

Geometries of Nation-Building: Triangulating Female Homosexuality in Richardson's *Wacousta*

L. CHRIS FOX

FEMALE HOMOSOCIALITY is critical to the theme of nation-building in *Wacousta* but has been almost entirely overlooked in critical treatments of the novel. As a foundational text of Canadian literature, *Wacousta*¹ has attracted continuous critical commentary, particularly since Canadian literature was established as an acceptable field of academic study in the 1970s. While much of this criticism centres on Richardson's contemporary literary influences and *Wacousta*'s eponymous anti-hero,² a surprising number of critics note the significance and ubiquity of geometrical figures in Richardson's 1832 gothic romance. In her succinct, yet thorough, literary contextualization of *Wacousta*, Jay Macpherson notes that "all Richardson's novels, like probably the majority of romances, are based in one way or another on triangles, usually with strong sexual overtones" (82). According to John Moss, "it is *Wacousta* that most exuberantly explores the narrative possibilities of three-way sexuality" (*Sex* 88), which is the key to what he calls "trisexuality and the Urthona triangle" (87). Dennis Duffy briefly notes Moss's discovery "that in *Wacousta* there is more to sex than sex itself ... the 'sexual conundrum,' the triangle that we often encounter" (*John* 13), and draws his own conclusions regarding the significance of sexualities in the novel. Like Duffy, this paper will also examine and extend Moss's investigations into Richardsonian trigonometry and explore its relevance to the novel's narrative and to the project of literary nation-building.

Michael Hurley invokes national concerns when he argues that "everything ... European ... is a right-angled monument to rationality.... It is a square ... [while] the world of nature and the Indian ... is ... one of circles and curves" (*Patterns* 90), a configuration that recalls Margaret Atwood's interpretation of the "Settler theme" in Canadian literature, where the straight line represents settlement and the curve represents na-

ture (*Survival* 122). For Margaret Turner, “the hollow square . . . exemplifies the falseness and worthlessness of the military institution, as well as the illusory and unsustaining nature of the cultural construction that the British are trying to impose on the new world” (*Imagining* 32). It is apparent (and sometimes explicitly stated) that the relation of the square to the fort and the fort to the garrison mentality (as identified by Northrop Frye in his seminal essay, “Conclusion to a Literary History of Canada”) underwrites the arguments of Hurley and Turner.

More recently, Peter Dickinson scrutinizes the relations between nationalism and sexuality, especially (male) homosexuality and homosociality (3ff). He explores the male-male attractions that other critics (Duffy, Hurley, Moss) note, and firmly situates the most florid of *Wacousta*'s male-dominated triangles within Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's analysis of male homosocial triangles. This paper's analysis of Richardson's narrative geometries, especially the triangles and their relation to nation-building, sex, and sexuality, focusses instead on the female-dominated homosocial triangles, extrapolating from the work of Sedgwick and Dickinson but also building on the observations of Robin D. Mathews, Duffy, Moss, Turner, and Hurley. The focus on female-dominated triangles in *Wacousta* is not an attempt to find an originary lesbian moment within Canada's literary canon but rather to gesture towards the importance of women and female homosociality in the formation of that nation/community of communities now called Canada. This exploration may suggest a (necessarily) partial answer to Jonathan Kertzer's question regarding the development of a Canadian literature: “What sense of community produces English-Canadian literature, or can be produced by it?” (4).

Richardson is an appropriate starting point for responses to this question: not only does Hurley suggest that he is “‘The Father of Canadian Literature’” (*Borders* 206), he cites James Reaney's observation that Richardson himself explicitly “wished for a ‘National Canadian Literature’ — his phrase” (204).³ Turner, too, points to the Richardsonian project as one of nation-building. She describes Richardson and Frederick Philip Grove: “Both are determined to write themselves into existence; to do that they have to write their place into existence as well” (“Language” 185). Therefore, it seems reasonable to suppose that the narrative patterns in *Wacousta*, his most important novel (specifically subtitled *A Tale of the Canadas*), address the issues involved in forming the Canadian nation. As well as following established literary conventions, the female-dominated triangles in *Wacousta* also contribute to Hurley's perception of Richard-

son's "different narrative structures which ... celebrate and question myths of nation-building" (*Borders* 204).

Dickinson invokes post-structuralist psychoanalytic theory when he argues that "the identificatory *lack* upon which Canadian literary nationalism has historically been constructed ... is in large part facilitated by ... a critical refusal to come to grips with the textual *superabundance* of a destabilizing and counter-normative sexuality," a sexuality that he labels "queer" (4-5). *Wacousta* is a rich source of both the "superabundance" of queer behaviour⁴ and critical resistance, particularly in relation to female "queerness." Dickinson explicates the most overtly homosocial triangle in the novel, that of young Charles de Haldimar, Sir Everard Valletort, and Charles's sister, Clara de Haldimar,⁵ but he does so not solely because it is so obvious. Like Sedgwick, whose *Between Men* informs his work, Dickinson prefers to focus on the male-dominated triangle because it is productive of, as well as (re)produced by, patriarchal power structures wherein the more significant relations between men are negotiated through the bodies of women.⁶ As such, Dickinson argues, the male-dominated triangle is more pertinent to discourses of nationalism, which, in patriarchal society, are discourses of power that, by definition, involve men more significantly than they involve women (12).

Sedgwick asserts the existence of a female homosocial continuum that suffers no significant disjunction between the *homosocial* and the *homosexual*, which is in marked contrast with a male continuum that has a strongly dichotomous response to each, thus disrupting that continuum (1-3). She claims that this difference privileges the male-dominated homosocial triangle in literature as a site of potentially profound insight into the "relation of sexual desire to political power" (6). Terry Castle takes exception to Sedgwick's assumptions regarding the seamlessness of the female homosocial/sexual continuum (71-72). She correctly points out that society responds quite differently to explicit female *homosexuality* (i.e., often with hatred and violence) than it responds to female *homosociality* (i.e., often with encouragement).

