

## Isabella Valancy Crawford and an English- Canadian Sodom\*

In this essay, I focus on a short story, “Extradited” (1886) by Isabella Valancy Crawford, that Margaret Atwood chose to open *The Oxford Book of Canadian Short Stories in English* (1986). By selecting the story as the point of departure for this collection, Atwood implies that it has something important to say about the emergence of modern Canada. Published in Ontario during a decade of intense nationalist fervor, “Extradited” offers a critical meditation in fictional terms on English-Canadian political ideology. Embedded in this ideology and in Crawford’s response are aspects of the structure of the story of Sodom and other narratives in the opening books of the Hebrew Bible. This fact is not surprising since English settler colonies carried with them the biblically based notions of a providential national covenant that had been framed in England during the reign of Elizabeth I.<sup>1</sup> As the colonies began to develop a sense of themselves as emerging nation-states, they adapted English ideology to their needs. Moreover, as a nation that in the 1880s identified itself in terms of westward expansion, Canada was well suited to a mode of thinking that originated in the efforts of the ancient Israelites to displace the existing inhabitants of territories that the Israelites required for agriculture and herding.<sup>2</sup>

The term “English Canada” is salient since this unnecessarily rebarbarative phrase (anglophone Canada is both more accurate and more accommodating) refers not only to English-speaking Canadians but also to Canada’s special relationship to Englishness or, in other words, to its colonial past. “English-Canadian” literature is usually read as working out the emergence

of a specifically Canadian difference—that, at least, is how Atwood describes it (xvi). Insofar as Canadian literature is English, however, it transmits the structures of English national identity—including the tendency, pronounced in the nineteenth century, for that term to subsume other differences (such as Scottish, Irish, and Welsh).<sup>3</sup> This tendency is especially apropos of Crawford since the interest in Irish migration to Canada shown in her writing indicates that she was keenly aware of her own status as an immigrant of Anglo-Irish origins. As a result, Crawford is able to identify with both English and Irish positions but with each only to a degree. Her representation of both is marked by ambivalence.<sup>4</sup>

Crawford's self-consciousness distances her from emergent English-Canadian nationalism. It distances her as well from the ideological construction of agricultural settlement that is a major part of the subject of "Extradited." In the story, Crawford's resistance shows both in the tensions internal to a marriage that joins Bessie, a woman most likely of English stock, with Sam O'Dwyer, an Irish-Catholic settler. Within the story, the ardent friendship that exists between O'Dwyer and a farm hand named Joe threatens to eclipse the triad of father, mother, and infant son. The violence with which the priority of the nuclear family is re-established at the end of the story underscores the exploitations and exclusions that Crawford associates with settlement in Canada.

The Sodom narrative in Genesis 18-19 poses the infidelity of the citizens of Sodom against the promises made by God to the seed of Abraham. Within this general structure, there is place for a number of figures such as Abraham's wife, Sarah, and Lot's wife, unnamed in the Bible, the presence of both of whom complicates the gender-structure of the narrative. Sarah's laughter in response to Abraham's news of her impending childbirth and the turn back of Lot's wife to Sodom in contravention of her husband's command express wifely dissidence in face of the promise of collective salvation. Since the continuity of this promise depends upon women's reproductive capacity, the resistance registered by these women is important. Female dissidence, moreover, finds unexpected affiliation in the person of Lot, whose choice of Sodom as a dwelling place, makes him a faulty patriarch. Lot's evident attraction, moreover, to the beautiful young strangers who visit Sodom situates him as yet another, albeit in his case unwitting, resister to the demands of patriarchy. And yet, without the erotic sympathy that motivates Lot's hospitality to the strangers, the providential rescue of his family would not be possible.

