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Ailsa Kay

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Sensation and Civility: Protecting the Confederation Family in Isabella Valancy Crawford's *Winona; Or, the Foster-Sisters*

AILSA KAY

IN JUNE 1872, GEORGE-ÉDOUARD DESBARATS'S Montreal weekly periodical the *Hearthstone* opened a literary contest offering a top prize of \$500 for the best Canadian story. The wording of the paper's announcement was exuberant:

We crave narratives, novels, sketches penned by vigorous Canadian hands, welling out from fresh and fertile Canadian brains, thrilling with the adventures by sea and land, of Canadian heroes. . . . We ask for novels and stories formed on Canadian history, experience and incident — illustrative of back wood life, fishing, lumbering, farming; taking the reader through our industrious cities, floating palaces, steam-driven factories, ship-building yards, lumbering shanties, fishing shacks, &c. (Early and Peterman 25)

At age twenty-one, more than a decade before publishing *Old Spookses' Pass* and *Malcolm's Katie and other Poems*, Isabella Valancy Crawford won the *Hearthstone* contest with her novel *Winona; or, the Foster-Sisters*. Serialized in Desbarats's new story paper, the *Favorite*, between January and March 1873, Crawford's novel provided a nearly point-by-point response to the *Hearthstone's* patriotic call. Moving (by canoe, train, and steamer) from the Ontario backwoods to rushing, urban Toronto, and from the bucolic banks of the St. Lawrence to fashionable Montreal, the novel locates its story of love and mystery within a carefully representative Canadian geography. Characters are equally representative of post-Confederation Canada; the family at the centre of the novel is itself a "confederation," the product of Scottish Captain Dick Frazer's marriage to the Quebecoise Desirée, and Winona, the foster sister of the title, is Native. In effect, the story does what the paper's publisher required it to do: to imagine Canada and to foster patriotism.

Desbarats's "craving" for stories "welling out from fresh and fertile Canadian brains" and "illustrative" of Canada in all its variety expressed a common nineteenth-century Canadian alignment of literature and patriotism, an alignment that Carole Gerson describes as so common that it was "taken for granted" that the purpose of indigenous Anglo-Canadian literature was to help build the nation. Gerson explains, "The motives underpinning the position that English Canada required an indigenous literature could be political or moral or both; taken for granted was the notion that one of the primary purposes of a national literature was the fostering of patriotism" (36). But *Winona* is not the realist novel or historical romance that one normally associates with literary nation building. Indeed, though published in an avowedly "moral" paper, the novel most closely resembles sensation fiction, employing a battery of familiar tropes, including a lost woman, a ghostly apparition, a father's will, a son long presumed dead, a charming stranger, a locked cabinet with a secret inside, and a detective.¹ This makes *Winona* a somewhat improbable "patriot fiction"; first, because the genre was considered to corrupt its readers; and second, because, as critics have lately argued, sensation fiction worked by exposing the fissures in society, rather than celebrating its coherence.

Winona did not appear in book form until Len Early and Michael Peterman's richly annotated 2007 edition. In a material sense, then, although its author is a canonical nineteenth-century writer, *Winona* is not an influential Canadian fiction but rather an ephemeral one. While it is impossible to know who the readers of periodicals were, or indeed how many people read each copy, nevertheless, the number of periodicals produced in Canada, together with the subscription lists available, allow Mary Lu Macdonald to argue that these publications performed an important intermediary role in Canadian literary culture; they "accustomed readers to the idea of native literary productions before local production of books became commonplace" (226). Periodicals, as the cheapest and most immediately available medium for local Canadian literature, were thus particularly vital to the literary project of nation building. Yet, while there exists a considerable body of critical work on nation building in nineteenth-century literature, there has been less critical attention paid to serialized genre fiction as it contributed to the same literary project.

Both as a deliberate attempt to create a “Canadian story” in an “unpatriotic” genre and as an example of a periodical publication that “accustomed readers to the idea of native literary productions,” *Winona* offers a productive site for investigating the relation between the Canadian novel and the Canadian nation in the years immediately following Confederation. In this essay I argue, first, that *Winona*, like British sensation novels, works to expose fears about the sanctity and safety of the family writ large as nation and, further, that the ways in which *Winona* differs from the British novels signal specifically Canadian anxieties. Second, I argue that by imagining an affectively charged, vulnerable “confederated” family, *Winona* sensationalizes the confederation of Canada as the defence of the domestic and “proper” national family against both the threateningly familiar European brother and the unsettling Native sister.