This split in attitude may be observed on a societal scale in the difference to social attitude that was initiated through the popularization of the work produced by the early sexologists, who, beginning in the late nineteenth century, first pathologized female same-sex love, which they defined as sexual activity based in a lesbian identity (Faderman, *Odd* 35-61). Previous to this, Lillian Faderman argues, female same-sex love was not considered to be problematic or sexual. On the contrary, such affec-

tionate relationships were encouraged by society to such an extent that “by the second half of the eighteenth century in England, romantic friendships became a popular theme in fiction” (Faderman, *Surpassing* 103). Positive treatment of this theme continued into the nineteenth century and it is within that tradition of female homosociality that *Waconsta* must be examined. That tradition is similar to literary male homosociality in that it was intended, ultimately, to support patriarchal structures, especially heterosexual marriage. Faderman argues that “Henry Wadsworth Longfellow characterized perfectly the male view of women’s intense, emotional relations with each other in his 1849 novel, *Kavanagh*. Such relations were seen by society to be merely ‘a rehearsal in girlhood for the great drama of woman’s life, marriage’” (*Chloe* 4). Thus, in Canada, at the time of nation-building, it was natural for Richardson to use the passion of female friendship as one narrative strand in his vision of the founding of the nation. That he chooses to triangulate these passionate relationships is also typical. The use of triangles is a common romance strategy of Richardson’s time, and the narrative use of a female dominated triangle is also similar to Shakespearean strategies (Macpherson 66). In contrast, one cannot imagine the writers of novels of, say, the 1950s and 1960s being able to deploy a similar narrative strategy because female same-sex relations, by then, were assumed to be sexualized and to invoke lesbian identity even if presented as romantic friendships. The social and literary mood had changed and the title of one of the better popular “lesbian” novels of that time, *Of Love Forbidden*, comments accordingly on the modern attitude towards female homo-*sexuality*, which by the 1950s completely eclipsed homo-*sociality*.

This dichotomous response has (particularly between 1915 and 1970) resulted in closeted behaviour on the part “lesbians” and public suppression of nearly all but pornographic portrayals of lesbianism. Castle’s argument that a similar disjunction exists in the female homosocial/homosexual continuum as in the male continuum problematizes the assumption that Sedgwick uses to justify her slighting of female homosociality (71-72). This study instinctively follows what Atwood calls “the [synthetic] Canadian habit of mind” (*Second* 94) and recognizes and incorporates Castle’s critique while benefiting from Sedgwick’s groundbreaking work, which argues that “the historically differential shapes of male and female homosociality ... will always be articulations and mechanisms of the enduring inequality of power between women and men (5). The male-male bonds, no doubt, have a stronger influence on politics; however, nation-building is dependent on other social relations besides those of public politics, and the female-female bond has a significant role

in the private bonds that buttress nations. Thus, examining the female-dominated triangles in *Wacousta* and noting points of comparison with Dickinson and Sedgwick may generate insights into early Canadian relations between and within the sexes, the relevance of these relations to the project of nation-building, and to aspects of the Canadian literary canon.

Not surprisingly, given Sedgwick's assertion "that the European canon as it exists is already [a male homosocial] canon, and most so when it is most heterosexual" (17), Dickinson correspondingly argues that "if the discourse of nationalism has historically been gendered as patriarchal . . . then it has also frequently been eroticized as homosocial" (5). Nor is it surprising that Moss claims *Wacousta* as one of the novels that demonstrate that, "in contrast [to American fiction], Canadian works of the frontier lean heavily on the heterosexual impulse" (*Patterns* 37). *Wacousta* sets discourses of nationalisms and sexualities into play in what may be interpreted as a literary attempt to resolve early pre-national conflicts, which involved four main cultures— Indian,⁷ (French) Canadian, British garrison, and nascent U.S. American. As Mathews suggests, *Wacousta*, as a novel of nation-building, raises the question of "what kind of white government (and therefore society) can and must exist in British North America" (296); however, *Wacousta* also raises questions of gender and sexuality, which Mathews ignores. While it is salutary that Mathews recognizes that there is no question of that government not being white, it is disappointing that he does not note that, similarly, there is no question of it not being male, and predictably, there is no question of sexuality at all. Homosociality, however, forms an important node within the novel where the discourses of race, sex, sexuality, and nation-building intersect.

Dickinson makes a strong argument for the role of male homosociality within this foundational text of our patriarchal nation (13-14). However, he also observes that the characters that form what might be termed the loving triangle of sensibility (Charles, Everard, and Clara) have all been killed by the end of novel, as an indication that "the triangulation of desire, interrupted in the Old World, cannot be allowed to flourish again in the New World, especially if the nature of that desire is sexually suspect" (14). Because a heterosexual couple, Frederick and Madeline, is among the few survivors, it may well be argued that, in typical European canonical style (as outlined by Sedgwick), homosociality is presented only to contrast with and privilege heterosexuality. In this vein, Moss argues that the relationships of the homosocial triangle are "perverse" (*Patterns* 49) and that this justifies their fatal conclusions (47),

which contrast with the authorial blessing bestowed upon Frederick and Madeline.⁸

However, the Canadian canon may, in fact, differ from the European canon that provided the material for Sedgwick's initial theorizing of the role of male homosociality in literature. Dickinson's argument that the Charles-Everard-Clara triangle is a classic Sedgwickian structure might be met by the counter-argument that, since its characters all die, the triangle's apotheosis (the achievement of a stable heterosexual union) is not achieved. Since Frederick and Madeline are the only representatives of heterosexual success in *Wacousta*, the fact that they are involved in not one, but two, female-dominated triangles is not likely to be literary accident or coincidence. Although other critics note the existence of one or both of these triangles, none examines them in any depth, or comments usefully on their homosociality. Nevertheless, these triangles, their relation to each other, and their relevance to the nation-building theme in *Wacousta* are of considerable interest.

The female-dominated triangle to be examined first is the most obviously homosocial of the two. Interestingly, the Clara-Madeline-Frederick triangle doubles the male homosocial triangle of Charles-Everard-Clara. Although neither the triangle nor its constituent characters are introduced until the last half of the novel, readers are then re-presented with another sensitive child of Colonel de Haldimar (Clara), that child's "best friend" (Madeline, her first cousin), and the opposite-sex sibling who is destined to become the best friend's spouse (Frederick). This representation, which now includes characters who will live and bear children in the New World, may be seen as the novel's New (and, within its own terms, more successful) Start. Instead of two military brothers-in-arms, readers encounter two women who, although they too are denizens of the garrison, are nevertheless civilians: the straight lines of the military are softened by curves.

