

“Her Extraordinary Sufferings and Services”:
Women and War in New England and New France, 1630-1763

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Gina Michelle Martino-Trutor

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DEDICATION

To Dr. Johnny

ABSTRACT

In the border wars that wracked French and English colonies in northeastern North America during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, women assumed visible, often violent roles in frontier communities that blurred the lines between military and domestic actions as well as settler and soldier identities. Scholars who have noted incidents in which women take up arms in these conflicts largely see their actions as anomalous due to a lack of context and a fragmented source base. Using sources such as petitions, diaries, laws, sermons, newspapers, letters, and chronicles, this dissertation demonstrates that, far from anomalous, these incidents resulted from government policies and cultural beliefs that prompted and even encouraged women to assume central and supporting roles in these wars.

This comparative approach in studying Euro-American women in New England and New France, as well as Native women when sources permitted it, is relatively new. Women in the “northeastern borderlands” of seventeenth and eighteenth-century New England and New France remain poorly understood. This is particularly true regarding women’s participation in the border wars. Often forbidden from evacuating to safety, women kept watch, worked directly with officials in administering forts, and fought alone and with their husbands when under attack. Far from marginalizing these women’s actions, most important men in Euro-American societies met their activities with approval and encouragement. Political and religious leaders even used accounts of women’s participation in the border wars as propaganda that served local, regional, and imperial agendas.

In the eighteenth century, a greater European military presence resulted in an increased separation of the home and the front. In response, debates arose in New England over the role of the Crown in protecting settlers whose fortified towns had previously acted as a first line of defense. In New France, where the danger shifted from the St. Lawrence River Valley to the coast, women’s economic and bureaucratic roles increased, while their physical participation in the defense of the colony decreased. Stories of women’s participation in these conflicts were culturally persistent, and nineteenth-century authors employed these accounts to express new identities and agendas. Appearing in both local and regional histories, stories of women’s participation in the border wars both reflected and shaped a new ideology of separate spheres while justifying past, present, and future colonization of the continent. In examining women’s participation in the wars of the northeastern borderlands, this dissertation complicates commonly held assumptions regarding the roles of women in early modern societies. It also argues that these roles may have been more flexible than previously recognized.

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INTRODUCTION

In August 1693, Major John Pynchon penned a report to Governor William Phips of Massachusetts that detailed an Indian raid on Brookfield, a town in the central region of the colony.¹ Witnesses identified the group of approximately twenty-six Indians as Canadian in origin, likely Abenaki from Pemaquid, near the border between Maine and Acadia.² The attack was motivated by their own military and political interests, as well as by their commitment to the French in the ongoing King William's War (1688-1697). The raiding party killed most of the members of the Woolcott, Mason, and Lawrence families. They also captured Mrs. Mason, her young child who was later killed, and one of Thomas Lawrence's sons, about eighteen years of age. After pursuing the party for over a day, Pynchon's subordinate, Captain Colton, found the group and retrieved Mrs. Mason and the young Lawrence.³

Relaying the experiences of the captives to the governor, Pynchon conveyed Mrs. Mason's account, as Lawrence was incapacitated. In his letter, Pynchon assured Governor Phips that Mrs. Mason was "a lively & Intelligent woman."⁴ Throughout her statement, Mrs. Mason demonstrated a solid understanding of the origin, strategic goals, and the previous actions of her former captors. Her testimony suggested that intelligence gathering was not alien to women in the northeastern borderlands. In addition to her

¹ John Pynchon to Gov. William Phips, 1 August 1693, in *The Acts and Resolves, Public and Private, of the Province of the Massachusetts Bay* (Boston: Wright & Potter, 1892), 7: 396-398.

² *Ibid.*, 397.

³ *Ibid.*, 396-397.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 397.

value as an informant, Mrs. Mason also revealed a willingness to take up arms and join in the fight. In her description of the death of her husband, Mrs. Mason stated that she watched her husband who, “having noe weapon beate them off with his hand only a great while til they cut his hand.” She finished this part of the story defiantly, exclaiming that she felt the Indians “were very cowardly afraid to meddle with her, that if she had any weapon she thinks she might have made her escape.”⁵ Pynchon wrapped up his letter saying that he had asked the constable to interview Mrs. Mason again in the hope of gathering further details.

Although Pynchon likely would have preferred a male informant with some formal military training, Mrs. Mason demonstrated her military value through the intelligence she provided. Pleased with her testimony, Pynchon also indicated that he planned to send any additional testimony gathered from Mrs. Mason to Governor Phips. In her account, Mrs. Mason also expressed frustration at having been unarmed and unable to defend herself after her husband was subdued and killed. As a settler on New England’s frontier, Mr. Mason had a duty to protect both the colony and his family. This responsibility often fell to women when masculine protectors failed to live up to this ideal by falling in battle, fighting in insufficient numbers, or by being absent at the time of an attack. This study will examine dozens of incidents in which women proved themselves willing and ready to fight alone, together, and alongside their struggling husbands.

⁵ “Letter from John Pynchon to Gov. William Phips,” 397.

Pynchon's letter, containing Mrs. Mason's account of the attack and her subsequent brief captivity, reflects a number of key themes regarding women's participation in the wars of the northeastern borderlands of northern New England and New France. Although serving in the roles of both an informant and a potential combatant, Mrs. Mason's gender positioned her as a second choice to both Lawrence and her husband. Despite this fact, Mrs. Mason was only one of many women throughout the northeastern borderlands who performed a variety of vital military and economic roles in the border wars. Indeed, men in these societies so valued women's participation in war that they passed laws mandating women's presence on the front lines of these conflicts, employed their stories as propaganda, and rewarded violent actions with land grants, pensions, medals, and gifts. In this dissertation, I examine the cultural ideas and government policies that both caused and encouraged women to take on central and supporting roles in these wars. I also explore the ways in which governments and religious orders used stories about women's participation as propaganda on local, national, and imperial levels.

The dissertation is loosely chronological and informally divided in two parts. The first three chapters focus on the region during its "foothold" and early "imperial" phases, from 1630-1713. For much of the seventeenth century, British and French settlers attempted to gain a foothold in northeastern North America. Both New England and New France found vital Native allies and made dangerous enemies while simultaneously becoming a part of and influencing the existing military, economic and political dynamics

of the region. By the second half of the seventeenth century, each became embroiled in major wars—New France’s Beaver Wars of the mid-seventeenth century, fought with its allies against the Iroquois, and New England’s King Philip’s War (1675-1676), against a coalition of many of the region’s Indian nations. Both wars were fought against Native coalitions determined to reduce or eliminate their European foes’ presence in northeastern North America.

These wars profoundly impacted settlement patterns, military policies, and both set precedents for women’s wartime participation that lingered into the next century. In the aftermaths of both wars, the French and English Crowns asserted greater control over their colonies in the region. Following these interventions, most wars involving New England and New France were fought as American theaters of European imperial wars, though parallel wars and alliances with Native nations remained important and increased the complexity of all conflicts. Over time, this greater imperial influence began to alter the nature of war in the region.

As the final two chapters of this dissertation show, one aspect of war that changed was women’s participation in war. Changes in military strategy—as well as changes in ideologies regarding gender and colonists’ relationship to their monarchs—transformed women’s participation in the border wars. In eighteenth-century New France, where attacks shifted from ground attacks against colonists in the St. Lawrence Valley to British naval campaigns against forts along the coast, women’s physical participation became less necessary. Their economic and bureaucratic roles, however, continued and even

increased during this period. In New England, women's physical participation remained important through the mid-eighteenth century. At the same time, debates over the role of the Crown as a benevolent, paternal protector-figure resulted in rhetoric that painted both male and female settlers as suffering, helpless subjects.

Despite these changes, accounts of women's participation in these wars remained important tools for constructing local and national identities beyond the eighteenth century. Writers in late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century New England retold—and frequently altered—these stories when creating new local, state, and national identities after the American Revolution. In many cases, alterations in these stories reflected a new emphasis on motherhood and domesticity. The French-speaking population of British Canada, which had never possessed high literacy rates or a publishing industry, would rediscover their stories later in the nineteenth century. Quebecois nationalists used these stories for purposes similar to those of New Englanders in the earlier decades of the century.

Throughout the dissertation I have attempted to find a balance between chapters dedicated to discussing the intersection of settlement patterns, military policy, and gender roles with those focused on propaganda and memory. Due to the availability of sources—an issue that will be discussed later in the introduction—this was not an entirely successful endeavor. English sources frequently outnumbered French sources until, by the second half of the eighteenth century, only English sources remained. Ultimately,

however, the inclusion of both pieces was critical in revealing the interconnectedness of war, politics, society, and culture in the northeastern borderlands.

Historiography

Historians of early America have tended to confine their representations of women's experiences in these wars to two extremes: the passive captive, best represented by Mary Rowlandson in 1676, and the most violent examples of resistance, typified by new mother Hannah Dustan's slaughter of nearly a dozen of her captors on an island in New Hampshire in 1697.⁶ In the historiography of New France, fourteen year old Madeleine de Verchères' defense of her father's seigneurie northeast of Montreal in 1692 has received the most attention. Indeed, historians interested in stories of women during the border wars have focused almost exclusively on these three women. In doing so, they have ignored dozens of other accounts, many of which fall in the middle of a continuum between passive and spectacularly violent.

Although a handful of scholars have noted instances of women taking on active combat roles in these conflicts, they largely have written off these incidents as anomalous. Most of these scholars draw their seemingly anomalous examples from a small number of primary sources, mainly major narrative histories. Using petitions, diaries, depositions, laws, sermons, treatises, newspapers, letters, and an expanded selection of chronicles, my research places women's participation in the border wars

⁶ Although Hannah Dustan's name has been spelled a variety of ways, including Dustin, Dunstan, and Duston, I will use the "Dustan" spelling unless I am quoting a source that uses an alternate spelling.

within a larger context. No longer anomalous, these incidents appear as the result of cultural ideas and government policies that made women both central and supporting figures in these conflicts.

In their respective studies of New England and New France, Ann Little and Louise Dechêne have argued that the wars of the northeastern borderlands should be seen as a whole, an era of wars punctuated by peace.⁷ From the perspective of the social historian, Louise Dechêne criticized “those who study the family, agriculture, trade and ways of life as if the war did not exist.” Dechêne also criticized those who practice more traditional military history and draw solely from accounts of “contemporary observers” without examining how over one-hundred years of warfare affected society and culture.⁸

The practice of warfare in the northeastern borderlands was far from uniform. In addition to differences in method and motivation between Native and European approaches to war, New England and New France each employed multiple styles of war-making. Both relied on a shifting combination of fortified frontier settlements, forts, teams of rangers and raiders, Native allies, and larger offensive invasion forces. As we will see, a diversity of opinions regarding how best to protect and expand these colonies was a major source of conflict, both within leadership circles and between residents and

⁷ Ann Little, *Abraham in Arms: War and Gender in Colonial New England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007); Louise Dechêne, *Le Peuple, L'État et la Guerre au Canada sous le Régime Français*, ed. Hélène Paré, Sylvie Dépatie, Catherine Desbarats, et Thomas Wien (Montréal: Les Éditions du Boréal, 2008).

⁸ Dechêne, *Le Peuple, L'État et la Guerre*, 58-59. Translation is mine. Other historians have examined war and society in the northeastern borderlands, though their work has more often focused on a single war, or even one raid. See also Kyle Zelner, *A Rabble in Arms: Massachusetts Towns and Militiamen during King Philip's War* (New York: New York University Press, 2009); Evan Haefeli and Kevin Sweeney, *Captors and Captives: The 1704 French and Indian Raid on Deerfield* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003).

leaders. The practice of multiple forms of warfare in the northeastern borderlands—as well as its impact on women—will be discussed in greater detail throughout this dissertation.

Despite the chaotic nature of war in the northeastern borderlands, most conflicts began and ended with predictable flurries of diplomatic activity, smaller skirmishes, and treaty-making. Although a handful of incidents described in this dissertation took place during raids and skirmishes that signaled the unravelling of an earlier, negotiated peace, most raids and major invasions occurred during periods that both Native and European parties viewed as official wars. The outbreak of a new war was frightening, though unsurprising in most cases. However, the nature of many of these lengthy wars, with long stretches of nerve-wracking inactivity interrupted by raids and invasions, meant that life in the northeastern borderlands during a war was profoundly unpredictable.

Peacetime was sometimes simply a period when past enemies continued to distrust one another while preparing rhetorically and materially for anticipated future wars. The ever-present threat of war, combined with poorly understood actions of and encounters with native warriors throughout the period, resulted in what Dechêne called an “ambient war.” According to Dechêne, this ambient war “contributed to the feeling of danger” that surrounded colonists, even in times of peace.⁹ Mary Beth Norton’s *In the Devil’s Snare* described similar feelings of dread and entrapment surrounding the Salem

⁹ Dechêne, *Le Peuple, L’État et la Guerre*, 103. Translation is mine.

witchcraft trials during King William's War.¹⁰ Norton's book which, like Ann Little's work, argues that New England's wars had profound effects on gender and culture, suggests that a constant fear of attack influenced both policy and daily life during periods of official war and peace in the northeastern borderlands.

Their work has done much to shed light on how this continuous warfare affected society and culture in the northeastern borderlands. This dissertation is part of the larger project that their work has helped launch: to understand the interplay between society, culture, and the near constant war experienced by Europeans and Native peoples in the northeastern borderlands. As part of this project, my dissertation examines women's participation in these wars. Both Ann Little and Dechêne largely focused on men in their studies and yet, women lived on the front lines of these wars, fighting when necessary and investing in military and expansionist projects.¹¹ The primary goal of this dissertation is to address this historiographic gap, to return women to the border wars of northeastern North America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Scholars involved in this larger project of placing the border wars in a greater chronological, geographic, and cultural context have contributed much to our understanding of the early modern northeastern borderlands. Despite their accomplishments, many of them seem unaware that they are working toward a common

¹⁰ Mary Beth Norton, *In the Devil's Snare: The Salem Witchcraft Crisis of 1692* (New York: Vintage Books, 2002).

¹¹ The only study that moved beyond Hannah Dustan and noted the existence of women's participation, though on a much smaller scale, was Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's *Good Wives*. I will examine Ulrich's contribution later in the introduction. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650-1750* (New York: Knopf, 1982).

goal. The dissertation's comparative approach in exploring French, English, and Native women's participation in the border wars unites seemingly disparate, frequently disconnected historiographies and allows for a better understanding of how cultural exchange contributed to attitudes toward women's participation.

Perhaps the most influential historiographic intervention of the past fifteen years in the study of borderlands and frontiers has been Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron's article "From Borderlands to Borders."¹² Many of the most recent works in the field have either rejected or embraced their paradigm.¹³ In this groundbreaking article, Adelman and Aron called for a reevaluation of the terms "borderlands" and "frontier." While seeking to revive Herbert Eugene Bolton's Borderlands school, Adelman and Aron argued that Frederick Jackson Turner's "frontier thesis" also has something to offer historians of

¹² Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, "From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in Between in North American History," *American Historical Review* 104 (June 1999): 814-841.

¹³ There is a flourishing body of literature that deals with other borderlands in the Americas, some of which inspired Adelman and Aron, some of which was inspired by their article: Andrés Reséndez, *Changing National Identities at the Frontier: Texas and New Mexico, 1800-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Jennifer M. Spear, "Colonial Intimacies: Legislating Sex in French Louisiana," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., 60 (January 2003): 75-98; Juliana Barr, *Peace Came in the Form of a Woman: Indians and Spaniards in the Texas Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Steven W. Hackel, *Children of Coyote, Missionaries of St. Francis: Indian-Spanish Relations in Colonial California, 1769-1850* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); Albert L. Hurtado, *Intimate Frontiers: Sex, Gender, and Culture in Old California* (University of New Mexico Press, 1999); Peter Pope, *Fish into Wine: The Newfoundland Plantation in the Seventeenth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Ramón A. Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality and Power in New Mexico, 1500-1846* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996); Eric Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires: Constructing Colonialism in the Ohio Valley, 1673-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Eric Hinderaker and Peter Mancall, eds., *At the Edge of Empire: The Backcountry in British North America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); Matthew C. Ward, *Breaking the Backcountry: the Seven Years' War in Virginia and Pennsylvania, 1754-1765* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2004); Andrew Robert Lee Cayton and Fredrika J. Teute, eds., *Contact Points: American Frontiers from the Mohawk Valley to the Mississippi, 1750-1830* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Daniel H. Usner, *Indians, Settlers & Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy: The Lower Mississippi Valley before 1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992).

what they called “the accommodations between invaders and indigenes and the hybrid residuals of these encounters.”¹⁴

Studies of borders and frontiers have changed greatly since Herbert Bolton introduced the study of the United States/Mexican border region in the early twentieth-century. Scholars have de-romanticized the subject, no longer painting exotic word pictures of settings and depicting people out of a Western movie. Borderlands historians such as Juliana Barr, Jennifer Spear, and Kathleen DuVal have also incorporated new lenses such as race, gender, and sexuality with which to view their subjects.¹⁵ They have increasingly emphasized the role of Indians in borderlands histories. In the cases of Juliana Barr and Kathleen DuVal, they have even recast Indians as the dominant group in the relationship between the two cultures living in the borderlands of Texas.¹⁶

Finally, historians have intensified their mission to integrate more peripheral areas of the borderlands such as California, Louisiana, and Florida into mainstream borderland studies. Historians of what some might call the “traditional” field of early America—areas north of Mexico which eventually became part of the United States—have appropriated the term “borderland” to describe areas which they once called the “middle ground” and the “frontier.” This sharing of terminology and concepts has already promoted new dialogue between “United States historians” and “Mexican historians.”

¹⁴ Adelman and Aron, “From Borderlands to Borders,” 815.

¹⁵ Ann Little, “Gender and Sexuality in the North American Borderlands, 1492-1848,” *History Compass* 7, no. 6 (Nov. 2009): 1606-1615; Kathleen DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); Barr, *Peace Came in the Form of a Woman*; Jennifer M. Spear, *Race, Sex, and Social Order in Early New Orleans* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).

¹⁶ Barr, *Peace Came in the Form of a Woman*; DuVal, *The Native Ground*.

Dialogue between historians from the United States and Canada is somewhat younger, though this dissertation hopes to help bridge that gap.¹⁷

One area of study Adelman and Aron identified as particularly fruitful for borderlands studies was the area Ann Little would dub the northeastern borderlands. The study of the northeastern borderlands as a contested region and site of cultural encounters in many ways began with James Axtell's *The Invasion Within*.¹⁸ Axtell de-centered war in his study. Instead, he chose to focus on missionaries, education, and other forms of cultural exchange as key in what he described as "a contest of cultures" that dominated the northeastern North America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This emphasis on cultural exchange and economic systems such as the fur trade has figured strongly in many borderland and frontier studies of the past thirty years. Indeed, much of the historiography of French borderlands in North America focuses on the Great Lakes and Mississippi River Valley. These works, in many cases influenced by historian

¹⁷ One historian who has been particularly active in this regard is Alan Taylor, though in a slightly later period. See: Alan Taylor, *William Cooper's Town: Power and Persuasion on the Frontier of the Early American Republic* (New York: Knopf, 1995); *The Divided Ground: Indians, Settlers and the Northern Borderland of the American Revolution* (New York: Knopf, 2006); *The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish Rebels, & Indian Allies* (New York: Knopf, 2010); *Liberty Men and Great Proprietors: The Revolutionary Settlement on the Maine Frontier, 1760-1820* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990); "The Late Loyalists: Northern Reflections of the Early American Republic," *Journal of the Early Republic* 27, no. 1 (Spring, 2007): 1-34.

¹⁸ James Axtell, *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

Richard White's *The Middle Ground*, examine missionary work and economic exchange, emphasizing cultural brokers, interracial marriage, and trade networks.¹⁹

Studies examining warfare and violence, which often play supporting roles in borderlands studies more interested in cultural contact and trade, have begun to appear in recent years. Ann Little and Ned Blackhawk have rightly recognized the critical role war and violence played in colonization projects. Their work has added much to our knowledge of this process and the roles violence and war played in transforming the societies and cultures of the affected peoples.²⁰ As Little rightly noted, "warfare was central to the political discourse and social and material reality in the northeastern borderlands."²¹ Although not conceiving of her project as a borderlands history, Louise Dechêne's *Le Peuple, L'État et la Guerre* also seeks to place warfare alongside trade and religion as key in shaping political, cultural, and social change.²²

One aspect of warfare has appeared in many borderlands studies, even those that focus more on exchange and networks: captivity. Historians such as Julianna Barr, James F. Brooks, and James Axtell have rightly identified captivity and the trading of captives

¹⁹ Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Susan Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women and French Men: Rethinking Cultural Encounter in the Western Great Lakes* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001); Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonists, and the Cant of Conquest* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975); Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-trade Society, 1670-1870* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980); DuVal, *The Native Ground*.

²⁰ Little, *Abraham in Arms*; Ned Blackhawk, *Violence over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008).

²¹ Little, *Abraham in Arms*, 10.

²² Dechêne, *Le Peuple, L'État et la Guerre*; See also John Mack Faragher, *A Great and Noble Scheme: The Tragic Story of the Expulsion of the French Acadians from their American Homeland* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2005).

as a major facet of war in contested regions of North America.²³ In the northeastern borderlands, where New England, New France, and the region's Indians engaged in over one-hundred years of warfare, a large documentary record allows for an examination of war and culture that stretches beyond rereading captivity narratives and tracking the movements of captives.

Although I consider the extensive scholarly literature on captivity in the northeastern borderlands, as well as the experiences of captives several times throughout this dissertation, captivity is not its primary focus.²⁴ The experience of captivity and the narratives it produced have already been well studied.²⁵ This dissertation is something of a response to captivity literature, examining women as active participants in war, rather than as commodities, victims, or spoils of war.²⁶ Captivity was not the only way women

²³ Barr, *Peace Came in the Form of a Woman*; James F. Brooks, *Captives and Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Axtell, *The Invasion Within*.

²⁴ A short list of the scholars who have investigated captivity in the northeastern borderlands might include: Mitchell Robert Breitwieser, *American Puritanism and the Defense of Mourning: Religion, Grief, and Ethnology in Mary White Rowlandson's Captivity Narrative* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990); Axtell, *The Invasion Within*; Teresa A. Toulouse, *The Captive's Position: Female Authority, Male Identity, and Royal Authority in Colonial New England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007); Little, *Abraham in Arms*; Michelle Burnham, *Captivity and Sentiment: Cultural Exchange in American Literature, 1682-1861* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1997); Pauline Turner Strong, *Captive Selves, Captivating Others: The Politics and Poetics of Colonial American Captivity Narratives* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999); Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola, "The Captive as Celebrity," in *Lives Out of Letters: Essays on American Literary Biography and Documentation in Honor of Robert N. Hudspet* (Cranbury, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2004); Haefeli and Sweeney, *Captors and Captives*; William Henry Foster, *The Captors' Narrative: Catholic Women and their Puritan Men on the Early American Frontier* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003).

²⁵ Some authors have even gone so far as to write women out of their own captivity narratives, reattributing authorship and highlighting male exploitation of their experiences. Although some of this may have gone on, as an example, Hannah Dustan did not return with a fistful of scalps and apply for a bounty based on the suggestion of her husband or Cotton Mather's desire for emotional sermon material. Those actions were her own.

²⁶ To highlight this difference, I have used the terms "participation" and "war-making" throughout this dissertation. These words possess a more active quality and help demonstrate that women had other roles to play in this highly militarized region beyond being cultural brokers and commodities.

in the northeastern borderlands experienced war, though it may be the best-documented thanks to published narratives and French record-keeping. Indeed, captivity likely was not even the primary way women and war intersected. Rather, captivity—particularly extended captivities—represented a relatively rare, extreme situation for women in frontier communities who appear to have often divided their time between household duties and keeping watch. As we saw with Pynchon’s letter detailing Mrs. Mason’s account, the information she gathered and perhaps even her willingness to fight if given the chance were far more relevant to Pynchon and Governor Phips than the spiritual ramifications of the very brief captivity that she endured.

In addition to the study of captivity, scholars of early modern Europe and North America have also made some progress in examining accounts of fighting women.²⁷ Much of their work has been limited to reports of cross-dressing women joining the military—particularly the Navy—and to literary representations of Amazons. In the case of the United States, their work has been confined to the American Revolution and Early Republic. In his biography of Deborah Sampson, Alfred Young contrasted Sampson, a

²⁷ Alfred F. Young, *Masquerade: The Life and Times of Deborah Sampson, Continental Soldier* (New York: Knopf, 2004); David Cordingly, *Women Sailors and Sailors’ Women: An Untold Maritime History* (New York: Random House, 2001); Daniel A. Cohen, ed., *The Female Marine and Related Works: Narratives of Cross-Dressing and Urban Vice in America’s Early Republic* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997); Julie Wheelwright, *Amazons and Military Maids: Women who Dressed as Men in the Pursuit of Life, Liberty and Happiness* (London: Pandora, 1989); Dianne Dugaw, *Warrior Women and Popular Balladry: 1650-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Holly A. Mayer, *Belonging to the Army: Camp Followers and Community during the American Revolution* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996); Marcus Rediker, “Liberty Beneath the Jolly Roger: The Lives of Anne Bonny and Mary Read, Pirates,” in *Iron Men, Wooden Women: Gender and Seafaring in the Atlantic World, 1700-1920*, ed. Margaret Creighton and Lisa Norling (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 1-33; Rudolf M. Dekker and Lotte C. Van de Pol, *The Tradition of Female Transvestism in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Macmillan, 1989); Dominique Godineau, “De la guerrière à la citoyenne. Porter les armes pendant l’Ancien Régime et la Révolution française,” in *Armées*, ed. Luc Capdevila and Dominique Godineau (Toulouse: *Clio* et Presses Universitaires du Mirai, 2004), 43-69.

veteran, with the numerous camp followers described in Holly Mayer's monograph *Belonging to the Army*.²⁸ He also connected Sampson in passing to other women who fought during the American Revolution, as well as to a New England "tradition of frontier women" who took up arms in the colonial wars.²⁹ The "tradition of frontier women" Young referred to has been woefully understudied up to this point, despite the fact that English, French, and Indian traditions existed in North America for over one-hundred years before the Seven Years' War (1756-1763) or the American Revolution (1775–1783). Apart from smaller studies of the most famous women such as Hannah Dustan and Madeleine de Verchères, few scholars have investigated this phenomenon in any depth.

Viewing the *ancien régime* from an Atlantic perspective, Diane Gervais and Serge Lusignan examined case studies of Joan of Arc and Jeanne Hachette, both of whom participated in wars in medieval France, and Madeleine de Verchères of seventeenth-century New France.³⁰ In their article, Lusignan and Gervais described a three-stage process by which women became temporary warriors. In the first stage, the woman transgressed the boundaries between male and female by taking up arms in a time of need and securing male support for her actions. In the second stage, the woman performed the role of a warrior. Finally, the woman returned to the female side of the binary pairing, repairing the transgressed boundary and emphasizing her feminine qualities.

²⁸ Young, *Masquerade*, 9-10; Mayer, *Belonging to the Army*.

²⁹ Young, *Masquerade*, 10.

³⁰ Diane Gervais and Serge Lusignan, "De Jeanne d'Arc à Madelaine de Verchères la femme guerrière dans la société d'ancien régime," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française* 53, no. 2 (1999): 171-205.

Although the pattern they described is common in many accounts of women's participation in the wars of the northeastern borderlands, Lusignan and Gervais were overly concerned with the transgression of simple binary pairings. By relying so heavily on transgression, boundaries, and the home as a domestic space, they ignored both the formal responsibilities of women of rank, as well as cultural space available to ordinary women during wartime in the Middle Ages and early modern periods. Their article also raises important questions regarding both gender roles in *ancien régime* France and the connection between transgressive behavior and fighting women. In other words, how transgressive was a woman who fought to uphold the patriarchal structure in which she lived? As this dissertation shows, rather than performing acts of transgression, most women who participated in these wars did so through their own power as women of rank or by "borrowing" the right to fight from the men who normally performed those roles.

Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's pathbreaking *Good Wives* is perhaps the most important foundational study for the New England portion of this dissertation.³¹ Published in 1980, it was the first monograph to attempt to reconstruct women's lives in northern New England. *Good Wives* took a "role analysis" approach to its subjects. Ulrich examined roles women played such as "wife," "mother," "neighbor," and "heroine" in an attempt to understand both the roles and expectations placed on women. Complementing this objective was Ulrich's desire to investigate how these roles were performed in the real world. Ulrich divided her monograph into three sections, each named after Biblical

³¹ Ulrich, *Good Wives*.

women. The first two, Bathsheba and Eve, examined women's roles related to housework, community, virtue, sexuality, marriage, and childbirth. The third Biblical figure, Jael, represented female action, violence, and disorder, though violence and disorder were not always paired in Ulrich's work. "Jael" consisted of four chapters focusing on women's roles in spirituality, captivity, crime, community violence, and wartime "resistance."

For the purposes of this dissertation, Ulrich's chapter "Blessed Above Women" is the most important. At sixteen pages long, it is the only modern scholarly analysis of New England women's participation in the border wars. Ulrich drew on a relatively small number of primary sources for that section. Although many of her conclusions have been proven correct by research for this dissertation, they were offered somewhat tentatively due to her small source base and the scope of her work. Many of these stories, as well as dozens of others that were not included in Ulrich's analysis, appeared in multiple sources including other narratives, court records, and diaries. This dissertation tracks down many of these sources and offers a complex reconstruction of women's experiences in the border wars that goes beyond anecdotes drawn from the best-known sources.