“Extradited” is a domestic tale—one in which a young wife who is also a mother and a teacher functions as a metaphor of the civilizing processes involved in nation-building. In Crawford’s view, woman in these roles is virtually synonymous with emergent Canadian identity in settler communities. In its repulsion from this particular figure, Crawford’s text instates an abiding tension and contradiction within feminist and, more generally, woman-centred thinking in Canada. Crawford implicitly condemns both the way in which woman is constituted within (and thereby serves to help constitute) nationalist discourse as well as the violent effects of that construction. The Sodom-narrative in Genesis defends patriarchal authority against an investment in same-sex desire that overruns the bounds of kinship. Woman in her identification as wife can police these boundaries—as Bessie does in “Extradited.” In the Bible, however, Lot’s wife turns out to be a point of resistance within the established order of things. Likewise, Crawford, in her sympathy with the shy romance of Sam and Joe, inhabits a dual position of feminine resistance to authority and alliance with sexual dissidence.<sup>5</sup> At the same time that woman is constituted in “Extradited” as the bulwark against sodomitic contamination by ethnic and racial others, Crawford’s imaginary investment in male friendship validates that intimacy while likewise signaling a possible openness on her part to intimacy between women.

Crawford’s validation of male friendship functions in another way as well. Rural settlement depended upon male collaboration, which depended in turn upon close emotional ties. In “Extradited,” the survival of the farm is portrayed as depending upon the loyalty and love of a laborer for his employer. In this way, Crawford, like Walt Whitman in his poetry, makes the point that without what Whitman calls comradeship the settlement of the North American continent would not have been possible.<sup>6</sup> “Extradited,” however, suggests that the story of westward expansion requires that the evidence of such collaboration be silenced and rendered invisible.

By the end of the nineteenth century, conservative female writers in England were proclaiming the fact that “by the depth and strength of her maternal instinct is the race preserved.” Commentators such as Eliza Lynn Linton were outspoken in condemning the demands of feminists and sexual dissidents for what she describes as “a new human nature and a new political economy,” demands that she saw as negatively “influencing the imperial policy of our grand old country!”<sup>7</sup> To Linton, the demands of women for political participation signified sexual inversion: “Like certain ‘sports’ which

develop hybrid characteristics, these insurgent wild women are in a sense unnatural. They have not 'bred true'—not according to the general lines on which the normal woman is constructed. There is in them a curious inversion of sex, which does not necessarily appear in the body, but is evident enough in the mind" (in Hamilton 188).

The need for a mother-centred, ultraconservative construction of the nuclear family was felt with intensified force on the ragged peripheries of empire. In Ontario, both the sense of responsibility to a collective destiny and the repulsion from threatening strangers were exacerbated. Moreover, as urbanization and industrialization took place, notions of genealogical inheritance were overlaid with the idea of economic and technological progress. In "Extradited," the dawn of this advance is hinted in Bessie's occupation as a school teacher and in the breaking log jam at the end of the story—a sign both of the exploitation of natural resources and of capital formation in the new province.<sup>8</sup> In English-speaking Ontario, genealogical transference remained in motion, projecting the pure country of the North as both heir and rival of a (mother) country that, by the end of the reign of Queen Victoria, was mired in economic decline and urban decay. In this perspective, the move from Liverpool or London to Ontario could be seen as a move from an Old World Sodom to a New World Zoar. Migrating as a young child from Dublin, Ireland, to the raw settlement of Paisley near Lake Huron, then eastward to Lakefield, a village in south-central Ontario and the mythic point of origin of English-Canadian literature, thence to the county seat of Peterborough, and finally to Toronto, Ontario's capital and leading city, Crawford witnessed all of these attitudes.

Ironically, Crawford finds that Sodom follows settlers to the New World as a newly constituted internal difference. In "Extradited," the little city of Zoar to which Lot and his family escape from Sodom (Gen. 19.22-23) becomes O'Dwyer's Clearing, located perhaps in the bush country outside Peterborough. The "bleak chaos of burned stumps" (116) that Crawford describes as surrounding the cabin and log barn register a Lot's wife's skepticism: the scene of desolation recalls the ashen plain of the fiery cities. Sam's wife, Bessie, serves the civilizing function of woman endorsed by ideologues such as Linton. For his part, Sam shows an unwarranted fondness for Joe, who has helped him clear the land over the past two years. Joe is a figure whose beauty, darkness, and mysterious origins signify in a number of ways. He is both a stranger from the United States and indigenous and mobile: on the morning of his death, he is absorbed in repairing a native-

style birch bark canoe. A phantasmatic focus of erotic, aesthetic, and decadent charm (his first word in the story is: "Sublime"), Joe is an ambiguous and ambivalent figure.<sup>9</sup> He is a young man of Sodom—tainted by "sin and wickedness" (121) in the words of Bessie, who at the opening of the story forbids him to touch her infant son, generically called "Baby." Like the Joseph of the Christian Bible, Joe is devoted in celibate fashion to the well-being of a mother and a son. But in this burnt-over landscape, he is also an apocalyptic messenger, opening hitherto unguessed reserves of affection and attraction in Sam, who grieves over the undisclosed trouble that robs Joe of peace of mind.