The description of the two women is relevant to understanding the type of triangle that they dominate and the rationale for its evolution into its more lasting sister triangle, wherein Clara is replaced by Oucanasta. In a short paragraph, Richardson first describes Clara as having the "elegant, slight, and somewhat petite form of a female . . . [with a] small and delicately formed hand" (293); however, he then shifts the narrative gaze to Madeline where it lingers, rather voyeuristically, for two pages. In keeping with the doubles of romance and Moss's "essentially simplistic [triangles wherein] . . . two characters present different aspects of the same thing" (*Sex* 85), in this case, "Woman," Madeline is presented as a contrast

to Clara. Madeline has a “less girlish appearance — one that embraced all the full rich contour of the Medicean Venus” (294). In narrative contrast to Clara’s description is the minute detail in the description of Madeline’s physicality and the explicit manner in which the narrative relates these details to less tangible personal characteristics. Thus, the narrator’s pronouncement that the peach-like colour of her cheek is “a physical earnest of the existence of deep, but not boisterous — of devoted, but not obtrusive affections.” Similarly, readers are informed that the “general expression ... of a countenance which, closely analysed, could not be termed beautiful,⁹ marked a mind at once ardent in its conceptions, and steady and resolute in its silent accomplishments of purpose.” Complementary doubles imply choices offered within the narrative of the novel. If *Wacousta* is concerned with nation-building, then these contrasting descriptions alone attest to Madeline’s greater suitability for the literal role of foremother. Madeline is, physically, the more robust figure and, furthermore, possesses a steady, determined heart and mind. As such, she is arguably better equipped to withstand the rigours of both maternity and frontier life.

This impression is reinforced by the setting of Madeline’s apartment, “which might be taken as a fair sample of the best the country could afford, ... wild, yet simple, ... unlike the embellishments of a modern European boudoir ... [and which also included] the more ingenious specimens of Indian art” (291). This description registers Madeline’s interest in her new country and her appreciation of its arts; she likes what she has encountered enough to appropriate it for her personal quarters. It is significant that she values Indian art since that valuation, within the terms of the novel, implies a degree of respect and understanding of Indian culture. Within the terms of contemporary Canadian literary criticism, it more significantly indicates Madeline’s desire to “indigenize,” a strategy that Terry Goldie identifies as a typical settler method of naturalizing to new geographic locations through “incorporating the Other” (12). In keeping with this analysis, the desire to indigenize marks Madeline as a white character who is likely to be successful in the founding of community and nation.

The affection between the two women is overtly and pleasurably physical, as is usual in early nineteenth-century literary portrayal of romantic friendships. When Madeline joins Clara at the window, “she [flings] her arm around her waist with the protecting manner of a mother” and Clara responds with “a corresponding movement ... [that brings] the more matronly form of her cousin into close and affection-

ate contact with her own” (296). As if this were not enough, Madeline subsequently “pressed her closer and in silence to her heart: then [resumed speaking], after a slight pause, during which the mantling glow upon her brow told how deeply she desired the reunion [with Frederick].” This scene beautifully enacts the workings of the homosocial triangle, including its necessary support of the heterosexual imperative demanded by patriarchal social structures: the affectional energy and physical excitement that is generated between the two women is formally dedicated to the absent and potential (male) spouse.

The playing out of the homosocial relation between Clara and Madeline elaborates on the comparisons between the two and is exploited by Richardson to demonstrate the superior adaptive qualities of Madeline. Their relationship exhibits many of the dynamics typically attributed to heterosexual relationships.¹⁰ In the scene above, readers discover that Madeline is protective of her somewhat frail younger cousin. Later, when an unknown object appears in the lake, the narrator observes Clara “clinging sensitively and with alarm to the almost maternal bosom against which she reposed” (302). Madeline determines that the object appears to be a beaver but worries that it may conceal treachery since, despite but not incongruently with her desire to indigenize, she “distrusts these cruel Indians” (302-03). Within the terms of the novel, this attests to her greater experience, analysis and judgement as well as to her normative racism. When the fort does come under attack by the Indians, “the necessity for prompt and immediate action was . . . evident; and she alone was capable of exertion. . . . Clara had now lost all command of her limbs; and, [was] clinging close to the side of her cousin” (305). Meanwhile, “the energy of despair lent more than woman’s strength to [Madeline]. She caught the fainting girl in her arms, retraced her way to the chamber, and deposit[ed] her burden on the bed” before going downstairs to attempt to alert the garrison (305). The man of action could not have done better, nor, in a romance, could he have done otherwise. Similarly, the delicate, ineffectual Clara embodies the perfect stereotype of passive femininity. The two are a well matched, active-passive pair (from the viewpoint of romance literature) and, were they not both female, we could happily anticipate nuptials.

Perhaps somewhat anachronistically, but aware of the narrative importance of the relationship’s intensity, Robert Lecker particularly cites Madeline, who “has more than one strange passion,” and Clara as examples of what he calls “abnormal relations which . . . exist between the sexes” in *Wacousta* (84). His selection of the shipboard reunion is telling, and a

more complete rendering of the scene demonstrates even more fully the intensity of the homosocial relationship. Madeline is initially in the arms of Frederick; however, when she sees Clara, “she start[s] from the embrace of her lover . . . and thr[ows] herself impetuously forward on the bosom of the sobbing girl; who, with extended arms, parted lips, and heaving bosom, [sits] breathlessly awaiting the first dawn of the returning reason of her more than sister” (345). Since a first cousin is rarely considered “more than” a sister, Richardson implies a homosocial relation of great depth, if not yet, as Lecker implies, a *homosexual* bond. A simple, self-directed thought experiment here would indicate the difference between homosocial and homosexual to most readers. Furthermore, most would no doubt agree, in accordance with Castle’s critique of Sedgwick, that overtly sexual acts between Madeline and Clara would be as shocking to readers as would clearly sexual acts between Charles and Everard. However, it must be allowed that female homosociality may proceed quite far in the direction of sexuality without arousing public or critical notice.¹¹ Lecker is perceptive in noting the desire between Madeline and Clara, which is ignored by most critics despite its importance to the narrative, although judgement of that desire as “abnormal” is both ahistorical and homophobic.

It probably bears repeating that the female-dominated homosocial triangle, no less than the male-dominated homosocial triangles that Sedgwick explicates, serves the purposes of hegemonic heterosexuality. Rather than an early example of the lesbian in pre-Canadian literature, this female homosociality may be read, as Dickinson reads male homosociality, for its relevance to the development of the nation-building theme of *Wacousta*. The emphasis on the details of physical affection between the two women allows the narrative to introduce a theme that is as critical to nation-building as is another focus of the novel, humane garrison management. This is the more private theme of maternity, the capacity to bear and nurture children. Madeline’s “almost maternal bosom” and “matronly form” emphasize the important, and specifically maternal, aspects of her embodiment of the “Medicean Venus.” In this context, the protective nature and strength of body and mind exhibited by Madeline evoke the image of a potentially powerful and capable mother, one who can be reliable in an unreliable land and who, therefore, is likely to succeed in raising a family.