The main disagreement this study has with Ulrich's work is with her assertion that women's participation in these wars was accidental. She wrongly argued that women and children were regularly evacuated and that such "heroism...represented possibility, not probability."³² Although she was right in suggesting that men were the primary defenders

³² Ulrich, *Good Wives*, 179.

of the frontiers, policies placed New England's women in situations where their participation was necessary in a variety of situations. The praise these women received, their use as political propaganda, and the manner in which they were held up as role-models suggest that political, social, and cultural roots of their participation ran much deeper than Ulrich suggested. In addition to providing a study of women's participation in the border wars, this dissertation will provide a much-needed, in-depth examination of a topic that Ulrich began to reveal in 1980.

More recently, Ann Little and Mary Beth Norton have considered the important role gender played in the wars of the northeastern borderlands in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.³³ Little's work explored the issue more thoroughly, though she made masculinity and the role of husband and father her primary focus. She argued that "gender and family differences were...central to the language and ideology of conquest and were the key principles upon which theories of difference were constructed in the colonial northeastern borderlands."³⁴ In making this argument, Little has pointed the way to a new area of inquiry for colonial historians. In a field that often seems as if it has been exhausted, Little demonstrates that a combination of histories of violence, gender, and transnational history can still bear fruit for the colonial historian.

The other historian who has considered the role of gender in these wars, Mary Beth Norton, has done so in a more limited fashion than Little. In Norton's *In the Devil's*

³³ Little, *Abraham in Arms*; Little, "Gender and Sexuality in the North American Borderlands"; Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*.

³⁴ Little, *Abraham in Arms*, 5.

Snare, she framed the Salem witchcraft trials—an episode teeming with examples of connections between female violence, religion, and gender roles—within the framework of a wider Essex County outbreak that she argues was triggered largely by a refugee crisis.³⁵ These refugees had fled settlements on the coast of Maine during King William’s War, some settling in Salem and bringing traumatic experiences with them. Norton argues that earlier historians of the crisis had focused too narrowly on Salem Village itself, ignoring the vital role King William’s War played in the conflict. She is especially convincing when describing the visions villagers had of hostile Indians approaching a village in Essex County that touched off a spate of accusations of witchcraft. Despite *In the Devil’s Snare’s* focus on women’s violence via spectral means, her success in this endeavor makes a strong case for the study of corporeal female violence in the context of the wars of the northeastern borderlands.

Although both Little and Norton’s works advance the study of gender during the border wars, each leave room for further study. Little’s work discussed gender across cultures during the wars but focused mainly on masculinity and the household. Norton’s monograph examined the role the wars played in a specific crisis that dealt with transgressive gendered violence. This study responds to Norton and Little’s work by combining Little’s broader approach to questions of gender in the northeastern borderlands and Norton’s interest in female violence.

³⁵ For another take on gender and Salem that explores women’s involvement from a more socio-economic perspective see: Carol F. Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1987).

As the site of endemic warfare, the northeastern borderlands are a particularly appropriate site for a study of comparative violence and war. Historians have only recently begun to examine violence in the Americas during the colonial period from a comparative perspective. According to Evan Haefeli, “the growing power of states was most palpable in their increasing control over and use of violence, writings about violence were often linked to political propaganda.”³⁶ Haefeli argued that a “culture of violence” flourished in the American colonies which often erupted when “European and Native American cultures of violence” clashed, when cultures failed in “interpreting and coming to terms with violent acts.”³⁷ The ability and inability of communities in the northeastern borderlands to make sense of other cultures of violence proved critical throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In a larger sense, the misunderstandings of other cultures’ motivation for warfare proved disastrous as Europeans failed to understand native cycles of warfare based on retribution and captive-taking.

One of the more exciting newer offerings dealing with colonial violence, *New World Orders*, “reexamine[d] the relationship between violence, sanction, and authority in the colonial Americas.”³⁸ In his introduction to the collection, John Smolenski argued that “conceptions of violence. . . helped reinforce boundaries of culture and law,” an

³⁶ Evan Haefeli, “Kieft’s War and the Cultures of Violence in Colonial America,” in *Lethal Imagination: Violence and Brutality in American History*, ed. Michael Bellesiles (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 27.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 35.

³⁸ John Smolenski, “Introduction,” in *New World Orders: Violence, Sanction, and Authority in the Colonial Americas*, ed. John Smolenski and Thomas J. Humphrey (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 3.

observation that is especially useful in an area consumed by violence and under shifting control such as the northeastern borderlands.³⁹ Indeed, in areas similar to the northeastern borderlands, often the authority of those in power “rested not on maintaining a monopoly of violence. . . but on maintaining a monopoly on the definition of violence,” a desperate battle for cultural control of violence.⁴⁰

Smolenski rightly observed that for all its importance, scholars have paid very little attention to the idea that violence was “a foundational element in colonial culture.”⁴¹ This observation rings particularly true in borderland areas. In a region in constant flux such as the northeastern borderlands, part of the colonial project and a major goal of those who aspired to power was to “establish a common repertoire of ways of violence among their members.”⁴² Throughout the colonies, “economies of violence—the range of permissible exchanges of violence in colonial society that defined who could inflict violence against whom and under what conditions” played a major role in shaping identities.⁴³ Indeed, according to Thomas Humphrey, one of the most important uses for violence was to define and construct ideas about gender and gendered roles and hierarchies in early America.⁴⁴

³⁹ Smolenski, *New World Orders*, 12.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* For an excellent example of a scholar who has used violence as a lens for understanding colonialism in North America, see Blackhawk, *Violence over the Land*.

⁴² Smolenski, *New World Orders*, 14.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Thomas J. Humphrey, “Afterword,” in *New World Orders: Violence, Sanction, and Authority in the Colonial Americas*, ed. John Smolenski and Thomas J. Humphrey (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 276.

In the early modern societies of the Atlantic world, women's violence was inseparable from issues of social order and religion. The concept of the "little commonwealth" thrived as a model for order at the familial level during this period. In this model, men ideally played the role of king, ruling over the orderly subjects in his household in the same way the kings of Europe ruled over their much larger domains. As John Smolenski and Thomas Humphrey have contended, violent conflicts in borderland areas often resulted in the "redrawing of boundaries and the redefinition of authority at different moments."⁴⁵ They argue that this phenomenon also is reflected domestically as "struggles for power along the 'intimate frontiers of empire' ... involved redrawing the boundaries between church, state, and the 'household' and redefining colonial authority over gender relations."⁴⁶ In the northeastern borderlands, most women's violence in wartime fell well within what Smolenski referred to as "the range of permissible exchanges of violence."⁴⁷ Their participation in the ongoing violence throughout the region was rendered necessary by the political and military priorities of all involved groups.

In both New England and New France, women's violence in war was framed within European and Christian contexts. Although it may be tempting to see women's participation in these wars as examples of Americans abandoning European gender norms as a result of contact with Native societies, evidence from the time overwhelmingly

⁴⁵ Smolenski, *New World Orders*, 69.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 14.

shows that authors placed both Native and Euro-American women's actions within established European and Christian contexts. Indeed, as we will see in Chapter Three, even the figure of the Amazon, who appears in many texts that describe women's war-making, had been partially "tamed" and Christianized by the early modern period. With the exception of Indian women's participation in ritual torture, Euro-American writers portrayed nearly all women's wartime actions as firmly within the bounds of Euro-American gender roles, drawing from similar European incidents in the past and present when necessary. French authors even portrayed allied Indian women as acting with the blessing of God or their husbands. How women's violent actions in the wars of the northeastern borderlands functioned within early modern gender expectations is one of the key questions this dissertation explores.

Sources and Methodology

As I collected primary sources for this dissertation, I created a searchable database of what I dubbed "entries," due to the fact that a given document might contain several useful but unrelated incidents or laws. Each entry included a description, quote, link, or image as well as bibliographic information. The database also broadly sorted entries as "incidents," specific instances of women's participation in the border wars, "legal sources," such as laws, court cases, petitions, and depositions, "cultural sources," such as treatises, sermons, newspapers, and "personal" documents, which included official and unofficial correspondence and papers. Some of these entries, particularly in the

“incidents” category, had over a dozen sources attached to it, as I collected multiple accounts of the same incident from different decades and even centuries.

The contents of the database are the result of an extensive search of archival sources, commercial databases, and published primary sources, many of which have been scanned and are available online.⁴⁸ Indeed, this dissertation, with its large chronological and geographic scope as well as its subject matter—women in remote areas of a contested region—has been possible thanks to technology. Many of the entries in my database were buried in much larger, seemingly unrelated documents. After an initial “scouting” trip to several of my archives, few of which had organized their card catalogues with women’s and gender historians in mind, I turned my attention to commercial databases and the hundreds of volumes of colonial records available online. Using keyword searches as well as simply reading the sources, I searched through thousands of passages that mentioned women, families, and the border wars. After compiling hundreds of useful

⁴⁸ In addition to databases such as Early American Imprints, Early English Books Online, and Eighteenth Century Collections Online, hundreds of volumes of colonial records are available online. A small number of examples might include: *The Acts and Resolves, Public and Private, of the Province of the Massachusetts Bay*, 21 vols. (Boston: Wright & Potter, 1869-1922); *Documentary History of the State of Maine*, 24 vols. (Portland: Maine Historical Society, 1869-1916); *Essex Institute Historical Collections*, 121 vols. (Salem, Mass.: Essex Institute Press, 1869-1993); *Journals of the House of Representatives of Massachusetts*, 50 vols. (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1919-1990); *Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay in New England*, 5 vols., ed. Nathaniel B. Shurtleff (Boston: William White, 1853-1854); *Jugements et Délibérations du Conseil Souverain de la Nouvelle-France*, 6 vols. (Québec: Législature de Québec, 1885-1891); *Édits, Ordonnances Royaux, Déclarations et Arrêts du Conseil d'État du Roi concernant Canada*, 3 vols. (Québec: E. R. Fréchette, 1854-1856); *Lettres de la Vénérable Mère Marie de l'Incarnation: Première Supérieure des Ursulines de la Nouvelle France, Divisée en Deux Parties*, 2 vols., ed. L'Abbé Richaudeau (Paris: Librairie International Catholique, 1876); *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France, 1610-1791*, 73 vols, ed. Ruben Gold Thwaites (Cleveland: Burrows Brothers, 1896-1901); *Collection de Manuscrits contenant Lettres, Mémoires, et autres Documents Historiques Relatifs à la Nouvelle-France: Recueillis aux Archives de la Province de Québec, ou Copiés à l'Étranger*, 4 vols. (Québec: A. Coté et cie., 1883-85).

entries, I returned to my archives the following year with a better understanding of my source-base and collected sources unavailable in databases and published collections.

As a brief example of how technology can facilitate this type of project, a return to historiography is useful. When Laurel Thatcher Ulrich wrote what would become *Good Wives* in the late 1970s, she relied largely on a handful of famous narratives, sifting through their pages for mentions of women acting within the *Jael* archetype. Ulrich herself seemed frustrated by the small number of sources, noting that “for every such account which appeared in public records of the period there must have been others which survived only in local tradition or family legend.”⁴⁹ In addition to those accounts that did survive in local and family traditions—many of which appear in this dissertation—dozens of sources that related women’s participation in the border wars remained buried in seemingly unremarkable or unrelated documents and in collections now accessible through technology.

Written in the late 1980s and 1990s, Mary Beth Norton’s *Founding Mothers and Fathers* drew from a much larger source-base. Her project, which relied heavily on published sources, was made possible through the efforts of students who “spent innumerable hours...translating the details of civil and criminal cases into numerical values that could be analyzed by computer.”⁵⁰ The thousands of entries in Norton’s databases dealt with cases that involved women and allowed her to sift through copious

⁴⁹ Ulrich, *Good Wives*, 178.

⁵⁰ Norton, *Founding Mothers and Fathers*, ix.

amounts of data while avoiding cases unrelated to her project.⁵¹ Thanks to the online availability of the volumes mined for Norton's database—as well as dozens of other volumes that were not relevant to her study—I was able to search through the equivalent of several times the number of sources available to Norton and her students. I then included those sources that were relevant to my project in my own database.

The study of early modern women and gender roles, particularly when using a wide yet somewhat fragmented source base, is fraught with interpretive dangers and temptations. The temptation to read historiography and theory backward onto early modern gender roles can be great. This is particularly true with regard to interpretations related to domesticity and nineteenth and twentieth-century ideas regarding separate spheres. As my sources often describe women behaving in ways that are vulnerable to being read as transgressive or overly heroic, understanding their actions and others' reactions to them through an early modern mindset is critical. Although it is impossible to truly see through their eyes, I have taken steps to approach this goal to the greatest extent allowed and to avoid the most dangerous obstacles. The most fruitful of these steps has been to rely on gender historians of early modern Europe and North America who base their formulations of early modern gender roles on the work of seventeenth and eighteenth century cultural theorists and on sources such as legal records and laws, newspapers, and diaries.

⁵¹ Norton, *Founding Mothers and Fathers*, 409.

Perhaps the historian with the greatest influence on this project's theoretical underpinnings has been Mary Beth Norton.⁵² Norton's efforts over the past forty years in establishing a framework for understanding gender in the early modern Atlantic world have proven invaluable. Two of Norton's works, *Founding Mothers and Fathers* and *Separated by their Sex*, have been particularly helpful in the development of this dissertation.⁵³ Both books explore the intersection of gender and power in the early modern period during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, respectively. Although I will discuss and integrate Norton's theories throughout the dissertation, a short explanation of her main ideas is necessary.

Drawing from theorists such as Robert Filmer and John Locke as well as from numerous real-life examples of gender roles at work from sources such as court cases, Norton argued in *Founding Mothers and Fathers* that "the public/private dichotomy so frequently discussed by historians of women...did not exist" in seventeenth-century New

⁵² Although Norton's work on women and gender in colonial America has been the most influential in helping shape this work as a whole, many other scholars of women's and gender history have made significant contributions to the literature. A number of the following works will be discussed further in other chapters of this dissertation: Ulrich, *Good Wives*; Kathleen Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Ann Marie Plane, *Colonial Intimacies: Indian Marriages in Early New England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000); Kirsten Fischer, *Suspect Relations: Sex, Race, and Resistance in Colonial North Carolina* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002); Theda Perdue, *Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700-1835* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998); Cornelia Hughes Dayton, *Women Before the Bar: Gender, Law, and Society in Connecticut, 1639-1789* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Lisa Norling, *Captain Ahab had a Wife: New England Women & the Whalefishery, 1720-1870* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman*; Lisa Wilson, *Ye Heart of a Man: The Domestic Life of Men in Colonial New England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999); Clare A. Lyons, *Sex among the Rabble: An Intimate History of Gender and Power in the Age of Revolution, Philadelphia: 1730-1830* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Anne Lombard, *Making Manhood: Growing Up Male in Colonial New England* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003); Vivian Bruce Conger, *The Widows' Might: Widowhood and Gender in Early British America* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).

⁵³ Norton, *Founding Mothers and Fathers*; Mary Beth Norton, *Separated by their Sex: Women in Public and Private in the Colonial Atlantic World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011).

England.⁵⁴ Rather, Norton described three spheres in which gender roles operated in British North America. The first, the formal public, related to secular and church authority and was more often—though not exclusively—the domain of men. The informal public was more community-based, included both men and women, and “did not always concur with the judgments or decisions of officially recognized authorities (the formal public).”⁵⁵ The final sphere, the private sphere, is the simplest of the three. In Norton’s formulation, private could refer to something secret, a closed meeting, or someone’s “personal business.”⁵⁶ These definitions of “private,” according to Norton, suggest that “the English colonists did not equate *private* and *female* or *private* and *family*.”⁵⁷

Norton also laid out the beginnings of two arguments that she would further pursue in her most recent monograph, *Separated by their Sex*.⁵⁸ The first of these arguments involved the idea that in the early modern period—particularly through the end of the seventeenth century—rank and status might trump gender as an organizing principle. In other words, a woman of means or higher social standing could wield greater power than a male social inferior. She greatly expanded this idea in her discussion of powerful women such as Lady Frances Berkeley of Virginia, who exercised her political clout in Bacon’s Rebellion. Norton’s ideas regarding rank and gendered power in the

⁵⁴ Norton, *Founding Mothers and Fathers*, 23-24.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 20-24.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁵⁸ Norton, *Separated by their Sex*.

Atlantic world are particularly useful in this dissertation's discussions of women of rank in early New France who led defenses of their seigneuries. Although social stratification existed on New England's frontier as well, for the most part, gaps between settlers' families did not begin to approach the divide between New France's seigneurial class and its laborers.

The second argument Norton expanded in *Separated by their Sex* was that over the course of the eighteenth century, social spheres became increasingly gendered.⁵⁹ Although, as Norton explained, "the notion that a hierarchy based on rank might give way to one resting on gender...was literally unthinkable in seventeenth-century England," this was precisely what happened.⁶⁰ Rather than the three somewhat overlapping spheres Norton described in *Founding Mothers and Fathers*, the more familiar masculine public and feminine private spheres began to emerge in the Atlantic world. Norton attributed this

⁵⁹ Other influential works on gendering public and private spheres in eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe and America include: Erica Longfellow, "Public, Private, and the Household in Early Seventeenth-Century England," *Journal of British Studies* 45, no. 2 (April, 2006): 313-334; Lawrence Eliot Klein, "Gender and the Public/Private Distinction in the Eighteenth Century: Some Questions about Evidence and Analytic Procedure," *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 29, no. 1 (Fall, 1995): 97-109; Amanda Vickery, "Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History," *The Historical Journal* 36, no. 2 (June, 1993): 383-414; Dena Goodman, "Public Sphere and Private Life: Toward a Synthesis of Current Historiographical Approaches to the Old Regime," *History and Theory* 31 (1992): 1-20; Linda Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," *Journal of American History* 75, no. 1 (June, 1988): 9-39; Jeanne Boydston, "Gender as a Question of Historical Analysis," *Gender & History* 20, no. 3 (Nov. 2008): 558-585; Leonore Davidoff, "Gender and the 'Great Divide': Public and Private in British Gender History," *Journal of Women's History* 15, no. 1 (Spring, 2003): 11-27; John Brewer, "This, that and the other: Public, Social and Private in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," in *Shifting the Boundaries: Transformation of the Languages of Public and Private in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Dario Castiglione and Lesley Sharpe (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1995), 1-21; Joan B. Landes, "Further Thoughts on the Public/Private Distinction," *Journal of Women's History* 15, no. 2 (2003): 28-39.

⁶⁰ Norton, *Separated by their Sex*, 2.

shift in the Anglo-Atlantic world to developments in response to 1688-1689's Glorious Revolution.⁶¹

One major reason for the establishment of the “feminine private” and the “masculine public” spheres was “a division between family and state” which followed the Glorious Revolution.⁶² According to Norton, these developments stemmed from Whiggish notions of government, which “distinguished between the powers of fathers and the power of rulers” and established the idea that social contracts between men rather than “the historical authority of family patriarchs” should form the basis of society.⁶³ As being male became an increasingly important qualification for participation in a government comprised of consenting men, women faced ever greater difficulties when attempting to claim power through family connections.⁶⁴ In addition to political philosophy, Norton also identified an increase in commercial activity as well as changes in ideas regarding biology as factors that may have contributed to a notion that women belonged in a sheltered, private, domestic sphere.⁶⁵

Norton's discussion of the development of separate spheres is convincing and is particularly useful in Chapter Five of this dissertation, which examines changes in the language New Englanders used in eighteenth and early-nineteenth century retellings of stories from the earlier period. Her caveat that these changes occurred over the course of

⁶¹ Norton, *Separated by their Sex*, 3.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 7.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

several decades is proven correct in Chapter Four.⁶⁶ That chapter, which examines changes in women's participation following 1713, explores competing notions of women's and settlers' relationships to the French and British Empires.

Norton looked at the Anglo-American Atlantic world in her studies, though her observations regarding status and gender hold true for the seventeenth century in New France. The development of the masculine public and feminine private spheres in England and British America during the eighteenth century does not appear to have occurred in New France, however.⁶⁷ Indeed, scholars such as Dena Goodman have argued that women of rank maintained significant political power through the *ancien régime*.⁶⁸ According to Goodman, French women assumed complementary roles in French Enlightenment society, particularly as salonnières.⁶⁹ Despite being seen as weaker and more delicate than men, many in French society viewed women's feminine qualities—and political participation—as a necessary counterbalance to male nature and vital to a healthy polity.⁷⁰ The divergence between British and French spheres of gender in the

⁶⁶ Norton, *Separated by their Sex*, 1-8.

⁶⁷ Norton acknowledged in a note that her findings likely did not apply to eighteenth-century France. *Ibid.*, 184, n. 9.

⁶⁸ Goodman, "Public Sphere and Private Life"; Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996). Paperback edition.

⁶⁹ Goodman, *The Republic of Letters*, 8-10.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 6-7. For other works on the changes in the nature of public and private spheres in eighteenth-century France, see: Joan B. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988); Steven D. Kale, "Women, Salons, and the State in the Aftermath of the French Revolution," *Journal of Women's History* 13, no. 4 (Winter, 2002): 54-80; Keith Michael Baker, "Defining the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century France: Variations on a theme by Habermas," in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), 181-209; Sarah Maza, *Private Lives and Public Affairs: The Causes Célèbres of Prerevolutionary France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Lynn Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); Suzanne Desan, *The Family on Trial in Revolutionary France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

eighteenth century is evident in my findings on post-1713 New France. Although the focus of the war shifted away from the seigneuries of the St. Lawrence River Valley, women of rank continued to participate in New France's military society, particularly via economic means.

In my study of gender and culture in New France, I have often relied on the work of historians of British North America and early modern France to inform my conclusions. Studies of women in New France have tended to fall into two main camps, focusing on demographic, judicial, and economic research, or studies of the Ursuline mission and its female leaders.⁷¹ The directions that scholars of New France have taken has been driven in part by a source base that is dominated by accounts from missionaries, government correspondence, and notarial and judicial documents. This lack of diversity in sources—a result of low literacy rates, the relative scarcity of European women, and the absence of a Canadian publishing industry—has limited the growth of the field. Studies of Indian women similarly tend to rely on the sources produced by French missionaries, particularly those regarding intermarriage between French men and Indian

⁷¹ Leslie Choquette, "'Ces Amazones du Grand Dieu': Women and Mission in Seventeenth-Century Canada," *French Historical Studies* 17, no. 3 (Spring 1992): 627-655; Ann M. Little, "Cloistered Bodies: Convents in the Anglo-American Imagination in the British Conquest of Canada," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 39, no. 2 (Winter, 2006): 187-200; Caroline M. Woidat, "Captivity, Freedom, and the New World Convent: The Spiritual Autobiography of Marie de l'Incarnation Guyart," *Legacy* 25, no. 1 (2008): 1-22; Anne Marie Lane Jonah and Elizabeth Tait, "Filles d'Acadie, Femmes de Louisbourg: Acadian Women and French Colonial Society in Eighteenth-Century Louisbourg," *French Colonial History* 8 (2007), 23-51; Janet Noel, "'Nagging Wife' Revisited: Women and the Fur Trade in New France," *French Colonial History* 7 (2006): 45-60.

women in the *pays d'en haut*.⁷² Although recently historians have begun to look more closely at widows, women who appear more frequently in the historical record, the lives of French and Indian women in New France remain poorly understood.⁷³ Scholarly discussions of women who participated in warfare are almost entirely confined to retellings of Madeleine de Verchères' story and biographical entries for a handful of women in encyclopedias.

Although a sizable percentage of this dissertation engages with sources relating to Native Americans, I have chosen to use these sources as windows into the societies of New England and New France, rather than adding a third comparative group. A lack of European-produced—let alone Native-produced—sources as well as the sheer diversity of Native nations in the region are the primary factors contributing to this decision. Combined, all available sources relating to Indian women's actions in these wars

⁷² Allan Greer, "Colonial Saints: Gender, Race, and Hagiography in New France," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., 57, no. 2 (April, 2000): 339-340; Dominique Deslandres, "In the Shadow of the Cloister: Representations of Female Holiness in New France," in *Colonial Saints: Discovering the Holy in the Americas, 1500-1800*, ed. Allan Greer and Jodi Bilinkoff (New York: Routledge, 2003), 129-152; Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women and French Men*; Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*. An exception is Anne Marie Lane Jonah, "Unequal Transitions: Two Métis Women in Eighteenth-Century Île Royale," *French Colonial History* 11 (2010): 109-129.

⁷³ Historians such as Josette Brun have attempted to counter earlier reports from Jan Noel and others of a "golden age" for women in colonial New France by introducing accounts of gender inequality. Their goal is to more accurately portray both the opportunities and restrictions women in New France encountered. Josette Brun, *Vie et mort du couple en Nouvelle-France: Québec et Louisbourg au XVIIIe siècle* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's Press, 2006); Molly G. Richter, "Widowhood in New France: Consequences and Coping Strategies," *French Colonial History* 4 (2003): 49-61; Benoît Grenier, Catherine Ferland, and Maryse Cyr, "Les procuratrices à Québec au XVIIIe siècle: résultats préliminaires d'une enquête sur le pouvoir des femmes en Nouvelle France," in *Femmes, culture et pouvoir: Relectures de l'histoire au féminin XVe-XXe siècles*, ed. Catherine Ferland and Benoît Grenier (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2010), 127-145. For examples of earlier historians who focused on women's opportunities in New France, see: Jan Noel, *Women in New France* (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1998); Catherine Rubinger, "The Influence of Women in Eighteenth Century New France," in *Femmes savantes et femmes d'esprit: Women Intellectuals of the French Eighteenth Century*, ed. Roland Bonnel and Catherine Rubinger (New York: Peter Lang, 1994), 419-444; Micheline Dumont, Michèle Jean, Marie Lavigne, Jennifer Stoddart, eds., *Québec Women: A History*, trans. Roger Gannon and Rosalind Gill (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1987).

produced a substantial collection of documents. Within this collection, however, no single nation left behind sufficient sources to support a detailed study in the mode of the dissertation's sections on New England and New France. Using these sources to form a composite picture of Native women's participation was equally impossible, though for different reasons. In a dissertation so concerned with how specific policy decisions of individual governments reflected and influenced women's participation in war-making, reducing dozens of separate Native nations into a blanket "Indians" section seemed both incongruous and irresponsible.

Throughout this dissertation I have made numerous linguistic choices, each with the goal of bringing clarity to the reader of a project that touches three centuries, dozens of polities, and draws on the historiography of both English and French-speaking authors. When possible, I have identified Indian nations by name, i.e. Pocasset. I have also chosen to follow the examples of many historians of American-Indians in employing the noun "Indian" when a nationality was not available. I have retained the term "Native" for use as an adjective. When speaking of New France, which also included parts of the interior of North America as well as the Caribbean, I chose to use the word "Quebec" to refer to the city, "Canada" (the term used in the colonial period) to refer to much of what is now the province of Quebec and eastern Ontario, and "Acadia" to refer to the French colony of Acadia. When speaking of Canada and Acadia as a whole, I will use the imperfect term "New France."

Although the historiographies of the United States, Canada, and many European countries employ different names for many of the conflicts discussed in this dissertation, I have chosen to use those terms most familiar to my largely American audience. Thus, King William's War rather than the Nine Years' War or the War of the Grand Alliance (1688-1697), Queen Anne's War rather than War of the Spanish Succession (1702-1713), Dummer's War rather than Ralé's War or Greylock's War (1723-1726), King George's War rather than the War of Austrian Succession (1744-1748), and the Seven Years' War, which has become the common term in the United States for the French and Indian War (1756-1763). As France adopted the Gregorian calendar in 1582, well before my earliest source, I have used modern dates for both New France and New England, converting English sources when necessary. Unless quoting from a modern translation or transcription, I have maintained authentic spellings.

Chapter Outline

Part One of the dissertation consists of three chapters which examine women's participation in the wars of the northeastern borderlands from social, cultural, and military perspectives through the treaty of Utrecht in 1713. Chapter One examines how the intersection of early modern gender roles and New England's expansionist policies increased and encouraged women's participation in the region's wars. Drawing on Norton's formulation of the formal and informal spheres in early modern society, I show how government-sponsored, fortified frontier communities blurred the lines between military and domestic, settler and soldier. Forbidden from evacuating to safer towns,

women living in these communities kept watch, worked directly with military officials in administering forts, and fought alone and alongside their husbands when under attack.

In addition to unpacking the relationship between women's roles in communities where the home was intertwined with the front, this chapter also investigates how New Englanders responded to Native women's participation in these wars. Participating in a wide variety of wartime roles including ritual torture and serving as sachems and spies, Indian women's participation frequently challenged New Englanders' notions of appropriate female behavior within the formal and informal spheres. Finally, I will examine how English women exploited loopholes within the informal public sphere to lead both vigilante groups against the colony's foes and violent popular protests that challenged colonial male leadership.

In Chapter Two, I explore women's wartime participation in New France through the lens of rank. Unlike in New England, where privileged English women tended to live in safer communities away from the frontier, women's participation while living under New France's seigneurial system was highly dependent upon rank. As the wives and daughters of seigneurs—and as holders of seigneuries themselves—women of rank rallied and led their troops when under attack and used their financial resources and influence to raise armies. Non-elite women, who lacked a formal role to play in New France's wars, were more often described as running to join the battle or partnering with men in defense of communities along the St. Lawrence River. In addition to exploring the role rank played in French women's participation in the border wars, this chapter also

examines how French writers portrayed accounts of allied Indian women's actions in these wars. Ultimately, I will argue that authors portrayed non-elite French and allied Indian women similarly: as expressing European and Christian traditions and values.

