught with dangers:
One has to get on a sea ship
To brave the greatest dangers

³⁴Hareven, 53.

³⁵Hareven, 54-55.

³⁶Regulations of Boarding Houses, Lawrence Manufacturing Company, Lowell, Mass., circa 1832-3. Lowell Historical Society Collection. Quoted in Hareven, 55.

The wonder of the water and the glamour of the sea
Are always ready to throw you overboard (VIII-c)

A far cry from the loving arms of Canada, the space of the United States could cause the immigrant to lose his or her way, or even die. Nature in the United States was actively violent – “always ready to throw you overboard” (VIII-c). In its very attractiveness to the immigrant, nature was not to be trusted. But at the same time, there is something recognizably familiar about the United States, though this note of similarity is not found within the factory towns, but in a space typically silenced – it is a recognition that points to an understanding of America’s America, “the multiple narratives of making and knowing the diverse human and cultural spaces of the Americas.”³⁷

We have to make war against these poor savages
Who like us know danger.
The shoot arrows at the head
Like us they know danger. (VIII-d)

The immigrants of this song are not employed directly in the mill towns of New England, but appear to be engaged in the defense of the very land and structures necessary for their existence. In traveling to the United States, the immigrants are forced into relationships with native populations. Out of these relationships – based on the reciprocal exchange of violence designed to deploy and maintain the validity of one valuational structure over an other – the immigrants are forced to confront the impingement of a recognition that they have more in common with the people they have been sent out to kill than with the people who employ them. Both the immigrants and the natives have come under the sway of the industry and urban consolidation, and as a result both have found themselves strangers

³⁷Carrasco, “The open city...” 18.

in their own homes, signified as other.

The native communities might be “poor savages”, but the French-Canadians – indeed all Catholic immigrants to the United States – were often readily confronted with anti-Catholic language, such as that voiced by Samuel Morse, a candidate of the American Party (better known as the Know-Nothing Party) in 1870: “Can one throw mud into pure water and not disturb its cleanliness?”³⁸ Again, it is imagery from the natural world that is utilized to suggest that the United States is a hostile place for the immigrants from French Canada. Except this time, the boundaries of the sacred and the profane have been inverted: America is a pristine pool of water, threatened by Catholic immigrants, who could only taint the water. A recognition that it was these very same immigrants that were responsible for building industrial New England is obscured by this line of discourse – it restricts the possibility of the impingement of the multiple narratives of America on the Americans.

³⁸Quoted in Fernandez-Armesto, 408.

Chapter Four – You Can't Go Back All the Way: At Home in New England

Steeple and Smokestacks

So what are the options for making a viable existence possible in Canada or the United States in the Songs of Departure? Of the songs examined so far, the images of both countries tend to enforce notions of strangerhood. They suggest that the understandings of North America in terms of *la survivance* or American exceptionalism are exclusionary hermeneutics, that definitions of humanity and religion that are contained by the categories of language and geography are limited and limiting. While not in Canada, the immigrants feel as though they are in exile. This exile is in a land that is imagined as holding little hope for a meaningful future, and that is presently a threat to the very well-being of the immigrants. But going home does not appear as an easy solution. Though most of the songs are imbued with the hope of returning to Canada, none of the narrators ever makes the journey. They dream of it, they pray for it, but the only way back is through sickness or death. Their sole comfort in New England is the Virgin Mary.

But the movement from Quebec to New England was not a completely disjunctive experience for the immigrants. Even under the strictures of factory agent paternalism, French-Canadians were not passively subsumed under the industrial modes of humanity that were defined in terms of work ethics and production and profit. As part of this paternal system, all workers were encouraged to attend a religious service on the Sabbath, and so French-Canadians were actively able to maintain the parish as a central pivot of their religious and social lives, a reality which went against the dominant line of thought in Quebec, which held that the immigrant had chosen to abandon his or her country as well as the Catholic

faith.¹ Though the clergy of Quebec were at first reluctant to provide French-Canadians in New England with francophone priests because of this belief, by the 1840s the immigrants were petitioning to erect their own churches as institutions separate from those under Irish Catholic operation.² After several conflicts with the Irish clergy in New England, and the French-Canadians in Quebec, the immigrants succeeded in creating a long string of parishes, so that by 1900 there were over 100 in New England.³

These parishes, along with the constant stream of immigrants coming to the United States, allowed for the constant reification of community ties between the immigrants and their families in Quebec. Francophone clergy throughout the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries were convinced that when the immigrants and their descendants “ceased to take part in the Franco-American parish, they ceased to be Franco-American.”⁴ These alternate centers of meaning, as against the mills and urban centers of New England, allowed for the immigrants to maintain a sense of themselves that was not contained by the meanings of workers propagated by the factory agents. They became, in a sense, a manifestation of a mode of ultimate reality that disclosed a more potent valuational structure than those expressed in industrial dreams of a better life.

I will not be putting on my shawl in those sad mills.
I am going back to Canada where life is good

I will work in the fresh air, in the morning sun

¹Wade, 169-170.

²Wade, 166.

³Wade, 188.

⁴Benoit, 94.

At night we sleep good, we rest until morning (VI)

This mythic construction of a paradisiacal Canada provided a dimension to reality that existed beyond the temporal and spatial confines of the New England mills that becomes the source of a definition of freedom that has its foundation in *la survivance*. It is a freedom to have control over one's own body, the freedom to say 'no.' So though the experience of the United States serves to reify an image of Canada as a place of fresh air and morning sun, it also leaves little room for the creative processes that could make a home possible in the United States. The factories might be imagined as inhospitable, and they influence nearly every aspect of the daily life of its workers, but as the above song points out, there are alternate loci of meaning available to the immigrants from French Canada. But as Father Thomas Landry writes, "Anytime one goes into one of the Franco-American centers of New England, try to find where the factories are and you shall discover immediately where the parish was."⁵ Alternate pivots of meaning were not necessarily located far away from the immigrants in New England. The United States could offer the possibility of being a home for French-Canadians.

A New Language

I have attempted to show that most of these songs recognize the existence and influence of these 'wobbling pivots.' But these other meanings are always considered at a distance. They are potent sources of French-Canadian identity for these immigrants, but they

⁵Thomas Landry, "The French Migration from Quebec to New England," Pp. 81-83 in *The French in New England, Acadia, and Quebec*, (Quebec: The New England-Atlantic Provinces-Quebec Center, 1973) 83.

exist on the other side of a boundary that is difficult to mediate. From these songs, the sense of communication is mostly one way. Information is passing from New England to Canada, and there is little sense that news is passing back from Canada to the immigrants. This latter movement comes in the form of other immigrants moving to New England. This stylistic of the Songs of Departure adds to the implicit sense of exile that is addressed directly in only a few of the songs.

When in the 1870's efforts were made to repatriate these immigrants to Quebec or the Canadian west there was strong resistance among the new Franco-American elite, who wished to establish their own stable population in New England.⁶ And though many French-Canadians did move to various part of Canada, many more remained in New England. This suggests that despite what the bulk of the Songs of Departure express, the United States was a place that could be more than a land of exile. It could be a real home for the immigrants from Canada, and as such it provided a space for the creative improvisations of the experience of America's America. This image of America is concerned with the fluidity of the contact zone and the resulting creolization of bodies, language, geography, and religion that takes place there. In exploring this idea, I wish to focus on one song, entitled "The Trip to Boston." I will include here both the original rendering of the song as well as an English translation, as it is the very shape and style of the song that is more important than the lyrical content at this stage.

⁶Frenette, *Brève histoire*, 88.