In choosing between “the fair but dissimilar forms of the cousins . . . ‘Venus and Psyche in the land of the Pottowatomies’” (297), the establishment of community clearly favours the “almost maternal” Madeline.

Clara is never described in maternal terms (as Madeline is), and despite her courageous resistance to Wacousta's threatened sexual assault, she again faints (as she does during the attack on Michillimackinac) while attempting to seize the opportunity to free Everard. Clara represents the delicate, over-civilized (albeit admirable) flower of European culture; her eventual death argues that that flower is not hardy enough for the North American climate. Margaret Atwood observes that in Canadian literature "Diana-Maidens¹² often die young. There is a notable absence of Venuses. And there is a bumper crop of sinister Hecate-Crones" (199). Viewed from this perspective, *Wacousta* is as exceptional as it is foundational; although Clara does die young, Madeline is definitely a strong Venus figure, and there are no Hecate-Crones of any significance. I would argue that this discrepancy exists *because* of the nation-building theme of *Wacousta*, a theme which recognizes that population is a necessary element of successful colonization. The virginal Diana figure is not necessary, nor is it yet time for the wise or sinister old woman; what settlement needs is the fertile and powerful mother. This requirement is further underscored by the absence of the mothers of Charles, Clara, Frederick, and Madeline from the British outposts of Détroit and Michillimackinac. Rather than an identificatory *lack*, such as Dickinson identifies, this is an actual social deficiency, one whose continued absence would preclude the construction of the "Canadian" nation.

However, the narrative of *Wacousta* implies that the mother cannot tackle the New World alone and that the father-to-be cannot provide her with either the knowledge or the support that she needs in order to establish community in this new place. Through emphasizing female homosociality, the novel argues that this is women's business, and through the evolution of one female homosocial triangle into another, it comments on the mother's need for the support of an active female Other. It is here that Richardson strays from the stereotypical portrayal of romantic friendship. The typical European middle-class myths of passive femininity and relations between active-passive female partners (as seen in the relationship between Madeline and Clara) are challenged. Apparently, this new community has need of two active women (one with European competencies and one with North American competencies) to underwrite the heterosexual couple. Clara, the inadequate European, drops out and her place (in geometry if not yet in affection) is taken by the more capable woman, Oucanasta, who is already a native in the New World. The settler-mother needs Oucanasta's greater knowledge of the environment (both social and geographic). Goldie's pattern of indigenization may be

traced in *Wacousta*, where knowledge (and comfort for “the alien within” the white settler [13]) is provided by a native, someone with a much longer history of this land and through whom Madeline can gain “the potential to become of the land” for herself and her children (16). Similarly, this orientation is provided by a woman, not only because some cross-cultural parallels in “women’s knowledge” do exist but because, as I will discuss in relation to Oucanasta’s brother, there are white cultural inhibitions that prohibit indigenization through native men.

It may reflect the continuance of these cultural inhibitions in contemporary society that Moss sees the homosocial triangle of Oucanasta-Madeline-Frederick as “just a triangle” (*Sex* 89), one which lacks the trisexual energy of the (as he describes it) seemingly “sexist” Urthona triangle (85). This is somewhat troubling for his argument, since, although Frederick carries the masculine torch, he does not then appear in a decently Urthonic triangle.¹³ Moss gets around this problem by positing a larger triangle composed of three others, one of which is the one under discussion here.¹⁴ A less contorted explanation might involve exploring more fully what he calls “three-way sexuality” (88), and its relation to developing a positive unity, from a less rigid interpretational stance. Indeed, his inability to see any three-way desire here may be read as an example of how “many people have trouble seeing what’s in front of them,” if what is in front of them might be discursively coded, in our time, as lesbian (Castle 2). Thus, what might be termed “lesbophobia” may impair critical ability to recognize female homosocial desire. Sedgwick defines “desire” as “the affective or social force, the glue, even when its manifestation is hostility or hatred or something less emotively charged, that shapes an important relationship” (2). This definition is broad; however, if one is not to be confined to the sexual, and, if one wishes to capture strong attachments that are not simply positive,¹⁵ such breadth is necessary. Moreover, it recognizes the social dimension of desire, which is critical when examining “the erotic triangle . . . as a sensitive register precisely for delineating relationships of power and meaning” (27), and which is particularly important when considering female-dominated triangles and their relation to the evolution of a community or nation.

The replacement of Clara by Oucanasta is dramatically signalled by one of the most overt narrative codes of (usually sexual) possession: Clara sees her beloved Madeline “borne away apparently lifeless in the arms of the tall Indian,” who is Oucanasta (321). The rescue/abduction of Madeline from Michillimackinac and the slaughter within does not necessarily register as involving homosocial desire, even though it doubles the

rescue/abduction of Ellen and the kidnapping of Clara by Wacousta (and Madeline's own actions with the fainting Clara), because Oucanasta is disguised as a (male) warrior and the less intuitive reader might not suspect her disguise. However, this affectively charged action figures substantial social meaning within the new homosocial relationship — meaning whose importance is stressed by the scene's repetition. It is narrated three times: initially, as it is witnessed by Clara (309); again, as it is told to Frederick by Clara (321); and finally, as the reader follows the action as experienced by Madeline (357-62). It is as if not only must the performance of this change in the formation of the homosocial triangle be compulsively reiterated to readers, but also each member of the old triangle must receive proper fictional notice of the change.

The new triangle alters Madeline's role and demonstrates the support that Oucanasta can offer the mother-to-be. Whereas with Clara, Madeline was the strong protector, in Oucanasta she finds a woman stronger and more reliable than herself, a woman who can save her from real danger and guide her through the "threatening" forest world of her new country: one who can save her from the wild Other. Oucanasta is written to present a more domesticated Other, one whose needs are not explored in the novel (since it is not told from any native point of view) but whose desires conveniently coincide with the needs of the white community that is forming. In what may be read symbolically as her collusion in the White process of indigenization, Oucanasta bears gifts of native cultural objects to Madeline's daughters (531).

One can imagine the warm gratitude Madeline would feel towards this woman. Indeed, when Oucanasta has led Frederick and Madeline back to the garrison, Madeline expresses her gratitude in a gesture that recapitulates the apogee of the marriage ceremony: "drawing a ring, of some value and great beauty, from her finger ... she placed it on [Oucanasta's] hand; and then, throwing herself on the bosom of the faithful creature, embraced her with deep manifestations of affection" (529). Oucanasta, too, is strongly attached to Madeline by this time and is "sensibly gratified" by this gesture. The "desire" that attaches Oucanasta to Madeline is largely fuelled by Oucanasta's gratitude to Frederick, who saved her from drowning; however, the importance of the women's relationship is signalled by Richardson's use of such strongly evocative images of possession and marriage. The fact that critics neglect this female homosocial attachment may be indicative of what Castle calls the "apparitional" nature of female-female desire. Nevertheless, its narrative significance is impressed upon readers through repetition and powerfully

coded imagery, which may indicate Richardson's writerly intuition that such overdetermination would be necessary.