In the third and final chapter of Part One, I examine how elite men in both New England and New France appropriated reports of these women's often violent actions, employing these stories for political and religious purposes at the local, colonial, and imperial levels. Using these accounts, authors attempted to establish female role-models, finance colonial operations, and even overthrow provincial governments. In New France, Jesuit leaders delighted their wealthy female donors in France with tales of New World Amazons—both French and Indian—fighting for the Catholic faith and the nascent French society in North America. Frequently, Jesuit authors paired such accounts with pleas for funds from “brave” women at home, linking the act of donating to a shared Amazonian spirit. Officials in New England used stories of fighting women as examples to settlers, to promote morale at home, and to elicit sympathy and score political points in England. Perhaps the most powerful example of this is an author who praised a mob of women in Boston for harassing soldiers returning from a botched military operation led by the author's enemy, Governor Joseph Dudley.

Part Two examines the region's mid to late-imperial phases. Following the French peace with the Iroquois in 1701 and the treaty of Utrecht in 1713, the northeastern borderlands experienced a period of relative calm. This period was followed by sixteen years of conflict that began in 1744 with King George's War and ended with the French

surrender of most of its North American territories at the end of the Seven Years' War in 1763. In Chapter Four, I explore political and cultural changes that arose concurrently with these military developments in both New England and New France. The lull in the fighting during the first half of the eighteenth century offered women in New England an opportunity to approach colonial governments with petitions requesting compensation for their "service" in the previous round of wars. These largely successful petitions depended upon evidence of women's independent action. In one case, a man named Joseph Neff successfully petitioned for land based on his mother's service. These accounts raise complex issues regarding women's political and legal identity as subjects of their government, as wives, and as individuals. They also emerged at a time when the home and the front—previously intertwined—began to separate in response to an increased British military presence in New England. As a result, debates raged in the legislature and the press regarding the role of the monarch-as-father in protecting both male and female settlers. In New France, peace with the Iroquois and increased English naval attacks on coastal settlements resulted in a military focus on the eastern areas of the colony, rather than on Montreal. As women's physical participation in these conflicts lessened, their role in commerce and in the financial support of French military operations in North America increased.

Chapter Five explores how stories of women from the early colonial period changed over time to serve different cultural and political agendas. Unlike Chapters Three and Four, Chapter Five focuses almost exclusively on New England. In New

France, the lack of a press, as well as the English conquest of the colony, left behind an insufficient number of sources to conduct a thorough study. New Englanders preserved these stories in both oral and written forms through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the first part of the chapter, I establish the cultural persistence of accounts of women fighting in earlier wars. In this section, I also examine how eighteenth-century authors drew upon accounts of women's participation from the earlier period, including them as important events in wars that these authors saw as critical in creating a shared history. The second portion of the chapter explores how oral and local histories augmented written accounts of women's participation following the American Revolution. In these histories, earlier accounts of women fighting in New England took on previously absent overtones of domesticity and motherhood.

By revealing a new facet of early American women's political, social, and cultural history, this dissertation makes a unique contribution to the discipline. In the field of borderlands history, my dissertation contributes to the geographic expansion of the field while returning women to the conflicts that characterized these hotly contested regions. In a field often dominated by discussions of cultural exchange, religion, and trade in contested regions, this dissertation investigates how the violent aspects of that contestation intersected with society and culture. As scholars such as Ann Little and Louise Dechêne have argued, the study of warfare in the northeastern borderlands need not be confined to studies of troop movements and biographies of Wolfe and Montcalm.

Rather, war and violence touched all aspects of society, including gender relations and the lives of women.

The dissertation also makes a major contribution to the field of early American women's history. In a period famous for its ideologies of patriarchal power and female submission, my research explores a new arena in which women performed traditionally masculine tasks. That they did so with the approval and encouragement of men in the midst of a conflict understood by all sides as intensely masculine is even more remarkable. This dissertation significantly bolsters the efforts of scholars of early American women's history who have attempted to challenge outdated notions that women's behaviors and experiences uniformly adhered to the prescribed ideologies of the time. It also suggests that those ideologies may have been more flexible than previously recognized.

CHAPTER 1:

GENDERING SPACES AND SPHERES OF WAR-MAKING IN NEW ENGLAND (1630-1713)

Gendering the Garrison House

On April 27, 1706, at least eight people in an unfortified home in Oyster River, New Hampshire were killed during an attack on their settlement. It was the worst attack on a frontier community since the infamous Deerfield raid killed forty-nine people in 1704.¹ This assault marked the beginning of a period of renewed attacks on fortified communities after a quieter 1705.² Casualties in the town would have been much higher were it not for an extraordinary event taking place at a fortified house nearby. As Samuel Penhallow related in 1726, “not a man” remained in the garrison house at the time of the attack.³ According to Penhallow, a number of women in the house at the time “assum’d an Amazonian courage, seeing nothing but death before them, advanced the Watch-box, and made an alarm.” The women then adopted a classic military strategy, manipulating their enemy’s perception of the strength of the garrison’s forces. Posing as men, they “put on Hatts, with their hair hanging down, and fired so briskly that they struck a terror in the Enemy, and they withdrew without firing the house, or carrying away much Plunder.”⁴

¹ Evan Haefeli and Kevin Sweeney, *Captors and Captives: The 1704 French and Indian Raid on Deerfield* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003), appendix E, 286-287.

² *Ibid.*, 190-193.

³ Samuel Penhallow, *The History of the Wars of New-England with the Eastern Indians* (Boston: T. Fleet, 1726), 32. Early American Imprints, Series 1: Evans, 1639-1800, accessed online; John Pike. “Journal,” in *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1875-1876* (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1876), 117-152.

⁴ Penhallow, *The History of the Wars of New-England with the Eastern Indians*, 42.

That Penhallow described the women as firing “briskly” is a testament to their effectiveness and the respect Penhallow accorded them. In early New England, the term suggested “bold efficiency and courage,” and briskness was a “highly desirable quality in military men.”⁵

One month after the women of Oyster River repelled the attack on their town in 1706, the Massachusetts government approved a remarkable amendment to an earlier law that banned the desertion of frontier towns.⁶ The amendment to the 1695 law specified that “during the time of the present war, all persons with their families” must “abide” in their appointed garrisons. Any “person capable of bearing arms” who deserted the garrison faced fines from five to twenty pounds.⁷ A second amendment required that “all male persons in the frontiers capable of bearing arms” carry their weapons at all times, even in the fields.⁸ Unrelated families had frequently lived together in fortified homes when attacks seemed likely, though these living arrangements had not been mandated by provincial law. The amendment that passed following the Oyster River incident suggests Massachusetts gained a greater understanding of the dangers settlers in unfortified houses

⁵ Ann Little, *Abraham in Arms: War and Gender in Colonial New England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), n. 49, pg. 249.

⁶ The government of Massachusetts also passed a similar, temporary law in 1675, during King Philip’s War. *Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay in New England*, ed. Nathaniel B. Shurtleff (Boston: William White, 1853), 5:48, 51; “An Act to Prevent the Deserting of the Frontiers” [1695], in *The Acts and Resolves, Public and Private, of the Province of the Massachusetts Bay* (Boston: Wright & Potter, 1869), 1: 194-195; “List of the Public Acts,” *Acts and Resolves*, 1: 767-787; “An Act for Reviving and Further Continuing of Several Acts Therein Mentioned that are Near Expiring” [1706], *Acts and Resolves*, 1: 585-586.

⁷ *Acts and Resolves*, 1: 586

⁸ *Ibid.* These amendments were renewed along with the original act in 1707. *Ibid.*, 1: 606. It is unclear whether the amendment was renewed beyond this year, though Haefeli and Sweeney argue that after that point, the focus of the war “shifted from New England’s western frontier to Acadia and New York.” Haefeli and Sweeney, *Captors and Captives*, 201.

faced. It also highlights the emphasis placed on fortified communities as simultaneously family spaces and military installations.

Families who settled in towns near the frontier occupied a complex and shifting set of social, military, and cultural roles. As recipients of government assistance in fortifying designated homes in which all residents could take shelter, male members of settler families had certain obligations to the colony, such as helping in the upkeep of their fortifications.⁹ The most demanding of these obligations was defensive service in their frontier town's militia. Although all towns had militias, settlers in designated frontier towns had additional responsibilities and restrictions. As there is not an adequate term in use that captures the complexity of the functions and duties of men and their families on the frontier, I have adopted the term "settler-soldier" to convey this role more succinctly.

In northern New England, the home and the front were at times indistinguishable. The presence of families in forts that marked the first line of defense was considered critical to the overall security of the entire colony. Relying on fully-occupied, fortified frontier towns on the outer edges of the colony to protect more established settlements closer to Boston, officials in New England required the presence of whole families for a number of reasons. Leaders believed that the family structure bolstered the godliness of the frontier's inhabitants. The official discouragement of absentee landholding also added men to the militia, while colonists who brought their entire families were more likely to

⁹ For example: "An Act for the Better Security and Defence of the Frontiers" [1711], *Acts and Resolves*, 1: 903-904.

establish permanent settlements in these communities. Laws that forbade families from deserting these settlements prevented the blow to morale that accompanied the loss of outposts and refugee crises. As we will see, officials also indicated that women's presence in frontier towns was crucial, particularly during periods when settlements were at great risk. Women living within this system bore the brunt of the dangerous consequences of these policies. Taking on their husbands' role of settler-soldier when necessary, women administered garrisons, petitioned the government, and even fought alone, together, and alongside their husbands.

The nature of garrison towns, with their extreme lack of privacy, the blurring of the military with the domestic, the settler with the soldier, and duty to family with duty to colony and crown challenges modern perceptions of public and private spheres. Seen in light of Mary Beth Norton's work on such spheres however, garrison houses and fortified communities functioned well within early modern spheres of action.¹⁰ Norton's formulation of the formal public, informal public, and private spheres discussed earlier in the dissertation offers a great deal of clarity. Women's participation in New England's wars rarely operated within the more masculinized formal public. Instead, war-making often fell into the realm of the informal public—the sphere most conducive to female action—due to desperation, a lack of manpower, and laws mandating the presence of women and families in homes that combined military and domestic functions.

¹⁰ Mary Beth Norton, *Founding Mothers and Fathers: Gendered Power and the Forming of American Society* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997); Mary Beth Norton, *Separated by their Sex: Women in Public and Private in the Colonial Atlantic World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011).

The government's response to Oyster River indicates that it believed in the strength of fortified houses and the ability of inhabitants of either sex to defend those structures. Male settler-soldiers remained the primary defenders of the frontier, their military obligations officially expanded to include areas outside their homes. The tightening of restrictions on the frontier was not a negative reaction to the women's defense of their garrison house in Oyster River. As the amendment suggests, men's absence from garrison houses while working in the fields was necessary to the community's survival. The location of families in unfortified homes, such as the one in which eight to ten people died that day, was unacceptable. A successful defense mounted by either men or women was far more likely in a fortified home. The government believed that the presence of whole families in designated garrison houses was vital to both colonial morale and to the defense of New England—regardless of whether the arrangement was convenient or even reasonable for families whose houses and fields lay further from the town's designated garrisons.

Despite the focus of this section, women's participation in New England's wars was not limited to garrison houses, nor was it confined to their roles and duties within fortified communities. The frontier could shift quickly and any household might come under attack. Women living in previously safe communities defended them with male approval regardless of whether the head of household had settler-soldier status. This chapter explores policies and ideologies that placed women in fortified frontier communities, the most common site of women's participation in these border wars and

the intersection of the private, informal public, and formal public spheres. It also investigates how English writers and policymakers used early modern gender spheres to understand—and misunderstand—Indian women’s participation in these conflicts. Finally, this chapter examines the cultural framework that allowed women—even women living in larger, safer towns—to participate in war, one of New England’s most masculine activities.

British settlement in New England favored an approach by which prospective landowners founded towns progressively outward from the main settlement at Boston, as if creating an island of security. Indeed, when speaking about frontier towns, New Englanders sometimes referred to Boston as “inland,” though the city was on the coast.¹¹ Although Boston and its neighboring settlements faced destruction in King Philip’s War, the system of frontier towns largely protected the area around Boston in later, less local conflicts. Settlers frequently brought their entire families to these new remote towns, which enemies of New England saw as relatively easy pickings. As Haefeli and Sweeney pointed out, the isolated frontier towns of northern New England “embodied the cutting edge of an aggressive and expansionist culture, one whose social and economic survival depended on securing ever more land for its increasing number of children to farm.”¹²

Towns in or near the northeastern borderlands were at particular risk. A settler gazing north would have been aware that their town was separated from the heart of New France along the St. Lawrence River Valley only by vast stretches of land controlled by

¹¹ *Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay*, ed. Shurtleff, 5:48.

¹² Haefeli and Sweeney, *Captors and Captives*, 1.

Indians frequently allied with France. Fortified towns in or on the edge of the northeastern borderlands increasingly became important as vanguards of the expansionist impulse following King Philip's War. New England's own geography also encouraged settlement in the direction of French-controlled and French-influenced areas.

There is a surprising lack of secondary information on New England's fortified communities, particularly given their strategic importance in the period. The most comprehensive examinations of this topic come from Steven Eames and Patrick Malone.¹³ Malone noted that although some towns built more traditional palisades around their core buildings, forgoing palisades in favor of designated fortified homes became increasingly popular in the 1660s and 1670s.¹⁴ Malone observed that "the idea of fortification with a separate peaceful function was certainly not new," pointing out that castles served a similar function on a much larger scale and that Plymouth's original meetinghouse doubled as a fort.¹⁵

According to Malone, some of the houses were ordinary homes with fortification added on, while others were designed with defense in mind.¹⁶ Malone explained that designated garrison houses were assigned in times of attack to families whose houses lacked proper fortification. He described more effective garrison houses as having "thick walls of heavy timber, projecting flankers at two or more corners, and perhaps a

¹³ Patrick Malone, "Indian and English Military Systems in New England in the Seventeenth Century" (Ph.D. diss., Brown University, 1976); Steven C. Eames, "Rustic Warriors: Warfare and the Provincial Soldier on the Northern Frontier: 1689-1748" (Ph.D. diss., University of New Hampshire, 1976).

¹⁴ Malone, "Indian and English Military Systems," 224.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

surrounding palisade. Strong doors, shuttered windows and loop-holes in the walls were desirable, as a was a second story which provided good shooting positions for the defenders.”¹⁷ Colonists also spread sand and ash on the floor of second stories to protect the ground level from roof fires.¹⁸ Malone noted that “although retreat to garrison houses often meant the destruction of all the undefended buildings in a town, the fortified dwellings saved thousands of lives.”¹⁹ Oyster River demonstrated that well-fortified buildings manned by “alert and well-armed colonists” of either gender were rarely worth attacking.²⁰

Garrison houses and their owners served as the foundation of any frontier community’s militia. Owners often served in administrative and leadership positions in their towns. As such, they were responsible for impressing inhabitants when volunteers for the army were scarce, assigning inhabitants to specific garrison houses if an attack seemed likely, and making decisions regarding provisioning. Considering New England’s military as a whole, “the administrative backbone of that system on the local level were the militia companies and committees...[which] enabled the provincial governments to gather and distribute supplies, prepare the inhabitants for their immediate defense, and raise soldiers for provincial service.”²¹ The ability of provincial military forces to

¹⁷ Malone, “Indian and English Military Systems,” 224.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 225.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 228.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Eames, “Rustic Warriors,” 51-52, 63.

undertake defensive or offensive action heavily depended upon the line of fortified communities that established New England's frontier.

Garrison houses were so critical to military and settlement policy that the colony frequently refused to allow the inhabitants of these towns to flee when under attack. The policy emerged during King Philip's War when the General Court made their stance clear in October of 1675. The new law required "all inhabitants to attend their places in such fortification or garrison as they are appointed unto, and in case of alarum or invasion, to appeare at and for the defence of such places" or risk a fine of five shillings per day or even the loss of the abandoned property.²² The court also ordered that particularly endangered frontier towns "judged not able of themselves to bear the distress of the warr" should send women and children to towns further "inland." Crucially, the Court required a certain number of women, "so many as are necessary to abide," to remain on the front lines. This effectively impressed them into—at a minimum—a kind of domestic defensive service.²³

Although the families of frontier towns were required to defend New England's outpost communities, the composition of the offensive and defensive forces of colonial armies during wartime varied enormously across the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Kyle Zelner has described King Philip's war as "the first and last conflict fought in colonial New England with a mass impressed army."²⁴ Zelner described these

²² *Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay*, ed. Shurtleff, 5:48, 51.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Kyle Zelner, *A Rabble in Arms: Massachusetts Towns and Militiamen during King Philip's War* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 9-10.

men as “rabble,” impressed by town militia committees who often chose young men whom they considered less useful or less established in the community.

Over the course of the war, the ineffectiveness of unwilling, unmotivated impressed troops led to changes in recruiting as special volunteer units had far more success. According to Zelner, this marked a major shift in recruiting practices in future wars.²⁵ Zelner argues that although the new volunteer armies depended on this same “rabble” impressed during King Philip’s War, these men were often eager to volunteer, as pay and bounty opportunities were good and the government provided them with uniforms, weapons, and supplies.²⁶ The use of new volunteer forces, or the “commercialization of military service,” as Zelner refers to it, also allowed recruits to avoid “the military press for defensive garrisons.”²⁷ Residents of frontier towns in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Maine were still expected to maintain and defend their fortified communities with help from soldiers assigned to their towns.

King William’s War and Queen Anne’s War, multi-year, intercolonial wars that followed King Philip’s War, were substantially different than that Anglo-Indian conflict of the mid-1670s. These later wars, fought between the British, the French, and the region’s Indians were American fronts of major European wars. No longer confined to New England, the expansion of contested territory—as well as a greater European presence—changed the way the war was fought with profound implications for frontier

²⁵ Zelner, *A Rabble in Arms*, 215-216.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 216.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

settlements. As Guy Chet observed, these changes could also lead to conflict and resentment between the military and the inhabitants of fortified frontier towns. According to Chet, the widening of the contested area resulting in a greater sense of security for towns closer to Boston. At the same time, it also contributed to a sense of greater isolation for the settlers living in a more clearly established northeastern borderlands. With major settlements in less danger, defense and offense less blurred than in King Philip's War, British and colonial leaders began to favor offensive strikes, siphoning troops and resources from the garrison communities.²⁸

Meanwhile, military and political leaders blamed settler-soldiers for what they saw as a "defensive lethargy."²⁹ This lethargy stemmed in some cases from numerous false alarms and well-intentioned warnings from friendly Indians and resulted in successful raids on frontier towns.³⁰ Unwilling to commit sufficient men to a more stationary quartering of troops in each fortified community, military leaders instead established floating units "as patrol and rescue forces" that rarely arrived on time to rescue anyone.³¹ It is during this period that the names of towns such as Deerfield and Haverhill became branded on New England's collective memory as sites of garrison communities' greatest losses.

²⁸ Guy Chet, *Conquering the American Wilderness: The Triumph of European Warfare in the Colonial Northeast* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003), 73.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 95.

³⁰ Haefeli and Sweeney, *Captors and Captives*, 95.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 73-74.

The 1706 amendment and the original 1695 law to prevent the desertion of fortified communities were at the center of these sometimes devastating policies that kept families in vulnerable situations.³² Both require additional scrutiny, particularly in their uses of the word “person” and various pronouns. It is also important to establish who was subject to this law and its amendments. Certainly male freeholders were. As settler-soldiers in the community, male freeholders owed the government service due to the “considerable sums of money...expended in the defence and for preservation” of their frontier towns.³³ The first two sections of the law demand that all freeholders in designated frontier towns acquire a special license from the governor and council before “remov[ing] from thence with intent to sojourn or inhabit elsewhere.” Selectmen and chief military officers in the towns were required to report any cases of abandonment.³⁴ Freeholders who left faced forfeiture of their property, which would be sold to pay for “defence of such town or plantation and support of the garrisons within the same.” A third section required the return of freeholders “fit and able for service” who had lived in any frontier town since “the beginning of this war”—presumably since 1689—and who had

³² “An Act to Prevent the Deserting of the Frontiers” [1695], *The Acts and Resolves, Public and Private, of the Province of the Massachusetts Bay* (Boston: Wright & Potter, 1869), 1: 194-195; “An Act for Reviving and Further Continuing of Several Acts Therein Mentioned that are Near Expiring” [1706], *Acts and Resolves*, 1: 585-586. Massachusetts passed a similar law during the brief peace between King William’s War and Queen Anne’s War, though restrictions upon leaving frontier towns were changed to go into effect only upon any resumption of hostilities. Laws requiring freeholders and non-freeholding men sixteen and older to remain in their frontier towns remained remarkably similar until the meeting of the General Court in May of 1706. “An Act to Prevent the Deserting of the Frontiers of this Province” [1700], *Acts and Resolves*, 1: 402.

³³ *Acts and Resolves*, 1: 194-195.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 194.

already left their frontier town.³⁵ Unless they returned or found another “able, sufficient person” to take their place, they too faced forfeiture.

Although freeholders were the mainstay of the settler-soldier defenses, the 1695 law also placed restrictions on non-landowning males.³⁶ Section Four pertained to any “male person of sixteen years of age or upwards, being an inhabitant of or belonging to any of the said frontier towns...and not having any lands or tenements in such town.” This section applied to both non-landowning male residents as well as the sons of landowners over the age of sixteen. As they had no land to forfeit, these men faced a ten pound fine for failure to acquire a license from the governor and council. Men neglecting to or unable to pay the fine were to be impressed into service until their debt was paid off. The harshness of these penalties was not always able to deter desertion. During King William’s War, settlers from towns beyond Wells, Maine abandoned their homes and communities, leading to panic in Wells.³⁷

Women and children, though not specifically mentioned in the 1695 law, remained in these communities, taking part in the incidents described in the histories, diaries, and legal documents of the day. Only when a major invasion by an army seemed imminent were women and children withdrawn temporarily from the outermost frontier towns. Because these brief retreats were limited to periods when officials feared a full invasion, they reinforced the idea that families belonged in fortified communities during

³⁵ *Acts and Resolves*, 1: 194.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 195

³⁷ Eames, “Rustic Warriors,” 70.

the stretches of irregular warfare that dominated the border wars. Even so, not all women and children were allowed to flee invasions. In June 1704, fear of an impending invasion prompted the governor to issue an order “that two or three Hundred Men...go Eastward for Enforcing the Frontiers for about a Months Space, And that the Women & Children that can be spared with the Cattle drawn in.”³⁸ This order is particularly revealing, as it sends some of the women and children away with livestock while declaring another group of women and children indispensable.

Policies designed to keep families in fortified communities created significant hardships for those families. This was particularly true when conditions and even laws required families to live together in garrisons. Claustrophobia-inducing conditions and a lack of privacy defined life in a garrison house facing an attack. One garrison in Maine boasted two stories and was slightly over 1750 square feet in combined area. Garrison houses such as this one might hold anywhere from twenty-five to one-hundred people when inhabitants fled to their assigned garrisons.³⁹ In a tract directed to the inhabitants of frontier towns written when the law of 1706 was still in effect, Cotton Mather empathized with frontier families.⁴⁰ He wrote:

We Consider your uneasy condition, when you are Thrust and Heap'd up together in Garrisons, where the Common Comforts of your Lives must needs have an Extreme Abridgment brought upon them. We consider the Clogs shot ly upon the course of your business, while your continual Fear of Incursions from Armed

³⁸ *The Acts and Resolves, Public and Private, of the Province of the Massachusetts Bay* (Boston: Wright & Potter, 1895), 8: 432; For another example see: *Acts and Resolves*, 8: 301.

³⁹ Eames, “Rustic Warriors,” 76-77.

⁴⁰ Cotton Mather, *Frontiers Well-Defended. An Essay to Direct the Frontiers of a Countrey Exposed unto the Incursions of a Barbarous Enemy, How to Behave themselves in their Uneasy Station*. (Boston: T. Green, 1707). Early American Imprints, Series 1: Evans, 1639-1800, accessed online.

men, must needs bring in upon you Poverty like an Armend man...Ever now and then, we hear of some who in Planting their Corn, alas, have their Fields water'd with their blood⁴¹

Mather's text then went on to give advice on issues such as chastity, temperance, and regular prayer, suggesting that these virtues would help to fortify the frontier.

Although Mather's *Frontiers Well-Defended* offers a valuable glimpse into both the conditions facing frontier families as well as insight into what was considered proper behavior, examining a settler-soldier's own words provides a unique perspective.

Representing the town of Lancaster, John Houghton pled with Governor Phipps and his council for assistance in February 1694.⁴² His petition illustrates the harsh conditions and blurred gender roles of the garrison community. Houghton noted that:

by being so long Nessessitated to live in Garisson where *neither men nor women* can doe but very little towards the supply of their families: their being so mutch time spent in watching warding & many allarrums that have been amongst us & that which is more the dayly feares we were exposed to in the Dangers which atended us in our labours.

Houghton's petition is a rare look into the lives of garrison families, moving beyond Mather's empathetic yet prescriptive text. His petition also sheds light on men and women's shared defensive roles and gives us insight into how and why men such as Mather ultimately accepted and encouraged women's participation—though men remained the primary defenders of frontier families and communities.

⁴¹ Mather, *Frontiers Well-Defended*, 4.

⁴² "Petition of John Houghton," *The Acts and Resolves, Public and Private, of the Province of the Massachusetts Bay* (Boston: Wright & Potter, 1892), 7: 445. Italics are my own.

Policies that mandated the close quarters reported by settler-soldiers contributed to a blurring of the formal and informal public spheres. In discouraging and even forbidding men from sending their wives and children to safety, colonial governments also interfered with the rights of husbands in their family governance. This meddling directly led to situations in which women participated in the colony's war-making. During this period, such interference was well within the purview of the government. As Mary Beth Norton has argued, in New England, "the seventeenth-century state and family were conceptually and practically related to each other."⁴³ In early New England, fathers served as heads of their own "little commonwealths," their families the "lowest rung on the ladder of secular and religious authority."⁴⁴ According to Norton, fathers acted as "the first line of defense against disorderly subordinates for both state and church."⁴⁵ In spite of this great power men held as leaders of their families, this authority was still subject to the rungs above it on the "ladder."⁴⁶

The colonial government's ability to interfere with a husband's control of his household had serious consequences for the families of settler-soldiers. In early New England, a woman was "legally subsumed into her husband's identity," and her "relationship to the polity was defined by their marital status and their rank in the wider socio-economic hierarchy."⁴⁷ As a settler-soldier's wife, she—along with the patriarch's

⁴³ Norton, *Founding Mothers and Fathers*, 17.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 96, 334.

other dependents—became enveloped by her husband’s role as a settler-soldier. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich’s concept of the “deputy husband” is helpful in sorting out wives’ roles within this system.⁴⁸ The concept of deputy husband can be complicated precisely because it is so familiar. The idea that a woman might assume some of the responsibilities of an absent or deceased husband is a common occurrence in many patriarchies. Indeed, women acting as “deputy husbands” show up in studies of Civil War plantations and even nineteenth-century Japan.⁴⁹ Over time, the phrase “deputy husband” frequently has come to represent any woman who performs duties normally assigned to her husband, especially when he was absent for extended periods of time. This is particularly true in histories that discuss women living on a homefront.

Historian Jeanne Boydston has complicated the concept and historiographical usage of the deputy husband.⁵⁰ Boydston noted that “some women’s historians acknowledge” the flexibility the concept uncovers in early American gender relations.⁵¹ Still, she argued, a majority of these historians tend to “subordinate these roles under those of ‘wife’ and ‘mother’ contained within a ‘domestic’ arena.”⁵² Historians accept this subordination at the expense of incorporating “accumulating studies of settler women”

⁴⁸ Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650-1750* (New York: Knopf, 1982).

⁴⁹ Kirsten E. Wood, *Masterful Women: Slaveholding Widows from the American Revolution through the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Laura F. Edwards, *Scarlett Doesn't Live Here Anymore: Southern Women in the Civil War Era* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000); Anne Walthall, “The Family Ideology of the Rural Entrepreneurs in Nineteenth Century Japan,” *Social History* 23, no. 3 (Spring, 1990): 463-483.

⁵⁰ Jeanne Boydston, “Gender as a Question of Historical Analysis,” *Gender and History* 20, no. 3 (Nov. 2008): 558-583.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 570.

⁵² *Ibid.*

that Boydston argued “suggest far more complex social/economic identities – including those of head of household, family governor, supervisor of servants and slave-owner, agriculturalist, manufacturer and trader, not to mention sometimes business-owner, lawyer, councillor, author and scientist.”⁵³

In order to better understand the deputy husband, we must return to Ulrich’s own words, to examine both what a deputy husband actually was, as well as the context in which she lived. Projecting the deputy husband into the nineteenth and even twentieth centuries ignores the fact that Ulrich conceived of the deputy husband as a “premodern” role. Indeed, when Ulrich wrote that “the role of deputy husband reinforced a certain elasticity in premodern notions of gender,” she did not suggest that this concept applies to modern societies that associated the public sphere with men and the private sphere with women.⁵⁴ Instead, Ulrich took a common-sense approach to her subject, arguing that “no mystique of feminine behavior prevented a woman from driving a hard bargain or chasing a pig from the field, and under ideal conditions day-to-day experience in assisting with a husband’s work might prepare her to function competently in a male world” if her husband was unavailable.⁵⁵ Ulrich even briefly observed that several women in her study may have been acting as deputy husbands when they took action to defend their homes.⁵⁶

⁵³ Boydston, “Gender as a Question of Historical Analysis,” 569-570.