*I went yesterday all aboard les États
With my port'-manteau and my umbrella.
Grimp' in the gros chars, on the seat sans
retard.
I said "Youp" say's I, pis j'm'embarqu' su'
l' backside.*

*À travers le window, j'ai voulu embrasser
My cavalier but the train run away.
The train go so fast que very plus loin;
J'embrass' un' gross' vach' qui r'gardait
passer l' train.*

*The conductor came and he said: "Your
ticket!"
I said: "Her' it is. You gros big feluette!"
He giv's me un clin d'oeil and I said: "You
bétail!
J'suis pas un' fill' d'mêm' and gav' him a
black eye!"*

*Someone lâche un cri: "Next place is Boston!"
I grab my snatchell pis get up, pis oh! donc.
With my parapluie right under my bras,
I hit a paurve homme on the et caetera.*

*Quand on va aux États, c'est pour avoir du
fun.
Le diable est aux vaches en son-of-a-gun.
Quand ils vont aux États, all the good
Canayens,
Il(s) se s'couent l'proissien with no mor' de
r'quuien b'in.*

*I went yesterday, all aboard the States
Hanging on to my coat and my umbrella
Get in the big wagon, on the seat promptly.
I said "Youp" say's I, and I get on the
backside.*

*From the window, I wanted to kiss
My man but the train run away.
The train go so fast that very much further;
I kiss a big cow that was watching the train go
by.*

*The conductor came and he said: "Your
ticket!"
I said: "Her' it is. You big fat sissy!"
He giv's me a wink and I said: "You, beast!
I'm not that kind of girl and gav' him a black
eye!"*

*Someone yells: "Next place is Boston!"
I grab my satchel and get up, and oh!
With my umbrella right under my arm,
I hit a poor man on the et cetera.*

*When we go to the States, it's to have fun.
The devil really gets in the herd
When they go to the States, all the good
Canayens (Canadians)
Hold nothing back, shaking their asses.*

What is most immediate in this song is its use of language. Neither French nor English is given priority here, both are equally and inseparably involved in the creation of something absolutely new. And yet in this newness, there is the recognition of prior modes of being and expression. The song is composed to the tune of song popular in the American Mid-West

called "Sweet Betsy from Pike," which in turn is in the tune of a song from England titled "Villikins and his Dinah."⁷ It is neither French nor English, but a creole expression of the material in intimate relationships of North America. While rooted in the specific context of the emigration of French-Canadians to New England in the nineteenth century, it also points to a prior history.

"Sweet Betsy from Pike" was a popular song among those traveling the overland trail from the eastern United States to California.⁸ The title character and her lover Ike make the journey west despite sundry hardships such as cholera, 'Injun' attacks, and Mormons. The narrator of "The Trip to Boston" appears to owe much to Betsy, who is introduced drinking whisky and showing "her bare arse to the whole wagon train," (B-d). The next stanza reveals Betsy protecting Ike from 'Injuns', fighting them off "with musket and ball," (B-e). When Ike wishes to turn back to Pike County, it is Betsy who forces him onward, and when the couple finally reaches their western destination, the two are married. But Ike soon becomes jealous and divorces Betsy, who proclaims triumphantly in the songs concluding line "Goodby, you big lummo, I'm glad you backed out!" (B-o).

The female figure in "Villikins and his Dinah" is also a similar character, but the purpose of the song is radically different. This English ballad is the story of a rich merchant's daughter, Dinah, who does not wish to marry despite her father's urging. She tells her father that she would rather lose all of her inheritance instead of taking a husband, and when her

⁷Deschênes, 494.; "Sweet Betsy from Pike: An Unexpurgated Ballad of the Overland Trail." at <http://www.ndsu.nodak.edu/instruct/isern/103/betsy.htm> (accessed July 13, 2004). The text of these two songs can be found in Appendix B.

⁸"Sweet Betsy from Pike: And Unexpurgated Ballad...."

father consents to this arrangement, Dinah secures for herself a bottle of poison which she promptly drinks. Villikins, a man who sought to marry Dinah, comes across her body as he is walking through the garden, and overcome with grief, he kills himself by finishing what is left of the poison. Contained in concluding stanza marked as its 'moral', the actions of Dinah are blamed for the death of Villikins as well as her own. The moral reads:

Now all you young maidens take warning by her,
 Never not by no means disobey your gov' nor,
 And all you young fellows mind who you clap eyes on,
 Think of Villikins and Dinah and the cup of cold pizen. (V-g)

Though the actions of Dinah and Betsy serve different meanings, the characters have more in common with each other than they do with the narrator of "The Trip to Boston." They are, I would suggest, self-made women. Self-making is more than achieving autonomy. Following Stephen Greenblatt's understanding of the term, in the sixteenth century there "is the perception [...] that there is in the early modern period a change in the intellectual, social, psychological, and aesthetic structures that govern the generation of identities," which is characterized by an increased self consciousness concerning the creation of the human identity.⁹ Interestingly enough, this new interest in identity corresponded to the new

⁹Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, 1-2. The scope of Greenblatt's study is the work and lives of sixteenth century British writers, all of whom in one fashion or another were influenced by their country's new imperial status and the 'opening' of the world through colonialism. Greenblatt provides an outline of "governing conditions common to most instances of self-fashioning – whether of the authors themselves or of their characters," (8-9). Some of these conditions are as follows:

1. None of the figures inherits a title, an ancient family tradition, or hierarchical status that might have rooted personal identity in the identity of a clan or caste.
2. Self-fashioning for such figures involves submission to an absolute power or authority situated at least partially outside the self.
3. Self-fashioning is achieved in relation to something perceived as alien, strange, or hostile. This threatening Other [...] must be discovered or invented in order to be attacked and destroyed.
4. The alien is perceived by the authority either as that which is unformed or chaotic [...] or that which is false or negative.
5. Self-fashioning is always, though not exclusively, in language.

exploratory and colonial efforts of Europe in the Americas sparked at the close of the fifteenth century.

It has been noted that the experience of space in North America has played a more important formative role in the shaping of Christianity – and the European identity in general – than the experience of time.¹⁰ The journey to the Americas itself demanded an unprecedented length of time at sea away from even the vaguest hint of dry land. And once arriving in the ‘New World’ the sheer vastness of the landscapes were unlike anything before experienced by Europeans. A plethora of personal accounts made by the earliest explorers, priests, and traders from France, Britain, and Spain document the inability of these Europeans to make sense of the *newness* of their experiences. The colors of birds, the magnitude of varieties of flora and fauna, the otherness of the indigenous populations they encountered could only be explained in terms already available in the European languages of discovery, politics, and religion.¹¹

But at the very same time, there is the sense that these writers were quite aware that these people, plants, and animals fell far outside the boundary of all previous experience. The radical alterity of the New World was not only immediately apparent to those first explorers, it also shook them to the core of their identity. Their own sense of the order of the world was jeopardized by this previously unknown landmass and the peoples who inhabited it. Where

6. The power generated to attack the alien in the name of the authority is produced in excess and threatens the authority it sets out to defend. Hence self-fashioning always involves some experience of threat [...] some loss of self. (9)

¹⁰Mead, *The Lively Experiment*, 2.

¹¹Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions*, 95-97.

did they belong in God's plan? They were no longer certain of exactly who *they* were. It is out of this situation that Greenblatt concludes that "self-fashioning occurs at the point of encounter between an authority and an alien, that what is produced in this encounter partakes of both the authority and the alien that is marked for attack, and hence that any achieved identity always contains within itself the signs of its own subversion or loss."¹²

Dinah and Villikins – the embodiment of all the men she does not wish to marry – are dead by the song's end. Betsy from Pike, after surviving endless dangers on the trip to California, is left alone and possibly pregnant; "A few little baby-clothes, done up with care/ Looked rather suspicious, but all on the square," (B-f). They are both confronted with 'alien' realities and their efforts to combat those realities threaten their own existences. Betsy and Dinah are engaged in projects which leave little room for the recognition of the border zones across which they move, and their own identities struggle against the changes they must undergo. They are both autonomous characters, refusing to be confined to the roles of wife or bride-to-be, but their autonomy is gained in response to an already existing social structure, and as such it seems that this autonomy is in many ways more confining. Dinah finds her total autonomy in a bottle of poison, while Betsy finds herself completely alone. The narrator of "The Trip to Boston" is different from the characters she appears to be based on because she is able to move through boundary zones, and recognizes their importance as well as their validity.