The heterosexual links of this triangle suffer no critical neglect and, therefore, do not require treatment here. Nevertheless, some comment regarding the relationship between Frederick and Oucanasta may be worthwhile insofar as it comments on Oucanasta's suitability as the central figure in this homosocial triangle. There can be no doubt of Oucanasta's grateful love for Frederick nor of her realistic assessment "that an Indian girl could never be the wife of a handsome chief of the Saganaw" (257). Critics seem unanimous in claiming that all of Oucanasta's actions, which presumably include the actions of her nameless brother, "the young Ottawa chief" (282), are undertaken solely out of her love and gratitude towards Frederick. Her love is thus extended, not only to his immediate family and fiancée, but also to his entire garrison. I would argue that, in making this claim, the critics echo Frank Hallowsay's initial (and mistaken) assumption that the meeting of Oucanasta and Frederick is a romantic tryst rather than a political action of great portent for their respective peoples (91). It may be that it is harder for whites than for natives to imagine women acting in a political role. However, Frederick more quickly convinces Hallowsay of the seriousness of their connection than the novelist does the critics, partly because Richardson, writing within the romance genre, naturally dwells on the potential for romance and exploits white stereotypes of female behaviour for his own narrative ends.

Pauline Johnson, in an article published in 1892 that remains generally relevant today, is the first critic to attribute Oucanasta's actions to love alone; however, unlike her critical heirs (except Turner, who also finds Oucanasta inauthentic), she berates Richardson for such a portrayal of the "Indian girl," although she observes that he "scarcely goes as far" as other white writers, who repeatedly portray surnameless Indian heroines who love white men, betray their tribe for him, and subsequently commit suicide when he marries a white woman. Johnson rightly criticizes Richardson's portrayal of native people in *Wacousta*, which, as a foundational text, bears some responsibility for creating Canadian literature and a Canadian national ideology, of which the white man's interested and distorting view of the indigene is an inescapable part. In fact, Richardson does not give readers Oucanasta's last name and does emphasize her love for Captain de Haldimar, who is not just any white man but a member of a garrison with which her nation is at war. However, Oucanasta is distinguished from other stereotypical portraits in that she

is associated with a particular tribe (the Ottawas) and, as already noted, she knows from the beginning that marriage with Frederick cannot be anticipated. Since Oucanasta has no marital expectations (257), contemporary critics who ground her actions in her love for Frederick seem to draw on a stereotype of the Indian maiden that implies a propensity to be “enslaved” by love or sexual desire with or without the possibility of native or white “marriage.” However, since Frederick seems equally clear that a romantic or sexual relation is no more possible between them than is marriage,¹⁶ this approach seems, at best, unfounded. The text itself, more altruistically, refers readers to Oucanasta’s selflessness, her generosity (529); however, simple, even loving generosity cannot satisfactorily account for her behaviour, much less so that of her brother.

Another reading of the actions of Oucanasta and her brother might look to the politics, which, however slighted they might be in this violent, action-packed gothic, are nevertheless present. What hegemonic history books call “The Pontecac¹⁷ Conspiracy” was a confederacy of a number of native nations; as such, there were numerous chiefs including, in Richardson’s fictional representation, Wacousta, the European who is adopted as a chief and Pontecac’s foremost advisor, “his seat on the right hand of that chief” (245). When readers first meet Oucanasta’s brother, he is challenging Wacousta’s claim to have killed Frederick. In this challenge, he makes particular reference to Wacousta’s age, and his inferior vision and race, claiming that “he is not cunning, like a red skin” (246). It is clear that he disapproves of Wacousta’s position of influence and wishes to undermine him. Given the political nature of Pontecac’s alliance, it is unlikely that this is simply a personal matter. It is more likely that there are differences in the policies that each would like to see adopted by Pontecac’s Council. While the young chief seems to know and be grateful that Frederick has saved his sister, his first comment to Frederick (spoken as he frees him) is not one of personal gratitude but rather a variation on that well-known verity of strategic alliance: “the enemy of my enemy is my friend.” Once he cuts the bonds, he tells Frederick the reason for his unexpected action: ““The Saganaw is the prisoner of Wacousta . . . and Wacousta is the enemy of the young Ottawa chief”” (279).

While the outcome of Oucanasta’s and her brother’s behaviour (a peaceful alliance with the English) may prove of questionable value to their people, there can be no doubt that it is a political outcome that they seek, one which is facilitated by their connection with de Haldimar, and which is not simply a naive betrayal of their own cause. Since, despite having the advantage, Pontecac’s alliance decides to negotiate a peace with the Eng-

lish rather than continue the war, one must assume that Oucanasta and her brother represent a significant faction of opinion within Pontecac's alliance, a faction whose opinions are embraced by Pontecac once Wacousta's influence has been, along with his body, dispatched by "the young Ottawa chief."¹⁸ In this context, it might even be argued that Oucanasta's rescue of Madeline was more the act of the politician who sees the necessity for an alliance with the British than the act of the private woman. That private woman must overcome jealousy and resentment before she can accept the mission. Be that as it may, in the novel's outcome, her brother seems to have gained in prestige and power and is sent to treat with the fort for peace as Pontecac's trusted envoy. Therefore, it does not appear that Oucanasta is, at least within the novel, "despised by her own nation" (Johnson). This more political reading of Oucanasta's role¹⁹ creates a more complex and intelligible character and prevents that character from being read as a traitor. Consequently, Oucanasta need not be, as Johnson suggests she is, "disliked by the reader." She is free to be used as a foundational character in the new alliance pre-figured by the erotic geometry of the female homosocial triangle.

In *Wacousta*, Oucanasta represents the means of achieving "the impossible necessity of becoming indigenous," which is faced by European settler-invaders (Goldie 13). It is an important aspect of the white ideology being created that this is a conscious and chosen act on the part of the Other. In citing *Wacousta*, Goldie discusses it as an ideal example of how standard narrative strategies of violence (fear) and sex (temptation) are deployed as emotional signs of the alienation and need for naturalization (respectively) experienced by Europeans in their adaptation to the New World. He claims that, in *Wacousta*, "the warrior constantly attacks, but the maiden is an agent to avoid that attack" (15). Although Goldie's thesis regarding white images of the indigene and his naming of the process of "indigenization" are sophisticated and valuable, the same cannot be said for this over-simplification of *Wacousta*. Although the Indians do attack, it is at the urging of a white man who could serve as a textbook case of how best not to indigenize, and although Oucanasta does present temptation (and salvation), the novel follows a path that avoids the (sexual) temptation while nevertheless securing salvation. Moreover, at least one Indian warrior, Oucanasta's brother, does not attack but rather is as instrumental in white salvation as is the Indian maiden.