"Extradited" is a story about secrets and their construction within a genealogical narrative. Strong beyond his frame, sensitive, and well educated, Joe is haunted by a secret that remains nameless until near the end of the story. Bessie works to expose this secret in order to disarm a second secret that is yet more disturbing: namely the disruption of the family by Sam and Joe's entanglement. The latter secret is both open and nonetheless to be both exposed and suppressed by the violent incident with which the story ends. A third secret is that of Bessie's betrayal and destruction of love between two men—an act of treachery that she justifies by the need to defend her family and her son's inheritance.

The catalyst of the crisis of the story is a notice in a newspaper advertising a one-thousand-dollar reward for information leading to the extradition of a Yankee, believed to be in hiding in Ontario, who is wanted by police for a robbery committed in the United States. Sam never refers directly to the notice, but the secret conclave that he holds with Joe in the barn immediately after returning at sunset from a visit to his wife's parents indicates that he is looking for a way to help Joe escape. Calling Joe, Sam says: "There's something to be spoke about betwixt you an' me, Joe, an' I'd as lieve say it in the dark; let the lantern be—I'd lieve say it in the dark" (117).

Sam proposes to Joe that the four of them leave Canada to begin a new life beyond the reach of the law. In the meantime, Bessie, who has also seen the advertisement, decides to disclose Joe's whereabouts to the men who are searching for him. With her father's help, she intends to use the reward to set up a trust fund for Baby. The contrast between an eroticized discontent with the rigours of a primitive domesticity that characterizes Sam's friendship with Joe and Bessie's obsession with securing the lineage (and modest class position) of her family could not be more marked.

On the next day, when three detectives arrive to arrest Joe, Joe first saves Sam and Bessie's son, who falls into the river, then loses his own life when he is hit by the first log in the jam released upstream. As a result, Joe cannot be arrested; and Bessie is left without reward. On the other hand, Sam's complicity in offering refuge to Joe is disclosed and a new secret, that of Bessie's betrayal of her husband, constituted. Family and homestead have been preserved but at the price of further domestic alienation and the destruction of Sam and Joe's friendship. Moreover, if Sam should surmise Bessie's treachery, the marriage will fail outright. Likewise, since Bessie remains short of money, it is possible that financial problems may eventually force the sale or foreclosure of the farm.

Within a national narrative, Joe connotes not only sodomitic threat but the threat of contagion by contact with darker, Southern races—of which, for the purposes of this story and for English-Canadian nationality in Ontario, the United States, overrun in the 1880s by immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe, is seen to be a reservoir. Bessie's patriotism is formed in defensive antithesis to her construction of the States. However, as the birch bark canoe signifies, Joe also carries the burden of internal differences which, in the happy myth of Canadianization, were expected to disappear (Smith). Likewise, Bessie's fantasy of extraditing her romantic rival carries other subliminal fantasies of internal exclusions—of francophone Canadians, for example.

Although I have suggested that O'Dwyer's Clearing may be set in the area outside Peterborough, neither place nor date is specifically mentioned. This ambiguity permits the story to function in the setting of Crawford's early years in Ontario while referring allusively to struggles over land ownership in the West in the 1880s. In 1885, the so-called National Policy of western settlement pursued by the Conservative government of Sir John A. Macdonald provoked a revolt by Métis and Natives in what is present-day Saskatchewan. The result was the North West Rebellion, whose major events were the defeat of an RCMP force by Louis Riel and his supporters in March, 1885, followed by his decisive defeat at the hands of the Toronto volunteers at the Battle of Batoche in May, and his subsequent trial and hanging in November. This triumph ensured that the development of the West would efface the history of continental settlement by trappers and traders from Quebec as well as the ties they and their descendants had fashioned with Canada's aboriginal inhabitants.