This essay follows the lead of scholars such as Jennifer Henderson and Daniel Coleman who theorize Canada as a “project” in order to ask how Canada as nation-state was created out of, and driven by, the transplanting of British experiments in political liberalism or, in Coleman’s analysis, the investment in British civility. Coleman theorizes that literary nation building, which he calls the “literary project of English Canada,” naturalized Whiteness as the norm for English Canadian cultural identity by conflating Whiteness and British civility (5). What’s striking about *Winona* in relation to Coleman’s argument is that it resolves civility’s ambivalence by refusing responsibility for its violence. The Confederation family does not defend itself, but is defended by outsiders: the Native foster sister, Winona; the regal Valerie Lennox (an in-law, as it turns out); and a hired gun, the oddly out-of-place Detective Fennel. In the third and concluding part of my argument, I suggest that *Winona* contributes to the literary project of English Canada which Coleman has potently termed “white civility” but that by outsourcing civility’s inherent violence, it simultaneously draws attention to the very structural ambivalence at the heart of civility itself.

Winona in the Favorite

By the time the first installment of *Winona* appeared in the *Favorite*, Crawford had published at least three stories and two poems, and another novel, *Wrecked! Or, The Rosclerras of Mistree*, was at the same time being published serially in *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*

(Early and Peterman 16). One of her earliest published fictions, *Winona* introduces concerns that drive some of her important later work. For example, the Canadian nationalism demanded by the *Hearthstone* contest and clearly represented in the novel anticipates the nationalism implicit in the settler narrative of her now best-known poem, *Malcolm's Katie*. And *Winona* rhapsodizes the Canadian wilderness as an ideal, unspoiled space, quintessentially Canadian, later animated (and indigenized) in many of her poems, including *Malcolm's Katie*, *The Dark*, and *The Canoe*.² That said, *Winona* is definitely an early work, and written for a different kind of publication and different readers. As Early and Peterman note, Crawford “cultivated two distinct facilities”; while she developed her talent as a poet, publishing in the more respected *Toronto Evening Telegram* and, later, the *Toronto Globe*, she also churned out short and long fiction for story papers such as the *Favorite* to earn her living (12).

The Favorite announced itself as a “thoroughly good paper, perfectly moral in its tone and tendencies” (“Our First Bow” 316). But, lest such moral emphasis suggest an unpalatable didacticism, the editor clarifies that the paper will nonetheless be “emphatically a *live* paper; there will be nothing in it to induce drowsiness” (317). To inculcate morality while warding off drowsiness, the *Favorite* published selections of Canadian fiction by writers such as Isabella's sister, Emma Crawford, and Catherine Parr Trail's daughter Mary Muchall, alongside ghost stories and M.E. Braddon's novel *Publicans and Sinners* (Early and Peterman 26-27).

Winona is nominally about two foster sisters, one Native and one white. Winona, the daughter of a “once celebrated Huron chief” (Crawford 88), has dedicated herself to protecting her foster sister, Androsia Howard, from the dark and brooding Andy Farmer to whom Androsia is betrothed. The story opens with the arrival of handsome young Archie Frazer at Colonel Howard's home in this bicultural wilderness seclusion. Despite the presence of multiple protectors, Androsia is abducted by a “tanned rascal,” Hawk-eye (97). That same night, Winona disappears (apparently drowned in the attempt to rescue Androsia), Colonel Howard dies, and Andy Farmer vanishes and is presumed dead. It is left to Archie Frazer to rescue the “uncommonly lovely” Androsia (92). He doesn't. Although Archie assumes his responsibility with all appropriate heroic vigour, and with some help from

Colonel Howard's "valet," the Irish Mike Murphy, it is her Native foster sister, Winona (not dead after all), who kills Hawk-eye and rescues the precious Androsia. Archie Frazer then escorts the two foster sisters out of the wilderness to glittering Toronto and, from there, sends them by steamer to the Frazer family home on the St. Lawrence. But even in the Frazers' domestic idyll, Androsia is not safe. Winona once again disappears, and a suave stranger, Mr. Macer, appears on the scene.

Canadian Sensation

Though generically slippery to define, sensation novels are, at the very least, "novels with a secret" (Maunder 5). The revelation of secrets is the thrill of sensation. Often, apparently ordinary moral citizens are revealed to be sinister plotters, or secret histories return to haunt the present. Sensation novels are often based on "crime and scandals . . . which disrupt the domestic lives of the property owning classes" (Wynne 4). Crawford's own awareness of the genre and medium she is writing for signal the importance of reading with generic constraints in mind. She seems to delight in self-conscious recognition of generic conventions — and the pressure that the Canadian location puts on these conventions. One harmless character, for example, loves to read murder cases from the English papers, as "his soul panted for the most gory and hair-raising literature that could be procured" (192). Similarly, the detective who makes his entrance toward the final third of the book is first described as "one of those useful growths of modern society written of in novels" (210), a facile literary typecasting that the narrator later corrects: "To tell the truth, Mr. Fennel was not at all like the recognized type of detective" (213). Crawford's commentary on generic convention provides pointed narrative instruction, inviting her readership both to enjoy the sensation and, simultaneously, to take pleasure in recognizing its tropes. This ironic distance from the genre is amplified by a further dissonance: the murder cases appear in English papers, and the detective novel is an American invention.³ Drawing attention to such affiliations, Crawford emphasizes the tension caused by asking sensation fiction to contribute to the work of constituting the nation.