Although often overlooked, as by Goldie, the brother is an intriguing character who deserves separate study; in a sense, he may be considered an aspect of Oucanasta in that his own separate identity is, literally,

withheld by the author. Not only is he unnamed, but when he is brought captive before Frederick on the schooner, Frederick's first address to him is, "in an emphatic and audible whisper, the name of 'Oucanasta!'" (326). Similarly, the note from Frederick that the brother attempts to deliver to the Michillimackinac fort is intercepted by a sailor who can only decipher one word: "Oucanasta." The character of the brother marks Richardson's ambitious and ambiguous inclusion of the male Indian as salvation (and by extension of Goldie's analysis, as temptation also); the brother enacts both the extent and the limit of the novel's reach towards a fictional expression of the white desire to indigenize.

The success of Oucanasta, and the female-dominated triangle that she enables, stresses both the dependence of the European on the female Indian and the European need to indigenize. The shadow presence of a nameless but equally necessary male Indian, who is attached to the triangle (but very carefully only) through his sister, speaks to an awareness and a discomfort on the part of the colonial male author. Duffy approaches the problem when he discusses the "racial exclusionism" performed by Frederick's union with Madeline rather than with Oucanasta (*World* 88).²⁰ Yet Duffy asserts that "cross-racial bonding does happen in *Wacousta*, but only in heterosexual form," which completely discounts the female homosocial bond and only notes the lack of a cross-racial male bond. It is probable that Richardson's discomfort and Duffy's oversight stem from a similar valorization of male desire and a complementary devaluation of female desire. Thus, it appears to threaten the security of racial exclusion even to name Oucanasta's brother, let alone to include him in any triangle. His sexuality is too powerfully overdetermined (as male and as Indian) by white patriarchal ideology; he is too (*potentially*) wild to integrate in either the novel's heterosocial or homosocial relations (because each would involve at least one male [him] and would therefore have a much too *sexual* subtext). Oucanasta, on the other hand, as a female, may participate, provided the (white) male demonstrates his lack of sexual interest (which desexualizes the relationship, since sexuality is gendered male) and provided she accepts the impossibility of their union. The help and indigenization offered to the whites by the brother must be mediated (and the threat of sexuality neutralized) by the Indian woman.

The nervousness that seems to surround any possibility of Indian sexuality is further demonstrated in that theirs is made a sibling relationship. The same impetus seems to deny the young chief a wife and to warrant Oucanasta's decision to "go to her solitary wigwam among the red skins" (529). This authorial nervousness, rather than any emancipa-

tory attitude towards women, may partially account for the ultimate dominance of the female homosocial triangle in *Wacousta*. The dominance of these triangles is suggestive in terms of a developing Canadian literature because it represents a break with the European tradition, in which the male homosocial triangle dominates in canonical works. The intersections of racism and sexism, under the imperialist imperative to colonize, seem to force a transformation of the literary tradition, which in turn, informs new ideologies of nationalism. Other Canadian novels might usefully be examined for similar departures from the European model.

Hurley notes the intersections of race and sex in *Wacousta* when he asks and answers the question, "What happens when Richardson's squares [white] and circles [Indian] do mate, when someone does connect? Well, perhaps, triangles: the union of Indian and white in Oucanasta, Frederick, and Madeline" ("Patterns" 91). He probably goes too far, however, in calling this a "union" of Indian and white (and, of course, he focusses only on the relationship between Frederick and Oucanasta). The triangle more closely resembles a (slightly unbalanced) female version of Moss's Blakean Urthona triangle²¹ wherein "the writer can move towards definition of an ideal condition of unity or completion, while showing it to be practically impossible or possible only on an arcane or esoteric level" (*Sex* 86); it suggests rather than achieves unity. However, *pave* Moss, this triangle is not the "least Urthonian" (89); desire flows in all directions in this triangle. It is slightly unbalanced in that Madeline and Frederick are destined to be sexual (although this is presented as belonging to the future of the novel). Nevertheless, this imbalance (and the children it produces) marks the triangle as the only generative one to emerge after the original, core triangulation of Clara Beverley, Charles de Haldimar (the elder), and Reginald Morton (*Wacousta*). Thus, any "ideal conditions of unity" suggested in the novel must be contained within this final triangulation of the problems raised in the transplanting of the old world into the "new," which is Richardson's movement "towards integration of the three principals ... in which the potential of each would most fully be realized" (84). Far from being "homeomorphic," as Hurley claims all of *Wacousta's* triangles are to the core triangle (*Borders* 77), Oucanasta's triangle differs from all others in that it includes an already indigenous person, which allows it to suggest hope for the survival and indigenization of the new white community (represented by Frederick, Madeline, and their progeny). This triangle also differs from all others (except the one it evolved from) in its reliance on female, as opposed to male, homosociality.

The centrality of the female-dominated homosocial triangles to the novel's resolution(s) is powerfully figured by the group of survivors who present themselves outside the besieged garrison once they have escaped their captors. Frederick, Madeline, and "one to whom we all owe our lives," Oucanasta, return, bearing with them the corpse of Clara, in a tableau which presents a startling rehearsal of the evolution and function of the two triangles (528). Clara joins all of the major characters from the first half of the novel, who now are dead and will remain forever within the garrison. It is significant that both Frederick and Madeline have been taken away from the garrisons (and, by implication, from their garrison mentalities) by the Indian woman, who protects them from the bloodshed all around them. In a sense, they have been reborn in blood with Oucanasta as their midwife. Richardson's narrative has a clear outcome: only the white characters who have indigenized through the agency of cross-cultural female homosociality survive to produce a "Canadian" generation.

Significantly, the only one of the surviving party not related to one of the two female-dominated triangles is François, the (French) Canadian, a minor but colourful character, who, in a manner analogous to the brother of Oucanasta, is clearly necessary to the community that will become Canada (as shown by his ability to guide Frederick and Everard),²² but whom Richardson cannot integrate into the desiring geometries of the text. Richardson's marginalization of these characters is an early representation of two of the most extreme fissures in contemporary Canada: the gap between Native, Québécois, and Anglo-Canadian cultures, which is subsequently complicated by arrivals of additional cultural communities, who must also find ways to naturalize. Thus, literary critics analyse *Wacousta* as a means of continuing the task of narrating literary history as an aspect of nation-building; as Homi K. Bhabha observes, "The language of culture and community is poised on the fissures of the present becoming the rhetorical figures of a national past" (294).