Without limits, in a fashion they exist in permanent liminal spaces. For Dinah, this is a social liminal space, as she refuses her position as inheritor and also as potential wife. The

¹²Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, 9.

story of Betsy is set in a geographic liminal space, between the east and the west, where anything can happen. It is not a safe place, but neither is it completely unpleasant, and it does afford Betsy with a place where she is able to bend gender roles. The character's actions are more in line with traditional male 'wild west' activities, and so the song itself is able to present a commentary on various gender biases, but also to critique the entire image of the west through its use of humor. One of the greatest similarities between "Sweet Betsy from Pike" and the "Trip to Boston" is that through the use of humor, the expectations of the destination are demythologized. In "Sweet Betsy from Pike," the west does not glitter with gold, while "The Trip to Boston" does not present an image of the United States as an environment hostile to French-Canadians. Through humor, what normally would be considered contradictions are held together and so offer a different possibility for understanding North America and its people. As Ike says to Betsy near the end of the song, "you're an angel, but where is your wings?" (B-m).

In its unapologetic expression of fun and the narrator's strong sense of her own self, the "Trip to Boston" is unique among the Songs of Departure I have examined.¹³ Following in the structure of the Songs of Departure, "The Trip to Boston" is the narrator's song, it is her story told by herself. It is through the humor of her actions and words that the narrator is able to maneuver between the different valuational structures of Canada and the United States. It is the basis of a creative definition of freedom that builds on that explored in the other Songs of Departure. From the position of being able to say 'No' the narrator of "The

¹³Kees W.Bolle, *The Freedom of Man in Myth* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 1968) Chapter 6: Characteristics of Humor, 41-72. *En passim.*, this section.

"Trip to Boston" states that in the United States "all the good Canayans/ Hold nothing back." (XIII-e). Wobbling between the pivots of French Canada and New England, the narrator is able to see the potential for a meaningful existence in both places. In diminishing the opposites between the French and English languages, between Canada and the United States, and inverting the role of the departee and the people left behind in Canada, the song suggests the freedom possible in a meaningful human life. The linguistic, political, social, and gender boundaries that are reified as universal in the Marian image of the woman, in *la survivance*, and by the American myth of exceptionalism, lose their absoluteness and become malleable.

In a reversal of the common theme of departure and family, the second stanza of this song shows the narrator leaving her man behind in Canada as she heads for Boston. She is not overcome with sadness at leaving him or her family, as the male narrators of the Songs of Departure usually are. As she leans out the window of the train to kiss her man goodbye, the train is already moving so fast, she misses him and ends up kissing a cow that happens to be watching the train go by. The solemnity that typically surrounds the departure of family members for the United States is reversed here, and her farewell becomes the occasion for a comic situation. "The Trip to Boston" then serves as a commentary on and a critique of the other Songs of Departure collected by Deschênes.

Her use of a stereotypical French-Canadian broken English allows her to take command of the implied insult and turn it into a celebration of her unique status and history. She is defiantly *not* American, but at the same time she does not see the United States as a hopeless place. For the narrator, the United States is a place where Canadians go to have fun, a liminal space of sorts where the social constraints of Canada do not apply. But in this song

there is also the implicit sense that Canada is always to be returned to. “When we go to the States, it’s to have fun.” (XIV-e). This narrator knows who she is and where her home is, yet she is able to negotiate the boundaries of that home with ease, feeling comfortable both in Canada and in the United States, as long as she is able to return to center.

Again, in the linguistic structure of the song, the lyrics reveal that the narrator is changed by her trips to the United States. Her tale is sung in both languages as she moves from Canada into the United States. Language is not tied to a geographic location, but is a flexible tool for expression and for ordering her world. Her story is told from the space between ‘umbrella’ and ‘*parapluie*,’ the space of the metamorphic vision of place, where change is norm. When she is in Canada, she uses the English word, and as she is departing the train in Boston, she refers to it in French. This contact zone, which most of the Songs of Departure imagine as disjunctive, disorienting, and dangerous, “The Trip to Boston” suggests a “non-locative” space where French-Canadian immigrants are able to creatively draw from the forms of Catholicism and the industrial towns of New England in a fashion that is beyond the control of both Canadian and American authorities.¹⁴ The lone authority figure to appear in this song is the train conductor. When he comes to collect the narrator’s ticket, she responds “Her’ it is. You big fat sissy!” (XIII-c), and when he winks at her, the narrator calls him a beast and gives him a black eye. The narrator is not subject to any form of punishment for this action, and when she gets ready to leave the train in Boston, she hits another man with her umbrella.

¹⁴ I am greatly influenced by David Carrasco’s article “Jaguar Christians in the Contact Zone.” for this line of thinking.

Far from being the Marian ideal of French-Canadian woman, taking care of the children while waiting patiently for her husband in Canada, the narrator initially appears as little more than as an image of a country bumpkin. But her independence and ability to confront and overcome valuational and authoritative boundaries set her apart as unique. She inhabits to contact zone. Her mode of orientation in North America is rooted in the creolized space of initially disparate peoples and materials that have come together as a result of European colonialism to produce something absolutely new; she is an expression of a New World people coming to an understanding of itself that is consonant with the experiences of those human communities that have had to undergo its founding. "The Trip to Boston" points to the French-Canadian immigrants' recognition of the multiple and creolized narratives of America's America. It is from these contact zones that a new mode for understanding the history and experiences of a post-Columbian world is possible. It is an understanding that allows for the meaningful recognition of other stories about the New World and its people, and with this sort of recognition, comes the hope that North America can be a viable home for all of the human communities that happen to be part of this 'strange place.'¹⁵

¹⁵Long, *Significations*, 145.

Conclusion: Down the Connecticut River

The Songs of Departure reveal multiple ways in which Canada and the United States could be inhabited by French-Canadians in the nineteenth century. French Canada was often understood in terms of *la survivance* and the sacred and agricultural calendars of Canada as a sacred space which disclosed a true ordering of the world and the French-Canadian's place in that world. In this ordering of the world, the United States was an inhospitable land of exile and physical and spiritual deprivation. The narrators of these songs long to return to Canada, to their wives and girlfriends, and to raise a family. While in the United States these immigrants had only the memory of their families far away in Canada, but they often turned to the Virgin Mary who provided a constant vibrant link to Canada and to the women there.

Other songs portray Canada as a bug-ridden primitive place. Here, the United States holds the possibility of disclosing the true nature of the world and the human being's place there. This is the vision of American exceptionalism, of progress and profit. From this vantage French-Canadians in Canada were seen to inhabit a unique – but ultimately undesirable – place in the evolution of human society; they were caught between the primitive and the civilized. French-Canadians who had emigrated to New England had their 'eyes opened' to this reality and could look back on their families and friends in Canada with only disdain and pity. The song "Don't Go to Canada" expresses shame and disgust for the French-Canadian way of life, referring to the people there as being little more than animals.

"We came in, were requested to come, but we were still strangers."¹ With this statement Father Thomas Landry sums up the initial French-Canadian experience of New

¹Landry, 82.