The right to own the land they had settled motivated the struggle of Riel's

supporters. In addition, Riel called for free land for new settlers from the East and direct management by the federal government of the lands necessary to the continued existence of the fur trade. In a letter published in the *Globe*, William Henry Jackson, Riel's personal secretary, laid out the rebels' political program:

Let this be our aim. Let us sink all distinctions of race and religion. Let the white man delight in seeing the Indian helped forward to fill his place as a producer of wealth, and let the Indian and Halfbreed [sic] scorn to charge rent for the soil which God has given to man, upon the settler who comes in to help build up the country and increase its public funds by his arts and machinery, and let both unite in seeing the fur country be managed for the benefit of the Indians who live by hunting, not for the good of a grasping company.<sup>10</sup>

During her years in Toronto, Crawford had become highly sensitive to issues concerning land tenure. In the first instance, these concerns focused on the situation faced by Irish peasants. In "Wealth," a poem prompted by news of a new outbreak of famine in Ireland in 1879, Crawford mocks the hypocrisy of the Protestant churches in defending the rights of absentee landlords (*Collected Poems* 85, 86). A similar insight motivated Charles Stuart Parnell, leader of the Irish party in the House of Commons. In the 1870s and 1880s, Parnell argued both for home rule for Ireland and the redistribution of farmland to the peasants. "On March 6th, 1880, Parnell made a speech in Toronto—a speech Crawford may well have heard—in which he reiterated his view that 'the suffering of the Irish was not due to the providence of God, as many supposed, but to the wickedness of men,' these men being 'grasping landlords.'" Parnell urged that "the only remedy was for those who tilled the ground and improved it to own it" (Burns, "The Poet" 40).

The Irish had a reputation for devotion to the idea of personal freedom. For example, when defenders of slavery contended that slaves in the American South were materially better off than the Irish peasantry, Fanny Kemble replied on their behalf: "Though the Irish peasant is starved, naked, and roofless, the bare name of freemen—the lordship over his own person, the power to choose and will—are blessings beyond food, raiment, and shelter" (3). In the aftermath of the end of black slavery, however, first in the British Empire and later in the United States, people began to ask whether farmers could be called free if they and their families lacked claim to the small holdings that they needed to support themselves.

In Canada, the ideal of the independently owned and managed family farm was central both to Irish immigrants to Ontario and to homesteaders

headed for the Western prairies. In 1881, Crawford published “A Hungry Day,” a poem which celebrates an Irish peasant, who after the death of his wife brings his famished children to Canada. There, after first working as a farm laborer, he eventually becomes the owner of his own farm.

But thin I left the crowded city sthreets—  
Th’are men galore to toil in thim an’ die;  
Meself wint wid me axe to cut a home  
In the green woods beneath the clear, swate sky . . .

’Twould make yer heart lape just to take a look  
At the green fields upon me own big farm;  
An’ God be praised all men may have the same  
That owns an axe an’ has a strong right arm! (*Collected Poems* 309)

While the farmer’s achievement might serve as an endorsement of the National Policy, the poem is notably ambivalent. For example, Crawford’s use of stage Irish dialect in the monologue marks an ironic distance from the same Catholic Irish who were the objects of her sympathy.

This tension is even more to the fore in an unpublished parody by Crawford of *Eos: A Prairie Dream* (1884), a dream-vision written by Nicholas Flood Davin on behalf of Macdonald’s policy. Davin, an Irish immigrant who had been baptized in infancy as a Roman Catholic but was raised as an Anglican by Protestant foster parents, became the leading Conservative spokesperson on behalf of Catholic Irish immigrants at a time when other Tories wished to have nothing to do with them. As a journalist, Davin covered the North West Rebellion in articles that were reprinted across the country. In her lampoon, Crawford mocks both his Irish background and his new-found Canadian jingoism. When the goddess Eos appears to Davin, she first kisses his bald head, then declaims, again in stage Irish:

Now, Davin be aisy, my bald headed daisy  
Don’t thrimble an’ stare in commotion  
My darlin’, my elf, shure ‘tis Eos herself  
Just dhrippin’ from out of the ocean  
Mywournee, ‘tis swate ‘tis to leather the metis  
To riddle ould Riel wid bullets  
To chase Crowfoot and crees as if they wor flees<sup>11</sup>  
An’ shoot down the rebels like pullets. (Burns, “Crawford” 66)

Eos inadvertently discloses the brutal mindlessness of the response in Ontario to Métis and Native resistance.