Given the range of interpretation of the nature of "the fissures of the present," it is not surprising that there is considerable critical variation in the interpretation of the rhetorical figures that Richardson presents. This is particularly true when it comes to interpreting the ending of *Wacousta* and the answers to questions of nation-building that are suggested by the ascendancy of Oucanasta's triangle. Perhaps because Turner finds neither Oucanasta nor her brother "credible representatives of the native structure" (*Imagining* 43), she argues that "Richardson leaves the problem of race relations to Frederick and Madeline, and implies that they will effect

a peaceful bridging of the two cultures” (“Language” 188). However, since Pontecac obviously considers the brother a “credible representative” and uses him to open peace talks, it would be more in keeping with Richardson’s narrative trajectory to expect that Oucanasta and her brother will continue to lead Frederick and Madeline towards the “peaceful bridging of the two cultures” as they have throughout the novel.²³ Thus, readers are shown a scene in the future where Oucanasta brings “curious presents, the fruits of Indian ingenuity, to the daughters of de Haldimar ... while her brother, the chief, instruct[s] his sons in the athletic and active exercises peculiar to his race” (531).²⁴ This scene suggests that Madeline and Frederick (and their children) are being instructed in the workings of gift culture by their Indian allies,²⁵ who are helping them to indigenize. Richardson is creating an image of Indians and an ideology for white settlement; that whites benefit is axiomatic to the ideology being developed. Richardson’s deployment of characters clearly indicates that not only do white invader-settlers need help from Indians, but that generous Indians will decide to help whites adapt to Indian land.²⁶

Despite being, on some levels, a male-dominated adventure story, Richardson’s ending (logically enough) suggests the family as a basis for settlement. His characters’ trajectories emphasize the new community’s need for robust, reliable, competent, and nurturing mothers who are capable of forming homosocial bonds with the indigenous Other. The fact that the female homosocial triangle supercedes the male homosocial triangles is significant in that it seems to deviate from the European literary pattern described by Sedgwick. Intriguingly, Carole Gerson notes that Susanna Moodie’s and Catharine Parr Traill’s “literary transmission of their settlement experiences after their arrival in Upper Canada in 1832 [the year *Wacousta* was published] underscores the importance of woman-to-woman engagement in European-First Nations interaction” (5). There are, therefore, some bases upon which to assert that, at the time of foundational nation-building in Canada, white literary figures were writing Indian-white female homosociality into Canadian settlement narratives. It seems that this move may have evolved as a result of a complex interaction of the hard necessities of colonization with the European ideologies of sex, race, and nationalisms.

Kertzer claims, “the nation is both fact (historical reality) and fiction (imagined community)” (18). In *Wacousta*, Richardson gives us not only what Kertzer calls “a good, gory baptism” but, in the cross-cultural and active social community-building aspects of female homosociality, “a sustaining vision of the public good” (175).²⁷ Moreover, the challenge

that *Wacousta's* female-dominated homosocial triangles pose to its male homosocial triangles, which originate in Europe and initiate the destructiveness of the novel, may also be interpreted as supporting the public good insofar as participation in the female triangle undoes the male-male bonding that the novel problematizes (and judges negatively) through its fatal treatment of the male homosocial triangles (de Haldimar-Wacousta-Clara and Charles-Everard-Clara). The patriarchal structures of this old-world society, which is based on male homosociality (as analysed by Sedgwick and Dickinson), are challenged when the successful male (Frederick) is bracketed by two females within the female homosocial triangles (Clara-Frederick-Madeline and Oucanasta-Frederick-Madeline). The novel's outcome seems to emphasize the importance of creating a community that includes strong female and native influences.

Wacousta offers as fertile ground for contemporary literary nation-building narratives as it offered when it was first published. This paper's emphasis on female homosocial triangles adds only another partial reading of the novel; however, it is a useful reading that has been overlooked by other critics. Richardson uses the literary conventions of his time to grapple with the challenges posed by the context of "the Canadas"; tracing where his pen follows or distorts those conventions outlines the pressures of early white invasion/settlement, and reveals the national imperatives implied by his literary resolutions. Critical discussion of these tracings continues the persistent discourse that makes of geography, "Canada" — "our home — and native land."

NOTES

¹ In any study of *Wacousta*, the matter of which edition to use is of greatest importance since many corrupt and abridged editions exist. This article uses the 1991 NCL edition, which follows the 1987 CEECT (edited by Douglas Cronk) choice of copy-text in that it is an unabridged reprint of the first edition, published in both London, England (by T. Cadell, Strand) and in Edinburgh (by W. Blackwood) in 1832. The 1991 NCL edition retains the original title and dedication and appends the 1851 "Introduction" by Richardson. This is the procedure adopted by both CEECT and the more recent 1998 Tecumseh critical edition (edited by John Moss). As the most affordable, available, and yet complete and sound edition, the 1991 NCL is the most useful choice for current teaching purposes while still meeting rigorous scholarly needs.

² *Wacousta* is variously named "destroyer ... oppressor" (Mathews 301-02), "trickster" (Hurley *Borders* 52, Duffy *World* 108) and "narrator" (Duffy 108). Moreover, he is compared to Poseidon and Iron John (Hurley 92-94) and pronounced "a gigantic figure, huge in con-

ception and attraction” (Mathews 304). He is also interpreted as representing “the American brand of liberal anarchist individualism” (Mathews 306), the wild forces of nature (Hurley 94-95), or the underside of European culture “using the new world as an arena for [its] own ends” (Turner, *Imagining* 41). He is the villain-hero of the gothic romance tradition (Macpherson 81), the Shakespearean revenge plot (68), or the Frontier novel (Duffy 91ff), whose author is influenced by James Fenimore Cooper (17-37) and/or Sir Walter Scott, Byron, and others (Macpherson 63ff) and writes for either metropolitan European or U.S. American audiences. Given that a man who cannot accept rejection by the woman he claims to love, and who subsequently kills her children (all the while blaming his best friend for his own destructive and self-defeating actions), fits the contemporary profile of the stalker as well as any of the aforementioned profiles, perhaps a new critical focus is overdue.