England. This is the attitude expressed in most of the Songs of Departure to the United States, and it also suggests the problematic manner in which French Canada and the United States were conceived. The colonial aspirations of *la survivance* allowed for only a small possibility of creative meanings that could be applied to the United States. New England, on the other hand, had a long history of religious intolerance that can be seen in the Puritan treatment of the region's native populations, the banishment of religious radicals, later in the witch trials of Salem, Massachusetts, and the general anti-Catholic attitude present in the United States.²

Though they did not understand the language the first French-Canadian immigrants gravitated to the Irish Catholic churches throughout New England.³ But as more immigrants began to attend services, their numbers shocked many of the Irish priests, who were worried that the French-Canadians would soon outnumber their own flock.⁴ As a result of this, Landry writes that the new immigrants were told, "Look, you're very good people but you have to find yourself a place [...] Get yourselves a priest, make everything nice and tidy and God will love you."⁵ The act of making New England a home for the immigrants from French Canada was slow to start, because so many believed they would be returning to Canada in a year or two. This is reflected in many of the Songs of Departure, which contain orientations

²Oplinger, See especially Chapter 5: The Salem Panic-Trial.; Landry notes that though never enforced, there was a statute in the state of Massachusetts which "forbade any Catholic priest to touch the sacred soil of Massachusetts, forbade him to do that under penalty of death." (Landry, 82).

³Wade, 165-166.

⁴Landry, 82.

⁵Landry, 83.

to the world that delimit Canada as a sacred space. The place these immigrants had which disclosed the love of God was spatially distant. Additionally, the American myth of exceptionalism helped to reinforce the immigrant experience of New England as a place of alienation and exile.

But even more importantly, their expressions of this experience in the Songs of Departure show that Canada and the United States were understood in mythic terms that created geographic, religious, and linguistic boundaries that were not to be mediated. Those who attempted to negotiate these border zones, such as the French-Canadian immigrants, were marginalized by both countries. The clergy of Canada saw the immigrants as traitors and exiles, while the elites of New England understood them to be an invading horde from the north. But at the very same time, these immigrants were appropriated by the Canadian clergy as the first wave of French-Canadian Catholic colonialism, while being actively sought by mill agents as a necessary component in the building of New England's urban industry and wealth. For French Canada, then, the immigrants to New England were understood in terms of *la survivance*, both as traitors and as colonists. For New England, these immigrants were confronted with American exceptionalism and the silencing discourse of progress and freedom, which allowed for a dynamic where French-Canadians were requested to take part in the construction of the United States, but at the same time were not allowed to take part in it; they were to remain strangers.⁶

This sense of disorientation comes through clearly in "The Sergeant Killed in Battle," where the young François finds himself at the end of the song incapable of being at home in

⁶See Brault, 67-68 for a brief overview of the literature expressing these views.

both Canada and New England. After leaving his family behind because he finds his social position too limited and his father too violent, he goes to Boston to join the American forces against the British. For a time, he seems to have achieved everything that the United States could possibly offer; he is made a sergeant and placed at the head of the army. But his new status is short lived, as his jaw is broken by a grenade blast, and he finds that the rest of the army continues on without him. Broken, he returns home, where his father greets him with little sympathy, telling him to pick himself up as he can. François is caught between Canada and the United States, belonging to neither, yet his identity is defined by their sway. The song ends with him in a state of permanent exile.

The French-Canadians kept “within the structures of the Church” because those structures were “the only ones available...”⁷ And though the Church was to continue to play a central role in the maintenance of the immigrants’ identity, they were no longer French-Canadian. By the end of the nineteenth century, most had become American citizens. As French-Canadians in Quebec opposed conscription and felt little desire to fight in the First World War, those in New England joined the American forces in Europe.⁸ This radical departure may have had much to do with the cultural atmosphere of the United States during this period of time. The American peoples’ response to the war in Europe was a fervent spike in nationalist discourses and actions. Even the newly arrived immigrants were expected to be ‘100% American’ in their support for the involvement of the United States in the war.⁹

⁷Landry, 83.

⁸Roby, *Les Franco-Américains...* 225.

⁹Roby, *Les Franco-Américains...*, 224.

With this resurgence of American nativism, the French-Canadian immigrant and Franco-American populations of New England felt they had to outwardly adopt the precepts of the notion of the melting pot; they sent their children to English language schools and became American citizens. They went to Europe for the United States, killed and died for their new country.¹⁰

Next to this outward show of conformity exists another aspect of the French-Canadian experience in New England. Beyond the discourses of *la survivance* and exceptionalism, there were other possibilities of being in North America. An example of these possibilities is best expressed by "The Trip to Boston," which in its use of language, reversals, and even its very structure explore the creative improvisations of the contact zone. This song points to the existence of French-Canadian 'ways to the sacred' that are continuous with the traditional modes of being of Catholic in French Canada and enlarged by those of the United States. The definition of being and space here is that of a metamorphic vision of place where constant change and improvisation is the norm. Boundaries are recognized and reified, but they are not envisioned as authoritative in an a priori sense. The geographic, linguistic, and gender boundaries are relational, and being such they are thresholds that can be mediated, negotiable spaces.

With the end of the First World War, the religious and cultural expressions of the immigrant populations in the United States fell silent. They did not disappear, but in the cultural mood expressed in the Palmer Raids and the Red Scare, it was beneficial to publicly

¹⁰Roby, *Les Franco-Américains...* 228-230.

be seen as one American among many.¹¹ This changed with the passing of the 1960's, when communities across the country began to assert their distinct traditions and modalities of being within the structures of the United States. Franco-Americans, though not as visible as some of these groups, have been involved in a slow but constant process of cultural renewal and dissemination. As with "The Trip to Boston," this process does not appear to be striving for some pure vision of what a Franco-American might be. There is the recognition of being mixed-up, creolized, of being a distinct community that is part of North America's time and space called the United States.

I have implied throughout this work that the mythic worlds of Canada and the United States were expressions of a desire for spatial and temporal continuity. The French-Canada of Paquet and the New England of John Winthrop were localized formations of the millennial visions which were the founding expressions of the European imagination of the New World. Though the Americas constituted a radically new horizon in the European world, replete with new forms of materiality and open to the possibility of new relationships and forms of exchange, the Europeans who made their way across the Atlantic acted as though this New World was transparent to them and their modes of knowledge. The wonder of the New World was subsumed under a language of economics and conquest – understood in terms of religion, progress, and civilization – which barred the possibility of forming meaningful and mutual relationships with the indigenous communities of North America.

But this ambivalence was not deployed solely to signify the indigenous populations of North America. French-Canadians who emigrated from Quebec during the nineteenth and

¹¹Roby, *Les Franco-Américains...*, 230-238.

twentieth centuries to New England were understood in these terms. And so the problematic nature of the validity of the binary formulation primitive/civilized is raised. The categories employed by the human sciences to make sense of the world since the beginning of the European colonial enterprise have served more to obscure the intimate and material relationships between peoples and places that occurred as a result of that colonization. The experiences of French-Canadian immigrants reveal that the West's *empirical other* is not located in some distant time or space, the West is the non-West, the primitive is the civilized, and vice versa.¹² The strangers are at home where the indigenous are strangers.

This experience of North America forms the dominant theme of the Songs of Departure. The narrators long to be at home, to no longer be strangers. But in looking at the advice given to Father Landry, there are indeed spaces and ways to be at home in North America. Since Columbus' first voyage, human beings have lived in a time and place that is truly a new world. The time and space known as North America, and the countries of Canada and the United States, are home to a multiplicity of meanings and communities that do not always fit together neatly. Modernity, as Charles H. Long has suggested in numerous lectures, is mixed up and messed up. The stylistics of "The Trip to Boston" suggests that the recognition of this reality is a way by which we can begin to see and be in North America in a manner that recognizes the humanity of all the communities which inhabit this space.