As a transplanted Dubliner, Crawford was sensitive to anti-Irish prejudice



among settlers around Peterborough. In “Extradited,” she immediately identifies—and identifies with—Sam’s Celtic lineage; so too, apparently, does Bessie until she begins to recognize his limited economic prospects plus his capacity for affection far beyond her own. Sam, writes Crawford at the outset,

was an Irish Canadian: a rich smack of brogue adorned his tongue; a kindly graciousness of eye made a plain face almost captivating, while the proud and melancholy Celtic fire and intentness of his glance gave dignity to his expression. The lips were curved in a humorous smile, but round them were deeply graven heroic and Spartan lines. (115)

Crawford’s “Greek” Celt is clearly defensive against more customary representations of the Irish as ignorant, disorderly, and wasteful. At the same time, the concept of Doric simplicity that links pastoral Ireland with ancient Sparta also associates it with what has been described as Spartan-model pederasty, the paradigm of manly love between an older and a younger man associated with military service at Sparta (Dellamora, *Postmodern* 43-64).

Crawford emblemizes to excess the barn to which Sam retires to talk to Joe. She sketches it in terms that at once naturalize, orientalize, and pictorialize it—colouring its interior with the reds and purples of a Pre-Raphaelite landscape painting. In this way, she attempts to render cosmopolitan a site that in actuality is meager enough. This cosmopolitanism, moreover, is imagined in and through the terms of male-male desire:

The barn’s uncouth eaves were fine crimson on one side, from the sunset; on the other a delicate, spiritual silver, from the moon hanging above the cedar swamp: the rude doors stood open: a vigorous purple haze, shot with heavy bars of crimson light, filled the interior; a “Whip-Poor-Will” chanted from a distant tree, like a muezzin from a minaret; the tired horses whinnied at a whiff of fresh clover, and rubbed noses in sedate congratulation. Sam looked at the ground a moment, reflectively, and then shouted:

“Hullo, Joe!” (116)

Like Sam “uncouth” on the outside, the place of the friends’ meeting is “shot with heavy bars of crimson light,” which “filled the interior.” “The Whip-Poor-Will,” chanting “like a muezzin from a minaret,” locates the structure—and the friendship—metaphorically within what the Victorian anthropologist, Richard Burton, referred to as the Sotadic Zone, the latitudes between which the oriental vice of sodomy thrived.<sup>12</sup> As with the references to Sparta, Crawford takes care to pastoralize exotic cultural references. “The tired horses” whinny at the smell of fresh clover and rub

each others' noses.

Burton's thoughts about the causes of the practice of male sodomy were confused and overdetermined. His description of the practice as pervasive over much of the globe, however, tended to suggest its naturalness—a view that recommended Burton to male homosexual Aesthetes, to whom his works principally appealed (Bleys 219). Crawford too naturalizes male romance as does Sam, in awkward fashion, when he suggests to Joe that all four might flee Canada together: "When this danger blows past I'll divide with you, an' you can make a fresh start in some sthrange counthry. South Americay's a grond place, they tell me; shure, I'll take Bessie an' the boy an' go with you. I've no kin nor kith of my own, an' next to her an' the child it is yourself is in the core of my heart" (122). Both male Aesthetes and female writers in Victorian England who resisted what today would be referred to as heterosexual normalcy often chose to portray families comprised of two women and a male infant (Vanita 28). Sam's affective domestic economy, which embraces wife, son, and heart's friend, challenges conventional domesticity—as Bessy well recognizes, hence her determination "to tear" Joe "out of" her husband's "large and constant heart" (120). Sam's wish, inoperable though it be, rejects the blockage of same-sex desire in conventional marriage. The pleasure that the narrator takes both in Sam and the tanned, lean young man, with the "nervous" face and "piercing" glance (117), suggests Crawford's sympathy with male same-sex romance. This investment registers her resistance to troping nation-building as acquiring, developing, and bequeathing land and other property within marriage and the nuclear family.