The title frames the novel as belonging foremost to Winona, suggesting that the Native heroine, who has few appearances and even fewer words, is the most significant character of the story or, perhaps, in the spirit of the sensation novel, its most significant secret.

Indeed, Winona presents, throughout, as a ghostly spectre. “The face of Winona,” Mike says in awe when he sees her at the door, after she has apparently drowned (140). As she watches Androsia recover, Winona stands “voiceless, her black shadow flickering vast and spectrally . . . a statue of bronze such as it is alone in the power of the Native to become” (153). Archie feels his own reality shift as he sits by the fire with Winona, “the mystery of whose appearance amongst the living was yet unexplained” (155).

On the one hand, figuring the Native as spectral only makes literal what Terry Goldie has called the “historicizing” of the indigene which makes indigenous peoples “of the past” and thus not agents in the present: “As people of the past there is no possibility of life in the present” (161). In this reading, Winona’s barely alive status would seem to nullify her opportunities for action and agency. She could only be the terrifying remainder — that spectre that haunts the nation, as Justin Edwards has theorized the phantom in relation to the violently displaced aboriginal populations. The trope of the phantom, Edwards argues, suggests “a form of transgenerational haunting that is inherently political,” a product of the interaction between colonized and colonizer (xxix). Yet Winona is neither dead nor spectral. On the contrary, her spectral appearance owes entirely to the superstitions of the colonizers; moreover, not only is she assuredly alive, she is the hero. By saving Androsia from Hawk-eye, Winona completes the heroic rescue that Archie Frazer failed to perform.

However, Winona is only briefly allowed to occupy the position of hero. Her usurpation of Archie’s role is quickly rationalized as evidence not of bravery, but of savagery. What is more, her savagery is presented in direct contrast to the white hero’s “civil” sensibility. When he first recognizes the “dirty-looking horse-hair” (153) that Winona carries into the Harty farmhouse, following her supposed death, as a scalp, Archie cries out “in very natural dismay,” unwilling to believe what he sees (153). The contrast between the two characters is further established in terms that emphasize their different sensibilities. Confirming that what she holds is, indeed, Hawk-eye’s scalp, Winona “showed her white teeth in a dazzling smile of triumph; but reading the expression of horror in the countenances of her listeners, she darkened into added gloom, with a touch of lofty scorn in it” (154).

The scalp, of course, is the mark of a “savage” rather than a “civilized” murder, such as would ordinarily appear in the pages of sensation fiction. Significantly, in *Winona*, it involves an act that has already been determined as excluded from the new nation. When Archie is pursuing Hawk-eye, he feels his hope fading, even though he “knew that the cleverest trappers and guides of the region would assemble promptly to avenge an outrage as daring as it was extraordinary at this period of Canadian history, when the red man and the white join in a not altogether hollow friendship, and when war-paint and scalping-knives are romances of the past” (104). Putting aside the awkward and odd “not altogether hollow friendship,” what is clear from this passage is that “at this period of Canadian history,” Natives are no longer violent, no longer to be feared. This is not the time of “romances” but of modern reality. *Winona* horrifies because she is unexpectedly anachronistic, but this horror takes a different form than in British or American sensation fiction, where the horror is often that which lurks under the facade of respectability. In other words, while similar to the horror of sensation fiction in its ability to manifest national or cultural anxieties, the scalp and the Native girl who carries it proudly cannot be subsumed by the genre. And so, as Early and Peterman note, the novel shifts from its “dime-novel romance” (31), beginning in the backwoods of Canada, to a topography more familiar to the sensation genre: the bourgeois family home.

Firmly establishing the Frazers at the bourgeois centre of the story and the nation, Crawford gives their home a rich and familiarizing description that sets the amply padded Victorian scene. We first see the Frazers’ domestic interior through the eyes of the rough Irishman Mike who has come to deliver a letter from Archie Frazer with news of the Colonel’s death. Demonstrating a sensitivity to decor remarkable for a woodsman, Mike sees “only a library by merest courtesy, with its chintz lounging chairs, pearl and rose carpet, covered with tangled bronze reeds and moss, its book-shelves of bird’s-eye maple, and gleaming busts, and its pretty little organ, the pipes gleaming mellowly in the cool shadows” (121). With its busts and organ, evidence of interest in the arts, the library signals good taste and prosperity. The objects also situate the Frazer home familiarly as of both the British Empire and Canada; the chintz references Britain’s imperial holdings in India; the bookshelves are made, emblematically, of Canadian wood. This atten-

tion to interior description does more than establish the Frazers as the comfortably Canadian bourgeois family, it also establishes a kind of narrative safety; such domestic details are precisely what are expected from sensation novels and alert readers to the sanctity of this family and their domain. In other words, for the knowledgeable reader of sensation fiction, these specific and realistic details identify the Frazers as “good” subjects — a model family — while at the same time signalling an inevitable sensational disruption of the domestic.