¹²Charles H. Long, "Indigenous People, Materialities, and Religion: Outline for a New Orientation to Religious Meaning." Pp. 167-180 in *Religion and Global Culture: New Terrain in the Study of Religion and the Work of Charles H. Long*, edited by Jennifer I. M. Reid (Lanham, MA: Lexington Books, 2003)174.

Appendix A

The Songs of Departure for the United States

I. Departure For the United States

When I left Canada
To go to the States,
One suitcase is all I had
All my belongings were in it,
One suitcase is all I had
But money, that I didn't have

On my way I met
A man I knew well.
He said to me, "My friend,
Where are you going? – In the States.
– You're running after misery.
Turn around, don't go there!"

I found myself (to be) very surprised,
My heart was seized with sadness.
I then told my wife
And my small children:
"We will keep on going,
God will protect us from accidents."

We've been seven years and a few
months
In the States
I didn't gather a fortune,
Though I work very hard,
In the evening after dusk
In the morning before dawn.

To be a good *habitant*
One has to be a good worker.
Come to surprise us on the field.
If you should forget,
You would quickly parish.

First we must get on board
To get to St. Leonard.

I. Le départ les États-Unis

Quand j'ai parti du Canada
Pour m'en aller dans les États,
Je n'avais qu'une valise,
Tout mon butin était dedans,
Je n'avais qu'une valise
Mais de l'argent, j'n'en avais pas.

Dans mon chemin j'ai rencontré
Un homm' que je ne connaissais bien.
Il m'a dit: " Mon camarade
Où allez-vous? – Dans les États.
– Vous courez après la misère.
Virez de bord, n'y allez donc pas!"

Moi, je m'ai trouvé bien surpris,
J'en avais le coeur-e bien saisi.
Là, j'ai dit à ma femme,
Aussi à mes petits enfants:
"Nous poursuivrons notre route,
Dieu nous protég'ra d' accident."

Il y a sept ans et quelques mois
Que nous étions dans les États.
J'n'ai pas ramassé fortune,
Pourtant j'ai beaucoup travaillé,
Le soir au clair de lune,
Le matin avant soleil levé.

Pour être un bon habitant,
Il faut être un bon travaillant.
Il faut point que l'endormitoire
Vienn' nous surprendre sur le champ.
Si vous en perdiez mémoire,
Vous péririez en peu de temps.

Il faut nous embarquer d'abord
Pous nous rendre à Saint-Léonard.

That is my place of birth,
There where I always stayed
We will buy a piece of land
That will be perfect in beauty.

When we will be in Canada,
Children will call us "Daddy!"
I don't hear the bells
From all around,
I don't hear the bell
Calling us every morning.

C'est là l'endroit d'ma naissance,
Là où que j'suis toujours resté
Nous achèterons un terre
Qui nous sera parfaite en beauté.

Quand nous serons au Canada,
Les enfants nous diront: "Papa!"
J'entends plus sonner les cloches
De tous bords et de tous côtés,
J'entends plus sonner la cloche
le matin pour nous appeler.

II. Work in the States

When I left Canada
To go to the States,
My heart was all at ease,
My heart was joyful,
I was told that we wouldn't work hard
In the mills, in the *fact'ries*.

The first day of work,
I tell you I was tired.
But when I woke up in the morning,
I couldn't eat,
When I thought that in a half hour
We would have to return to the mill.

Noon is here,
An we must go home.
We have only one hour
To eat our dinner.
One hour will ring in ten minutes,
We must go back to the mill.

It's been two years and a few months
That I arrived here in the States.
I worked all week
For a dollar fifty.
I tell you its hard work,
In the mills, in the *fact'ries*.

And everyday it begins again.
It's his work we have to clean.
But he is cleaning the machine,
Empty the car,
Because we need to change routine.
Let's live, let's live in Canada.

II. Le Travail aux États

Quand j'ai parti du Canada
Pour m'en aller dans les États,
J'avais le coeur tout à mon aise,
J'avais le coeur tout réjoui,
Qu'on me disait qu'on travaillait point
fort
Dans les moulins, dans les *fact'ries*.

Le premier jour que j'ai travaillé,
Je vous assure que j'étais fatigué.
Mais le matin, à mon réveil,
Je ne pouvais point manger,
Quand je pensais que dans une demi-
heure
C'est au moulin qu'il faut s'en aller.

Voilà le midi arrivé.
Là, c'est chez nous qu'il faut s'en aller.
On a seulement que une heure
Pour y prendre son dîner.
Une heure dans dix qui va sonner,
C'est au moulin qu'il faut s'en aller.

Voilà deux ans et quelques mois
Que je suis arrivé ici aux États.
J'ai travaillé toute la semaine
Pour une piastre et demie.
Je vous assure qu'on travaille pour le
peine,
Dans les moulins, dans les *fact'ries*.

Et tous les jours, c'est à recommencer.
C'est son ouvrage qu'il faut *cleaner*.
Mais il *cleane* la machine,
Car aussi la débourrer,
Car il faut changer de routine.
Vivons, vivons au Canada.

III. Departure for America

I left my father's house
 At the age of nineteen,
 Not fearing misery
 When I left my parents.
 I leave for America
 To make some money,
 If the good God saves me from
 Hardship and accidents.

Being in these prairies,
 Looking all around,
 A field bird
 Comes and makes me feel the pangs of
 longing.
 Yet there is not the reason for my
 longing,
 But to be abandoned,
 Because it is my dear mother
 That I will be so far away from.

If the good God shall preserve me
 That I should go to Canada,
 I pray the Holy Virgin
 So she does not abandon me.
 Holy Virgin Mary,
 Don't leave me.
 I hope one day soon to come
 To die in your arms.

III. Le Départ pour l'Amérique

J'ai parti [de] chez mon père
 À l'âge de dix-neuf ans,
 Craignant point de misère
 En quittant mes parents.
 Je pars pour l'Amérique
 Pour y gagner de l'argent,
 Si le bon Dieu m'y conserve
 De peine et d'accident.

Étant dans ces prairies,
 Regardant de tous côtés,
 Un oiseau de campagne
 Qui vient me faire ennuyer.
 Ce n'est point là l'ennui,
 C'est d'être abandonné,
 Car c'est ma très chère mère
 Don't je vais être si éloigné.

Si le bon Dieu me conserve
 Que j'aie en Canada,
 Je prie la Sainte Vierge
 Qu'elle m'abandonne pas.
 Sainte Vierge Marie,
 Ne m'abandonnez pas.
 J'espère un jour à venir
 Mourir entre vos bras.

IV. When I Left Canada

Listen, I will sing for you
A story that happened to me.

When I left Canada
It was to go to the States.
I did not go far
Before I already had tears in my eyes.

It was in a lumber camp
Where time is really long,
Where we cry and feel alone
To be far from our family,
From our girlfriend, from our country
And those we love so tenderly.

Little bird, you are very lucky
To fly where you want to.
If I had your wings,
Ah, yes! I would fly
To my love's knee
Ah yes! There I would rest.

This lit'le song was composed
By a boy in the lumber camp
That left Canada,
To go to work;
To the States he went
But now he wants to go back home.

IV. Quand Je Partis Du Canada

Écoutez, j' vas vous chanter
Une histor' qui m'est arrivée.

Quand je partis du Canada,
C'etait pour monter aux États.
Je n'avais pas cinq lieues de faits
Que j'avais déjà les larmes aux yeux.

C'est dans un camp de bûcheron
Là où trouv' le temps bien long,
Là où l'on pleure et l'on s'ennuie
D'être éloigné de ses parents,
De son amie, de son pays
Et ceux qu'on aim' bien tendrement.

Petit oiseau, tu es bien chanceux
De voltiger là où tu veux.
Ah! si, j'avais tes avantages,
Ah! oui, j'irais prendre ma volée
Sur les genoux de ma bien-aimée
Ah! oui, j'irais m'y reposer.