⁵⁴ Ulrich, *Good Wives*, 50. Ulrich rightly noted that the very violent actions of Hannah Dustan “enlarg[ed] the quite commonplace role of a wife as deputy husband and defender.” Ulrich, *Good Wives*, 195.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 178-179.

The wife of a settler-soldier likely learned to perform defensive duties—and in some cases administrative tasks—in the course of living in a fortified community.

The image of the deputy husband taking on her husband's duties solely in his absence is complicated by reports of women fighting alongside men. Cotton Mather approvingly reported that in 1692, defenders of both sexes at Storer's garrison in Wells, Maine repelled an attack. According to Mather, Wells' women both assisted the men with ammunition and "took up the Amazonian Stroke" and "with a Manly Resolution fired several Times upon the Enemy."⁵⁷ Although in this incident the women acted as assistants performing essential combat services rather than as equals, it does suggest that the role of deputy husband was more flexible. Rather than merely filling a husband's shoes during his absence, the wife of a settler-soldier might also be expected to assist her husband if he needed an extra set of hands. Perhaps the term "deputy," with its connotations as a person who substitutes for a superior in their absence, might be replaced by the words "associate" or "assistant." These words maintain the unequal nature of the partnership while expanding the scenarios in which such a partnership might function.

In addition to fighting alongside their husbands, a woman might also petition the government on behalf of a busy, though present husband. Lydia Scottow petitioned the governor on behalf of her husband, Captain Joshua Scottow, during King Philip's War.⁵⁸ Scottow noted that her husband defended their garrison with the help of only four men.

⁵⁷ Cotton Mather, *Decennium Luctuosum* (Boston, 1699), 94. Early American Imprints, Series 1: Evans, 1639-1800, accessed online.

⁵⁸ "Petition of Lydia Scottow," in *Documentary History of the State of Maine*, ed. James Phinney Baxter (Portland: The Thurston Print, 1900), 6: 203.

She asked for six or eight more men to “defend the place, & prevent the Barbarous Enemy, to make Inroade in & march further into the Country.” As John Houghton’s petition claiming that both men and women were too busy attending to security matters to care for their families demonstrated, the wife of a settler-soldier may have assisted a present but busy husband on a regular basis.

The role of settler-soldier could even pass to a woman upon the death of her husband, albeit without the clear mandate for physical combat. In February of 1696, James Convers petitioned the lieutenant governor, William Stoughton for fifteen pounds and seventeen shillings on behalf of Elizabeth Stover, a widow from Cape Neddick, Maine.⁵⁹ According to the petition, Stover, “(in the beginning of this present Warr) lost her husband, and she, with much deficulty & Charge maintained her fort at Cape Nuddick, about two Years.” Eventually her neighbors and sons left the area and “she was forced to quitt the (then) best fort in the Easterne parts, which was within one Week Seized by the Enemy, her houses one of stone an other of wood within the Wals burnt.” Stover had administered her garrison, distributing supplies and food to soldiers and receiving receipts for reimbursement from military officials. Her son-in-law had traveled to meet up with her and deliver a debenture signed by the treasurer for the amount, but lost the note on his journey. The petition states that Stover had traveled to Boston on more than one occasion with a man she had hired to help her recover her money. Convers assisted Stover in this latest attempt as “she being weary, left the matter with the

⁵⁹ “Petition of James Convers,” in *Documentary History of the State of Maine*, ed. James Phinney Baxter (Portland: The Thurston Print, 1897), 5: 432-433.

petitioner.”⁶⁰ The House of Representatives awarded Stover the money in March of 1697.

Another widow, Elizabeth Heard of Cochecho, featured prominently in Cotton Mather’s *Decennium Luctuosum*.⁶¹ Relaying an account from Dover, New Hampshire’s minister, John Pike, Mather credited Heard with helping to preserve the northeastern frontier. Heard, “a Widow of Good Estate,” avoided capture in a 1689 attack on Cochecho with the help of an Indian who recognized her as someone who had previously sheltered him.⁶² After making her way to another garrison, she learned “that her own Garrison, though one of the first that was assaulted, had been bravely Defended and mentained against the Adversary.”⁶³ Mather praised Heard for returning to live in “this gentlewomans Garrison” which was “the most Etxreme Frontier of the Province...and more uncapable of Relief.” As a result of returning to her garrison, Mather argued, through “her presence and courage, it held out all the War, even for Ten Years together; and the Persons in it, have Enjoy’d very Eminent preservations.” He noted that she had refused offers from friends in Portsmouth to live “in more safety.” Her absence, he claimed, “would have been a Damage to the Town and Land: but by her Encouragement this Post was thus kept: and She is yet Living in much Esteem among her Neighbours.”⁶⁴

⁶⁰ *Documentary History of the State of Maine*, ed. James Phinney Baxter, 5: 433.

⁶¹ C. Mather, *Decennium Luctuosum*, 33-36.

⁶² The detail of how she was saved is not included in Mather’s account. The reliable Jeremy Belknap writing later in the next century believed that the Indian was a young man when Heard protected him during a massacre in 1676. The attack on Cochecho was in retaliation for the massacre. Jeremy Belknap, *History of New Hampshire* (Philadelphia: Robert Aitken, 1784), 1: 250-252. Early American Imprints, Series 1: Evans, 1639-1800, accessed online.

⁶³ C. Mather, *Decennium Luctuosum*, 35.

⁶⁴ C. Mather, *Decennium Luctuosum*, Ibid., 35-36.

Her presence as the widow of a settler-soldier was an example to all, reinforcing the importance of fortified communities as both spaces for families as well as for colonial defense.

In addition to the moral support provided by widows such as Elizabeth Heard and the administrative work done by Elizabeth Stover, Mary Lake, a widow who owned a stake in a fortified community, contributed financially to the rebuilding and refortifying of her settlement. The widow's continued investment in her community had legal ramifications for decades. In asserting his right to the troublesome site of Arrowsic in Maine in 1731, Sir Bibye Lake traced his claim to the land through his grandmother Mary Lake, the widow of Captain Thomas Lake. Lake and his partner, Thomas Clarke, received permission from the Massachusetts government to establish a settlement on the island in 1673. The nascent settlement was destroyed and Lake was killed in an attack on the settlement during King Philip's War on August 14, 1676. On June 1, 1677, Mary Goodyear Lake and Major Thomas Clarke successfully petitioned the General Court for the return of "two guns" which they presumably required for the rebuilding of the settlement on Arrowsic.⁶⁵

Mary Goodyear Lake was well-connected, the daughter of a former New Haven deputy governor, Stephen Goodyear. Her husband was the son of an English baronet, and one of Thomas and Mary's sons later inherited the baronetcy. It is unclear whether Mary Lake ever visited Arrowsic, though she clearly took an interest in it as an investment, if

⁶⁵ *Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay in New England*, ed. Nathaniel B. Shurtleff (Boston: William White, 1853), 5: 149.

not as a home. It is likely that Mary Lake's status as a member of the gentry of the Atlantic world opened doors for her. As in the case of Elizabeth Stover, the status of widowhood alone provided women with the power to administer a garrison house. In Lake's case, her continued investment in Arrowsic provided her descendants with a claim to that land.

Her grandson, Sir Bibye Lake, successfully petitioned the Crown on behalf of himself and two of Major Clarke's descendants. He claimed that after the 1676 attack, Clarke returned to the site "with the Concurrence & assistance" of his grandmother, Mary Lake. According to Bibye Lake, Clarke and his "late Grandmother Endeavoured with a very great Expence to Resettle the Premmes [premises] and to repair and Rebuild the severall Settlements ruined or destroyed by the Indians."⁶⁶ Sir Bibye Lake wrote that the pair "proceeded therein until suce [such] time as a New Warr broke out." By the time resettlement was possible after 1713, Mary Lake had died and Bibye Lake partnered with Clarke's descendants in later settlement attempts. Bibye Lake's claim to Arrowsic appears to have rested upon the fact that although his grandfather died, his grandmother refused to abandon the project. Her work in restoring the settlement in the years between King Philip's War and King William's War established her grandson's right to the land alongside that of the descendants of Thomas Lake's partner who later resettled Arrowsic with Mary Lake's help.

⁶⁶ "Petition of Sir Bibye Lake," in *Documentary History of the State of Maine*, ed. James Phinney Baxter (Portland: The Thurston Print, 1897), 11: 90-94.

Although the idea of the deputy husband is useful in understanding how a husband's role of settler-soldier affected wives and widows, it does not explain the participation of a daughter. Because a husband's position covered an entire family, female children of settler-soldiers also had defensive duties. In one instance in February of 1676, a fifteen year old "maid" was carried off by Indians near Concord, Massachusetts while "set to watch upon an hill."⁶⁷ Benjamin Hubbard reported that there had been several attacks on settlers homes in the area in the weeks before. It is likely the young woman's family was on edge and sent their daughter out to take a turn on watch.

In a slightly later example, father and daughter fought and died side by side. In August of 1723, Aaron Rawlins and his daughter, age twelve, held off an attack while vainly awaiting assistance from neighbors who helplessly watched the events unfold.⁶⁸ Rawlins was eventually killed by stray bullets, his daughter beheaded when their attackers finally entered the home. According to Belknap's account based on the collected testimony of witnesses, she was likely killed for putting up a defense "which evidently appeared by her hands being soiled with powder."⁶⁹

Servants, fictive children in the settler-soldier's family, also appear to have been trained in the use of firearms for defense. A female servant in John Minot's Dorchester home, a few miles south of Boston, saw an Indian approach while minding her

⁶⁷ Benjamin Hubbard, *A Narrative of the Troubles with the Indians in New-England* (Boston: John Foster, 1677), 84. Early American Imprints, Series 1: Evans, 1639-1800, accessed online.

⁶⁸ Penhallow, *The History of the Wars of New-England with the Eastern Indians*, 104; Jeremy Belknap, *History of New Hampshire*, vol. 2 (Boston: Isaiah Thomas, 1791), 54-55. Early American Imprints, Series 1: Evans, 1639-1800, accessed online.

⁶⁹ Belknap, *History of New Hampshire*, 2: 55.

employers' children. When the Indian realized that he could not enter through the shut door, he moved to come in through the window. At this point, the woman hid the two children under brass kettles, "ran up the stairs and charged a Musket and fired at the Indian" after his first shot missed.⁷⁰ Shot in the shoulder, he "was just coming in at the Window" when the servant "made haste and got a Fire shovel full of live Coles and applied them to his Face, which forced him to flie and escaped."⁷¹ He was later found dead five miles away and identified by his burned face. This example is particularly interesting in that, along with the story of the young woman carried off while keeping watch, it suggests that the role of settler-soldier covered both real and fictive children of the household. Despite the fact that as "deputy husbands," wives were called upon to assist in defense more frequently, all members of the household might be required to help defend New England.

Although government policies placed women in garrison communities, the physical structures and technologies employed in defending them allowed women to take on active roles in New England's wars. One unique factor that contributed to female participation in these wars was the use of guns. Ann Little has argued that the male monopoly of the ownership of guns was a powerful nod to patriarchy.⁷² As our numerous examples suggest, however, the female members of settler-soldiers' households knew how to handle firearms and were praised for using them. Still, Little's assertion that

⁷⁰ N.S. *The present state of New-England, with respect to the Indian war...till the 10th of November, 1675* (London: Dorman Newman, 1676), 6. Early English Books Online.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 7

⁷² Little, *Abraham in Arms*, 27.

firearms were gendered objects is borne out by the fact that the terms used to praise women who used them were often masculine words such as “briskly” and “with a Manly Resolution.”⁷³

Gunpowder weapons provided women with two distinct advantages. When defending a garrison, firearms allowed women to drive off an attack from the relative safety of a garrison house—as the raids on Wells and Oyster River discussed earlier prove. The second advantage relied on the poor accuracy and unreliability of early modern guns. Although the appearance of the flintlock musket in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries marked an improvement over earlier matchlock muskets, even flintlock muskets left much to be desired. Flintlocks suffered from poor accuracy, slow loading time, and often misfired. When confronted with an armed enemy, women might benefit from a wild shot or the time it took to reload.⁷⁴ Stories of lone, armed women taking on three or even four men might seem unrealistic or exaggerated to modern-day readers. These stories are more credible when the technology of the time is considered.

Even women living in unfortified homes occasionally were able to defend themselves with the use of guns, as the example of the servant in John Minot’s house showed. In another example from 1724, a woman living near Oxford in “a house that lay under a hill” shot an Indian in the stomach as he and his three companions attempted to

⁷³ Gendered language in accounts of women’s participation in war will be examined further in Chapter 3.

⁷⁴ Jeremy Black, *European Warfare* (London: University College London Press, 1994, e-Library edition, Taylor & Francis, 2003), 39-40.

break in through the roof.⁷⁵ They retreated at this point, perhaps because the woman had three other loaded firearms, enough to take on each remaining assailant at close range.

Because the element of surprise was critical to a successful raid on a garrison, doorways feature heavily in stories of women defending their homes. This is particularly true of women living in unfortified homes within garrison communities. Doors could be shut and weight placed against them to delay or prevent entry. Doorways were a narrower point an enemy passed through, the perfect place for an ambush. In some cases, the opening of a door marked the first time combatants saw each other face to face. It is tempting to see their place in the stories as a metaphor or a transition point that marks the end of the rough outside world and the beginning of the domestic space the woman must defend. No evidence exists to support the idea that the doorway or threshold developed metaphorical meaning in this period, however. The strong association between gender and domestic spaces was a later phenomenon.

Perhaps the most dramatic and literal example of the importance of doorways occurred on October 1, 1675, when a group of fifteen women and children gathered in Richard Tozer's home at the Salmon Falls settlement near present-day Berwick, Maine. It is unclear from William Hubbard's account whether Tozer's home was fortified. Two Indians, known to the colonists as Andrew and Hope-hood, son of Robin Hood, attacked the house. An eighteen year old woman, described as a "young maid," saw the two

⁷⁵ Penhallow, *The History of the Wars of New-England with the Eastern Indians*, 102; Thomas Hutchinson *The History of the Province of Massachusetts-Bay, from the Charter of King William and Queen Mary, in 1691, until the Year 1750* (Boston: Thomas & John Fleet, 1767), 308. Early American Imprints, Series 1: Evans, 1639-1800, accessed online.

Indians approaching the house, shut the door, and kept it shut while the other fourteen ran out the back door to a nearby house that was better fortified. She continued holding the door shut until “the Indians had chopt it in pieces with their Hatchets.”⁷⁶ Upon entering, they wounded the young woman with their hatchets and chased after the settlers who had escaped. All of the occupants of Tozer’s house arrived at the garrison house, with the exception of two children. The young woman was able to make her way to the garrison house and eventually recovered.

In cases where women were surprised by attackers at the doorway, they sometimes resorted to fighting with household implements. In these instances, such as the attack on John Minot’s servant who used a shovelful of coals, the fascinating blurring of domestic and military is at its most dramatic. One of the most colorful examples is provided by twice-captured Hannah Bradley.⁷⁷ Bradley was taken from Haverhill in the infamous raid that took Hannah Dustan. After returning home to Haverhill, she spent another ten years in the town before it was attacked again in February 1704. This time, Bradley grabbed the pot of soap she had been boiling and threw it on two of her assailants, killing one and maiming another before finally being subdued and carried away again. Susannah Eastman Swan also found herself working with her husband to hold their front door shut during a later 1708 raid in Haverhill.⁷⁸ Seeing that her husband

⁷⁶ Hubbard, *A Narrative of the Troubles with the Indians in New-England*, 20-21.

⁷⁷ Penhallow, *The History of the Wars of New-England with the Eastern Indians*, 10-11.

⁷⁸ B.L. Mirick, *The History of Haverhill, Massachusetts* (Haverhill: A. W. Thayer, 1832), 123-124. According to Mirick, the story of Swan was passed down through the Emerson family of Haverhill. He heard the story from the grandson of Jonathan Emerson, who witnessed the attack.

was close to giving up, Swan grabbed a nearby fire poker and skewered their attackers as they came through the door.

Women's dramatic interventions in towns such as Wells and Oyster River, as well as their more day-to-day work keeping watch and petitioning the government, reflect the space available to women in New England's wars. Although settler-soldiers and expeditionary forces acting within the formal public sphere remained New England's preferred source of defense throughout the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the nature of fortified communities—and the choices of the lawmakers who regulated them—challenged this ideal. Located at the intersection of the military, the domestic, the settler, the soldier, the home, and the empire, women's participation in war-making in these towns highlights the blurring of the informal and formal public spheres in a New England seemingly perpetually at war.

The Formal and Informal Public Spheres Encounter Native Women

The lines between combatant and civilian were rarely less distinct than in the case of New England's bounties on the scalps of Indian women and children. Dover, New Hampshire's Rev. John Pike regularly recorded instances of English women and children killed and taken captive in his diary. He also noted the return of soldiers from an expedition to the area near the Pigwacket fort on October 26, 1703. In this entry, he observed that the expedition "brought in 6 Indian scalps & 5 Captives, all squaws and children (both killed and taken) except one old man."⁷⁹ On all sides, the capture and

⁷⁹ Pike, "Journal," 136.

killing of women and children brought financial rewards in the form of forced labor, ransom money, and scalp bounties. These acts also served to weaken one's respective enemies while simultaneously functioning as revenge for the deaths of loved ones.

Although these bounties and attacks on Indian women and children show a true disregard for Native lives, reports from colonists do suggest that Indian women participated in attacks on New England settlements and soldiers. In addition to the leadership roles Indian women played in their own communities, Native women acted as spies, staged ambushes, and participated in ritual torture. These women's actions, and the settings in which they took place, produced great anxiety in New England over Indian women's formal and informal roles in war-making.

Indian women's assumption of these roles, as well as the confusion these actions produced, is hinted at in the laws establishing scalp bounties. Although in a September 1694 law, Massachusetts vaguely placed a bounty on "every Indian, great or small," a later law clarified the genders and ages of the law's targets.⁸⁰ This later law, passed in October of 1697, stated that "every man or woman of the said enemy" slain and scalped by volunteer raiding parties was worth fifty pounds. Children would garner the sum of ten pounds. These large rewards were meant to encourage groups of English men to head out into the woods and search for opposing forces rather than merely wait for attacks on garrison houses. The second portion of that law's first section addressed rewards for

⁸⁰ "An Act for Encouraging the Prosecution of the Indian Enemy & Rebels, and Preserving Such as are Friends [1694]," *The Acts and Resolves, Public and Private, of the Province of the Massachusetts Bay* (Boston: Wright & Potter, 1869), 1: 176.

Indians killed in attacks on garrison houses. The bounties were for the scalps of both men and women and each fetched five pounds. These smaller rewards reflect the fact that defensive garrison duties were expected of all men in frontier towns and were not normally subject to reward. That this law considered the idea of Indian women in combat roles attacking garrisons suggests that their presence in such an attack was a possibility, though sources from the period largely are silent on this issue.

As with English women in garrison houses, lines between combatants and civilians in Native societies were never absolute. Any woman might become a combatant and any fortified settlement was at once a home and a military space. The leaders of a combined group of Pennacook and Saco grasped these nuances and used this knowledge to engineer a devastating midnight attack on the settlement of Cocheco, New Hampshire. The June 27, 1689 attack was—at least in part—in retaliation for Major Richard Waldron's betrayal of number Indians who agreed to participate in a mock battle following King Philip's War. The Indians involved included men from the Pennacook nation, who had not gone to war against the English, as well as men who had fought against the English from other nations. These men had taken refuge with the Pennacook and were the target of Waldron's betrayal. After surrounding the Native participants in the mock battle, Waldron and his fellow officers attempted to separate Pennacook from non-Pennacook Indians. Those Waldron deemed non-Pennacook—and therefore hostile—he shipped to Boston, where they were hanged or sold into slavery.⁸¹

⁸¹ Belknap, *History of New Hampshire* (Philadelphia: Robert Aitken, 1784), 1: 140-145.

John Gyles, a captive taken two months after the attack on Cochecho, wrote of the attack in his memoir. Gyles had heard that two Indian women infiltrated the garrison following a feast meant to inaugurate several days of trade in Cochecho.⁸² The women likely had been pre-selected for their abilities, their plea for shelter strengthened by inclement weather. Their task was to “take Notice of the Numbers, Lodgings, and other Circumstances of the People in his Garrison and, if they could obtain leave to Lodge there, to open the Gates and Whistle.” According to Gyles, the “Gates had no Locks but were fastned with Pins” and the residents of Cochecho neglected to keep a watch.⁸³ Both Gyles and Jeremy Belknap noted that many of Cochecho’s residents argued against allowing the women to stay overnight but were overruled by Major Waldron. The inhabitants’ resistance may have been the result of discreet warnings given by friendly Indian women in the days leading up to the attack.⁸⁴ Ultimately, Waldron believed that the women were harmless and allowed them to stay. That evening, “the Squaws went into every Apartment, and observed the Numbers in each and when the People were all asleep, rose and opened the Gates and gave the Signal.”⁸⁵ The attack resulted in the death of Waldron and twenty-two others, as well as the captivity of twenty-nine residents of heavily-damaged Cochecho. Its success can only be attributable to Native leaders’

⁸² This story is also recounted in C. Mather, *Decennium Luctuosum*, 30.

⁸³ John Gyles, *Memoirs of odd adventures, strange deliverances, &c. in the captivity of John Gyles, Esq; commander of the garrison on St. George's River* (Boston: S. Kneeland and T. Green, 1736), 6.

⁸⁴ Belknap, *History of New Hampshire*, 246.

⁸⁵ Gyles, *Memoirs of odd adventures, strange deliverances, &c. in the captivity of John Gyles*, 6.

understanding of the complexities of English gender expectations and the realities of life in fortified communities.

English anxiety regarding the nature of Indian women's roles in wartime was only heightened by an incident in mid-March 1676. Nathaniel Saltonstall reported that "a great number of Indian Women" ambushed two English men in the woods between Malbury [Marlborough] and Sudbury in Massachusetts.⁸⁶ According to Saltonstall, these women were "armed with Clubs, pieces of Swords, and the like." He emphasized that through "their numbers," the women were able to "over-master the two poor Travellers, that had nothing but small sticks to defend themselves." The women "beat out their brains, and cut off their privy members, which they carried away with them in triumph."⁸⁷

Although Saltonstall and his contemporaries were quick to praise English women who killed Indian men, he was—perhaps understandably—unwilling to condone the deaths of English men at the hands of Indian women. In addition to lamenting the deaths of his countrymen, Saltonstall objected to women who he claimed had "utterly abandoned at once the two proper Virtues of Womankind, Pity and Modesty." He argued that it was "vain" to expect Indians to behave civilly when—as he saw it—"the most milde and gentle sex" in those societies "delight in cruelties."⁸⁸ It is interesting to note that a group of English women in Marlborough threatened and intimidated several English-allied Indians—including women and children—who had been given shelter in

⁸⁶ N.S. *A New and further narrative of the state of New-England, being a continued account of the bloody Indian-War, from March till August, 1676* (London: Dorman Newman, 1676), 4.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

Marlborough while on their way to Boston.⁸⁹ This attack occurred during the same month and area as the Marlborough incident, though it is unclear which occurred first. It is possible that one of the attacks was in response to the other.

The image of Indian women emerging from the forest and setting upon two English men clearly troubled Saltonstall. As we will see later in this chapter, although mobs of English women dismembering Indian men did not receive outright praise, those troubling incidents were often condoned via a lack of censure. Indian women attacking English men in what appeared to be a violent frenzy likely evoked exotic images of disorderly pagan rituals. That the Indian women went on to castrate English men only added to a sense that the natural and moral order had been violated. It likely was also reminiscent of reports that Indian women participated in the ritual torture of their captives in Native camps and settlements.

English colonists were particularly troubled by women's participation in ritualized torture. A formal aspect of war-making in many Native communities, ritual torture appeared uncontrolled and wild to New Englanders. Ann Little rightly noted that such incidents "fed European stereotypes about Native savagery in general." Perhaps more importantly, she also attributed much of the English repulsion to these actions to their belief that Indian women had "unnatural power" in their societies and lacked "family discipline."⁹⁰ English observers did not understand that, although the act of seeking out

⁸⁹ Daniel Gookin, *An Historical Account of the Doings and Sufferings of Christian Indians in New England in the Years 1675, 1676, 1677*, in *Transactions and Collections of the American Antiquarian Society*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: University Press, 1836), 503.

⁹⁰ Little, *Abraham in Arms*, 101-102.

battle was largely gendered male in Native societies, once men returned with captives, the war-making continued within the village with the critical assistance of women and even children. Although the assumption of the role of torturer appeared to showcase the perceived disorder of Native gender roles and families, it actually demonstrated the orderly transfer of war-making roles to the larger community.⁹¹

The confusion New Englanders felt regarding Indian women in less formal combat roles—as well as those roles *perceived* as less formal—largely did not translate to their attitudes toward female sachems in the seventeenth century. Among their many roles as leaders of Native nations, female sachems signed international treaties, participated in land deals and disputes, and commanded troops. In a short study of the female sachem Awashunkes, Ann Marie Plane argued that New England officials “accepted” a female sachem “as the appropriate representative” of her nation “because of the balance of power” prior to King Philip’s War.⁹² In the decades leading up to King Philip’s War, New England lacked the power to shape Indian leadership in that way, regardless of their cultural preference for dealing with male leaders. English leaders also knew that their own nation had been ruled by queens in the past and frequently referred to these sachems as “queens,” an attempt to familiarize the role of female sachem within a European notion of rank and the formal public sphere.

⁹¹ Ann Little has also written about Native women’s roles in stripping and clothing captives, a ritual meant to facilitate adoption. *Abraham in Arms*, ch. 2. See also Theda Perdue, *Cherokee Women* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 53-54.

⁹² Ann Marie Plane, “Putting a Face on Colonization: Factionalism and Gender Politics in the Life History of Awashunkes, ‘Squaw Sachem’ of Saconet,” in *Northeastern Indian Lives*, ed. Robert S. Grumet (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 152.

In spite of the critical role female sachems such as the Pocasset sachem Weetamoo played in the history of the region, historians tend to mention these leaders in passing. A leader such as Weetamoo often is briefly acknowledged as “a powerful sachem in her own right,” before the author turns their attention to one of her male allies. When historians do acknowledge these women, rather than focus on their political and military potency, they tend to emphasize traditional “feminine” sources of power and qualities of leadership such as diplomacy, compromise, accommodation, and capitulation. Other times, historians see them merely as pawns in a larger masculine game. Of the few articles dedicated to female sachems in New England and the Mid-Atlantic, most focus on issues of land ownership, perhaps due to a greater availability of land records.⁹³ However, in relying heavily on land records and emphasizing land ownership, these studies tended to gloss over female sachems’ other political and military roles.

Modern narrative accounts of wars in which female sachems participated mention them briefly, as bit players, not major characters. Weetamoo and her contemporaries in King Philip’s War, the historical conflict with the best surviving accounts of female sachems taking part in war-making, are prime examples of this historiographical phenomenon. One exception is Ann Marie Plane’s chapter on Awashunkes of the Saconet.⁹⁴ Plane’s study of Awashunkes offers insight into a leader best known for her

⁹³ John A. Strong, “Algonquian Women as Sunksquaws and Caretakers of the Soil: The Documentary Evidence in the Seventeenth Century Records,” in *Native American Women in Literature and Culture*, ed. Susan Castillo and Victor M.P. Da Rosa (Porto, Portugal: Fernando Pessoa University Press, 1997): 191-214; Robert Steven Grumet, “Sunksquaws, Shamans, and Tradeswomen: Middle Atlantic Coastal Algonquian Women During the 17 and 18th Centuries,” in *Women and Colonization: Anthropological Perspectives*, ed. Mona Etienne and Eleanor Leacock (New York: Praeger, 1980): 43-62.

⁹⁴ Plane, “Putting a Face on Colonization.”

shrewd diplomacy in King Philip's War. A female sachem in the Wampanoag Confederacy who shared power with her son Peter, Awashunkes met with English negotiators before joining King Philip's side. She eventually aligned her forces with the English toward the end of the war, but only after ensuring the safety of her people.⁹⁵ Although aware of Awashunkes' political and military power, Plane tended to focus on Awashunkes' skilled diplomacy and her experience as a female sachem who survived the war at great cost to herself and her people. This emphasis on female sachems as diplomats and dealers of land in seventeenth-century New England has obscured their other roles in war-making during that period.

By the onset of King Philip's War, English settlers had over fifty years of experience working with and against female sachems. Indeed, female sachems appear in the New England record from the decade of Plymouth's founding when, in 1621, several colonists went in search of the "Queene" of the Massachusetts.⁹⁶ As early as 1637, a female sachem appeared at the Massachusetts General Court regarding the sale of land that would become Concord and Charleston.⁹⁷ In addition to issues of land ownership, female sachems and English colonists also negotiated matters related to firearms. Although as Ann Little pointed out, gun ownership was exclusively male in seventeenth-century New England, at least some female sachems—perhaps as a privilege of their rank

⁹⁵ Plane, "Putting a Face on Colonization," 147.

⁹⁶ William Bradford, *A Relation or Iournall of the Beginning and Proceedings of the English Plantation Setled at Plimoth in New England, by Certaine English Aduenturers both Merchants and Others* (London: John Bellamie, 1622). Accessed Early English Books Online.

⁹⁷ *Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay in New England*, ed. Nathaniel B. Shurtleff (Boston: William White, 1853), 1: 201.

—did own guns.⁹⁸ In 1643, the Massachusetts General Court “granted” a woman known only as “Squa Sachem” “haulfe a pound of gunpowder” and agreed to repair her “peece.”⁹⁹ In September of the same year, the court agreed to sell an additional quantity of shot and powder to the same woman.