For Bessie, citizenship is a manifestation of maternal instinct as understood by post-Darwinian Victorians. Crawford says of Bessie: "Many of her exceedingly respectable virtues were composed mainly of two or three minor vices: her conjugal love was a compound of vanity and jealousy: her maternal affection an agreement of rapacity and animal instinct. In giving her a child, nature had developed the she eagle in her breast" (117). As the quotation suggests, nature combines with human greed, in the first instance to secure a homestead and to hold it intact for one's offspring but more generally, as well, with the principle of material acquisition in civil society. It is to make this point that Crawford has Bessie intend to invest the reward money in mortgages. Freedom to invest is linked with Bessie's economic uncertainty as well as with the fact that, as a woman and the wife of a settler, Bessie herself enjoys few rights of citizenship.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, citizenship as

practiced by Bessie, looks a lot like subjection. Crawford's association of family farm ownership with Macdonald's National Policy suggests as much.

Bessie's freedom as an English Canadian is a freedom that she experiences in the form of the identification of motherhood with imperial expansion that I earlier observed in the writing of Linton. Another form of identification in English Canada was an imaginary investment in a martial national subject. In the 1880s, the National Policy depended upon such projections, and literature soon obliged. W. D. Lighthall, for example, a self-styled English-Canadian imperialist from Montreal, wrote in his novel, *The Young Seigneur* (1888), of "the Ideal Physical Man" as the foundation of "The Ideal State" (127, 126):

We must never stop short of working until,—now, do not doubt me, sir,—every Canadian is the strongest and most beautiful man that can be thought . . . . Physical culture must be placed on a more reasonable basis, and made a requisite of all education. We need a Physical Inspector in every School. We need to regularly encourage the sports of the country. We require a military term of training, compulsory on all young men, for its effect in straightening the person and strengthening the will. We must have a nation of stern, strong men—a careless people can never rise; no deep impression, no fixed resolve, will ever originate from easy-going natures. (127-28; Wright 144)

Lighthall's ideal man combines aspects of Crawford's pair. Like Sam, he is "strong" and, when necessary, "stern" (117). Like Joe, he is a "beautiful man." But in order to be achieved, Lighthall's man must be subjected to the surveillance of "a Physical Inspector." Lighthall's citizen-soldier is modern, technological man, a product of "physical culture."<sup>14</sup> And he is functional—a unit in a national military force. This is the sort of lifelong training necessary for "straightening the person and strengthening the will." Finally, Lighthall's assertion of manliness leads not to the call for political independence urged by some English Canadians in the 1880s but rather towards a reasserted subordination to the motherland. The Canadian man is to achieve virility fighting under the Union Jack.

In the story, Crawford offers an alternative to this model of subjection and sacrifice, which she had observed in operation during the 1885 Rebellion. The homosocial desire that inflects Lighthall's ideal takes on a different political valence in the mode of an aesthetic and pastoral same-sex love and friendship. This friendship is seen as democratic—it is necessary if settlement is to succeed and freedom to be gained on a primary level. But it is also seen as something reserved from the many. It is the experience of the special few who are capable of recognizing it. Just as Bessie in her jealousy

of Joe internalizes the fear of sodomitic pollution as an important aspect of the ideology of national purity, so also Crawford draws love between men into the orbit of Canada. In her presentation, however, sodomy is reconceptualized as cosmopolitanism, not the cosmopolitanism of foreign metropolises such as London and New York City, though mindful of them, but, again, as an internal cosmopolitanism that is partly constitutive of Crawford's dream of a new place in the world. How is one to characterize this cosmopolitan mode of friendship? For one thing, it presents itself as a challenge to domestic normalcy. Implicitly, it demands not the abandonment of family but its re-articulation, in terms of Sam's proposal, which I described earlier, as a quadrilateral expansion of father, mother, and son—and friend. As embodied in Joe, male friendship means a love that extends to a willing loss of the self in order to protect the future of human life. This going out of the self differs from the self-sacrifice enforced on the mechanically produced infantryman. Joe's sacrifice of his life to save Sam's son indicates that, in contrast to the limitation of the national idea within the terms of continental expansion and private ownership, Joe's experience of friendship is civic in the sense of being open to the future, confident enough in Canada as a field of possibility to risk all on behalf of an infant.