³ Ironically, early Canadians weren’t that interested in *Wacousta*, leading a piqued Richardson to later express the “hope, that should a more refined and cultivated taste ever be introduced into the matter-of-fact country in which I have derived my being, its people will decline to do me the honor of placing my name in the list of their ‘Authors’” (qtd. in Cronk xl).

⁴ Duffy labels *Wacousta*’s queerness, “polymorphous/perverse aspects of sexuality ... [and cites as examples] the men admiring each other rather than women, the women who in their turn display a greater interest in their own sex than in the other,” as well as the brutalizing and incestuous alliances (*John* [13]).

⁵ Dickinson’s analysis (especially of the Charles-Everard-Clara triangle) complements this reading; however, it is not repeated here since the focus of this paper is the female-dominated triangle.

⁶ In this way, both draw on Gayle Rubin’s notable essay, “The Traffic in Women: Notes on the ‘Political Economy’ of Sex,” as a basis for their analyses of how male homosociality uses women to reinforce patriarchal power relationships.

⁷ I use “Indian” to designate that imaginary subject of white fiction and ideology in general, and *Wacousta* in particular, and not to refer to the diverse nations of people who inhabited the land that includes the politico-geographic space now called Canada before European invasion and settlement, and continue to inhabit it today, despite pressures to the contrary. Following Richardson, I also refer to the specific nation of the Ottawas. I use “native people” or “indigene” when I wish to refer to people of several or unspecified native nations.

⁸ Moss contrasts this “perversity” to “Wacousta’s lusty supplications to the terrified Clara” (48), which seems to indicate the not unusual (but always unpleasant) critical preference for coercive heterosexuality (even if it threatens rape) over the implication of homosexuality. While not as homophobic as Moss (no doubt the intervening years of gay liberation are influential here), Hurley also valorizes heterosexuality (in his recuperation of *Wacousta* as “mystic and artist, lover and explorer” [*Borders* 88]) and performs a rhetorical erasure of *Wacousta*’s violence towards Ellen and Clara in his airy statement that “both women are abducted and taken to wife by *Wacousta*” (75).

⁹ This close analysis seems to have escaped Moss, who, in his eagerness to proclaim Frederick and Madeline as the heterosexual icons of the New World order (a basic position which my arguments also support), overshoots the mark and claims that they imbue “their world with an order based on natural virtue and beauty” (*Patterns* 45), when, in fact, the text attributes more striking beauty to Charles and Clara (111 and *passim*), a beauty that Moss declares “effete” (47).

¹⁰ These dynamics are, of course, elements in many diverse human relations; however, the congruence is noted here to counter our more accustomed focus on the differences between homosocial/sexual and heterosocial/sexual relations.

¹¹ As Emma Donoghue notes, the distinction may have been as confusing in real life

as it can be in literature. She allows that “it is hard to tell where these women [poets who were romantic friends] drew the line between sensuality and sex, given that standard romantic-friend behaviour included sleeping together and pillowing your head on your beloved’s bosom” (xxvi).

¹² In this regard, it seems most appropriate that Wacousta, who repeatedly exclaims upon Clara’s similarity to her mother (451), asserts that her mother, when a maid, “could only be compared with ... one of the huntresses of Diana” (450).

¹³ Oddly enough, despite Moss’s claim that this type of triangle is not *necessarily* sexist, he also asserts that it must, *necessarily*, be male-dominated (85). This seems to be unnecessarily restrictive as well as contradictory.

¹⁴ Interestingly, he twice genders this female-dominated triangle as male: firstly, he attributes the triangle to Frederick and secondly, he states that “Frederick’s [triangle] offers *man* in time and space striving to endure” (89; emphasis added).

¹⁵ Without such a definition, for instance, it would be difficult to analyse the intense relationship between Colonel de Haldimar and Wacousta, which is obviously homosocial and, clearly, no less of an attachment when the love becomes hate.

¹⁶ Frederick’s consideration of Oucanasta as a woman undergoes “a wonderful revolution” and disappears once his hand touches the rough sole of her foot (240-41).

¹⁷ Richardson’s spelling is used throughout.

¹⁸ It is important to stress that, as Goldie observes (drawing on Edward Said’s analysis of Orientalism) regarding his own study, what is of interest is not “the correctness of the representation nor its fidelity to some great original” (Said 21) but rather what the novel represents as its ideological contribution to nation-building (Goldie 5).

¹⁹ I was initially inclined to share Johnson’s frustration with Richardson’s portrayal of Oucanasta and would like to thank Heather Martin for first suggesting a more political interpretation, one which recognizes the novel’s gestures towards greater complexity in both Oucanasta’s character and the portrayal of Pontecac’s alliance.

²⁰ Both Johnson and Duffy (71, 88-89) question a situation where “marriage with the Indian girl is so despised in books and so general in real life” (Johnson).

²¹ Madeline’s maternal female corresponds to Moss’s aggressive male while Oucanasta’s more androgynous female corresponds to his “neutral” male and Frederick is “the traditional [masculine] cliché” (*Sex* 85). All three are equally represented in the narrative, as Moss’s Urthonic triangle requires.

²² Mathews sees François’s (French) Canadian village (and not the wilderness as is more commonly argued), in opposition to the garrison; in it he finds “a social order which prizes land, wealth, and people and employs them creatively for everyone’s freedom and benefit” (302), which seems an overly utopian, albeit attractive, view of early francophone culture.

²³ Again, although we may disagree with Richardson’s interpretation of “the reality the works seem to represent, the truths they claim to depict, [what we are studying is] the reality of the texts and their ideology and ... the ideology of the authors and their culture” (Goldie 5).

²⁴ One notes the stress that Richardson places on gender segregation, particularly in the context of the nation-building community. The segregation of the sexes is a typical component of a culture which encourages romantic friendship, the typical nineteenth-century expression of female homosociality.

²⁵ Frederick’s saving of Oucanasta, which is reciprocated by Oucanasta’s saving of Madeline, might also be read as a gift exchange. An in-depth analysis of the operations of gift culture within native cultures, particularly the Iroquois, and its role in Native-European contact, would enrich the analysis of white indigenization suggested by *Wacousta* but is beyond the scope of this project.

²⁶ Hurley's claim seems to point to transcendent possibilities beyond this simple ideology: also citing Goldie, he suggests that "Richardson's life and fiction curiously foreshadow the attempt to close the gulf between an immigrant and an indigenous mentality" (*Borders* 11).

²⁷ Certainly, the public good was on Richardson's mind. The culmination of the understanding that Colonel de Haldimar achieves before his suicide is expressed as a recognition of one's primary duty to the public good: "Private feelings must no longer be studied at the expense of the public good" (522). This also seems to have been Oucanasta's approach.

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