In an episode spanning 1667-1668, the General Court of Massachusetts took seriously, though ultimately rejected, a female sachem’s claims to military dominance over another Native group. In August of 1667, the female sachem Quaiapen—called Watowswokotaus at this time—sent 126 warriors to the Nipmuck village of Quantisset to seize mats and guns in payment of tribute owed to the Narragansett. Along with the mats and guns, the Narragansett also took deer skins, six swine, wampum, coats, powder, shot, kettles, and other goods. The Nipmuck approached the Massachusetts General Court in September in an attempt to reclaim their property and to declare themselves free of Narragansett control. The Nipmuck claimed that a previously signed treaty prevented the Narragansett from using force on another Native community without first consulting the English. Quaiapen refused to appear in court, but sent deputies as well as a signed statement to an October 1667 hearing. In addition to her admission that her men raided Quantisset, Quaiapen accused the Nipmuck of slandering her late husband and robbing members of the Narragansett.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Little, *Abraham in Arms*, 27.

⁹⁹ *Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay in New England*, ed. Nathaniel B. Shurtleff (Boston: William White, 1853), 2: 36.

¹⁰⁰ *Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay in New England*, ed. Nathaniel B. Shurtleff, 4.5: 357-359.

The General Court initially, though tentatively, found that the Nipmuck were a free people due to lack of evidence and ordered the Narragansett to return the goods they had taken. The Court also ruled that the two nations should live in peace. If Quaiapen could prove that the Nipmuck did owe tribute, the Court would help formalize the terms of this tribute.¹⁰¹ Although Quaiapen provided proof in the form of a letter from John Williams of Rhode Island, the letter and the Narragansett deputies were several days late to a scheduled May 1667 hearing. In the mean time, the Nipmuck had agreed to submit to the General Court and accept the presence of a Christian mission in their community. This decision, which Richard Cogley attributed to a Nipmuck desire for “protection from raiding parties and release from tribute payments,” resulted in a major loss of Nipmuck autonomy.¹⁰² Realizing that the Nipmuck offer was impossible for the English to refuse, the Narragansett agreed to turn over the seized goods, including the guns, to the English. According to Narragansett terms, the English would hold those items until satisfied of Nipmuck sincerity in pledging to “pray to God” and accepting “subjection unto the government of the Massachusetts.”¹⁰³ In one stroke, Massachusetts stripped the Nipmuck of their ability to control their own economic and military destiny.

Although no longer able to collect Nipmuck tribute, Quaiapen maintained control over her people and kept her position as one of the more powerful sachems in the region. The English ruling against her right to tribute was not related to Quaiapen’s gender, nor

¹⁰¹ *Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay*, ed. Shurtleff, 4.5: 357-359.

¹⁰² Richard W. Cogley, *John Eliot’s Mission to the Indians before King Philip’s War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 155.

¹⁰³ *Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay*, ed. Shurtleff, 4.5: 386.

did anyone question her right or ability to dispatch troops and collect tribute due as a female leader. Instead, the unfavorable ruling was the result of the poor timing of the letter, the late appearance of the Narragansett at the May hearing, and—above all—the English desire to control the Nipmuck. Quaiapen eventually joined with Philip’s forces in the later war with New England and died in a well-publicized attack on her camp in July 1676.¹⁰⁴

Younger than Quaiapen—though both were leaders in the years between 1650 and 1676—Weetamoo came to power a generation after female sachems first encountered English colonists. Born in what is now Rhode Island, Weetamoo likely was the daughter of Corbitant, sachem of the Pocasset of the Wampanoag Confederacy.¹⁰⁵ Weetamoo entered the historical record after succeeding Corbitant as sachem of the Pocasset around 1650. Appearing in colonial records under three aliases with at least four husbands, Weetamoo quickly gained experience participating in land deals and proved very willing to challenge unfair agreements in court.¹⁰⁶

Weetamoo also quickly mastered the diplomatic marriage. Of Weetamoo’s four or five husbands, Wamsutta and Quinnapin are the best known. Weetamoo married Wamsutta in 1652 and her husband assumed the leadership of the Wampanoag Confederacy upon the death of his father, Massasoit, in 1660. His brother Metacom, or

¹⁰⁴ “Letter from Major John Talcott to the General Council,” July 4, 1676 in *Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut, from 1665 to 1678*, ed. J. Hammond Trumbull, vol. 2 (Hartford: F.A. Brown, 1852), 458.

¹⁰⁵ Pattiann Frinzi, “Wetamoo,” in *Native American Women: A Biographical Dictionary*, ed. Gretchen M. Bataille and Laurie Lisa (New York: Routledge, 2001), 333-334.

¹⁰⁶ See cases in: *Records of the Colony of New Plymouth in New England*, ed. Nathaniel B. Shurtleff (Boston: William White, 1855) 4: 17, 24-25, 186. Weetamoo appears under the name Namumpum.

Philip, was married to Weetamoo's sister, Wootonekanuske. As head of the Wampanoag confederacy, Wamsutta was a powerful sachem in his own right. His alliance with Weetamoo resulted in a couple that wielded great influence. Wamsutta died in English custody under suspicious circumstances in 1662. By 1675, his brother Philip had taken his place as head of the Wampanoag and Weetamoo had married a man named Petananuet.

In addition to her legal, political, diplomatic, and commercial acumen, Weetamoo commanded the loyalty of troops numbering in the hundreds. William Hubbard estimated that Weetamoo commanded close to three-hundred men who, Hubbard wrote, "belonged" to her and served "under her."¹⁰⁷ According to Hubbard, Philip himself brought only slightly over three-hundred men to the his coalition.¹⁰⁸ The value of an alliance with such a powerful leader was not lost on Philip or his enemies.

Both sides approached Weetamoo early on in the war. Massachusetts merchant Nathaniel Saltonstall reported to his London audience that once Philip had decided to attack the colonists, he approached Weetamoo before any other sachems. Saltonstall observed that Philip promised her "great rewards" and met with her first because she was "as Potent a Prince as any round her, and hath as much Corn, Land, and Men at her Command."¹⁰⁹ Indeed, Saltonstall's account suggested that Weetamoo's partnership was

¹⁰⁷ William Hubbard, *A Narrative of the Troubles with the Indians in New-England* (Boston: John Foster, 1677), 209. Early American Imprints, Series 1: Evans, 1639-1800, accessed online.

¹⁰⁸ Saltonstall estimated that Philip brought about five-hundred men and that his local allies brought eight or nine-hundred men combined. N.S., *The present state of New-England*, 4. Early English Books Online.

¹⁰⁹ N.S., *The present state of New-England*, 3.

so critical that Philip only sent messengers to other sachems asking for alliances after securing her alliance. Philip may have believed that the task of convincing other sachems to join his coalition would be easier if he had Weetamoo's support. Her assistance might have suggested that Philip was assembling a coalition capable of winning. It may have also signaled a certain amount of solidarity within the Wampanoag Confederacy, bringing the legitimacy of Weetamoo, a leader and rival who had once claimed power within the Confederacy as a sachem and wife of Wamsutta.¹¹⁰

Saltonstall's description of Weetamoo as a "Woman Prince or Queen" as well as a prince—not to mention "potent"—is telling. His use of the masculine terms were neither mocking nor dismissive. Rather, his language and the details he provided regarding her holdings suggest that Saltonstall understood Weetamoo's importance and position in the region. Had Saltonstall hoped to diminish her importance, he might have employed the more violent, gendered language wielded by Major John Talcott when he boasted in July 1676 that the "ould peice of venum, Sunck squaw Magnus [Quaiapen] was slaine."¹¹¹ Talcott's choice of the word "venom" conjures images of the poisonous old, female bodies that populated the literature of the day. Comparing Talcott and Saltonstall's language suggests that a female sachem receiving respect or at least acknowledgment might be depicted in positive masculine terms.

¹¹⁰ N.S., *The present state of New-England*, 4.

¹¹¹ "Letter from Major John Talcott to the General Council," in *Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut, from 1665 to 1678*, ed. J. Hammond Trumbull, 458.

It is interesting to note that New Englanders' willingness to accept Weetamoo as a woman of rank acting within the formal public sphere may not have extended to non-elite members of society. Weetamoo is familiar to scholars for her role in Mary White Rowlandson's 1682 captivity narrative *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God*. In Rowlandson's account, Weetamoo appears as a spiteful, vain antagonist for the pious Puritan matron who saw the sachem merely as one of her master Quinnapin's three wives. What Mary Rowlandson did not know about her mistress, was that the woman she so despised had developed a high political and military profile in the decades leading up to the period Rowlandson spent in her company. Indeed Weetamoo, who Rowlandson scorned for reaching above her position in life, likely was the most powerful woman in northeastern North America in the late seventeenth century.

Rowlandson saw Weetamoo merely as one of her master Quinnapin's three wives or as "King Philip's wife's sister." She described Weetamoo as a "severe and proud" woman who shamefully grasped above her station, wearing clothing Rowlandson saw as both prideful and not befitting her position in the world.¹¹² According to Rowlandson, Weetamoo dressed as "the Gentry of the land" did.¹¹³ Indeed, Weetamoo incorporated both Native and European symbols of power at a feast Rowlandson witnessed, bedecking her serviceable coat with wampum while decorating her head and neck with numerous

¹¹² Mary Rowlandson, *The Sovereignty & Goodness of God* (Cambridge: Samuel Green, 1682), 47. Early American Imprints, Series 1: Evans, 1639-1800, accessed online. For a more thorough take on this see: Laura Arnold, "'Now . . . Didn't Our People Laugh?' Female Misbehavior and Algonquian Culture in Mary Rowlandson's Captivity and Restoration," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, 21, no. 4 (1997): 1-28; Tiffany Potter, "Writing Indigenous Femininity: Mary Rowlandson's Narrative of Captivity," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 36, no. 2 (2003): 153-167.

¹¹³ Rowlandson, *The Sovereignty & Goodness of God*, 48.

bracelets and necklaces. She wore “severall sorts of Jewels in her ears” and wore “fine red Stockins, and white shoes.” Weetamoo also powdered her hair and painted her face red.¹¹⁴

Rowlandson viewed Weetamoo’s costume as incongruous with her own perception of her mistress’s station. As the wealthy sachem of the Pocasset with dynastic ties to other sachems in both the Wampanoag and Narragansett Confederacies, Weetamoo’s self-presentation was consistent with a woman aware of her powerful position. It also revealed a leader who deftly blended the symbols of authority and rank of two cultures.¹¹⁵ That Weetamoo’s efforts were lost on the Rowlandson, a frontier minister’s wife, suggests that recognition of Weetamoo’s status as a woman of rank may not have extended to those outside of elite circles.

Nathaniel Saltonstall’s estimation of Weetamoo’s great value as a military ally reflected the urgency both Philip and the English colonists displayed in their attempts to gain Weetamoo’s support in the late spring and early summer of 1675. Representing New England, Captain Benjamin Church traveled to meet with Weetamoo and her neighbor, Awashunkes, another female sachem.¹¹⁶ Weetamoo’s husband at the time, Petananuet, alias Peter, spoke with Church along the way. Petananuet informed Church that he had

¹¹⁴ Rowlandson, *The Sovereignty & Goodness of God*, 57.

¹¹⁵ Michelle Burnham noted Rowlandson’s discomfort with Weetamoo’s wealth and potential power over men, though she ignored the blending of authority styles. Burnham also suggests that Rowlandson was unaware of Weetamoo’s actual political position. Michelle Burnham, *Captivity and Sentiment: Cultural Exchange in American Literature, 1682-1861* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1997).

¹¹⁶ Increase Mather places this meeting on June 7, 1675. Increase Mather, *A Brief History of the Warr with the Indians in New-England* (Boston: John Foster, 1676), postscript 5. Early American Imprints, Series 1: Evans, 1639-1800, accessed online.

recently returned from visiting a “Dance” that Philip had been hosting for several weeks in an attempt to drum up support for his cause.¹¹⁷ According to Petananuet, “Young Men from all Parts of the Country” attended the event.¹¹⁸ Opining that war was now inevitable, Petananuet asked Church to meet with Weetamoo. When Church reached Weetamoo, he found that many of her men had left to attend the dance. Although Church urged Weetamoo to side with the English in the coming conflict, Weetamoo declined to give a firm answer.

Despite English efforts to gain Weetamoo’s support, Increase Mather reported in July 1675, “that Squaw-Sachem of Pocasset her men were conjoined with the Womponoags (that is Philips men) in this rebellion.”¹¹⁹ Once it became clear that Weetamoo would not ally her sizable force to the English colonists, their focus shifted to potential financial gains that might result from her capture or death. Saltonstall—a merchant—admitted that if Weetamoo were “taken by the English, her Lands will more than pay all the Charge we have been at in this unhappy War.”¹²⁰ Plymouth governor Josiah Winslow described Weetamoo’s Pocasset lands as some of the “best Land in the Colony.”¹²¹ Lost as a potential military ally, her English enemies believed Weetamoo’s wealth might be used to finance the entire war.

¹¹⁷ Benjamin Church, *Entertaining Passages Relating to Philip's War which began in the Month of June, 1675*, ed. Thomas Church (Boston: B. Green, 1716), 3. Early American Imprints, Series 1: Evans, 1639-1800, accessed online.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹¹⁹ I. Mather, *A Brief History of the Warr with the Indians in New-England*, 4.

¹²⁰ N.S., *The present state of New-England*, 18.

¹²¹ Letter from Josiah Winslow, May 1 1676, in I. Mather, *A Brief History of the Warr with the Indians in New-England*.

A disastrous first half of 1676 turned the tide of the conflict. Native coalition forces dwindled and sachems and their followers even defected to the English. Weetamoo's husband Quinnapin was captured in July of 1676. With the end of the war near, one of Weetamoo's men, a soldier named Alderman, betrayed Weetamoo's position in late July or early August of 1676. According to both Hubbard and Mather, Weetamoo alone escaped the attack but died of drowning, exposure, or exhaustion after crossing a river or "arm of the sea" on a makeshift raft.¹²² Mather found it ironic—and providential—that Weetamoo was unable to find a canoe in the place where, one year before, she had helped Philip's men escape with the help of her canoes. He also suggested that with Weetamoo dead, it was only a matter of time before English troops killed Philip.¹²³ Upon finding her body, English soldiers cut off her head and placed it on a pole in Taunton where a number of prisoners were held as a trophy and a signal that an English victory was near. This display provoked a "horrid" and "diabolical Lamentation," a cacophonous outpouring of grief from the prisoners.¹²⁴ Later that month, New Englanders placed Philip's head on a pole in Plymouth where, according to Jill Lepore, it remained for decades.¹²⁵

Although reports of Weetamoo's actions and the actions of her contemporaries demonstrate the importance of a female sachem's military role, the full magnitude of her

¹²² Hubbard, *A Narrative of the Troubles with the Indians in New-England*, 102-103.

¹²³ I. Mather, *A Brief History of the Warr with the Indians in New-England*, 46.

¹²⁴ Hubbard, *A Narrative of the Troubles*, 103; Mather, *A Brief History of the Warr with the Indians in New-England*, 45.

¹²⁵ Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity* (New York: Vintage, 1999), 174.

influence becomes apparent when we examine the writings of prominent observers of the conflict. Two chroniclers of King Philip's War recorded their impressions of her role in these events. Increase Mather believed Weetamoo was a key player in the war—second only to Philip. In the early stages of the war, Mather described the coalition forces as “Philips and Squaw-Sachims [Weetamoo's] men.”¹²⁶ Mather described Weetamoo as “next unto Philip in respect of the mischief that hath been done, and the blood that hath been shed in this Warr.”¹²⁷ Saltonstall went even further, arguing that, in addition to being “as Potent a Prince as any ‘round her,” Weetamoo “willingly consented, and was much more forward in the Design, and had greater Success than King Philip himself.”¹²⁸ Mather and Saltonstall's words aptly sum up what Native and English leaders clearly understood: that Weetamoo was a military leader to be reckoned with.

Although the most prominent examples of female sachems appeared during King Philip's War, New England authorities did continue to deal with female sachems after the war, albeit in a more limited capacity. Ann Plane argued that the English victory in King Philip's war profoundly impacted Native female leadership.¹²⁹ According to Plane's study of Awashunkes, “growing English dominance” increasingly frustrated Native women's leadership ambitions as “sachems found their autonomy diminished and women found their opportunities for formal leadership reduced.”¹³⁰ Attempts at colonial control over

¹²⁶ I. Mather, *A Brief History of the Warr with the Indians in New-England*, 19.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹²⁸ N.S. *The present state of New-England*, 3.

¹²⁹ Plane, “Putting a Face on Colonization,” 153

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 155-157.

the gender of Native leaders appear to have increased during the eighteenth century. Amy E. Den Ouden briefly discussed differences in perception of the role of the female sachem, noting that when the sachem Mary Momoho referred to Eastern Pequot males as “her men,” she was engaging in “an assertion of her political authority by her own community’s standards, not those of colonial society.” Den Ouden supported this observation with the fact that the General Assembly “refers to her as ‘Momoho’s Squaw’ rather than as a sachem or sunksquaw in her own right.”¹³¹ By 1736, choice of a female sachem such as Anne of the Mohegan might be considered “a most blatant gesture of defiance to colonial authority.”¹³²

The tradition of female sachems in New England never entirely died out, in spite of New England officials’ best efforts to reduce both their numbers and their power. Their role as leaders in war-making—and English recognition of this role—did end with Weetamoo and her contemporaries, a result of both a lack of wars in southern New England as well as English pressure to conform to their preferred gender hierarchy. Native women engaged in other forms of war-making—including acting as spies and participating in ritual torture—continued to frighten New Englanders well beyond King Philip’s War and into the eighteenth century.

¹³¹ Amy E. Den Ouden, *Beyond Conquest: Native Peoples and the Struggle for History in New England* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 71.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 131.

“So-ho, Souse the Cowards”: Female Armies in the Streets of New England

Despite lacking access to the formal roles in wartime leadership exercised by Native women, English women did take a profound interest in the leadership of New England's wars. This interest encouraged groups of English women to take violent action within the informal public sphere on a number of occasions. In each of these following incidents, women used the cover of the informal public sphere to act as a mob. An informal army that challenged male leadership decisions, the female mob attacked people believed to be combatants and even attempted to reshape colonial military policy through group action. In each of these examples, the women were not prosecuted and received support from men in their communities.

That these women faced no punishment for seemingly insubordinate acts is partially due to the nature of the informal public sphere. According to Norton, although the formal public sphere was largely a male world where official secular and church business was conducted, both men and women were part of the informal public. A more community-based realm with its own concerns and self-policing, the informal public “did not always concur with the judgments or decisions of officially recognized authorities (the formal public).”¹³³ Outraged women, distrustful of colonial governments and their ability to protect their people or mete out justice to wrongdoers, sometimes took matters into their own hands. Men in their communities often supported this “mob action,” which was an expression of a larger sense of frustration within the informal public. Similarly,

¹³³ Norton, *Founding Mothers and Fathers*, 20.

John Walter has argued that women acting in mobs or crowds in England often “operated on behalf of, and drew support from, the wider community.”¹³⁴ This does not mean that actors within the formal public approved of their actions. On the contrary, most of these reports involve women challenging policies of leaders who, though frustrated by their actions, were unable to prosecute them.

Historians have long been fascinated by the image of early modern women acting as a mob, particularly in the context of the food riot. Indeed, most studies have linked female riots and mob action to “domestic concerns.”¹³⁵ For example, Robert Shoemaker argued that women were more likely to riot over issues “in their traditional sphere of influence” in early modern England.¹³⁶ Shoemaker specifically mentioned sexual morality and economic matters as the concerns of women, with attacks on shopkeepers and food riots as examples of the latter. More recently, Jennine Hurl-Eamon has argued that women played a much larger role in violent mob action than previously thought, particularly in Jacobite riots.¹³⁷

John Walter noted that English women were less likely to participate in “rebellions that ultimately took the form of mobile armed forces marching over considerable distances,” and maintained that the presence of women was more common

¹³⁴ John Walter, “Faces in the Crowd: Gender and Age,” in *The Family in Early Modern England*, ed. Helen Berry and Elizabeth A. Foyster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 120.

¹³⁵ Robert B. Shoemaker, “The London ‘Mob’ in the Early Eighteenth Century,” *The Journal of British Studies* 26, no. 3 (July, 1987): 273-304; Walter, “Faces in the Crowd: Gender and Age”; One exception is Rudolf M Dekker, “Women in Revolt: Popular Protest and its Social Basis in Holland in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries,” *Theory and Society* 16, no. 3 (May, 1987): 337-362.

¹³⁶ Shoemaker, “The London ‘Mob’ in the Early Eighteenth Century,” 285.

¹³⁷ Jennine Hurl-Eamon, *Gender and Petty Violence in London: 1680-1720* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2005), 108-122.

in protests regarding household matters such as food prices. Still, he suggested that women's presence in more local political protests was not unusual.¹³⁸ Walter also made an intriguing observation that women may have enjoyed some measure of legal protection when acting as a mob.¹³⁹ According to Walter, women may have taken advantage of "the license afforded them by their ambivalent legal status." Coverture, the legal doctrine which placed responsibility for women's actions on their fathers and husbands, may have "compounded legal uncertainty over women's culpability" when acting as a mob or in protest.¹⁴⁰ In some instances, women even taunted officials with the knowledge that they were unable to prosecute the female protesters.¹⁴¹ Lacking a formal role in the military and politics, women took advantage of loopholes that allowed them to take on informal, yet potent roles in public life. Insults and slander were women's traditional weapons in such circumstances, though they also took to physical violence, especially stoning, with great enthusiasm.¹⁴²

Two astonishing examples from King Philip's War and one incident during Queen Anne's War demonstrate women's willingness to offer collaborative military action as well as advice. This action, though often effective, was not always appreciated outside of the informal public sphere. Perhaps the most shocking incident of women's violence in colonial New England's history occurred in Marblehead, a fishing community north of

¹³⁸ Walter, "Faces in the Crowd: Gender and Age," 110-111.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 113.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 113.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 116, 118.

Salem, Massachusetts. The testimony of thirty-year-old sailor Robert Roules in July of 1677 described the scene and the events leading up to it.¹⁴³ Early in the morning of July 8, approximately nine or ten Indians in a canoe approached and boarded Roules' employer's fishing vessel, the *William and Sarah*. Roules and four other men were stripped to their underclothing and bound on the deck. Later that afternoon, the men were unbound and ordered to sail toward Penobscot. The prisoners and their captors later captured another vessel and the men of the two crews were split up and mixed together. Near dusk, Roules led a mutiny against their captors, throwing at least two of them overboard and binding another two.

The tired crew reached Marblehead one week after their first encounter with the canoe. The initial attack was part of a larger Indian strategy that involved capturing fishing vessels to attack the islands in Boston harbor and burn Boston itself.¹⁴⁴ Marblehead was already mourning the presumed loss of the mariners and, according to Increase Mather's diary, much of the town had just left Sunday services at the meeting house.¹⁴⁵ Although the crowd that formed to welcome them was delighted by their unexpected return, they quickly grew angry upon learning that the two Indians had been left alive. The sailors argued that they had hoped to recover the value of the clothing that had been stolen from them on board the ship. Although the crowd was only slightly

¹⁴³ Robert Roules, "Testimony to Sec. Edward Rawson," in *Essex Institute Historical Collections* (Salem, MA: Essex Institute, 1918), 54: 181-183; see also James Axtell, "The Vengeful Women of Marblehead: Robert Roules's Deposition of 1677," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 3rd. ser, 31, no. 4 (Oct., 1974): 647-652.

¹⁴⁴ Axtell, "The Vengeful Women of Marblehead," 647.

¹⁴⁵ Increase Mather, *Diary: March, 1675-December 1676*, edited by Samuel A. Green. (Cambridge: John Wilson and Son, 1900), 48.

mollified, several men agreed to bring the Indians to Marblehead's constable. The constable would then arrange for the prisoners to be sent to Boston for court proceedings.

When the prisoners were brought ashore, however, the crowd, made up of the "whole Towne," again grew unruly.¹⁴⁶ A group of women near the front of the crowd "layd holt on the Indians hair at which the Indians laught" and began shoving and hurling rocks at the men escorting the Indian prisoners.¹⁴⁷ Their aim was not to injure their fellow townspeople but to strip the Indians of their protection. Roules testified that the women "gott the Indians into there hands & with stones & billets [sticks] & what else they know not they made an end of the Indians which they saw not till they saw them lye dead & all there heads bones & flesh pulled."¹⁴⁸ Roules' testimony suggests that the men of Marblehead were willing to look the other way during this vigilante execution. According to Roules, onlookers claimed "that the tumultation was such by the weomen that for their lives they Could not ascertain or tell any particular woman."¹⁴⁹ Apparently, although the "whole Towne" was present, none of the onlookers were able recognize any of the women.

For their part, the women were defiant, "Crying out if they [the Indians] had bin Carried to Boston they would have lived but if there had bin forty of the best Indians in the Country they [the women] would kill them all though they [the women] were hanged

¹⁴⁶ Roules, "Testimony," 183.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

for it.”¹⁵⁰ Whether from fear or—more likely—complicity, the women faced no consequences as “neither Constable Mr. Mavericke nor any suffered to come nere them.”¹⁵¹ The government did take the time to acquire a deposition from Robert Roules, suggesting some sort of inquiry. Despite this inquiry, the women’s actions within the mob and the informal public sphere went unpunished, as ordinary people, and perhaps even the town’s constable, were unwilling to turn them in.

One scholar suggested that this incident “reminds us that while an atrocity was committed by some English colonists, we should not rashly adjudge all colonists guilty of moral turpitude and genocidal intent.” Rather, he argued, the attack at Marblehead was “an instance of frontier vigilantism substituting its fearful brand of injustice for the more circumspect justice of established government.”¹⁵² This rosy take on the “Vengeful Women of Marblehead” ignores the fact that the women, backed by most of the town, stood up to a handful of sailors hoping to keep the Indians alive long enough to recover the value of their stolen clothing. Acting as part of the informal public—and with the tacit approval of Marblehead’s men—the women were distrustful of the government’s willingness to mete out suitable punishments.¹⁵³ As it turns out, the women of Marblehead were not the only women willing to assert themselves within the informal public during King Philip’s War.

¹⁵⁰ Roules, “Testimony,” 183.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Axtell, “The Vengeful Women of Marblehead,” 650.

¹⁵³ In a brief discussion of this incident, Ulrich rightly noted that the women may have “acted as surrogates for the larger community.” Curiously, she includes the incident in a chapter on violence and crime, not her chapter on war. Ulrich, *Good Wives*, 194.

Daniel Gookin, best known for his attempts to convert New England's Native peoples to Christianity, wrote disapprovingly of an incident in Marlborough, Massachusetts in March of 1676. Gookin himself faced a backlash from his hometown of Cambridge, losing his leadership position in his church for his defense of allied Christian Indians.¹⁵⁴ The backlash Gookin experienced was representative of a larger anti-Indian sentiment that gripped New England during King Philip's War. Many colonists distrusted their Indian allies, unable or unwilling to distinguish between the numerous nations fighting in complicated alliances on both sides in the war. By this time, hundreds of Christian Indians had already been sent to live on Deer Island—ostensibly for their protection—in miserable conditions.¹⁵⁵ Gookin reported that many of the “vulgar” among the colonists felt powerless to strike against the enemy, who had conducted a number of successful raids and who “were too crafty and subtle for the English.”¹⁵⁶ Instead, according to Gookin, many hoped to “[wreak] their rage upon the poor unarmed Indians our friends.”¹⁵⁷

In March of 1676, a party consisting of the children and friends of an ally named Job arrived at Marlborough on their way to Boston where they had been promised protection. Although the constable of the town had promised to shelter them for “one night or two,” the people of Marlborough resented their presence. The promises of

¹⁵⁴ Cogley, *John Eliot's Mission to the Indians before King Philip's War*, 227.

¹⁵⁵ Gookin, *An Historical Account of the Doings and Sufferings of Christian Indians in New England*, 503.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 494.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

officials were no match for the rage of the frightened “informal public.” According to Gookin,

there came some people of the town (especially women) to their quarter, some of whom did so abuse, threaten, and taunt at these poor Christians, and they being thereby put into great fears, that in the night the minister’s wife, and his eldest son, a lad of twelve years old, and another woman, a widow that had carefully kept and nourished Job’s children, with her daughter, being four of them in all, escaped away into the woods.

The threats were serious enough, the time they had to escape so brief, that the Native minister Tuckapawillin’s “wife left a nursing infant behind her, with her husband, of about three months old, which affliction was a very sore trial to the poor man, his wife and eldest son gone, and the poor infant no breast to nourish it.”¹⁵⁸ All but one member of the party eventually reached Deer Island. The minister’s son who escaped with the smaller group died from “famine” after his escape.

Jenny Hale Pulsipher, who mentioned this incident in her monograph *Subjects unto the Same King*, noted that “animosity toward Indians touched both men and women, then—both those fighting in and those threatened by the war.”¹⁵⁹ In this Pulsipher was correct, though she constructed a barrier between male and female roles in the war, failing to acknowledge the blurring of gender roles occurring during King Philip’s War. Both men and women fell into the categories of “those fighting in and those threatened

¹⁵⁸ Gookin, *An Historical Account of the Doings and Sufferings of Christian Indians in New England*, 503.