Another way to refer to the cosmopolitanism that Crawford reaches for is to describe it as Aesthetic. There are suggestions in Crawford's writing that, after moving to Toronto in 1876, she found fellow spirits among a circle of male aesthetes there. Once in Toronto, Crawford took advantage of the local media's access to the transatlantic cable to keep up, on a daily basis, with events in London and throughout the British Empire (Burns, "Crawford" 75 n. 1). "Keeping up" in part meant keeping up with Aesthetic politics. In her poetry, for example, Crawford obliquely comments on the "Fleshly School" controversy in England during the 1870s, in which Robert Buchanan attacked the effeminacy and, implicitly, the sexual irregularity of vanguard artists and poets. In that particular contest, Crawford's sympathies were with the Pre-Raphaelites and the Aesthetes rather than Buchanan (Ower). In the following decade, keeping up meant being aware of the politics of social purity, which were quickly imported from London. Bessie's position reflects the mother-centred ideology of national purity that characterizes this movement (Devereux, Valverde). The major legislative achievement of the social purity movement was the passage of the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885, including the homophobic Labouchère Amendment, under which Wilde was to be tried a decade later. Through

her circle of acquaintances, Crawford likely knew of the distress provoked by passage of the amendment among men with sexual and emotional ties to other men. Wilde himself had visited Toronto in 1882 during his North American lecture tour (Ellmann 188).

Crawford despised the philistinism of Toronto's mercantile and industrial class and felt snubbed by its male cultural elite, such as it was. A few days after her death in 1887, a new journal published a letter in which she wrote: "No contribution of mine has ever been accepted by any first-class Canadian literary journal. I have contributed to the *Mail* and *Globe*, and won some very kind words from eminent critics, but have been quietly 'sat upon' by the High Priests of Canadian periodical Literature" (Burns, "The Poet" 30). The independence that she showed in her personal life may be due in part to the fact that she herself was sexually nonconformist. Crawford's choice of a single life, her economic independence, and her at times extremely critical view of the cultural construction of women as wives and mothers signify her place as one of Canada's first New Women. These factors and others, including contemporary descriptions by other women of her manner and appearance during the Toronto phase, further suggest that she may have been a member of the new category of female sexual inverts that Linton warned her readers against.

Conventional characterizations of Crawford, even when tone deaf to ambivalence, ambiguity, and irony in her writing, might easily be traced so as to disclose a countertype. For example, in an essay by E. J. Hathaway published in *Canadian Magazine* five months after the Wilde trials, Crawford's poems of Western local color are described as showing "masculine strength" (570). Hathaway writes: "If there is one element in Miss Crawford's writings more distinctly visible than another it is that of power—virility it would be called if applied to a man. Her work throughout is characterized by bold, vigorous treatment, purity of thought, and felicity of expression" (571). Combined with Hathaway's recognition that her poetry bears "the stamp of genius" (569) and the physical description of her that he provides, which could be lifted from Havelock Ellis's description of the passive female sexual invert (222), the Crawford valued and condescended to in the years following her death bears the marks of what Andrew Elfenbein refers to as wild poetic genius (18), supplemented by the contradictory typology of *fin-de-siècle* sexology.

Crawford's sympathy with sexual dissidents is implicit in the choice of the epitaph for the "six-foot celtic [sic] cross of grey Canadian granite" (Galvin

78) that her friends chose for her when they organized a successful campaign to erect a monument on the site of her burial in Peterborough. The marker was dedicated in 1900, the same year in which another well-known Anglo-Irish writer was buried in exile in Paris. The monument gathers connotations of sacrifice, strength, and Irish heritage together with explicit allusion to ancient Greek culture—the same combination of elements that Crawford joined in “Extradited.” In the lines chosen, the poet Crawford identifies herself not with a maternal eagle but with a male dyad, one of whom adopts the form of an eagle. The pair derive from a tale in classical Greek mythology, in which Jove metamorphoses into an eagle to seize Ganymede, the ephebe whom he desires. Some members of the committee are likely to have read these lines in a way that effaces the pederastic singularity of this couple. For these readers, the eagle probably functioned as an allegorical figure of the animate Canadian landscape. The Ganymede figure referred to the nascent poetic genius that cultural nationalists hoped a Canadian sense of place would inspire. Crawford herself was recognized as the first important female poet in this new tradition. In other words, the passage describes the relationship between the sense of place and the coming into existence of national voice. Readers steeped in Victorian verse also would have recognized an allusion to the lines in Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s *Aurora Leigh* in which the protagonist, a young, aspiring poet, compares her gift with the pair from Greek mythology.<sup>15</sup>