Cett' p'tit' chanson fut composée
Par un garçon sur le chantier
Et qui partit du Canada,
C'est pour aller travailler;
Dans les États il est allé.
Mais il voudrait s'en retourner.

V. Good-bye, I'm Leaving for America

Good-bye, I'm leaving for America,
My loved-one, shall you come?
She said unto me: "No, no, she says, I'll
not go,
Because all the boys that go never come
back."

- I have some money in my pocket,
My love, do you want it?"
She said unto me: "No, no, she says, I
don't want any.
All the boys who go to America need it.

When you will be in America,
Very far from me, you will forget me.
You'll see one, you'll see others, you'll
forget me.
I will languish waiting for news from
you."

- When I will be in America,
I would like to have your [white] picture.
I would hide it safely in my room.
And kiss it five or six times a week."

V. Adieu, Je pars pour l'Amérique

"Adieu, je pars pour l'Amérique,
Ma bien-aimée, y viendrez-vous?"
Elle me répond: "Non, non, dit-elle, je
n'irai pas,
Car tous garçons qui vont dans
l'Amérique en reviennent pas."

- J'ai de l'argent dans mon gousset-te,
Ma bien-aimée en voulez-vous?"
Elle me répond: "Non, non, dit-elle, je
n'en veux pas.
Tous garçons qui vont dans l'Amérique
en ont besoin.

Quand tu seras dans l'Amérique,
Bien loin de moi, tu m'oublieras.
Tu vois un, tu vois l'autre, tu
m'oublieras.
En attendant de tes nouvelles, je
languirai."

- Quand je seras dans l'Amérique,
Ton blanc portrait, je le voudrais.
Je le mettrai dedans ma chambre bien
enfermé..
Cinq ou six fois dans la semaine
embrasserai."

VI. Return to Canada

I will not be putting on my shawl in those
sad mills.

I am going back to Canada where life is
good.

I work in the fresh air, in the morning
sun.

At night we sleep good, we rest until
morning.

VI. Le retour au Canada

Je n'accroch`rai plus mon châle dans ces
tristes moulins.

Je m'en retourne au Canada où l'on y vit
très bien.

Je travaille au grand air, au soleil du
matin.

Le soir on se couche, on repose jusqu'au
lendemain.

VII. When I was Returning to Canada

When I go back to Canada
I'll buy me a new Impala,
A nice trailer, I swear,
Three or four rooms of furniture.
I had a few *piasses* in my pocket,
But in my head, I had rocks.

VII. Quand je m'en retournais au Canada

Quand j'm'en r`tournais au Canada,
J'm'avais ach`té un nouveau Impala,
Un beau *trailer*, je vous assure,
Trois ou quatr' *rooms* de *furniture*.
J'avais quelqu's *piasses* dans ma poche,
Mais dans la têt', j'avais de roches.

VIII. Far Away From My Mother

I'm eager for my fatherland.
For a handful of gold, I left my country.

Refrain:

Praying to our mother for relief
We have to pray to God for our
salvation.
Yes I cried far from my poor mother.
Far away from one's mother, one could
die of loneliness.

On has to get on a sea ship
To brave the greatest dangers.
The waves of the water and the glamour
of the sea
Are always ready to throw you
overboard.

We have to make war against those poor
savages,
Who like us know danger,
They shoot arrows at the head,
Like us they know danger.

We had to take the stick of the trip
To go to my sad country.
The spell was on my face,
My mother died calling her son.

Oh! Give me back my clothes and my
homeland.
Keep your gold and let me go.
Yes I cried far away from my mother,
Far away from one's mother, one can die
of loneliness.

VIII. Loin de ma mère

Je suis avide de ma pauvre patrie.
Pour un peu d'or, j'ai quitté mon pays.

Refrain:

Secours en secours, priant notre mère,
Faut prier Dieu, c'est pour nous secourir.
Oui, j'ai pleuré loin de ma pauvre mère.
Loin de sa mère, on s'ennuie pour
mourir.

Faut embarquer dans un vaisseau de mer
Pour y braver tous les plus gros dangers.
Les flots de l'eau et l'éclat de la mer
Sont toujours prêts à vous faire
renverser.

Faut faire la guerre à pauvres sauvages,
Tous comme nous connaissant le danger.
Ils nous envoient de flèches à la tête,
Tous comme nous connaissant le danger.

A fallu prendre le bâton de voyage
Pour m'en aller dans mon triste pays.
Le sort était sur mon visage,
Ma mère était est morte en appelant son
fils.

Oh! rendez-moi mes habits, ma patrie!
Gardez votre or et laissez-moi partir.
Oui, j'ai pleuré loin de ma pauvre mère,
Loin de sa mère, on s'ennuie pour
mourir.

IX. Lumber Camps in the United States

We left, these young *voyageurs*
 We left for the United States
 Without saying good-bye to our fathers,
 to our mothers,
 Without saying good-bye to our families,
 to our friends.
 We went to meet misery
 In the lumber camps of strange countries.
 Therefore good-bye then, beautiful
 village of Lamèque!
 Therefore good-bye then, our happy
 country.

The wagon brings us at 45 miles and
 hour,
 45 miles, never slowing down.
 For 20 hours we walk without rest
 To get to our destination.
 Once we arrived in this foreign town
 We got to work right away
 With a man by the name of René
 Springer,
 At the camps where we cut wood.

Arriving at this sad shack
 Arriving at this sad lumber camp
 Thomas Corbett, the boss (opens the
 wagon)
 And gives us axes to fix
 While telling us: "After this work is done
 You'll go on these trails to work."
 He goes to find his other men
 Without offering us a bite to eat.

Day after day we'd go to work
 Everyday without growing weary
 And after working hard for some time
 We'd start to get tired.
 The holidays are coming soon,

IX. Les Chantiers aux États-Unis

Nous somm's partis, ces jeunes
 voyageurs,
 Nous somm's partis, pour les États-Unis,
 Sans dire adieu à nos pères, à nos mères,
 Sans dire adieu aux parents, aux amis.
 Nous somm's allés rencontrer la misère
 Dans les chantiers des pays étrangers.
 Or, adieu donc, beau villag' de Lamèque!
 Or, adieu donc, notre joli pays.

Les chars nous mèn'nt quarant'-cinq
 milles à l'heure,
 Quarant'-cinq mill's sans jamais modérer.
 Pendant vingt heur's, nous marchons
 sans relâche
 Pour arriver à notre destinée.
 Tout aussitôt nous nous somm's t-
 engagés
 A un monsieur d'au nom d' René
 Springer,
 Pour les chantiers où nous devons
 bûcher.

En arrivant à cett' triste cabane,
 En arrivant à ce triste chantier,
 Thomas Corbett, le *boss*, (souffl' ;a
 wingagne)
 Et il nous donn' des haches à amancher
 En nous disant: "Après cet ouvrag' fait-
 e,
 Vous irez dans ces ch' mins-là travailler."
 Là, il s'en va trouver ses autres hommes
 Sans nous offert un' bouchée r-à manger.

Jour après jour, nous allions t-à
 l'ouvrage

We'll have to spend them at the camp.
 Great God! How sad to think of the
 church

And our families who go there to pray.

One day, one of our brave gang
Got sick. He had to leave.
Each of us gave him a message,
All are sad to see us separated:
"Pay my respect to my family
Go see my dear love
Tell her that after this hard winter
I hope to see her again."

Soon unfortunately! the *skidage* will end.
Once more we'll have to start again,
We are not of our slavery yet.
We'll have to load up the sleighs.
We'll have to shake the cant-hook-e
Straining really hard on these logs;
We'll have to work in the snow
And in the rain, like when it's nice.