¹⁵⁹ Jenny Hale Pulsipher, *Subjects unto the Same King: Indians, English, and the Contest for Authority in Colonial New England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), paperback 2007, pg. 149.

by the war.”¹⁶⁰ She also failed to understand the power the informal public could wield when dissatisfied with official decisions. In this case, the people of Marlborough—led by its women—doubted the sincerity of New England’s allies as well as the judgment of their own government in protecting them. Their frustration boiled over in the presence of Job’s friends and family and their actions resulted in the death of a child.

Although the previous examples featured women leading attacks on Indians as part of the informal public, an incident in 1707 demonstrates that acceptance of women in this role was not limited to violence against Indians or even enemies. In July of 1707, following a failed attack on Port-Royal in Acadia, a group of women met a boat with officers bearing official news of the expedition at Scarlet’s Wharf in Boston. The news had already reached Boston through less official channels. According to John Winthrop, the women mocked the soldiers:

‘Welcome, souldiers!’ & presented them a great wooden sword, & said withall ‘Fie, for shame! pull off those iron spitts which hang by your sides; for wooden ones is all the fashion now.’ At which one of the of the officers said, ‘Peace, sille woman, &c,’ which irritated the female tribe so much the more, that they cal’d out to one another as they past along the streets, ‘Is your piss-pot charg’d, neighbor Is your piss-pot charg’d neighbor?’ So-ho, souse the cowards. Salute Port-Royal. Holloo, neighbor, holloo.¹⁶¹

Upending Boston’s gendered, aged, and economic order, the women were joined by a group of children and servants who followed the officers through the town. This

¹⁶⁰ Pulsipher, *Subjects unto the Same King*, 149.

¹⁶¹ John Winthrop, “Letter to Fitz-John Winthrop, July 1707,” in *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 6th ser. (Boston: Published by the Society, 1889), 3: 388-389.

remarkable mob taunted the officers, carrying wooden swords and other children's war toys while shouting "Port-Royall! Port-Royall!"

In an incident reminiscent of traditional "shaming" processions such as charivari and its English counterpart, skimmington, the mob of women attempted to publicly shame men who they felt had failed as soldiers.¹⁶² The women had clearly been planning this encounter, meeting the soldiers at the wharf carrying a very large wooden sword. By presenting the soldiers with a wooden sword and demanding their iron swords, they simultaneously challenged their manhood and adulthood. Winthrop—speaking from the perspective of the formal public sphere—described the group of women as a "female tribe," a phrase that evoked a wild nature associated with Indian women. When one of the soldiers called them "sille women," the group increased the force of their assault. Adopting a military-like cadence—"Is your piss-pot charg'd, neighbor Is your piss-pot charg'd neighbor? So-ho, souse the cowards. Salute Port-Royal. Holloo, neighbor, holloo"—the women took on the role of soldiers themselves. They called upon the other women of the neighborhood to empty their chamber pots on the heads of the passing soldiers. In doing so, they asked their neighbors "is your piss-pot charged?," mockingly linking the charged masculine, even phallic musket to the full receptacle of a chamber pot.

¹⁶² Matthew Dennis, William Pencak, and Simon P. Newman, eds., *Riot and Revelry in Early America* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002). See also Natalie Zemon Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985); Martin Ingram, "Ridings, Rough Music, and Mocking Rhymes in Early Modern England," in *Popular Culture in Seventeenth-Century England*, ed. Barry Reay (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), 166-197.

In another account of the same incident, Cotton Mather accused Dudley's forces of being "afraid of having the Fort fall into their hands" and of running home "as fast as their canvas Sails cou'd carry them."¹⁶³ In Mather's narrative, the women of Boston were the heroes of the day. He wrote:

The Good Women in Boston, could not forbear their Out-cries, when they met in the Streets, on this Occasion. Says one of them, *Why, our Cowards imagined the Fort at Port-Royal would fall before them, like the Walls of Jericho.* Another Answers, *Why did not the Block heads then stay out Seven Days to see? What ail'd the Traitors to come away in Five Days Time after they got there?*

According to Mather, this taunting had the desired effect. "The Cry of the People must be Satisfyed," he penned. The governor attempted another attack with similar results. Cotton Mather loathed Governor Dudley and, wasting no opportunity to undermine him, published this account in London. He clearly relished the idea that a group of women could shame Dudley into a second failed attempt at Port-Royal. It is interesting to note that in Mather's account, he omitted the masses of children and servants so prominent in Winthrop's account. Instead, Mather chose to highlight the women's role in channeling "The Cry of the People" and focusing on their accusations of treachery.

This incident appears to have split the opinions of men working within the formal public along political lines. As usual, the larger community appears to have supported or at least sympathized with the small uprising. Among prominent men involved with the business of governing, Governor Dudley did not appreciate their actions, while John

¹⁶³ Cotton Mather, *The deplorable state of New-England, by reason of a covetous and treacherous governour* (London, 1708, reprinted Boston: 1721), 34-35. Early American Imprints, Series 1: Evans, 1639-1800, accessed online.

Winthrop seemed uncomfortable with the work of the “female tribe.” Only Mather’s report of the incident portrays the women as heroines, likely due to the trouble they caused for Dudley. As we will see in later, Cotton Mather—among many other men—had little problem turning positive accounts of women’s participation in the border wars into political and religious propaganda.

New England’s policymakers and writers viewed English and Native women’s participation in the border wars of the seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries within the context of early modern gender spheres. Whether marching as a mob in the streets of Boston or defending a fortified frontier settlement, English women took on central and supporting roles in these conflicts. They did so as a result of government policies and cultural ideas that tolerated and even encouraged their actions within the informal public sphere and as members of settler-soldiers’ households. Native women found a more mixed reception, as New England’s elite initially accepted female sachems’ authority, casting them as actors within the formal public sphere through the late seventeenth century. These same players rejected ordinary Indian women’s formal role in ritual torture and as potential combatants as indicative of a disorderly and savage nature. By the middle decades of the eighteenth century, New England’s leaders and authors were taking part in a transatlantic process that would rethink the relationship between gender and spheres of action.

In the years after Queen Anne’s War, New England increasingly became a part of the British Empire and its military system. As British forces took on a larger role in the

protection of New England's frontier, fortified communities ceased to be the first lines of defense for New England. The presence of professional soldiers and an increase in the use of paternalistic language that described frontier inhabitants as children of the king resulted in a greater formalization of wartime roles. At the same time, boundaries between home and front hardened as women's roles were increasingly relegated to a new private sphere. As Chapter Four will show, although women still received praise for defending their frontier homes, this praise was frequently accompanied by admonishment of the government for failing to protect the poor, helpless settlers.

CHAPTER 2:

LA COMMANDANTE AND LA BONNE FEMME PRIMOT: RANK, GENDER, AND WAR-MAKING IN NEW FRANCE (1630-1713)

In 1699, Madeleine de Verchères wrote a letter to the Comtesse de Maurepas in which she mentioned rumors that French noblewomen had led peasants against France's enemies in the European theater of King William's War.¹ De Verchères likely had heard stories of the daughter of the Marquis de la Charce, Philis de la Tour-du-Pin de La Charce, who successfully led her father's peasants against Savoy-allied armies in southeastern France with the help of her sister in 1692.² De Verchères noted that the French women of New France were equally eager to take up arms in the name of their king. As she wrote, she may have kept in mind the reputation for fierceness the women of New France had developed over previous decades of war against the Iroquois and the English. The action de Verchères took in defending her father's fort seven years earlier was one of the last and best-promoted examples of women taking up arms to defend their homes, their families, and their communities along the St. Lawrence River and in Acadia.

Eyewitness as well as anecdotal evidence suggests that both French and Native women of all ranks in New France took part in the conflicts of the northeastern borderlands. This was particularly true in the more unstable regions of the colony

¹ Letter from Marie Madeleine de Verchères to Comtesse de Maurepas, in *Supplement to Dr. Brymner's Report on Canadian Archives*, ed. Edouard Richard (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, 1901), 6-7.

² Colin Coates and Cecilia Morgan also made this comparison in Colin M. Coates and Cecilia Morgan, *Heroines and History: Representations of Madeleine de Verchères and Laura Secord* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 24-25.

upstream near Montreal. In her memoirs, Canadian-born Sister Marie Morin wrote that while living at Montreal's Hôtel-Dieu in the 1660s, she was able to look down from the bell-tower onto fighting near Montreal. Morin recorded the fear she felt when battles raged too close for comfort as well as the pride she felt when watching battles farther away, as "everyone ran to help their brothers and expose their lives" to save the lives of others. Morin also recalled how, "many times" she saw women, "amazon-like," dressed as men, armed, and running to fight in the battles.³

New France's seigneurial system of fiefdoms held by lords and ladies ensured that rank—and the social hierarchy it imposes—had a profound impact on women's participation in the border wars. The nature of the seigneurial system, with its stratified society and often unprotected settlements that huddled along the St. Lawrence River, helped create distinct wartime roles for elite and non-elite women. The distinction between ladies of rank and ordinary women was far more important under New France's seigneurial system than in New England, where wealthier European women tended to live in safer regions and lacked formal military roles.

As this chapter demonstrates, elite women, exercising authority within the formal public sphere, took on leadership roles as wives and daughters of seigneurs as well as in their own names after inheriting a seigneurie. Ordinary women, who often had to choose to join the battle or flee to the nearest fort, participated in these wars via the informal

³ Marie Morin, *Annales de L'Hotel-Dieu de Montreal: Rédigées par la soeur Morin*, ed. Æ Fauteux, E. A. Massicotte, and C. Bertrand, in *Memoires de la Société Historique de Montréal*, vol. 12 (Montréal: L'Imprimerie des Editeurs Limitée, 1921), 158. Translation is mine.

public sphere. French authors also drew distinctions between Indian women of rank and non-elite Indian women, often associating allied, non-elite Indian women rhetorically with their non-elite, French counterparts. In doing so, French writers framed both European and allied Native women's military participation within European traditions regarding the proper roles of ladies of rank and their social inferiors via the formal and informal public spheres.⁴

Writing later in her life, in the 1690s, Sister Morin's memoirs of Montreal described a period in New France's history known as the Iroquois Wars or the Beaver Wars. A series of brutal regional conflicts that saw some of the most dramatic examples of women's participation in New France's wars, the Beaver Wars dominated the first major phase of French settlement in Canada during the mid-seventeenth century. Although French colonists and their Huron and Algonquin allies fought the Iroquois for control of the St. Lawrence region throughout the seventeenth century, fighting was fiercest in the middle decades of that century. Indeed, the nascent settlement at Montreal barely survived and the once-powerful Huron confederacy was destroyed.

As in New England after King Philip's War, Canada underwent a transition to an increased royal presence beginning in 1663. The royal takeover of government and

⁴ Studies that examine women's wartime roles in earlier centuries include: Diane Gervais and Serge Lusignan, "De Jeanne d'Arc à Madelaine de Verchères la femme guerrière dans la société d'ancien régime," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française* 53, no. 2 (1999): 171-205; Helen Stolterer, "Figures of Female Militancy in Medieval France," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 16 (1991): 522-549; Megan McLaughlin, "The Woman Warrior: Gender, Warfare and Society in Medieval Europe," *Women's Studies* 17 (1990): 193-209; Brian Sandberg, "'Generous Amazons Came to the Breach': Besieged Women, Agency and Subjectivity during the French Wars of Religion," *Gender and History* 16, no. 3 (Nov., 2004): 654-688.

assistance from the newly-arrived French Carignan-Salières Regiment ultimately led to the temporary defeat of the Iroquois in 1667 after decades of devastating conflict. In the years following, including King William's War and Queen Anne's War, France's new influence began to affect New France's war-making, though, as in New England, its true impact would not become clear for decades.

Records from the late seventeenth century are even more fragmentary than those of the middle part of the century. Although official correspondence from the emerging bureaucracy of New France increased during this time, other sources dwindled. The Jesuits ceased publication of their historically invaluable *Jesuit Relations* in 1673 and prolific letter writer Mère Marie de l'Incarnation died in 1672. The lack of a press in New France and a dearth of chronicles from the period only exacerbate the problem of piecing together women's roles in King William's and Queen Anne's Wars. As Louise Dechêne observed, this transition marked a gain for the traditional military historian and a loss for cultural history.⁵ In spite of this loss, as we will see, it is still possible to glean patterns from the available sources.

The Great Peace of Montreal of 1701 largely ended the threat from the Iroquois to French interests in the region. It also shifted the focus of future wars with England to the better-fortified lower St. Lawrence River near Quebec and Acadia. This change in strategy ultimately ushered in a transition in women's wartime roles from military to

⁵ Louise Dechêne, *Le Peuple, L'État et la Guerre au Canada sous le Régime Français*, ed. Hélène Paré, Sylvie Dépatie, Catherine Desbarats, and Thomas Wien (Montréal: Les Éditions du Boréal, 2008), 108.

bureaucratic and economic in the eighteenth century. Due to swift transformations in both the location and type of military campaign fought in New France, changes in women's participation occurred abruptly. This is particularly true when compared to the more gradual changes in women's participation which took place in eighteenth-century New England. As a result, there is little in the way of change over time to chart with regard to women's roles in military strategy and combat. Rather, this chapter will examine the influence of rank on women's military participation within the formal and informal public spheres during the seventeenth century.

It was during the Beaver Wars and King William's War of the seventeenth century that women in New France gained their reputations for jumping into the fray. In New England, an expansionist system based on families pushing outward in fortified communities contributed to laws that placed the families of settler-soldiers on the front lines. French women's roles in a wartime society were also greatly influenced by the colony's policies and settlement patterns. According to Serge Courville and Richard Howard, French leaders, like their British counterparts, embraced a strategy based on the establishment of a "safe" city (Quebec) and the gradual expansion inland from that city. Instead of pushing outward in all directions from that city, the French established seigneuries along the banks of the St. Lawrence River. By 1663, most of the colony's seigneuries—approximately 82.5%—were located downstream, near Quebec and Trois-Rivières, with over 50% of those near Quebec. Although only nine seigneuries were established near Montreal by 1663, these seigneuries lay closest to Indian-controlled

territory to the west and were the most vulnerable to attacks. Indeed, most of the incidents of women's participation in war-making from the seventeenth century took place near the seigneuries around and in Montreal.⁶

French settlement in the St. Lawrence Valley was anchored by two major towns, a highly fortified administrative center at Quebec, founded in 1608, and Montreal, founded in 1641 as a center for trade and missionary work. Both Quebec and Montreal had approximately four-hundred people each in 1667. Neither had more than ten-thousand in 1759.⁷ As Cole Harris has pointed out, the towns of New France “were creations of the French state.”⁸ Merchants, religious orders, colonial administrators, and military officials used these small towns as bases for their operations throughout New France. Despite official support for these towns, even in the early decades of the eighteenth century only about one-fifth of Canada's population lived in “urban” centers.⁹

Frenchmen from sixteen to sixty years of age were required to serve in a militia that protected the area near their homes. Another force, comprised of Native allies and Canadians whom Louise Dechêne dubbed “volunteers,” responded to military threats farther afield.¹⁰ Although lacking the better organization and fortifications of their counterparts in New England, both groups faced the greatest danger when caught off

⁶ Serge Courville, *Quebec: A Historical Geography*, trans. Richard Howard (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008), 51-52.

⁷ Cole Harris, *The Reluctant Land: Society, Space, and Environment in Canada Before Confederation* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008), 66.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 68.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹⁰ Dechêne, *Le Peuple, L'État et la Guerre*, 98-99.

guard by attacks while working near their homes.¹¹ Canada's forts, which Louise Dechêne described as "precarious refuges," could only exercise control over a small area surrounding each installation.¹² Settlers who chose to live closer to the fields they worked often "built their homes outside the palisades, but within sight of one another."¹³

Although some homes near Montreal had boarded windows, homes downstream became increasingly less fortified, a response to the lower likelihood of attack. Colonists living near Trois-Rivières took shelter at the nearest fort when under attack, while those settled near Quebec faced attacks less often.¹⁴ In all cases, Canadians lacked the benefit of the fortified villages and towns that protected New Englanders from devastating attacks when properly manned.

Although these cities played powerful political, economic, cultural, religious, and military roles in New France, most settlers lived in the colony's rural areas under the seigneurial system. New France's governments, first the commercial Company of New France and, after 1663, the Crown, granted parcels of land along the St. Lawrence River to seigneurs as fiefs.¹⁵ Seigneurs then divided their seigneuries into smaller parcels of farmland contracted out to the farming peasantry known as "*habitants*." *Habitants*, who contracted with seigneurs—and who were referred to legally as *censitaires*—paid for the use of the land annually. They did this both through the *cens*, a smaller, "token" payment,

¹¹ Dechêne, *Le Peuple, L'État et la Guerre*, 101.

¹² *Ibid.*, 100.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 100. Translation is mine.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 100.

¹⁵ The Company of New France is also known less-formally as the Company of One Hundred Associates.

and a *rente*, a larger payment that provided the seigneur with a more substantial income. *Habitants* also owed seigneurs personal services, such as one-fourteenth of grain ground using the seigneur's mill.¹⁶

Although *habitants* relied on extensive kinship and local networks, their lives did not revolve around villages, nor was the seigneurial system merely feudalism transplanted wholesale.¹⁷ Seigneuries were not villages, rather, they existed as subdivided plots of land managed by the seigneur or a seigneurial agent. As Courville and Howard have pointed out, the Canadian seigneurial system rested not on the "man-to-man feudalism of old Europe" but was tied to land use.¹⁸ In this case, the seigneur possessed "direct ownership," while the *censitaire* held "useful ownership."¹⁹ The long, narrow lots of the seigneurie were not conducive to village formation, despite the wishes of members of the colony's government. Priests, militia captains, and wealthier settlers often acted as a local elite.²⁰ Still, scholars such as Cole Harris and Rony Blum have argued that *habitants* had relatively large amounts of autonomy, with some freedom to continue French peasant traditions or selectively adopt often superior Native American customs and practices.²¹ Indeed, Harris argues that although for much of the colonial period, urban centers more closely resembled their French counterparts than did rural areas.²²

¹⁶ Harris, *The Reluctant Land*, 73.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 73-78; Richard Colebrook Harris, *The Seigneurial System in Early Canada: A Geographical Study*, rev. ed. (1966; repr., Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1984), xvii.

¹⁸ Courville, *Quebec: A Historical Geography*, 54.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 73-78.

²¹ Harris, *The Reluctant Land*, 85-88; Rony Blum, *Ghost Brothers: Adoption of a French Tribe by Bereaved Native America: A Transdisciplinary Longitudinal Multilevel Integrated Analysis* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005).

²² Harris, *The Reluctant Land*, 85-88.

In her groundbreaking book *Frenchmen into Peasants*, Leslie Choquette argued that men and women underwent substantially different migration experiences, particularly with regard to recruitment, numbers, and motivation.²³ According to Choquette, men tended to migrate from regions of France that faced the Atlantic as well as from Paris, while women more frequently hailed from areas closer to Paris.²⁴ In the early decades of the colony, prior to the royal takeover in 1663, most men arrived in New France as priests, fur-traders, investors, and seigneurs who had a responsibility to recruit new settlers that they rarely fulfilled.²⁵ After 1663, the Company of New France maintained their monopoly on trade but turned over nearly all other aspects of governing to the Crown. Immigration was of particular concern to the Crown, which sent over approximately four-thousand settlers between 1663-1673.²⁶ Although soldiers, indentured servants, and other young men made up a large percentage of settlers in the first decade following the royal takeover, the Crown increasingly turned to soldiers as immigrants from that point.²⁷ The French Navy, followed by the *Compagnie des Indes occidentales*, as well as charities, the Church, and prisons supplied most of these “state-subsidized emigrants.”²⁸

New France was a colony constantly concerned with maintaining gender ratios favorable to population increase. This was particularly true after the royal takeover, when

²³ Leslie Choquette, *Frenchmen into Peasants: Modernity and Tradition in the Peopling of French Canada* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 54.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 54.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 251-252.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 253.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 253.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 270.

officials became “intent on giving a boost to procreation by balancing the sex ratio.”²⁹ In the period prior to 1663, most women who migrated to New France, came as part of a family, though women still never accounted for more than fourteen-percent of emigrants in those decades.³⁰ In the 1630s and 1640s, women accounted for approximately five and seven percent of migrants, respectively.³¹

The majority of women who migrated to New France arrived as single women in the years surrounding 1670.³² Women’s immigration peaked in the 1660s at approximately thirty-one percent.³³ Many of the single women who migrated in these relatively large numbers in the 1660s and early 1670s were known as *filles du roi*. Recruited to address Canada’s lopsided gender ratio, these women, often poorer women and orphans, received passage and dowries from the King in return for a respectable marriage in Canada. Few women moved to New France after 1673; indeed, no more than thirty-six women immigrated to New France in any given year of the eighteenth century.³⁴ Choquette has estimated that over eighty-percent of the women who migrated to New France did so before 1700.³⁵

The arrival of 1,310 soldiers of the French Carignan-Salières regiment in 1665 on a “mission to exterminate the Iroquois” marked major shifts in imperial, military, and

²⁹ Allan Greer, *The People of New France* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 16-17.

³⁰ Choquette, *Frenchmen into Peasants*, 176-177, Table 6.9.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 176-177.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 175.

settlement policies.³⁶ After a successful French and Indian assault on the Iroquois in 1667, the Iroquois signed a peace treaty with the French and spent much of the following two decades regrouping. Although only approximately four-hundred Carignan-Salières soldiers remained in Canada after the 1667 peace with the Iroquois, that number was part of a much larger drive by the new royal government to strengthen the colony's defenses and boost the low population levels.³⁷ Officers received seigneuries in the colony and their subordinates remained to work the land and offer military protection. Dechêne described these four-hundred soldiers and their officers as the "cornerstone" of a new "sociopolitical regime" marked by greater royal involvement in nearly every aspect of life in New France.³⁸ Officials particularly hoped that movement away from a homegrown militia and toward a colonial "reserve" force overseen by the French military would lead to greater military success.³⁹

Between 1687 and 1697, the region around and to the south and west of Montreal underwent a period of increased fortifications in response to devastating attacks by the Iroquois. Montreal built a formidable wall in 1688 capable of "accommodating hundreds of refugee camps."⁴⁰ In rural areas, farmers were required to fortify the area around a public building located in a centralized area such as a church, where families could retreat with their possessions.⁴¹ As in New England, life in these communities during

³⁶ Dechêne, *Le Peuple, L'État et la Guerre*, 105.

³⁷ Courville, *Quebec: A Historical Geography*, 71.

³⁸ Dechêne, *Le Peuple, L'État et la Guerre*, 109.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 127.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 157.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

times of danger was unpleasant; however, the organization of people within the fortified areas reflects differences between the two societies. In New England, where town-based militias were of greater importance and the British military had not yet taken on a greater role, settler-soldiers hosted assigned families in their homes. The rural communities of New France were often forced to surrender one of their better buildings to officers, while soldiers and residents lived in “makeshift shelters, huts covered with piles of bark, sleeping on straw.”⁴² This arrangement, different from the household-forts of New England, represented a growing stratification within the military institutions of New France as well as greater imperial control over matters of defense.

Despite the growing reliance on metropolitan France, Canadian officials continued to acknowledge the strategic potential of ordinary families. The *Conseil Supérieur* took preventive action in January 1686, when the war that would later be called King William’s War seemed imminent.⁴³ Acting on concerns that the population of New France was insufficiently armed, the *Conseil* passed a law regulating the transfer of firearms. The law noted that the members of the *Conseil* agreed that the safety of the colony depended on each household possessing sufficient weapons. Reports had reached the *Conseil* that creditors had been seizing guns in lieu of payment and that inhabitants had been selling their weapons to make ends meet. The law applied to all people “of whatever quality and condition” and specified that inhabitants might sell any excess

⁴² Dechêne, *Le Peuple, L’État et la Guerre*, 158.

⁴³ “Arrêt du Conseil Supérieur de Québec qui défend d’acheter, vendre ou troquer les armes des habitants, à peine de 50lbs,” [1686] in *Arrêts et Rédlements du Conseil Supérieur de Québec, et Ordonnances et Jugements des Intendants du Canada* (Québec: La Presse a Vapeur, 1855), 110-111.

weapons beyond the number needed to “arm each father of the family, his [presumably male] children and servants who had reached fourteen years of age.” Those who failed to comply faced a fine of 50 *livres*.⁴⁴ Although the *Conseil* only mandated the arming of male members of households in this decree, accounts of women’s participation in these conflicts suggest that women remained potential combatants and defenders of France and its Native allies in the New World throughout the seventeenth century.

“*La Bonne Femme Primot*”: French and Native Women as Obedient Warriors

Sister Marie Morin’s tantalizing description of women dressed as Amazons running to battle in the early decades of Montreal’s history speaks to a larger pattern of female participation outside of and near forts. These women likely were not of an elite social status and suffered from a dearth of fortifications in the region. Few accounts detailing these women’s actions have survived, probably due to a general lack of sources from this time as well as the hectic nature of the battles. Of the incidents that were recorded, many demonstrate similar characteristics with regard to language and narrative. Most note the woman’s courage and bravery, occasionally referring to her as an Amazon or even a lioness, while also placing her actions within the context of early modern gender roles. Unlike their counterparts among New France’s nobility, most of these women would not have been considered women of rank with their own role to play in a

⁴⁴ “Arrêt du Conseil Supérieur de Québec qui défend d’acheter, vendre ou troquer les armes des habitants, à peine de 50lbs,” in *Arrêts et Rédlements du Conseil Supérieur de Québec*, 110-111.

formal public sphere. Their informal participation was—in theory—undertaken with the approval of husbands or priests.

In her recent analysis of Indian influence on French culture, Rony Blum has argued that *habitant* women lived in ways that would have been unrecognizable even to their French counterparts. According to Blum, this was particularly true during the seventeenth century as well as in rural and remote, less “Europeanized” regions such as Montreal and its surrounding areas.⁴⁵ Blum emphasized sources complaining that French women had become wild in the New World, including a particularly interesting account of a bishop who reported his horror at seeing French women attending church naked from the waist up.⁴⁶ Her argument, though intriguing, overlooks the fact that women who participated in the colony’s wars were described as upholding both European gender roles as well as Christian morals. As we will see, French observers even placed allied Indian women’s actions within this framework.

The overlap Blum noticed between non-elite French women and Indian women may be related to a cultural phenomenon in the early colonial period that, as in the case of Mary Beth Norton’s description of the relationship between gender and rank, privileged

⁴⁵ Blum, *Ghost Brothers*, 126. Although an urban center, remote Montreal nevertheless maintained a reputation for being less civilized than its more “genteel” counterparts to the northeast.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 120.

rank over race as well as gender.⁴⁷ A number of historians have noted the relative fluidity of race with respect to rank and status throughout the Americas, particularly prior to the eighteenth century.⁴⁸ Indeed, Europeans were often very aware of the social statuses of Indians and Africans in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, after which gender and racial ideologies became increasingly fixed. In the case of women's participation in New France's wars, authors sometimes saw more similarities between women of the same class than the same race or ethnicity.

One of the best-documented incidents of the mid-century wars involving a non-elite French woman was the attack on Martine Messier Primot, who later earned the nicknames "la bonne femme Primot" and "Parmanda." It is in Primot's story that French writers fully articulated the idea of the virtuous yet violent peasant woman of French or Native origin. At least four separate accounts noted the incident at the time and in the immediate decades following. The earliest report was Paul Ragueneau's account of the

⁴⁷ This discourse was not wholly controlled by Europeans. Indeed, Juliana Barr has even argued that in regions where Indians had the upper hand, they controlled the way in which gender, power, and race interacted. Juliana Barr, *Peace Came in the Form of a Woman: Indians and Spaniards in the Texas Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007). Additional studies that support this idea include: Ramón A. Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality and Power in New Mexico, 1500-1846* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996); James F. Brooks, *Captives and Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

⁴⁸ Jennifer M. Spear, *Race, Sex, and Social Order in Early New Orleans* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009); Kirsten Fischer, *Suspect Relations: Sex, Race, and Resistance in Colonial North Carolina* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002); Kathleen Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Jeremy Mumford, "Aristocracy on the Auction Block: Race, Lords, and the Perpetuity Controversy of Sixteenth-Century Peru," in *Imperial Subjects: Race and Identity in Colonial Latin America*, ed. Andrew B. Fisher and Matthew D. O'Hara (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 39-59; Pedro Carrasco, "Indian-Spanish Marriages in the First Century of the Colony," in *Indian Women of Early Mexico*, ed. Susan Schroeder, Stephanie Wood, and Robert Haskett (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997); Peter B. Villella, "Pure and Noble Indians, Untainted by Inferior Idolatrous Races": Native Elites and the Discourse of Blood Purity in Late Colonial Mexico," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 91, no. 4 (2011): 633-663.

attack in the *Jesuit Relation* of 1651-1652. Ragueneau wrote that a French woman had “received five or six wounds” but “did not die of them; her courage brought her out of the danger.”⁴⁹ He also elaborated on the story in his journal. According to Ragueneau, on July 29, 1652, two Iroquois men, using a field of corn as cover, attacked “Martine, wife of Antoine Primot, who defended herself courageously” until help could arrive from nearby Montreal.⁵⁰ The Ursuline Mother Superior Marie de l’Incarnation also wrote of the incident briefly to her son in September of that year.⁵¹

Although these earliest accounts are intriguing, they do not by themselves explain the extraordinary cultural impact of this event. In Francois Dollier de Casson’s *Histoire de Montréal*, new details fleshed out the story.⁵² As the Superior of the Sulpician Order in New France, Dollier de Casson had direct access to many of his subjects when he wrote his history in the early 1670s. According to Dollier de Casson, Martine Primot became something of a folk heroine, known in Montreal as “la bonne femme Primot” as well as “Parmanda.” Dollier wrote that this “woman of virtue...was attacked within two gunshots of the château. As soon as she was attacked she shouted loudly.” Three Iroquois

⁴⁹ Paul Ragueneau, *Relation de ce qui s'est passé en la mission des Pères de la Compagnie de Jésus, au pays de la Nouvelle France, depuis l'été de l'année 1651 jusques à l'été de l'année 1652, envoyée au R. P. Provincial de la province de France* (Paris: Chez Sebastien Cramoisy et Gabriel Cramoisy, 1653). I will quote from the Jesuit Relations from the widely used translation: *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France, 1610-1791*, 73 vols., ed. Ruben Gold Thwaites (Cleveland: Burrows Brothers, 1896-1901), 38: 51-53.