Yet other readers are likely to have been aware that the poetic genius invoked in these lines is shaded with Romantic suggestions of the diseased, perverse character of poetic genius (Elfenbein 1-6), connotations that had become determining in transatlantic media coverage of the Wilde trials five years earlier. The epitaph reads as follows:

. . . but toward the sun  
 The eagle lifts his eyes, and with his wings  
 Beats on a sunlight that is never marred  
 By cloud, or mist, shrieks his fierce joy to air  
 Ne’er stirred by stormy pulse.  
 The eagle mine, I said, “Oh I would ride  
 His wings like Ganymede, nor ever care  
 To drop upon the stormy earth again  
 But circle star-ward, narrowing my gyres  
 To some great planet of eternal peace. (Galvin 79)

The lyric voice here identifies itself both with the “fierce joy” of the eagle and with the terror and desire of the ephebe. How to read such an identifi-

cation? Some readers, in sublimating fashion, have found in these lines a prayer for personal deliverance and a promise of the ability of the soul of the poet to transcend the limits of the here and now. Read within a historical frame, however, the lines, like Joe's action at the end of "Extradited," are oracular. They suggest that Crawford and some of her readers envisaged the possibility of opening Canadian literature and history to an incarnate "fierce joy" that would find in life not only a "stormy pulse" and "cloud or mist" but also a spiral towards the light.

## NOTES

- \* This article is drawn from a recently completed book-length study of citizenship and the politics of friendship in Victorian fiction.
- 1 For an example of the part played in this development by the Sodom narrative in Genesis, see "A Sermon Preached before Queene Elizabeth," in Hallam 158-67.
- 2 For the use of the Book of Exodus in myths of westward expansion in the United States that reflect ethnic rivalries and anxieties, in particular between Americans of Anglo-Saxon background and recent Jewish immigrants, see Gardner.
- 3 Katie Trumpener argues that English Canadian nationalism developed as a play of conciliatory versus antagonistic tensions between persons of English, Irish, and Scottish stock in colonial Canada (242-91).
- 4 For example, in "The Rose of a Nation's Thanks" (June 11, 1885), published on the occasion of the return home of the Toronto volunteers after their success at the Battle of Batoche (Burns, "The Poet" 46-47, 51). On Crawford's ambivalence, see also Mazoff 103-22, 126-127.
- 5 Dellamora, *Victorian Sexual Dissidence* 1-12; Dowling.
- 6 On comradeship in Whitman, see Martin 52, 66.
- 7 Eliza Lynn Linton, in Hamilton, 194, 195.
- 8 The story could take place either before or after Confederation in 1867, hence before or after Upper Canada was separated from Lower Canada to create the province of Ontario. It is more likely, however, that the action takes place before 1867. In this way, Crawford sets her story in two different temporal contexts: that of the pre-Confederation settlement of Ontario, often by immigrants fleeing from conditions in Ireland; and that of settlement in the Canadian West during the 1880s.
- 9 Assuming the coloration of Joe's outlook, the narrator later uses the same word to describe Joe's "sublime effort" (125) in rescuing Sam and Bessie's son.
- 10 Cited in Burns, "Crawford" 70.
- 11 Eos stumbles here. Crowfoot, who was a chief of the Blackfoot not the Cree, remained neutral during the conflict.
- 12 Bleys 217. In 1886, the year in which Crawford published her story, Burton began to translate Al Nefzawi's erotic classic, *The Perfumed Garden*, including "the passages of homosexual content that had been bowdlerized in the previous French translations." The manuscript remained unfinished, however, perhaps another unwilling offering to the Labouchère Amendment. "After Burton's death in 1890, it was destroyed by his wife Isabel." (217)

- 13 In Canada, women did not become legal persons until 1929 (Atwood xv).
- 14 See Mark Seltzer's analysis of similar conceptions in the United States.
- 15 Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Aurora Leigh* I. 915-42.

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