But neither the domesticity of the Frazer home nor the realism of Crawford’s description work strictly within the generic convention. Whereas the sensation genre responded to, and exposed, the anxieties of urban (or suburban) Victorian modernity, in Confederation-era Canada just 18.3 percent of its 3.5 million people were living in urban areas (Careless and Brown 453). The sparkling, bustling city of Toronto that Crawford depicts had a population of only 56,092 (Dept. of Agriculture 33). Whereas in British novels the sensation was employed to unbalance the bourgeois family, in *Winona* the domestic space and the family are already, in some sense, unbalanced or displaced. After all, the Frazer family exists not in the bosom of the Empire but, as the novel establishes in its opening scenes of uncultivated wilderness, in the new Dominion of Canada, which is still being built — both literally and imaginatively. Indeed, the novel itself is a response to this drive for literary nation making to keep pace with, or indeed exceed, its physical construction.

However, sensation novels were not generally understood to build the nation, but rather to threaten its morals. In his 1867 address “The Mental Outfit of the New Dominion,” Thomas D’Arcy McGee explicitly warns his listeners against those “sensational and sensual books, many of them written by women, who are the disgrace of their sex, and read with avidity by those who want the opportunity equally to disgrace it” (80). Significantly, though not uniquely, McGee couples his anxiety about “promiscuous” reading of sensation fiction with anxiety about the morals of women writers and readers. But more than feminine morality is at stake. For McGee, sensation fiction not only endangers morals but also potentially stunts national development, for these novels, he says, fill “our memories with vain, or perplexing, or atrocious images” rather than giving “certainty and population to the geographical and historical dreams of our youthful days” (81). Promiscuous readers and disgraceful writers of sensational books create a backward, past-oriented

imaginary. But as one of the earliest and most outspoken advocates of Confederation, McGee wants a forward, future-oriented literature that will “populate” and give “certainty” to the nation.

So, while *Winona* represents a Canada bourgeois enough to exploit the sensation genre’s familiar domestic tropes and its thrilling upsets, by responding to the contest’s requirement to tell a story that “illustrates” the nation, it knocks the genre just slightly askew. Similarly, as an example of the popular but disturbing genre of sensation fiction, *Winona* occupies an uneasy relation to the national literary project; as an explicitly patriotic response, the novel imagines a nation, yet as a morally suspect sensation fiction, it realizes a dangerous kind of imagining that could, in its patriotic efforts, very well corrupt avid readers and even impede the building of nation. *Winona* also, as I will argue next, freights the typical fears of readers — “of unscrupulous imposters, hidden secrets from the past, and sinister crimes” (Wynne 8) — with specifically Canadian anxieties about confederation and civility.

Sensationalizing Confederation

While the title of the novel emphasizes sisterhood, the sensational plot actually turns on the relation between two sons. As it turns out, the mysterious Mr. Macer is the very same “presumed dead” Andy Farmer, who is shockingly revealed to be the son of Captain Frazer by a previous marriage and, therefore, Archie Frazer’s half-brother. Once betrothed to Androsia, and thus heir to her father, Colonel Howard’s, wealth, Farmer learns that Colonel Howard made out a second will before he died; in this will, he inherits nothing. Farmer learns, too, that Mike Murphy has taken the will to Captain Frazer for safekeeping. So, driven by resentment at being abandoned “a nameless waif” (254), and now excluded from what he considers his only chance at happiness, Farmer is bent on destroying the Frazers’ new-world happiness and making away with the Canadian prize, the half-wild beauty Androsia.

In July 1867, George Brown, the editor of the *Toronto Globe*, celebrated “the inauguration of a new nationality, to which are committed the interests of Christianity and civilization” and assured his readers that “if the people of the United Provinces are true to themselves and exercise a persistent and careful control over all public proceedings, there is not a shadow of doubt to success” (Willis 306). Yet, as Alexander Willis shows, Brown’s hopeful assurance did not influence the coun-

try's papers. Rather than imagine the nation, newspapers "revealed strengths and weaknesses in party lines not readily seen in the forums of the provincial legislatures" (Willis 310). In the context of the public debate leading up to and following Confederation, the expectation that literature must foster patriotism seemed more than ever imperative. Henry James Morgan echoes Brown's sentiment in his 1867 *Bibliotheca Canadensis*: "We are just entering upon the commencement of a new, and it is sincerely to be hoped, — a bright and glorious epoch in our history. . . . Now more than at any other time ought the literary life of the New Dominion develop itself unitedly" (63). It is striking that both Brown's and Morgan's words bear the trace of an uncertain future. Brown phrases his hope as an "if" and Morgan as an "ought." If people are "true to themselves," then the union will be successful; now, the literary life "ought" to "develop itself unitedly." Successful union, in other words, is by no means fully present. It is the task of literature to imagine the provinces into a fully realized, and emotionally felt, confederation.