⁵⁰ Abbots Laverdière and Casgrain, eds., *Le Journal des Jésuites* (Québec: Léger Brousseau, 1871), 174.

⁵¹ Marie de l’Incarnation to Claude Martin, “Lettre CVI,” 1 September 1652, in *Lettres de la Révérende Mère Marie de l’Incarnation*, 2 vols., ed. L’Abbé Richaudeau (Paris: Librairie International Catholique, 1876), 1: 470.

⁵² François Dollier de Casson, *A History of Montreal, 1640-1672, from the French of Dollier de Casson*, trans., Ralph Flenley (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1928), 165-166.

emerged from hiding and “threw themselves upon her to kill her with their hatchets.” Primot defended herself like a “lioness,” but was knocked down and nearly scalped. As her attacker moved to scalp her, “our amazon...raised herself and, more fierce than ever, caught hold of this monster so forcibly by a place which modesty forbids us to mention that he could not free himself.” Although she was hit with a hatchet several times, she was able to hold out until she was rescued by several French men. Primot became confused when one of her rescuers embraced her and she hit him. She received her curious nickname “Parmanda” when, asked why she hit the man, she replied “Parmanda, I thought he wanted to kiss me.”⁵³

This intriguing incident reflects several major themes common to reports of both European and Native women. First, Dollier de Casson is careful to remind readers of Primot’s virtue at the beginning and the end of the story. Although Primot transformed into both a lioness and a fierce Amazon who grasped and injured an Iroquois man’s genitals, the author lauded her “as a woman of virtue” and emphasized that she continued to protect that virtue when she hit one of the French men who came to her rescue. These common elements, the virtuous woman compelled to graphically violent acts and who is praised by men who sanctioned her actions repeat in stories about French and Native women.

⁵³ Dollier de Casson, *A History of Montreal*, 165-166. Dollier de Casson remarks that the word “Parmanda” was a garbled version of Primot’s own words. According to the author, Messier spoke with a provincial accent and I suspect that she may have been saying “par mon dieu!” or “I swear to God, I thought he wanted to kiss me!” Her alternative pronunciation of the phrase stuck with her as a nickname into old age.

Due to the unique nature of New France, particularly the prominence of religious institutions and the greater literacy of their members, more sources describing the wartime actions of non-elite Indian women than non-elite French women in war have survived. Jesuit missionaries, as well as women such as Ursuline leader Marie de l'Incarnation, took great interest in the actions of ordinary Native women. More than any other writer in New France, the founder of the colony's Ursuline order, Marie de l'Incarnation, reported numerous accounts of Indian women who fought against their attackers and captors. In addition to the combination of literacy and colonial curiosity found in religious authors, far greater numbers of Indian women lived in the unstable area around and west of Montreal, increasing the likelihood that they might be required to fight. Many of these women also appear to have been captured or attacked while traveling through the forest. Nearly all of these accounts of non-elite Native women's participation in the wars follow patterns similar to those of non-elite French women, praising them, yet highlighting their obedience to God and to their husbands.

French reports of both elite and ordinary Indian women suggest that French authors recognized distinctions in rank among Indian women. When Marie de l'Incarnation wrote to her son in September of 1654 to inform him of the recent peace between the French and the Iroquois, she noted that during the negotiating process it had seemed likely that five Iroquois women would be sent to live among the French. These women were the daughters of "women of quality" who she referred to as

“capitainesses.”⁵⁴ According to the Ursuline leader, these capitainesses had a voice at councils among their people and their opinions held weight similar to that of men. Indeed, in this case, the capitainesses apparently initiated the current peace efforts by sending the first negotiators.

In a 1655 letter to her son, Marie de l’Incarnation seemed pleased to report a new relationship the mission had established with another capitainesse.⁵⁵ This female chief and her “company” had arrived with several (presumably) male chiefs. The mission provided the dignitaries with two “splendid” feasts in the style of the Iroquois. The capitainesse was persuaded by the testimony of a young Huron girl to promise to send her own daughter. Marie de l’Incarnation later received word that the capitainesse had taken an interest in the Mass and would be sending her sister—instead of her very young daughter—to live with the French.⁵⁶ The capitainesse, a woman of rank with diplomatic responsibilities, had also taken a newly arrived Jesuit, Father Dablon, under her wing and was teaching him her language.

Religious leaders in New France particularly valued the conversion of Indian women of rank. These conversions were especially appreciated when the convert was from a nation not allied with the French. In 1674, the Jesuit Superior of New France,

⁵⁴ Marie de l’Incarnation to Claude Martin, “Lettre CXXV,” 24 September 1654, in *Lettres de la Révérende Mère Marie de l’Incarnation*, 2: 68.

⁵⁵ Marie de l’Incarnation to Claude Martin, “Lettre CXXXII,” 12 October 1655, in *Lettres de la Révérende Mère Marie de l’Incarnation*, 2: 90-93.

⁵⁶ Marie de l’Incarnation to Claude Martin, “Lettre CXXXII,” 12 October 1655, in *Lettres de la Révérende Mère Marie de l’Incarnation*, 2: 91. This is corroborated by François Le Mercier, *Copie de Deux Lettres Envoyées de la Nouvelle France* (Paris: Chez Sebastein Cramoisy et Gabriel Cramoisy, 1656), in Thwaites, 41: 219-222.

Claude Dablon, reported to his French counterpart that Marie Tsaouenté, “an Iroquois woman of rank,” had fled her people after her conversion to Christianity had “deprived her of her rank in the councils and assemblies.”⁵⁷ Dablon described Tsaouenté as “very intelligent” and praised her understanding of Christian doctrine.⁵⁸ Tsaouenté appears to have assumed a position of leadership within the Native Christian community, “instructing the Iroquois catechumens” and leading worship in the cabin she shared with three other families.⁵⁹

In addition to the leadership positions French leaders recognized and even—to a certain extent—attempted to preserve among Indian women of rank, accounts of non-elite Native women’s wartime actions also reflect European ideas regarding non-elite women vs. women of rank. Marie de l’Incarnation was particularly interested in accounts of Indian women killing to save themselves or their families. A close follower of the colony’s military situation, she sent letters reporting these incidents to correspondents, most notably her son in France. In one 1655 letter to her son, she wrote of an Algonquin woman who was kidnapped with her husband and children by the Iroquois.⁶⁰ According to her letter, the Iroquois bound the woman’s husband but left her free. The husband encouraged his wife to free the family, saying that “if she wanted, she could save them all.” Marie de l’Incarnation wrote that the woman “understood what that meant” and

⁵⁷ The term Dablon used was “*une Iroquoise de qualité*.” Claude Dablon, *Relation...les années 1673-1674*, in Thwaites, 58: 160-165.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 165.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 165.

⁶⁰ Marie de l’Incarnation to Claude Martin, “Lettre CXXXII,” 12 October 1655, in *Lettres de la Révérende Mère Marie de l’Incarnation*, 2: 85-86.

“took her time before seizing a hatchet.” Then, “with an unparalleled courage” she “split the captain’s head, cut the neck of another,” and frightened off the rest with her “fury.” She then untied her husband, and the group made their way to safety.⁶¹ Although it is unclear whether the woman’s husband actually suggested that she take up the hatchet, one of the key elements of the story was the husband granting his wife permission to transform into a seemingly furious killer. The story clearly illustrated what the founder of New France’s Ursuline order saw as Indian couples adhering to European ideas about the proper relationship between husband and wife.

In a 1658 letter, also written to her son, Marie de l’Incarnation told of the capture of two Algonquin women and their children.⁶² She described one of these women as particularly “courageous,” stabbing her captor in the stomach with his knife and driving off his companions who had likely decided that subduing these particular captives was not worth the potential gain.⁶³ Marie de l’Incarnation then noted that following their victory, the women gathered the weapons and baggage their captors had left behind and “brought their booty to the feet of Monsieur the Governor.”⁶⁴ The Ursuline’s approval of the women’s purported decision to lay their spoils of war at the Governor’s feet suggests a kind of submission to European authority and a return to order at the end of the incident.

⁶¹ Marie de l’Incarnation to Claude Martin, “Lettre CXXXII,” 2: 85-86.

⁶² Marie de l’Incarnation to Claude Martin, “Lettre CXL,” 4 October 1658, in *Lettres de la Révérende Mère Marie de l’Incarnation*, 2: 133.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

Marie de l'Incarnation also wrote of a husband and wife from the Algonquin Petite Nation who left together in a canoe to warn their people of an attack in 1647 after a group of Iroquois had killed their parents near Trois Rivières. When the pair discovered another canoe with seven or eight Iroquois, the husband told his wife that he wanted to attack the Iroquois "provided she was willing to assist him."⁶⁵ The letter reported that the wife replied that "she would follow him willingly, and that she would live and die with him." Although perhaps romanticized, these words evoke the image of an officer and a soldier, a husband and wife, embarking on what seemed to be a suicide mission yet maintaining a "proper" hierarchy.

After making their decision, the husband and wife advanced on the canoe. As they approached the canoe, they heard the Iroquois shouting triumphantly and saw four other canoes filled with men. Changing their plan, the husband left his wife on the bank and, shooting his gun in the air, pretended to be an Iroquois rejoining the group. Returning his signal with their guns, the Iroquois signaled that they had taken forty prisoners from his own Petite Nation. He rejoined his wife and the two slipped away to gather a group of young men, more appropriate soldiers, who helped the husband successfully rescue the captives.⁶⁶

In addition to Marie de l'Incarnation's accounts of non-elite Indian women's participation in war-making, Jesuit missionaries also recorded a number of incidents

⁶⁵ Marie de l'Incarnation to Claude Martin, "Lettre LXXXI," 1647, in *Lettres de la Révérende Mère Marie de l'Incarnation*, 1: 346.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 345-346.

using similar language. As in the letters of Marie de l'Incarnation, Jesuit authors emphasized virtue and obedience to husbands and to God. The *Relation* of 1660-1661 described an incident in which eighty Iroquois attacked a trade expedition made up of two French men and thirty Indians from the Poisson Blanc nation near Trois Rivières. According to the account, the Poisson Blanc “fought with such ardor that they suffered themselves to be riddled with bullets rather than surrender” to the Iroquois. The chronicler went on to praise the women in the group, who “were no whit inferior to the men in courage, sparing no effort to secure their own death, rather than fall alive into hands that would surely have made them suffer as many deaths as they were given days to live.”⁶⁷ Fighting alongside French and French-allied Agonquin men, these women attempted to preserve their lives as well as Franco-Algonquin control of the region. Equally important to the author, the women also fought to save themselves from the disorder and paganism he believed they would face as captives of the Iroquois.

Father Jean Pierron's account of an attack on a Mohawk village provides a rare, detailed description of Indian women assisting men in a town under siege.⁶⁸ On the morning of August 18, 1669, three-hundred warriors from the Mahican nation attacked the French-allied Mohawk village of Gandaouagué, also known as Caughnawaga. Near present-day Albany, New York, Gandaouagué was protected by a palisade which allowed its inhabitants time to awaken and take defensive positions that morning. According to Pierron, many of the men living in the town immediately “took gun and hatchet in hand,”

⁶⁷ Paul Le Jeune, *Relation...les années 1660-1661*, in Thwaites, 46: 207.

⁶⁸ François Joseph Le Mercier, *Relation...les années 1669-1670*, in Thwaites 53: 137.

holding off the attackers while the women of the town split into two groups. One group of women began “to make bullets,” presumably to support the men currently defending the town. The other group prepared for a potential breach of the palisade walls by “arm[ing] themselves with knives and defensive weapons.” Their combined efforts helped to drive off the attackers after approximately two hours. Although Pierron did not express any opinions regarding the joint effort, he was pleased with the result.

In 1667, Claude Jean Allouez related the story of a pair of converts, mother and daughter, who escaped Iroquois captivity only to be recaptured. As captives, the women would have likely faced pressure to integrate into their new community and renounce Christianity. In his report, Allouez was careful to note their piety and submission to God, writing that they “had received from [God] unfailing and extraordinary succor, very recently learned by experience that God never forsakes those who put their trust in him.”⁶⁹ Allouez wrote that the two women, left alone with only one guard, “asked the Iroquois for a knife to use on a Beaver-skin” that the daughter “had been ordered to dress.” The daughter stabbed the guard in the chest, “at the same time, imploring Heaven’s aid,” while the mother struck him on the head with a piece of wood. The two “left him for dead” and successfully escaped with some food.⁷⁰ Allouez clearly equated “the fires and cruelties” of the unconverted Iroquois with the fires of Hell and saw the women’s actions as proper and blessed by a patriarchal God, their father in heaven.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Claude Jean Allouez, *Relation...les années 1666-1667*, in Thwaites, 51: 67.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

Despite French admiration of allied Indian women who fought against the Iroquois, writers expressed their revulsion when witnessing these women as participants in ritual torture. This revulsion was, perhaps, one reason why French writers made a greater effort to place allied Native women's "proper" actions within accepted gender conventions when possible. As in the case of New England, French observers either did not recognize or did not accept the formal role Indian women played in ritual torture, preferring to interpret their actions as disrupting gendered order rather than upholding it.

In 1635, Father Paul Le Jeune recorded a visit with an unnamed band at war with the Iroquois. Le Jeune wrote that on October 23, a group of men from the band returned from war with an Iroquois prisoner. Clearly disapproving of the treatment the man had already received, Le Jeune watched as the man was led to a cabin where "children, girls, and women str[uck] him, some with sticks, others with stones." Le Jeune noted that the man became "insensible" from the "these blows" but did not comment on the participants' gender again. His hosts attempted to reassure him with information that the man had been involved with the death of three French men. As Le Jeune and his companions were fictive kinsmen of the French men who had died, Le Jeune's hosts even graciously offered to allow their French guests to participate in the ritual. In spite of the offer—or perhaps as a result of it—he seemed particularly pleased when his hosts chose to spare the young Iroquois man's life in favor of negotiating a peace.⁷²

⁷² Paul Le Jeune, *Relation...l'année 1635*, in Thwaites, 8: 24-25.

Father Le Jeune used a 1636 incident to contrast what he viewed as appropriate and inappropriate behavior for Native women in war. In his report, he focused on a young female captive who arrived marching on an empty stomach at the head of her group. The woman, noting that her captors killed prisoners who fell behind, “endur[ed] the fatigue better than a man.” He noted that in addition to a “modest face,” she had “so bold an eye that I took her for a man.”⁷³ The Jesuit seemed fascinated by this woman who, in spite of her boldness verging on manliness, demonstrated resourcefulness and an ability to suffer quietly.

After describing the captive woman’s positive attributes, Le Jeune then went on to criticize the behavior of his allies. The male prisoners who returned in the same party as the modest yet bold women faced death at the hands of their captors. Le Jeune observed that when one man reached the shore, “the women and children fell upon him, each one trying to see which could strike the hardest blows.” Comparing his allies to animals, Le Jeune expressed his distaste when a woman bit a man’s finger, “trying to tear it off, as a dog would do.” She eventually cut the finger off and attempted to feed it to the prisoner. When that failed, “this Tigress” roasted the finger and shared it with a group of children.⁷⁴ When Le Jeune objected, a group of women approached him, saying that the

⁷³ Paul Le Jeune, *Relation...l’année 1636*, in Thwaites, 9: 255.

⁷⁴ Paul Le Jeune, *Relation...l’année 1636*, in Thwaites, 9: 257; Although Le Jeune’s report is colored by his European perspective, ritual cannibalism was an important part of ceremonial torture among many nations in the northeastern borderlands. The consumption of a captive warrior, particularly one who proved himself brave in the face of torture, helped complete the group’s victory over a worthy adversary and may have also allowed the victors to claim a portion of the captive’s courage for themselves. See: Daniel K. Richter, “War and Culture: The Iroquois Experience,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 3rd. Ser., 40, no. 4 (Oct., 1983): 528-559; Erik R. Seeman, *The Huron-Wendat Feast of the Dead: Indian-European Encounters in Early North America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 18; Little, *Abraham in Arms*, 73.

Iroquois “did still worse things to their fathers, husbands, and children, asking me if I loved such a wicked nation.”⁷⁵ Unmoved, Le Jeune continued to berate both the men and women participating in the torture.

The next day, a group of Algonquins criticized a lack of French participation in the war, but presented the captive Iroquois woman with the bold eye as a gift to the French. They hoped she might serve to mollify the French who they believed remained angry over the death of the three French men mentioned earlier.⁷⁶ According to Le Jeune, the French then made plans to send the woman to study with nuns in France, a seemingly appropriate choice, given her physical and mental fortitude.⁷⁷ Although several similar accounts of women participating in torture appear in the *Jesuit Relations* during the 1630s, few appear in later decades.⁷⁸ It is unclear why reports of these incidents decreased, though France’s Indian allies may have simply given up trying to share this aspect of their war-making with their French friends. These accounts of non-elite Indian women participating in what appeared to be disorderly, senseless torture contrasted with positive stories of ordinary French and Native women. Fighting for Christian virtue under the approving gazes of European authority figures and even God, these other women acted appropriately within the informal public sphere.

⁷⁵ Paul Le Jeune, *Relation...l’année 1636*, in Thwaites, 9: 257.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 267.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 269.

⁷⁸ Paul Le Jeune, *Relation...l’année 1633*, in Thwaites, 5: 29-31, 53; Paul Le Jeune, *Relation...l’année 1634*, in Thwaites, 6: 245.

Accounts using similar language to describe non-elite French and Native women's participation in the border wars largely disappeared by the mid-1670s. Documents written by government officials replaced the earlier reports and letters from missionaries who had a special interest in those women. Available sources do hint that non-elite French women continued to fight alongside French men in an informal capacity. Madeleine de Verchères' letter to the Countess de Maurepas announcing the willingness of French women to fight in the King's wars suggests this practice continued. Her words were corroborated by a report in Sulpician Superior Francois Vachon de Belmont's history of Canada, written in the first decades of the eighteenth century.⁷⁹ Vachon reported that on May 7, 1691, "Guillon's wife; Grégoire, his wife; Goulet, the farmer from Lachenaye, and some others defended a breach of forty feet against 300 Iroquois."⁸⁰ Regardless of the veracity of the claim that a handful of settlers—with the help of "some others"—succeeded in their defense against such improbable odds, Vachon's account suggests that ordinary women still had a role to play.

In a later case, somewhat reminiscent of attacks on New England, a widow attempted to defend her home with the help of a neighbor from an Iroquois attack on the seigneurie of Chesnaye, near Montreal. According to a chronicle written shortly after the end of Queen Anne's War, the Iroquois approached the seigneurie in the autumn of

⁷⁹ François Vachon de Belmont, *Histoire du Canada*, in *Collection de Mémoires et de Relations sur L'histoire Ancienne du Canada*, ed. George Barthélemi Faribault (Quebec: William Cowan et Fils, 1840). It is unclear when Vachon de Belmont wrote his history. His history ends in 1700, though Belmont did not die until 1732.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 33.

1693.⁸¹ The residents of the seigneurie were settled in for the winter and the widow had been entertaining an unmarried male friend that night. When he attempted to leave for home, the widow, apparently afraid, asked him to stay. The man complied and remained at her house with his gun and his small dog. In the middle of the night, the man awakened to the sound of the dog barking. When he saw that the seigneurie was on fire, he woke the woman, who had her own gun, and put her to work as a sentinel at the corner of the house. As the Iroquois neared the house, the French man and woman went inside and began their defense. Alternating between guns, the man shot at the Iroquois while the woman charged the used gun and handed it back to him. After holding out the entire night, the man and woman were able to escape to a French fort in a canoe.⁸² Much as they did in the Beaver Wars that Marie Morin watched from her bell tower, non-elite women continued to defend against attacks informally, alongside their husbands and neighbors, until the Great Peace of 1701 altered the theater of war.

La Commandante: Women of Rank in New France

The earliest recorded example of a noble French woman taking part in a battle in New France comes from 1640s Acadia. This period was marked by a bloody struggle between two local seigneurs, Charles de Saint-Étienne de la Tour and Charles de Menou d'Aulnay. Both sought greater control over Acadia and favor with the King of France,

⁸¹ Anonymous, *Recueil de ce qui s'est passé en Canada au sujet de la guerre, tant des Anglais que des Iroquois, depuis l'année 1682*, in *Manuscript Relating to the Early History of Canada* (Quebec: Middleton & Dawson, 1871), 52.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 52.

frequently resorting to armed conflict as well as diplomatic maneuvering. De la Tour in particular was not above seeking help from Boston when backed into a corner. His wife, Françoise-Marie Jacquelin de la Tour, took a large role in her husband's Acadian empire, traveling twice to France to seek aid from the vice-admiral. Following the second, disastrous visit in 1643 or 1644 after her husband had been branded a traitor for his dealings with Boston, Madame de la Tour returned to their fort in Acadia with English help. This assistance was necessary, as the French king had forbidden her return to Acadia.⁸³

When Sieur de la Tour left the fort to seek help in Boston in early 1645, d'Aulnay seized the opportunity and attacked their fort near present-day St. John, New Brunswick.⁸⁴ Madame de la Tour and the remaining soldiers at the fort held off the attack for three days and nights before d'Aulnay was forced to withdraw outside the range of the fort's guns. On the fourth day, Madame de la Tour and her men were betrayed by a Swiss man in their company who had formed an alliance with d'Aulnay. After holding out for a time, Madame de la Tour surrendered to d'Aulnay under the condition that he spare their lives. In his account written after Sieur de la Tour's death, Nicolas Denys used language that placed Madame de la Tour in command, referring to "her guns" and "her

⁸³ "Lettre du Conseil D'Etat au Sujet du Sieur de la Tour" [6 March, 1644], in *Nouvelle-France: Documents Historiques: Correspondance Échangée entre les Autorités Françaises et les Gouverneurs et Intendants* (Québec: L.-J. Demers & Frère, 1893), 1: 99-102.

⁸⁴ Nicolas Denys, *Description Geographique et Historique des Costes De L'Amerique Septentrionale. Avec l'Histoire naturelle du Pais* (Paris: Claude Barbin, 1672), 1: 38-40. Denys, a resident of Acadia, provided the most thorough account in 1672, though the story was confirmed by Sieur Iberville in 1700. "Memoire du Sieur D'Iberville sur Baston et ses Dependances," in *Collection de Manuscrits Contenant Lettres, Mémoires, et autres Documents Historiques Relatifs à la Nouvelle-France* (Québec: A. Côté, 1884), 2: 355.

men” and giving her the title “*la Commandante*.”⁸⁵ He noted that as a woman of rank, Madame de la Tour was not hanged with her men when d’Aulnay broke his word. Instead, he forced her to watch with a noose around her neck as her men died. Madame de la Tour died approximately three weeks later, possibly by poisoning.⁸⁶

D’Aulnay mounted a vigorous and successful defense of his actions, producing documents from inhabitants and missionaries that convinced the King that d’Aulnay had protected Acadia and smashed a nascent rebellion.⁸⁷ In a deposition taken in May 1645, de la Tour’s own men—including Hans Vannes, the Swiss man who allegedly betrayed Madame de la Tour—painted a picture of a Protestant wife who mistreated representatives of the Catholic faith in Acadia. They also claimed that she had hoped to convert the fort and draw her own husband into a betrayal planned with the British. According to d’Aulnay’s witnesses, d’Aulnay attacked the stronghold of a rebellion against the King and Catholicism. After her capture, they claimed, Madame de la Tour was well-cared for but died three weeks later of emotional distress.⁸⁸ D’Aulnay and his deponents sidestepped Madame de la Tour’s role in the defense of the fort, preferring to emphasize her role in stirring up a rebellion against God and King, while simply noting that their attacks were met with return fire. Neither d’Aulnay nor Denys contested Madame de la Tour’s position as head of the fort; they merely chose to present either

⁸⁵ Denys, *Description Geographique et Historique*, 38-39.

⁸⁶ *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and West Indies: 1661-1668*, ed. W. Noel Sainsbury (London: Longman & Co., 1880), 596-597.

⁸⁷ Library and Archives Canada, Fonds des Colonies, R11577-7-8-F, "Correspondance générale" series, volume 1, Procès-verbaux et documents relatifs à la rébellion du sieur de La Tour et de sa femme contre le roi de France en Acadie, 1645, reproduction copy number F-168, folio 72-79.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

unflattering or heroic portrayals of her leadership, depending on their perspective and agenda.

In her most recent work, *Separated by their Sex*, which draws upon and expands ideas in *Founding Mothers and Fathers*, Mary Beth Norton described a seventeenth century Atlantic world in which women of rank such as Madame de la Tour operated within the formal public sphere. According to Norton, prior to the eighteenth century, “rank trumped gender” as a social organizing principle and “hierarchical structure.”⁸⁹ Both men and women “owed deference to those above them on the scale and insisted on receiving deference from those below.”⁹⁰ As a result, high-ranking women answered to a relatively small handful of elite men and “social standing rather than sex thus served as the key determinant of a man’s or woman’s ability to exercise appropriate authority inside or outside the household.”⁹¹ Women of sufficient social standing might even vote, hold office, and otherwise participate in aspects of governance.⁹²

Although Norton did not offer examples of high-ranking women taking charge of military operations in England or its colonies, such women did exist in England, portions of British America, France, and New France. Madame de la Tour’s military leadership and sporadically skillful diplomacy was not out of place in the French Atlantic world of the mid-seventeenth century. Women of rank in mid-seventeenth century France took on

⁸⁹ Mary Beth Norton, *Separated by their Sex: Women in Public and Private in the Colonial Atlantic World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 34, 1.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1-2.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 3. Norton described women acting in this capacity as “state actors.” *Ibid.*, xiii.

highly visible roles in the country's conflicts, leading troops in battle and defending their estates.⁹³ In the English Civil War, the Royalist Charlotte, Countess of Derby negotiated and sustained a three month defense of her husband's castle in Lancashire in 1644. These incidents, along with those involving Madame de la Tour and the other women discussed in this section, represent the waning of a larger tradition that included Margaret of Anjou (1430-1482), Emma, Countess of Norfolk (c. 1075), Isabella, Duchess of Lorraine (d. 1453), and Blanche of Castille, Queen of France (d. 1252).

These women of rank—along with dozens of others stretching back hundreds, if not thousands of years—defended their castles and led troops on the battlefield as wives, regents, and landholders in their own right. At play was a complex melding of ideas regarding the concept of a deputy husband, a widow or regent in control of an estate, and Norton's theories regarding pre-eighteenth century noblewomen's roles within the formal public sphere. Since, as Norton pointed out, rank trumped gender, women of rank could and did represent their keep or fort and reserved the right to direct troops under her own or her husband's command. In New France where, unlike New England, a kind of formal system of nobility persisted throughout the colonial period, women continued this tradition during the seventeenth century.

Interest and participation in military matters was not restricted to women in charge of forts and seigneuries, however. Female leaders of religious orders and

⁹³ Joan Dejean, *Tender Geographies: Women and the Origins of the Novel in France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), ch. 1; Coates and Morgan, 24-25. These French conflicts and their cultural impact on relations between France and New France will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

institutions in New France also took a keen interest in wars that they viewed as both secular and sacred struggles.⁹⁴ Well-educated, informed, and unmarried, some of these women—as Sister Marie Morin noted—watched as battles raged uncomfortably close to the institutions where they lived and worked. Of the few surviving sources written by women in seventeenth-century New France, most were composed by nuns and their lay associates. Additionally, these women also received the most substantial biographical treatments of the early female colonists.⁹⁵ Their actions, letters, and memoirs reveal a remarkable understanding of the colony’s military strategy and offer more intimate insights into the ways in which a well-connected woman might understand and participate in New France’s earlier wars. In the case of Jeanne Mance of Montreal, their stories also demonstrate that, despite early attempts to establish separate roles for men and women in the new settlements along the St. Lawrence, these boundaries sometimes broke down quickly. In such cases, a suitable woman might rush in to fill voids in leadership.

Perhaps the most active female religious leader in the early wars was Jeanne Mance, a laywoman closely connected to the major religious orders in New France. Recruited in France by the Société de Notre-Dame de Montréal, Mance co-founded Montreal with Paul de Chomedey de Maisonneuve in May 1642 and established its

⁹⁴ Marie de l’Incarnation to Claude Martin, “CLXXVIII,” 12 November 1661, in *Lettres de la Révérende Mère Marie de l’Incarnation*, 2: 327.