Soon unfortunately! March will end
And the spring, soon it will be nice
The good sun will melt the snow
And our hard work will end.
We will return to the village of Lamèque
See our families and our loved-ones.
We will return to our beautiful village
And together, we will pass the summer.

À tous les jours sans jamais nous lasser.
Et après quelque temps de dur ouvrage
Nous commençons à être fatigués.
Voilà bientôt les jours de fêt' qu'arrivent,
Il faut passer ces beaux jours au chantier.
Grand Dieu! qu'c'est trist' quand on
pense à l'église.

À nos parents qui y vont pour prier.
Par un beau jour, un de notre brav' gang
Tomba malade. Il lui faut s'en aller.
Chacun de nous on lui donne un message
Et tous chagrins de se voir séparés:
"F'ras des respects à ceux de ma famille,
Tu iras voir ma très chère bien-aimée,
Tu lui diras après cet dur hiver-e
Que j'espère que je la reverrai."

Bientôt hélas! finira le *skidage*,
Il nous faudra encor' recommencer.
Nous somm's pas las-se de notre
esclavage,
Il nous faudra que nous chargions les
sleighs.

Il nous faudra remuer le *cant-hook-e*
Lever bien fort sur ces pesants billots;
Il nous faudra travailler dans la neige
Et dans la pluie comm' quand qu'il fera
beau.

Bientôt hélas! finira le mois d'mars
Et le printemps, bientôt z-il fera beau.
Le beau soleil consommera la neige
Et nous aurons fini nos dur travaux.
Nous retourn'rons au villag' de Lamèque
Voir nos parents, aussi nos bien-aimées.
Nous retourn'rons à notre beau village
Et tous ensembl', nous passerons l'été.

X. Weaving in the United States

When I left Canada
It was to go to the States
And as soon as we arrived,
We started weaving.

Refrain:

So let's drink, ourselves, our people!
So let's drink, ourselves.

And as soon...
But we played some rissonnette
To get the fucking shuttle in!

But what is worse
Is to see my brother against the *boileurs*.
Monday, Tuesday goes by,
And we see the second boss!

Monday...
But at the end of the week
We don't get a fucking cent.

But at the end...
But we arrive at the small boarding
house
To pay for all our groceries.

But we...
Ah! the wife wants to argue:
Go sit down, don't bother me!
You well know I wasn't paid.

Go sit down...
But we're coming, the Canadiens.
How are you Americans?

But we...
In Woonsocket, it went well,
But we fucking weaved a lot!

What hurt us

X. Weaver aux États-Unis

Quand j'ai parti du Canada,
C'était pour monter aux États;
Et aussitôt qu' nous fûm's arrivés,
L'on a commencé à *weaver*.

Refrain:

Et buvons donc, nous autr's, nos gens!
Et buvons donc, nous autres.

Et assitôt...
Mais on a joué d'la rissonnette
Pour l'enfiler c'saudit' navette!

Mais c'qu'i(l) (y) a de plus d'valeur,
C'est d'voir mon frèr contr' les *boileurs*.
Le lundi, l' mardi se passe,
Et on voit de second *boss* !

Le lundi...
Mais à la fin de la semaine,
On r'tir' pas un' maudit' cenne!

Mais à la fin...
Mais on arrive au p'tit logis
Pour payer tout' notr' *groc'rie*.

Mais on...
Ah! la bonn' femm' veut mettr' la
chicane:
Va t'assir, viens pas m' bâdrer!
Tu sais bien qu'j'ai pas 'té payé!

Va t'assir...
Mais on arriv', les Canadiens.
Comment ça va, les Américains?

Mais on...
À Woonsocket, ç'a bien été,
Mais on a sacrement *weavé*!

Qui est-c'qu'i(l) y a qui nous fait tort,

Is to come in these little wagons,
'Cause you know as well as I do
That these wagons are painful.

C'est d's'en v'nir dans les p'tits chars,
Car vous savez tous comm' moi
Qu'les p'tits chars donn'nt mal dans
l'corps.

XI. In the Factories

Don't do like the people
 That go to the States,
 Swimming in misery
 And in shame.
 At the sound of the bell,
 Who knows when they'll get out!
 Look at those poor people
 How they are over there!

In the factories,
 I assure you its tough.
 They are closed in there
 For the whole day.
 When they come out at night,
 Oh! how sad it is to see them.
 Their faces are pale,
 It is hard for them to walk.

XI. Dans les manufactures

Ne fait's pas comm' ces gens
 Qui vont dans les États,
 Plongés dans la misère
 Et aussi dans l'embarras.
 Ils sont au son d'la cloche,
 Cherch' quand ils en sortiront!
 Voyez donc ces pauvres gens-ses
 Comment qu'ils sont par là!

Dans les manufactures,
 Je vous assur' que c'est dur.
 Ils sont là renfermés,
 C'est pour tout' la journée.
 Quand ils sortent le soir,
 Oh! que c'est triste de les voir.
 Il(s) ont la figur' blême,
 De la peine à marche.

XII. Don't Go to Canada

Don't go to Canada
 Because there's poverty up there.
 The way of Canada
 Is to eat pea soup,
 And the Canadian way
 Is to eat buckwheat.

Everyone from the shore
 Don't have all they need.
 They fish for catfish
 And make themselves stews
 And also sturgeon.
 They say it's good.

And the people from the small village,
 They live only on herbs (grass),
 You see the creatures
 Caged inside the fence
 Picking the cotton shrub
 To make breakfast.

When May comes around
 There comes the flees
 You see the ladies
 At night by the candle light
 Pushing themselves in all directions
 Looking tormented.

And among our young boys
 Some are not so good.
 You see them at the *veillée*
 Getting together at night
 Around a flask
 Sucking the tip.

XII. N'allez pas au Canada

N'allez pas au Canada
 Car la misère est par là.
 À la mod' du Canada,
 On mang' d'la soupe aux pois,
 Pis à la mod' des Canadiens,
 On mang' du sarrasin.

Tous les gens du bord de l' eau
 Ils n'ont pas tout c' qu'il leur faut.
 Ils pêch'nt des barbottes,
 Pis se font des gib'lottes,
 Pis aussi de l'esturgeon,
 Ils dis'nt que c'est bien bon.

Et les gens du p'tit village,
 Ils ne vivent qu'aux herbages.
 Vous voyez les créatures
 Encarcannées sur la clôture,
 Ramassant les cotonniers
 Pour se faire à déjeuner.

Quand vient le mois de mai,
 V'là les puces en quantité.
 Vous voyez les demoiselles
 Le soir à la chandelle
 Se poussant de tous côtés
 D'un air bien tourmenté.

Et parmi nos jeunes garçons,
 Il y en a qui sont pas bien bons.
 Vous les voyez à la veillée,
 Le soir-e rassembles
 Autour-e du flacon
 Qui sucent le bouchon.

XIII. The Trip to Boston

I went yesterday, all aboard the States
 Hanging on to my coat and my umbrella
 Get in the big wagon, on the seat
 promptly.
 I said "Youp" say's I, and I get on the
 backside.

From the window, I wanted to kiss
 My man but the train run away.
 The train go so fast that very much
 further;
 I kiss a big cow that was watching the
 train go by.

The conductor came and he said: "Your
 ticket!"
 I said: "Her" it is. You big fat sissy!"
 He giv's me a wink and I said: "You,
 beast!
 I'm not that kind of girl and gav' him a
 black eye!"

Someone yells: "Next place is Boston!"
 I grab my satchel and get up, and oh!
 With my umbrella right under my arm,
 I hit a poor man on the *et cetera*.

When we go to the States, it's to have
 fun.
 The devil really gets into the herd, son of
 a gun.
 When they go to the States, all the good
 Canayens (Canadians)
 Hold nothing back, shaking their asses.