Carl Murphy argues that "the marriage metaphor as the archetypal resolution of English-French relations is a feature of Canadian fiction from the beginning" (6), concluding that as it is represented metaphorically by marriage, the confederation of Canada "is a union achieved after great struggle, but one that emerges stronger because of the struggle" (19). But in *Winona*, the Confederation-style marriage is in place before the beginning of the story — in the productive union of Captain and Desirée Frazer. This marriage forms the prehistory of the story but a prehistory that nonetheless remains central to Crawford's sensation plot because it hides a traumatic secret: Captain Frazer's abandonment of a prior British son. This restaging of the marriage metaphor reflects a different post-Confederation struggle.

After Confederation, the national struggle was not (or was not only) to bind English and French Canada, but to work through partisan politics, to differentiate between central and local legislation, and to begin the protracted process of separating Canadian property, trade, and taxes from British. In April 1867, Auberon Herbert asserts an optimism about what he calls the "moral effect" of Confederation: "By the mere passage from provincial to national life, the mind of the people will acquire new force and energy; the pride of empire will be kindled, and will replace old jealousies and narrow ambitions" (486). Confederation will unify by replacing partisanship with national pride. Part of this national pride

will stem from Canada's newfound responsibility for managing its own business. Herbert comments on the debate regarding taxation of British imported goods: "All that England can do is to offer advice, and Canada must decide, as all other nations do, by the light of her own interests. It is at once childish and ridiculous for any of our great manufacturing towns to indulge in complaints on the subject, as if Canada were playing the part of a parricide when she collects a revenue upon English goods" (488). The definitive separation of colony from empire (figuratively rendered as the separation of child from father) is made tangible in the renegotiation of trade. British goods are now subject to the same import taxes as any other "foreign" good. Herbert's tone of assuagement suggests this was distressing to some, and that this distress was registered as the very epitome of family tragedy: the "parricide." So the process of "making" the nation was at the same time a process of discomforting, ambivalent defamiliarization.

Critics have identified in Crawford's work a skeptical or critical distance from England's imperial project of aggressive agrarian settlement and its alliance of war and commerce. *Winona*, too, bears traces of this skepticism.⁴ But in the context of post-Confederation Canada, when Britain was in the process of becoming "foreign" to the new Dominion, this critical or wary attitude toward the empire is rendered not as critique of nation building but as necessary to it. Canada *must* separate from Britain. This is not "parricide," Herberon insists, but just growing up. So it is significant that, in *Winona*, the conflict between old world and new is not between son and father but between brothers, one British and one Canadian. In this way, *Winona* slightly reconfigures the relation between newly independent colony and its empire, in effect making the contest one of equals. The reconfigured relationship between Britain and Canada imagined in *Winona* is similar to that advanced by the Canada First movement, launched in 1868. Carl Berger characterizes the tension of Canada First's nationalism in this way: "Canadian imperialism rested upon an intense awareness of Canadian nationality combined with an equally decided desire to unify and transform the British Empire so that this nationality could attain a position of equality within it" (49). Canada First joined these two seemingly opposite desires into a national goal: to affirm the singularity of Canada while at the same time nesting the nation within a unified British Empire. In *Winona*, this ambivalent relation to Britain takes the form of suspicion of British

hypocritical civility and celebration of old-world romantic heroes. This is not a critique of imperialism but rather an assertion of the rightness of the new Canadian nation's separation from its imperial history.

Coleman emphasizes that civility is "a positive value that is structurally ambivalent" (9). While noting that the borders of the civil community are policed and maintained by violent exclusions, Coleman insists that observing how "civility" works should not deny the "real" value of civility. Rather, "these borders have been, will always be, the sites where new projects of civility are under negotiation" (9). Coleman's analysis exploits the two meanings of civility, both operative in late nineteenth-century Canadian literature. The first meaning of *civil* carries a connotation of progress, whereby *civilization* is the vantage point on a single timeline from which the European surveys the "pre-modern," and thus less-civilized or "savage," Other. The second meaning is the "moral-ethical ideal" of the *civil* state, wherein subjects are treated with justice and as equals. Both these meanings, Coleman notes, are "demonstrated by cultivated, polite behaviour" (10), the third meaning of "civil." While *Winona* certainly exploits the first part of that definition by casting Winona as the anachronistic savage in contrast to Archie's sensitive civility, it also presents the second and third meanings, revealing the very ambivalence Coleman considers a structural necessity for civility.

While civility could be demonstrated by the performance of specific "civilized" behaviour, such behaviour was increasingly suspect in the very period that most idealized it: the nineteenth century. The superficiality of civility, its potential to be focused only on conduct rather than on a reflection of true moral feeling, is surely one of the most common themes of Victorian fiction: is politeness merely hypocrisy? Is commercial wealth built on the backs of the poor? What hides in the attic of the ordinary family? Unmasking that civility, and producing sensation in the act, is a defining aspect of the sensation genre. As Ann Cvetkovich explains, "Sensational events often turn on the rendering visible of what remains hidden or mysterious, and their affecting power arises from the satisfaction or thrill of seeing" (24). They generated suspense and frightened their readers; that was the thrill. But these thrills worked precisely because, as Lynn Pykett argues, the plots and subjects of sensation "both embodied and, to some extent, explored the hopes and fears of the Victorian middle classes" (9). In other words, sensation novels animated fears close to home. They did so by re-mapping

the familiar terrain of the realist novel: the nature of the family and gender roles, as well as the role of law in organizing family, property, and middle-class moral codes. Sensation fiction typically worked by calling into question the veneer of respectability and, in so doing, pointing to the instability at the heart of British civility; if politeness — the external behavioural manifestation of civility — can mask a seemingly ordinary person's greed, venality, and cruelty, then who was to say that British civility itself did not mask something dastardly at the heart of the nation?

Winona demonstrates the ambivalence associated with civility in its deployment of sensation: the duplicitously civilized character that threatens the new Confederation family is not Canadian but British. The novel asserts the propriety of the Canadian-born; territory has been won, the indigenous population has been "civilized," settlement — at least of Upper and Lower Canada — is complete. In this new Canada, the risk to propriety comes not from the woods, but from the "civilized" centre — from the abandoned Briton, Andy Farmer, first son of Captain Frazer. It's Andy Farmer, in his guise of Mr. Macer, whose identity is "rendered visible" and whose wicked plans are (thrillingly) revealed to the reader. By staging the plot as a contest between the Canadian and the British brother, the novel seems to promise a sensational allegory of Canadian imperialism: the strapping young Canadian son set against the suspiciously smooth British son, their fight not over territory but over a woman. Indeed, such a fight is twice prefigured. When Archie Frazer and Andy Farmer first meet at Colonel Howard's, Farmer scathingly summarizes his impression of Archie as "a commonplace military fop and athlete," and the narrator intervenes to warn that "it remained for time alone to shew [sic] him his fatal mistake" (93). Violence between the two men is predicted a second time when Archie declares to his father that if he met Farmer again he would "feel [his] fingers tingle to choke the life out his cowardly carcass [sic]." His father ominously replies, "Do you know that you are calling for the blood of your brother? . . . Worthy of death he may be, but neither by your hand or will" (191).

As Daniel Coleman shows, the allegory of the fratricidal Loyalist, the loyal brother forced to murder his rebellious sibling, dominates nineteenth-century representations of one of Canada's other formative historical moments, the war of 1812 — when Loyalist forces defended

British North America against its White “brother,” the United States. The Loyalist allegory typically associates more venal attributes with the “bad” brother, who puts self-interest above loyalty. The “bad” brother’s “disordered values” defamiliarize him, making him un-family enough to be turned against without disrupting the core narrative of Canadian civility (Coleman 53). Archie Frazer and Andy Farmer present a different kind of international fraternity and, indeed, the homologous structure of their names is suggestive in this regard: Archie is the Canadian son of Confederation while Andy is British. Yet the logic that governs their confrontation is not so different than in the novels Coleman analyzes. Like the “bad” brother of Loyalist narratives, Andy is venal, expelled from family and society, and, indeed, from the possibility of a virtuous life. Disguised as Macer, he arrives at the Frazer home to destroy Colonel Howard’s second will, thereby guaranteeing himself the future and fortune promised him in the Colonel’s first will.

The context of Captain Frazer’s disclosure of Archie’s fraternity is crucial. It directly follows Winona’s disappearance from the Crawford family home. Winona has left to hunt down Andy Farmer, who, we now learn, broke Winona’s heart before threatening her beloved Androsia. When Captain Frazer is informed of Winona’s midnight escape, “his dark eyes flashed with horror,” and he instructs Archie “Open the window! . . . I am suffocating” (190). Archie interprets his father’s nervous reaction to be panic for the Native girl’s safety. “Remember her race,” Archie says to calm what he believes are his father’s fears for Winona’s safety, suggesting she is only “rambling.” His father replies, “I do [remember her race] . . . and therein lies my grief. Vindictive, revengeful, sure and swift on the trail of an enemy as a sleuth-hound. Relentless as fire or pestilence” (190). And it is in response to this suggestion that Archie makes his unknowingly fratricidal declaration: “If you think that is her errand, I wish her every success. If I met him myself I would feel my fingers tingle. . . .” With this statement, Archie aligns himself with the vengeful Winona, perhaps prefiguring her assumption, yet again, of his heroic role.

Archie’s momentary identification with Winona is immediately trumped by the revelation of his secret brotherhood with the man he hates. This short conversation ends with the father’s prescient words, “neither your hand nor will,” thus contrasting Winona’s racial talent for violence with Archie’s brotherly duty *not* to kill — a contrast has

already been highlighted once before, when Winona proudly wielded Hawk-eye's scalp to Archie's horror. The exchange of roles is expected: Archie cannot commit the murder because he is a brother and because he is horrified by violence; Winona *can* commit the murder because she is "savage" enough to do so and because she's not of the same family.