XIII. Le voyage à Boston

I went yesterday all aboard les États
With my port'-manteau and my
umbrella.
Grimp' in the gros chars, on the seat
sans retard.
I said "Youp" say's I, pis j'm'embarqu'
su' l'backside.

À travers le *window*, j'ai voulu embrasser
 My cavalier *but the train run away.*
 The train go so fast que very plus loin;
 J'embrass' un' gross' vach' qui r'gardait
 passer l'train.

The conductor came and he said: "Your
 ticket!"
 I said: "Her" it is. You gros big
 feluette!"
 He giv's me un clin d'oeil and I said:
 'You bétail!
 J'suis pas un' fill' d'mêm' and gav' him
 a black eye!"

Someone lâche un cri: "Next place is
 Boston!"
 I grab my snatchell pis get up, pis oh!
 donc.
 With my parapluie right under my bras,
 I hit a paurve homme on the *et caetera*.

Quand on va aux États, c'est pour avoir
 du *fun*.
 Le diable est aux vaches en *son-of-a-*
gun.
 Quand ils vont aux États, *all the good*
 Canayens,
 Il(s) se s'couent l'proissien *with no mor'*
 de r'quien b'in.

XIV The Sergeant Killed in Battle

The neighbor's daughter,
 Had a 'compadre' come see her
 She was of his liking
 So her asked her
 When she wished to marry.
 He spoke of this to her father
 He took hold of the broomstick
 He almost killed him.

"My father, if you beat me,
 Yes, I will go
 On board as a Bostonian
 To fight against the English."
 To Boston he went:
"How many men fired away?"
 Do you want to enlist me
 As a soldier of war?

"Yes, we'll sign you up
 If you want to be a good boy.
 We will bring you
 To the head of the army."
 The saber on his side
 And the pistol in hand,
 François walked in front
 Like a brave sergeant.

On the first strike
 His jaw broke.
 François fell down
 People yelled 'Hurra'
 But he got back up:
 We cannot stop
 For a wounded sergeant.

François complained
 to his dear and good father
 That he was wounded
 By a grenade strike.
 "Didn't I tell you
 That you would perish by the gun!

XIV Le sergent mort à la bataille

La fille de notre voisin,
 Son compère va la voir.
 I(l) la trouve à son gré,
 Mais i(l) lui demande
 Quand ell' veut se marier.
 À son père en a parlé,
 I(l) a pris le manche à balais,
 I(l) a manqué l' éreinter.

"Mon papa, si vous me battez,
 Oui, j'irai m'engager
 À bord d'un Bostonnais
 Battre contre l' Anglais."
 À Boston il s'en est allé:
"How many men fired away?"
 Voulez-vous m'engager
 Pour un soldat guerrier?

-Oui, nous t'engagerons
 Si tu veux fair' le bon garçon,
 Nous irons t'y mener
 À la têt' de l'armée."
 Le sabre à son côté
 Et le pistolet à la main,
 François marchait devant
 Comme un vaillant sergent.

Dès la première volée,
 Les mâchoir's lui ont fêlé.
 François tomba en bas;
 On s'écria: 'Hurra!'
 Mais il sèst relevé:
 Il faut pas s'arrêter
 Pour un sergent blessé.

François se lamenta
 À son cher et bon papa
 Qu'il avait été blessé
 Par un coup d'grenadier.
 "Je n'te l'avais-t'y pas bien dit
 Qu'tu périrais par le fusil!

Now there you are.
Pick yourself up as you can!"

À présent t'y voilà,
Ramass-toi comm' tu pourras!"

Appendix B
Source Material for "The Trip to Boston"

B: Sweet Betsy From Pike

Did you ever hear tell of Sweet Betsy from Pike,
Who crossed the wide mountains with her lover Ike,
Two yoke of cattle, a large yeller dog,
A tall Shanghai rooster, and a one-spotted hog.

They swam the wide rivers and crossed the tall peaks,
And camped on the prairie for weeks upon weeks.
Starvation and cholera, hard work and slaughter –
They reached California 'spite of hell and high water.

One evening quite early they camped on the Platte,
Twas near by the road on a green shady flat.
Betsy, sore-footed, lay down to repose –
With wonder Ike gazed on that Pike County rose.

Out on the prairie one bright, starry night,
They broke out the whiskey, and Betsy got tight.
She sang and she shouted and she danced o'er the plain,
And she showed her bare arse to the whole wagon train.

The Injuns came down in a thundering horde,
And Betsy was scared they would scalp her adored.
So under the wagon-bed Betsy did crawl
And she fought off the Injuns with musket and ball.

The wagon broke down with a terrible crash,
And out on the prairie rolled all sorts of trash.
A few little baby-clothes, done up with care,
Looked rather suspicious, but all on the square.

They stopped at Salt Lake to inquire of the way,
When Brigham declared that Sweet Betsy should stay.
Betsy got frightened and ran like a deer,
While Brigham stood pawing the ground like a steer.

The alkali desert was burning and bare,
And Isaac's soul shrank from the death that lurked there.
"Dear old Pike County, I'll go back to you" –

Says Betsy, "You'll go by yourself if you do!"

They soon reached the desert, where Betsy gave out,
And down in the sand she lay rolling about.
Ike in great wondering looked on in surprise,
Saying "Betsy, get up, you'll get sand in your eyes."

Sweet Betsy got up in a great deal of pain.
She declared she'd go back to Pike County again.
Ike gave a sigh, and they fondly embraced,
And they traveled along with his arm round her waist.

The Shanghai ran off, and the cattle all died,
That morning the last piece of bacon was fried.
Ike got discouraged, Betsy got mad,
The dog drooped his tail and looked wonderfully sad.

They suddenly stopped on a very high hill,
With wonder looked down upon old Placerville.
Ike said to Betsy, as he cast his eyes down,
"Sweet Betsy, my darling, we've got to Hangtown."

Long Ike and Sweet Betsy attended a dance.
Ike wore a pair of his Pike County pants.
Betsy was covered with ribbons and rings.
Says Ike, "You're an angel, but where is your wings?"

A miner said, "Betsy, will you dance with me?"
"I will that, old hoss, if you don't make too free.
Don't dance me hard, do you want to know why?
Doggone you, I'm chock-full of strong alkali."

This Pike County couple got married, of course,
But Ike became jealous, and obtained a divorce.
Betsy, well-satisfied, said with a shout,
"Goodby, you big lummo, I'm glad you backed out!"

V: Villikins and His Dinah

'Tis of a rich merchant who in London did dwell,
He had but on daughter, and uncommon nice gel.
Her name it was Dinah, scarce sixteen years old,
With a very large fortune in silver and gold.

As Dinah was a' walking her garden one day,
Her papa he came to her, and thus he did say:
"Go dress yourself, Dinah, in gorgeous array,
And get you a husband both gallant and gay!"

"Oh, papa Oh, papa I've not made up my mind,
And to marry just yet, why I don't feel inclined;
To you my large fortune I'll gladly give o'er,
If you'll let me live single a year or two more."

"Go, go, boldest daughter," the parent replied;
"If you won't consent to be this here young man's bride,
I'll give your large fortune to the nearest of kin,
And you shan't reap the benefit of on single pin."

As Villikins was walking the garden around,
He spied his dear Dinah lying dead on the ground;
And a cup of cold pizen it lay by her side,
With a billet-doux stating 'twas by pizen she died.

He kissed her cold corpus a thousand times o'er,
He called her his Dinah though she was no more,
Then swallowed the pizen like a lover so brave,
And Villikins and his Dinah lie both in one grave.

Moral:

Now all you young maidens take warning by her,
Never not by no means disobey your gov'nor,
And all you young fellows mind who you clap eyes on,
Think of Villikins and Dinah and the cup of cold pizen.

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