Crawford, however, complicates this set-up by making Macer (almost) an object of compassion. Macer is not a naturally bad man; rather, he's bad, the narrator explains, "more from education and circumstances than from the moulding of nature" (255). As Macer himself avers in soliloquy before the theft that will secure his fortune, "I would gain wealth hand in hand with Virtue if so I could, but if that is forbidden, welcome Vice, but welcome as an accomplice, not a friend. . . . Well, the fate that cast me a nameless waif on the world will either mar or make my fortunes soon" (254). The implication is that he became a bad man only because he was denied the father that Archie was fortunate enough to have. Macer is driven by resentment about this originary loss — the very loss that is the premise for the post-Confederation Crawford family. Captain Frazer (unknowingly) abandoned his son when he left Britain, and founded his new family by taking a new French-Canadian bride.

Protecting the Innocence of Nation

By this point in the story, "Macer" has insinuated himself into the family by rescuing a Frazer daughter from a shallow frozen lake. His disguise is apparently impenetrable. He has fooled the Colonel's Irishman, Mike Murphy, and even Androsia is strangely uncertain of his true identity. The only one who sees through him is a visitor to the home, Valerie Lennox, who comes to resolve a romantic subplot concerning her cousin and a Frazer daughter. When Valerie sees Macer, she immediately penetrates his disguise and recognizes him as the husband who deserted her in France, "covered with the odium of a felony, the forgery of [his] employer's name" (258). Valerie confronts her husband. While claiming to still love him, she threatens to reveal him to the Frazer family if, as she says, "so much as a hair of these innocent heads suffers through [his] machinations" (258). Before leaving him alone to consider her threat, she presents him with a locket containing the miniature of their dead daughter in the hope that the girl's angelic face will convince him not to perpetrate whatever evil he has planned. But neither her threat

nor his daughter's image diverts Macer from his wicked plan. Having ascertained that Colonel Howard's will is kept in the maple *escritoire* (where else?), Macer steals down to the library "with the velvet tread of a panther," unaware that his progress is being watched (261). Invisible to him, "a tall, slender form stepped suddenly, appeared phantom-like from the shadows, a figure of bronze in the fuller light of the hall" (261). It doesn't take much for the reader to guess whom that "phantom" might be, but Crawford helpfully adds, "It was the figure of an Indian youth" (261).

In the Frazers' richly described library, the two violent quasi-siblings come "face to face," as the chapter title warns, and Winona seems to assume Archie's aggressive position toward the "bad" brother.⁵ At the moment of their confrontation, not only is Farmer now the black-bearded Macer, but Winona, too, is in disguise. Having shorn her hair when she left the Frazer house in search of Farmer, she is now cross-dressed as a Native "youth." But these two disguised not quite family members nevertheless recognize each other immediately. Even in the dark, there is no hesitation. When Macer guesses, "You seek revenge?" Winona replies, "The pale-face traitor speaks the truth. . . . I seek revenge" (265). It is hard not to read this as a moment of colonial accusation. Winona accuses the White Briton, holding him accountable for his duplicity and his violence, calling him responsible for her newly unsympathetic heart. Referring to herself in the third person, she explains this change:

Winona's heart has become as iron, from which fierce words strike nothing but fire . . . yes, from that night on which the pale-face traitor shot her down as a dog, because she would have rescued her sister from his claws . . . then Winona's heart changed within her, as the bright flower changes to the hard unlovely seed. (265)

Putting aside the awkwardly double-edged closing simile — the seed is not only the end of the flower but the beginning of new life — the line of responsibility is nonetheless clear: his violence created her "savagery." Her cross-dressed appearance also has the effect of repositioning her accusation. Though she is still recognizably Winona, she is also, at the same time, a man. This is not a confrontation between male colonizer and colonized woman but between two masculine antagonists, fighting over one woman: Androsia. Winona once again assumes Archie's heroic role. But, of course, Winona is neither male nor white, and she is not

part of the Confederation family. The Native cannot alone secure the family home. Macer shoots Winona before she can kill him.

While this may seem a reasonable point in the plot for Archie to intervene — now that he has the additional motivation of a woman's death to avenge — Crawford chooses to follow Captain Frazer's imperative. There will be no fratricide in this novel. Instead, Detective Fennel intervenes.

The Toronto detective, who we learn is “highly thought of in his calling” (214), was originally hired by Archie to find Winona after she disappeared from the Frazer home. His arrival on the scene at this crucial homicidal moment is explained later (though perspicacious readers may already have penetrated his disguise as Mike's ever curious new helper, “Pat”). Fennel has assembled the facts he gleaned from the train station master together with what he already knows of Macer to deduce that the sickly looking Native boy and the black-bearded stranger have both gone to where all the plot lines converge — the Frazer home. In the library, over Winona's not-yet-dead body, Fennel states his intention to arrest Macer for forgery and burglary. The two tussle, and “in the struggle, the detective's revolver, which he had held concealed in his hand” (267) accidentally fires, killing Macer.

In *The Novel and the Police*, D.A. Miller observes that the technique of detective fiction that locates guilt in a single individual — the aberration in a person, not the community — is a “tactic in the more fundamental strategy of localizing the investigation” (36). As Miller explains, not only is only one person of the community found to be guilty and apprehended as a criminal, but the investigative agency is also limited to a single (“eccentric”) detective, and the intervention of the detective (or the circumstances requiring such intervention) is highlighted as an “exception to the social norms usually in effect” (36). This “localizing” strategy in detective fiction means that it is not so much (or not only) that the community is free of criminal guilt but rather that because the community is not the “subject of detection,” it is “a fortiori — innocent of criminology too.” As Miller suggests, “The community's “most radical innocence . . . derives from its sheer ignorance of power, its incapacity to assume a machinery of surveillance, control, and punishment. The crime and the failure to solve it both testify to the community's naive state of vulnerability. Taken charge of by an eccentric outsider, the investigation preserves such naiveté while neutralizing the vulnerability

that attends it” (36). These words seem to describe Detective Fennel’s role in *Winona* and the community that he defends in the middle of the night. In *Winona*, however, the “radical innocence” that Miller theorizes is precisely the (imagined) state of the post-Confederation nation as realized in the literary project of civility. Coleman observes that “civility operates as a mode of internal management: the subjects of the civil order discipline their conduct in order to participate in the civil realm, and they themselves gain or lose legitimacy in an internally striated civil society depending on the degree to which they conform to its ideals” (10). In turn, mastery of these codes of civility gives “civil subjects a mandate for managing the circumstances of those perceived as uncivil” (13). But the community of the detective novel refuses the mandate to manage or discipline its own conduct. Or, more exactly, if we read Miller back into Coleman, the radically innocent community is both innocent and ignorant of its own deployment of such internal management.

The criminal in *Winona* is British — not a member of the *new* community, the new Dominion of Canada — and the crime he commits is the one that so much Canadian fiction disavows: the murder of the Native. So, the duplicitously “civil” Briton is individually and criminally responsible for the death of the Native, while the family is not only innocent of the murder but also “innocent of criminology.” The family’s naïveté concerning the violence of power is protected by the sudden, fortuitous appearance of the detective. Detective Fennel “neutralizes the vulnerability” of the newly confederated Canadian family. Macer is not killed by family — neither by his own brother nor the vengeful Native sister of the woman he has plotted to marry — but accidentally, by the only character with anything like the legal authority to wield such power and the one character *not* emotionally invested. In his emotional disinterest, Detective Fennel embodies the ideal of civil justice. In Crawford’s construction of this “eccentric” character, she reveals most clearly the resolution of the ambivalence at the heart of “White civility.” Here, in the figure of the detective, is negotiated the desire to protect the post-Confederation civil family and the wish not to commit the violence such protection inevitably entails. The British half-brother, not any member of the Canadian family, is guilty of the Native’s death. He pays for this crime, as it were, by accident, but an accident caused by a quasi-legal authority. Thanks to Detective Fennel,

and the detective's "localizing" strategy, justice and equality appear to have been maintained — all while the Frazer family sleeps.

By putting the gun in the detective's hand, Crawford dispatches the national anxieties, narrating, but refusing to participate in, the violent excisions required to protect the family, maintaining the implausible, optimistically idealistic fiction that "civil" citizens are never uncivil, that the governance and policing of civility is impartial and distant. Not only have the Frazers done nothing wrong, but they have been naive to the power structure which, in their domestic idyll, they inhabit and instantiate. In this way, while excluding from civility both the British brother and the indigenous sister, *Winona* asserts the fiction that the sons and daughters of Confederation are not only civil but also innocent.

NOTES

¹ In their introduction to the text, editors Len Early and Michael Peterman discuss the novel's relation to sensation fiction, principally the bearing of the genre on narrative structure, style, and "the woman question."

² Cecily Devereux, for example, considers *Malcolm's Katie* "an ideological land claim" (298), whereas Robert Alan Burns argues that while Crawford "may have celebrated the expansion of the Canadian nation, she mourned the passing of the forests and of those whose homes, communities, and lives were sacrificed" (160).

³ Edgar Allen Poe's "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1841) is generally considered the first detective story, while the first British adaptation of the genre, Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone*, appeared only four years before *Winona* in 1868.

⁴ See Richard Dellamora's "Isabella Valancy Crawford and an English-Canadian Sodom" and Robert Alan Burns's "Poet in Her Time: Isabella Valancy Crawford's Social, Economic, and Political Views."

⁵ In fact, this is not the only "face-to-face" encounter in the chapter. Along with the Colonel's will, Macer also finds in the escritoire a portrait of his mother, Flora Lennox, and, in this moment, learns that Captain Frazer is his father. This second portrait, his mother's face, holds him to account in a way his daughter's face did not: "In one glance, the ambitious man read the lordly future which might have been his, and from which his crimes would now forever exclude him . . . he suffered the pangs of the deepest hell, of a thousand deaths, though on his stony face there was no sign or token of the awful despair within him" (Crawford 264).

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