⁹⁵ The reason for this is unclear, though it may be due to the fact that many of the early histories and accounts of the colony were written by priests seeking to preserve and promote the work done by their colleagues. In addition, as the administrators of substantial institutions that often required significant networking and correspondence with benefactors, female religious leaders may have simply produced a greater number of sources.

hospital, the Hôtel-Dieu, soon after. As a laywoman, unconfined by a nun's vows, Mance seemed to embody the secular and sacred parties that comprised New France itself. One of Mance's contemporaries, Dollier de Casson, contended that her participation in the founding of Montreal was essential to its success.⁹⁶ Dollier de Casson described her cofounders' search for a "girl or woman of character sufficiently heroic and of determination sufficiently masculine to come to this country and take charge of all the supplied and merchandise while at the same time acting as nurse to the sick and wounded."⁹⁷ This almost martial language celebrated a woman who chose a vocation Dollier de Casson referred to as "almost unheard of" and who became a minor celebrity before she left home, even meeting with the Queen of France.⁹⁸

Describing Mance as "heroic" and of a "masculine" determination may also refer to her role in saving the town she founded. Although originally chosen to "take charge within" the town while another took "charge of the colony as a whole and lead in war," this arrangement fell apart as Mance became increasingly involved with these other aspects of governing.⁹⁹ In the late 1640s, Montreal was severely weakened by devastating attacks and financial catastrophe. According to Dollier de Casson, Mance feared both the for the safety of her town as well as New France, which she realized depended on the

⁹⁶ Dollier de Casson, *A History of Montreal*, 34, 75.

⁹⁷ Dollier de Casson, *A History of Montreal*, 75. Complimenting a woman using the descriptor "masculine" or other positive words associated with men was particularly common in the late-seventeenth century, when Dollier de Casson wrote his history of Montreal and into the eighteenth century. This phenomenon will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 79.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 83.

security Montreal provided as “a bulwark” against attacks further downstream.¹⁰⁰

Deciding to seek help in France, Mance left the colony in 1649. During the time she was absent, New France nearly fell to Iroquois military advances, while the Huron Confederacy largely was destroyed. Mance returned the next year, having recruited a new French director for the company and in possession of an official contract establishing Montreal, which she hoped would bind the settlers closer together.¹⁰¹

Despite Mance’s hopes for the town, conditions continued to deteriorate and, in 1651, Mance dispatched her cofounder, Paul de Chomedey de Maisonneuve, to France. Aware that Montreal desperately needed military reinforcement, Mance offered to exchange 22,000 livres she had received from the hospital’s benefactress, the widowed Angélique Faure de Bullion, for “one hundred arpents of the seigneurie’s domain, with half of the buildings.”¹⁰² The deal was lopsided in Chomedey de Maisonneuve’s favor and designed to protect the town. Chomedey de Maisonneuve left for France in possession of a letter Mance wrote to de Bullion and which he used to secure the 22,000 livres. Madame de Bullion donated an additional 20,000 livres, which helped fund reinforcements for the city and prevented the destruction of Montreal.¹⁰³

Living in the relative safety of Quebec, Marie de l’Incarnation wrote hundreds of letters to correspondents, including her son Claude Martin. The founder of the Ursuline

¹⁰⁰ Dollier de Casson, *A History of Montreal*, 149.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 151-153.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 161.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.* Sister Marie Morin supports Dollier de Casson’s claim that the Hôtel-Dieu’s endowment paid for reinforcements. Morin, *Annales de l’Hôtel-Dieu de Montréal*, 74.

order in New France, Marie Guyart Martin joined the order in 1633 at the age of thirty-four, following the death of her husband. Although she did not experience the frequent attacks Jeanne Mance faced upstream in Montreal, she maintained a high level of interest in the colony's military affairs, politics, and diplomacy. Responding to her son's request for information regarding a massive French invasion of Iroquois territory, the Ursuline leader described how the force forded rivers and traveled on narrow roads littered with "stumps, roots, and dangerous holes."¹⁰⁴ Her vivid accounts of battles, troop movements, and strategy suggest that women of rank—whether through birth, marriage, or office—held strong, informed opinions regarding New France's military situation.¹⁰⁵

Following the actions of Madame de la Tour and Jeanne Mance in the 1640s and 1650s, authors in New France did not record further instances of women of rank defending seigneuries or towns until the final decade of the seventeenth century. Although Madame de la Tour defended her husband's fort in 1640s Acadia, prior to the 1680s, fortifying seigneuries in mainland Canada was not common practice. Rather, as noted earlier, people under attack ran for shelter at the nearest city or fort or attempted to defend against the attack in battles similar to those Marie Morin saw from her bell tower. Additionally, a period of relative peace between the Iroquois and the French from

¹⁰⁴ Marie de l'Incarnation to Claude Martin, "CLXXVIII," 12 November 1661, in *Lettres de la Révérende Mère Marie de l'Incarnation*, 2: 327.

¹⁰⁵ A few examples of her numerous letters related to military affairs in both volumes of *Lettres de la Révérende Mère Marie de l'Incarnation*: "Lettre XLVI," 1:133-153; "Lettre LXVI," 1: 237-260; "Lettre LXXIX," 1: 324-325; "Lettre XCVI," 1:416-419; "Lettre CXIV," 2: 10-12; "Lettre CXXXII," 2: 84-93; "Lettre CXL," 2: 128-137; "Lettre CLXXVIII," 2: 327-336.

1666-1686 also reduced the need for women to defend seigneuries, despite estimates that 54.5% of seigneuries were controlled by women in 1663.¹⁰⁶

One example of a woman of rank who assisted—rather than led—in the defense of Montreal in 1661 sheds some light on this period prior to the fortification of the seigneuries along the St. Lawrence. That year was particularly successful for the Iroquois who, according to Marie de l’Incarnation, attacked areas near Quebec and captured or killed over one-hundred near Montreal.¹⁰⁷ Although the Ursuline leader described 1661 as one of the hardest years they had lived through, the *Jesuit Relation* of that year was even more dramatic in its description. According to the *Relation*, an earthquake and a comet portended a disastrous year, the comet’s “tail...pointed toward us and seemed to threaten us with flagellation.”¹⁰⁸ Supernatural language aside, the *Relation* did report two surprise attacks on Montreal in late winter and early spring of 1661 that resulted in the capture of over twenty men.

It was against this backdrop that the wife of M. Du Clos helped save a number of French men who were defending against an Iroquois attack in February 1661. Dollier reported that although the French were outnumbered and thirteen were captured, “a bold defence made by our people gave time for others to come to their aid and so save those who had not by this time been mastered by the enemy.”¹⁰⁹ The woman in question was

¹⁰⁶ Rony Blum, *Ghost Brothers*, 112.

¹⁰⁷ Marie de l’Incarnation to Claude Martin, “CLIV,” September 1661, in *Lettres de la Révérende Mère Marie de l’Incarnation*, 2: 202-210.

¹⁰⁸ Paul Le Jeune, *Relation...les années 1660-1661*, in Thwaites, 46: 205-207.

¹⁰⁹ Dollier de Casson, *A History of Montreal*, 271.

Barbe Poisson, the wife of militia officer, judge, and minor Montreal seigneur Gabriel LeSel Du Clos.¹¹⁰ The French were not prepared for an attack during the winter and only one man, Charles Le Moyne, a soldier, interpreter, and future seigneur of Longueuil had a single pistol. Seeing that the defense was failing and knowing that “there was no man in her house to go to their aid, she herself took a load of muskets on her shoulders and, fearless of a swarm of Iroquois whom she saw rush from every direction toward her house, she ran to our Frenchmen.”¹¹¹ Although Dollier noted that only some of the weapons were in working condition, the guns “this amazon” delivered allowed some of the defenders to hold out until help arrived.¹¹²

The story of Barbe Poisson is an interesting case that suggests both physical location and a certain amount of variation between degrees of rank among the elite played a role in how women’s actions were perceived. As the wife of a powerful officer and public figure in Montreal, she had access to a significant stash of weapons, which she was able to deliver to an appropriate male figure of the same rank, Charles Le Moyne. Both Le Moyne and Poisson’s husband were important members of Montreal society, though both had yet to reach the pinnacles of their careers. Although described as the wife of a “Monsieur,” Poisson’s actions are portrayed not as those of a lady of rank

¹¹⁰ “Ordre de Mr. le Gouverneur pour la Milice de la Ste. Famille, Jésus, Marie, Joseph, avec un Roolle des soldats d’icelle, du 27 Janvier 1663,” in *Memoires de la Société Historique de Montréal* (Montréal: Duvernay, Frères, 1859), 1: 133-140; Records Relating to the Election of Judges in Montréal [March 2, 1664], in *Memoires de la Société Historique de Montréal*; Cyprien Tanguay, *Dictionnaire Généalogique des Familles Canadiennes* (Québec: Eusèbe Senécal, 1871), 109. Also known as Celles dit Duclos and other variations.

¹¹¹ Dollier de Casson, *A History of Montreal*, 273.

¹¹² Ibid.

defending a keep, but of a respectable woman acting as deputy husband. Indeed, Dollier de Casson was particularly careful to note that she took this action because “there was no man in her house to go to their aid.”¹¹³ Poisson’s narrative more closely follows those of respectable, non-elite wives helping to defend a group of houses and represents a period prior to the development of fortified seigneuries along the St. Lawrence River. As a resident of a town, rather than a mistress of a family-controlled fort, Poisson was cast as a woman of a slightly lesser rank, despite her husband’s influence.

The fortification of seigneuries in the 1680s increased opportunities for women of rank to lead troops in defense of their seigneuries. Unfortunately, fewer relevant sources are available from the final decades of the seventeenth century. At least one instance of a woman of rank defending her seignury was not recorded for another thirty years. That story, regarding Madame de Verchères, illustrates perfectly the difficulties in obtaining all accounts of such incidents. Madame de Verchères’ own experience as commander may have been even more successful than her daughter’s later defense of their seignury. However, her defense of the Verchères seignury would have gone unrecorded were it not for her daughter’s persistence and the family’s dire financial straits following the death of Seigneur de Verchères.

Madame de Verchères actions only came to light in a 1723 history of New France written by an acquaintance of the de Verchères family, Claude-Charles Bacqueville de la Potherie. In his history, de la Potherie focused on Madeleine’s efforts, but asserted that

¹¹³ Dollier de Casson, *A History of Montreal*, 273.

Madame de Verchères' actions also deserved recognition. According to de la Potherie, in 1690, two years prior to Madeleine's incident, the Iroquois "who had caused much disorder" along the St. Lawrence near Montreal that year approached the Verchères seigneurie. Upon seeing the Iroquois, Madame de Verchères ran to the redoubt, a separate, square fortified tower approximately fifty paces from where she had been standing. After watching one of her three or four men die from an Iroquois bullet, Madame de Verchères took action. Grabbing her gun, powder, and shot, she returned to the redoubt through a covered walkway. According to de la Potherie, she fought with the "courage of a seasoned soldier" and held out until help arrived from the Marquis de Crisafy.¹¹⁴ Madame de Verchères' actions, which would have otherwise gone unnoticed, tantalize with the possibility of other, unrecorded incidents.

The heroism of Madame de Verchères' daughter, Madeleine de Verchères, is one of the foundational narratives of Canadian nationalism.¹¹⁵ Accounts from the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries agree that in October 1692, Madeleine de Verchères took command of her father's seigneurie in the absence of both her parents. After seeing that a group of Iroquois had captured approximately twenty prisoners, de Verchères ran inside, secured her family's fort, and climbed the watchtower. After putting on a soldier's hat and taking actions that suggested the appearance of a well-armed fort,

¹¹⁴ Claude Charles Le Roy Bacqueville de la Potherie, *Voyage de l'Amerique Contenant ce qui s'est Passé de plus Remarquable dans l'Amerique Septentrionale depuis 1534 jusqu'à Present* (Amsterdam: Henry des Bordes, 1723), 327.

¹¹⁵ An excellent study of the development of Madeleine's personal narrative and its impact on Canadian nationalism is Coates and Morgan, *Heroines and History*.

de Verchères set off a canon that altered nearby seigneuries and allegedly forced an Iroquois retreat. Historians Colin Coates and Cecilia Morgan believe that de Verchères either wrote or approved two accounts of the incident.¹¹⁶ She wrote her first letter, a request for a pension or commission for her brother in 1699, seven years after the October 1692 incident. She also composed a much more elaborate—and less believable—version in the late 1720s that appears to have significantly influenced the later Canadian re-appropriation of Madeleine as a national figure.¹¹⁷

Recent research suggests that Madeleine de Verchères' exploits may have been less dramatic than she advertised, at least in the accounts she wrote in the middle of her life. Pointing out that the original story spread via de Verchères and Bacqueville de La Potherie, a family friend, Louise Dechêne questioned the details of de Verchères' account. Noting that it was unlikely that a group of Iroquois would capture twenty colonists and then besiege a fort for several hours, Dechêne also suggested that de Verchères' story that her cannon frightened off the Iroquois was implausible given the Iroquois' decades of experience with such weapons. A lack of government reports on the attack as well as a journal entry noting that some of de Verchères' inhabitants had been captured and killed suggests that de Verchères achieved a more modest victory.¹¹⁸ Although the specific events described in Madeleine de Verchères' accounts may have been exaggerated, even

¹¹⁶ Coates and Morgan, *Heroines and History*, 19. According to Coates and Morgan, Claude-Charles Bacqueville de la Potherie, who composed the earliest published version of the incident, may have either helped Madeleine write her first letter or used it as the basis for his own account published in 1723. *Ibid.*, 21.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹¹⁸ Louise Dechêne, *Le Peuple, L'État et la Guerre*, 160-161.

Dechêne, her fiercest detractor, admitted that both Madeleine and her mother had been “cool-headed” in their separate defenses and did not question whether the two women had led those defenses.¹¹⁹

Despite the fact that most accounts of de Verchères’ exploits were penned long after the event, Madeleine did write one letter describing the attack less than three years later.¹²⁰ Written in the hope of securing a pension for herself or a commission for her brother following her father’s death, de Verchères’ letter to the Comtesse de Maurepas made its way to France attached to a longer letter. The Intendant of New France, Jean Bochart de Champigny sent this longer letter to the Minister of the Navy, Louis Phélypeaux, Comte de Pontchartrain. The letter vouched for both Madeleine and the contents of her letter to the Comtesse de Maurepas, who was also Phélypeaux’s wife.¹²¹ Madeleine’s early letter, unlike her later accounts, told a much more believable story. The letter described how, after seeing twenty of Verchères’ people captured, Madeleine escaped to the fort and “mounted the bastion where the sentry was posted.” There, she “donn[ed] the soldier’s helmet, and went through a variety of movements intended to create the impression that we had quite a number of men in the fort.”¹²² Madeleine de

¹¹⁹ Dechêne, *Le Peuple, L’État et la Guerre*, 161.

¹²⁰ “Letter from Marie Madeleine de Verchères to Comtesse de Maurepas,” 6-7. Accounts of Madeleine’s actions written after the end of Queen Anne’s War (1713) will be analyzed in the chapters of the dissertation that focus primarily on the eighteenth century.

¹²¹ Library and Archives Canada, Fonds des Colonies, R11577-4-2-F, “Correspondance générale” series, volume 18, Lettre de Champigny au ministre, 15 October 1700, reproduction copy number F-18, folio 102v-103.

¹²² “Letter from Marie Madeleine de Verchères to Comtesse de Maurepas,” 7.

Verchères claimed that she set off the cannon to alert nearby garrisons that an attack was underway.

When placed in the context of other attacks on forts in the northeastern borderlands and cross-referenced with the letter Champigny sent to France not long after the attack, de Verchères' experience falls into a more familiar pattern. Perhaps, after successfully capturing a number of people from the surrounding fields, the Iroquois approached the fortified portion of the seigneurie. Believing it to be undefended, they may have hoped to take more captives or set it on fire. Madeleine de Verchères' choice to use the tactic of inflating a garrison's numbers to intimidate the enemy had been used successfully by men and women throughout the northeastern borderlands.¹²³ When she shut the door and demonstrated with a cannon that the Verchères seigneurie was capable of mounting a defense, the Iroquois—who knew that taking a defended fort was difficult and time-consuming—simply turned and left Verchères, taking their captives with them. Ironically, Madeleine de Verchères' triumph may have also been a modest Iroquois success.

Even if de Verchères' account was exaggerated, those very exaggerations and attempts at self-promotion offer a unique window into women's participation in the wars of late-seventeenth-century New France. In her letter, de Verchères' attempted to walk a fine line between expectations of femininity and appealing to the ancient image of the woman of the keep exercising sovereign authority. The letter opened with false modesty

¹²³ See examples in New England in this dissertation: Ch. 1, 1-2; Ch. 3, 29-30.

as de Verchères demurred: “while my sex does not permit me to have other inclinations than those it requires of my, nevertheless, allow me, madam to tell you that I entertain sentiments which urge me on to aspire to fame quite as eagerly as many men.”¹²⁴ At the same time, Madeleine de Verchères put herself forward as a representative of the tradition of the lady-as-defender by setting herself apart from the other, lower-ranked women present at the attack noting that she paid “no heed to the lamentations of the women, whose husbands had been carried off” as she mounted her defense.¹²⁵

Capping off the comparison, she placed herself in the shoes of “women in France during the late war who went forth at the head of their peasants to repel the attacks of enemies invading their provinces.”¹²⁶ In their study of Madeleine de Verchères’ place in Canadian memory, Coates and Morgan also noted de Verchères’ claim to this tradition and offered Philis de la Tour-du-Pin de La Charce as an example of a woman took similar actions in France during the same war.¹²⁷ Curiously, they argue that although de Verchères highlighted her rank in a later letter, she failed to mention it in the 1699 letter.¹²⁸ This is an odd omission, as merely comparing herself to women who led “their peasants” in France was a claim to a higher rank.

Madeleine de Verchères also framed her actions within a network of relationships that spanned the Atlantic world, placing all Canadians under the patronage of Madame de

¹²⁴ “Letter from Marie Madeleine de Verchères to Comtesse de Maurepas,” 6.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ Coates and Morgan, *Heroines and History*, 24-25.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 25.

Maurepas' husband, the French Minister of the Navy, "whom they look upon as their protector."¹²⁹ Beyond the homage owed to the Minister, de Verchères appealed to Canadians' relationship to the King, noting that the wars against the Iroquois "have enabled many of our people to furnish proof of their great zeal for the service of the Prince."¹³⁰ She also stated later in the letter that "the women of Canada would be no whit less eager [than the fighting women of France] to manifest their zeal for the king's glory should the occasion arise."¹³¹

Despite Madeleine de Verchères' belief that the women of New France would take up arms for the King if needed, the incident that prompted her letter was one of the final recorded instances of elite and non-elite women in the St. Lawrence Valley fighting in the border wars. Reports of Indian women's actions also dwindled, though this also may have been due to a decrease in reports from the missionaries who worked most closely with them. Following the royal takeover in 1663, France forged ever-closer ties to New France, although it was only after the peace with the Iroquois in 1701 that New France turned its attention to the Atlantic more fully. No longer threatened by Iroquois raids from the west, Canada looked toward the sea, toward fortifications at Quebec and Acadia to protect it from the English naval attacks that became the primary threat to New France's security.

¹²⁹ "Letter from Marie Madeleine de Verchères to Comtesse de Maurepas," 6.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid., 7.

This major shift in strategy and policy had important ramifications regarding women's participation in war-making. As attacks on settlers and seigneuries in the St. Lawrence Valley ceased, accounts of virtuous peasant women informally joining battles and noblewomen defending their family forts disappeared abruptly. Women who lived in the fortified coastal towns took shelter within their walls, while France's increased imperial presence and command structure negated the necessity of women taking command of the fortresses.

Although changes in the theater of war resulted in a reduction of women's physical participation in New France's wars after 1701, elite French women continued to play roles in these wars, though mainly via trade and within New France's developing military bureaucracy. French officials welcomed women's support of French war efforts through their financial support of fortifications and the construction of naval vessels. This transition was not entirely smooth. As we will see in Chapter Four, officials in both France and New France became increasingly concerned over affairs between officers and elite women that seemingly threatened both the security and morality of New France, combining elements of sex, treason, and trade.

CHAPTER 3:

A DISCOURSE OF AMAZONS: TRANSATLANTIC PROPAGANDA IN NEW ENGLAND AND NEW FRANCE (1630-1713)

In 1632, the Jesuit Superior of New France, Paul Le Jeune, began sending reports back to the Jesuit Superior in France. These reports detailed events in the New World, with a special emphasis on interactions between the French and Native peoples. After some editing, the Jesuits in France published these accounts, known as *The Jesuit Relations*, for the masses. These stories played a particularly important role in Jesuit fundraising, providing entertaining and engaging narratives that credited the church while emphasizing the civilizing mission that it represented. According to Sara Melzer, the *Relations* “took the reading public by storm, becoming more popular than novels.”¹ Excerpted in newspapers and republished as anthologies, the *Relations* “had the aura of a serial drama.”²

The accounts included in the *Jesuit Relations* were some of the first examples of propaganda that deployed stories of women’s participation in the wars between New England, New France and their Indian allies. Authors of these as well as other, similar accounts disseminated their work throughout Europe and the northeastern borderlands of North America. Stories of women wielding hatchets, boiling soap, muskets, and drawing

¹ Sara E. Melzer, “The *Relation de voyage*: A Forgotten Genre of 17th-Century France,” in *Relations & Relationships in Seventeenth-Century French Literature: Actes du 36e Congrès Annuel de la North American Society for Seventeenth-Century French Literature*, ed. Jennifer R. Perlmutter (Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 2006), 40.

² *Ibid.*, 39.

upon a militarized Christian strength to convert or subdue Indian populations furthered secular and sacred agendas of officials in both colonies. Authors of this propaganda attempted to reach a wide range of people—from commoners to royalty. In doing so, they sought to solicit support for projects such as missionary work, endeavored to boost morale, worked to elicit political and financial support from European readers for colonial ventures, and attempted to meddle in imperial politics.

Using the *Jesuit Relations* as their primary medium, Jesuit priests in New France sent home exciting stories of French and Indian women's violent actions that played on popular French literary themes of Amazons and "strong women"—*femmes fortes*. In these accounts, Indian women from French-allied nations who killed their Iroquois captors and French-born Ursuline nuns fought together in a war with both military and spiritual dimensions. In addition to captivating their French audiences and drumming up support for their mission in the New World, these accounts also paired their praise of courageous French and Indian women with pleas for funds from "brave" French women.

In New England, political officials, authors, and ministers used similar stories to bolster morale and claim divine favor in the face of devastating losses. The Rev. Cotton Mather even sent accounts of women's participation back to England in attempts to meddle in imperial affairs and destroy the political careers of his foes. One such report praised a mob of women who assaulted troops returning from a botched mission led by Mather's enemy, Governor Joseph Dudley. Although New England's use of women's war-making as propaganda was far less centralized than the Jesuits' edited, official,

published reports, both groups exploited cultural and literary conventions in combination with accounts of violent women for political ends in North America and Europe.

This chapter explores how authors used accounts of women's participation in the border wars as early modern propaganda in both New France and New England. The phrase "early modern propaganda" is not anachronistic. Historians of early modern Europe have long noted the importance of the printing press in Luther's initial successes as well as in the later struggles between confessions. Although these earlier historians sometimes used the term propaganda to describe these processes, it was not until the 1960s and 1970s that historians began to identify the Reformation as the origin of modern propaganda.³ The term "propaganda" originally referred to the propagation of the Catholic faith via two bodies established by the papacy in the early seventeenth century. Founded in 1622 by Pope Gregory XV, the Congregation of the Propaganda (*Congregatio de Propaganda Fide*) was a committee of Cardinals who oversaw the Church's foreign

³ For more on early modern propaganda, see Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* (New York: Cambridge University Press 1979); Ian Green, *Print and Protestantism in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Wolfgang Reinhard, "Reformation, Counter-Reformation, and the Early Modern State: a Reassessment," *The Catholic Historical Review* 75, no. 3 (July 1989): 383-404; Peter Lake and Steve Pincus, "Rethinking the Public Sphere in Early Modern England," *Journal of British Studies* 45 (April 2006): 270-292; Brendan Scribner, Maurice Dooley and Sabrina Alcorn Baron, eds., *The Politics of Information in Early Modern Europe* (London: Routledge, 2001); Peter Lake and Michael Questier, "Puritans Papists, and the 'Public Sphere' in Early Modern England: The Edmund Campion Affair in Context," *The Journal of Modern History* 72 (Sept. 2000): 587-627; Thomas Cogswell, "The Politics of Propaganda: Charles I and the People in the 1620s," *Journal of British Studies* 29, no. 3 (July 1990): 187-215; Mark U. Edwards, Jr., *Printing, Propaganda, and Martin Luther* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Howard C. Rice, "Cotton Mather Speaks to France: American Propaganda in the Age of Louis XIV," *The New England Quarterly* 16, no. 2 (June 1943): 198-233; J.P.D. Cooper, *Propaganda and the Tudor State: Political Culture in the Westcountry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003); John Patrick Montaña, *Courting the Moderates: Ideology, Propaganda, and the Emergence of Party, 1660-1678* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2002); Joad Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); David Zaret, *Origins of Democratic Culture: Printing, Petitions and the Public Sphere in Early Modern England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

missions, which were vividly described in the *Jesuit Relations*.⁴ Five years later, Urban VIII added a College of the Propaganda, which trained missionaries who spread the Christian faith abroad. In their sweeping history of the topic, *Propaganda and Persuasion*, Garth Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell single out the early modern period as pivotal in the history of modern propaganda for the use of the printing press in disseminating propaganda as well as for the establishment of the first bureaucratic office, the Congregation. These models would later be co-opted by secular governments.⁵

Images of Fighting Women in Early Modern France and England

Both French and English authors of propaganda who made use of stories of women and war-making deployed familiar language from early modern European literature. Chief among these literary terms were words such as “Amazon,” “*femme forte*” (strong woman), and to a lesser extent, “virago.” In particular, the combination of the image of the Amazon with New World conflicts tapped into a broader early modern fascination with Amazons. According to Kathryn Schwarz, early modern Europeans derived “infinite pleasure in imagining Amazons, and tremendous uneasiness as well.”⁶ Schwarz argued that “texts locate the figure of the Amazon at the heart of social

⁴ For centuries, the term “propaganda” lacked the negative connotations commonly associated with it. Significantly, the Church renamed the group the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples after World War II.

⁵ Garth Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion*, 3rd edition (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1999), 66-75.

⁶ Kathryn Schwarz, *Tough Love: Amazon Encounters in the English Renaissance* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), xiii.

negotiations,” particularly gender roles, sites of intense contestation throughout the early modern period.⁷

European encounters with the New World and its unfamiliar, non-Christian women encouraged an even greater interest in Amazons. Alison Taufer has explored the sixteenth-century Spanish fascination with taming the Amazon via Christianity.⁸ According to Taufer, the conversion of Amazons “express[ed] an idealized conception of the proper relationship between the barbarian ‘other’ . . . and the white European male.”⁹ It is not surprising that one of the most popular contexts for the figure of the Amazon was a New World that had never been exposed to the teachings of Christianity and early modern gender hierarchies. European colonizers perceived rampant disorder in Native societies that assigned tasks such as farming and the torture of captives to women. Indian men, who many Europeans believed shirked their masculine duties, seemingly submitted to overly-powerful women in an exotic world turned upside down.¹⁰ Indeed, many missionaries and explorers of the seemingly unstably gendered New World actually expected to find the legendary Amazons of Greek myth just over the next hill or around the bend of a river.¹¹

⁷ Schwarz, *Tough Love*, 9.

⁸ Alison Taufer, “The Only Good Amazon is a Converted Amazon: The Woman Warrior and Christianity in the *Amadis Cycle*,” in *Playing With Gender: A Renaissance Pursuit*, ed. Jean R. Brink, Maryanne C. Horowitz, and Allison P. Coudert (Urbana, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

⁹ *Ibid.*, 48.

¹⁰ For more on English perceptions of Native gender roles, see Kathleen Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), ch. 2; Ann Little, *Abraham in Arms: War and Gender in Colonial New England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), ch. 3.

¹¹ Virginia M. Bouvier, *Women and the Conquest of California, 1542-1840: Codes of Silence* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2004), ch. 1.

Early modern writers in Europe and the Americas did not transfer the figure of the Amazon unaltered from classical literature. Instead, European authors transformed the Amazon over the course of centuries. Françoise Denis has argued that the Amazon was a key figure in the earliest French romances, a popular appropriation from classical literature.¹² According to Denis, during the Middle Ages, authors of the French *roman* genre penned poems and prose stories of epic adventure and romance which modified the classical tradition of the Amazon, incorporating chivalric qualities such as beauty and heterosexual love into the more traditional warlike image of the Amazon. Denis noted the tension of some of these new and older qualities: warrior's prowess and love, virginity and erotic love. All were present in the image of the Amazon, an object of masculine fear and desire, attraction and repulsion.¹³ An examination of these gendered tensions inscribed in the figure of the Amazon and the manner in which representations of the Amazon evolved over time, Denis argued, allows scholars to examine the changing preoccupations of patriarchal societies.¹⁴

Denis observed that writers in the early modern period retained the major developments in the tradition of the Amazon that emerged from the Middle Ages: "beauty, love, chastity, and valiance in combat."¹⁵ Although early modern French authors continued to emphasize the medieval aspects of the Amazon's complicated heterosexual

¹² Françoise Denis, "Ces Étranges Étrangères: Les Amazones," in *Étrange Topos Étranger: Actes du XVIe Colloque de la SATOR, Kingston, 3-5 Octobre 2002* (Laval: Presses Université Laval, 2006).

¹³ *Ibid.*, 90, 94.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 90.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 95.

romances, this love frequently resulted in the Amazon's use of her considerable fighting prowess in the service of or in defense of her male partner, a literary addition that reinforced the existing patriarchal order.¹⁶ It was in this early modern context of the Amazon's weakened independence that a new literary trend emerged featuring the Amazon as a woman of politics, letters, and, above all, of Christian piety and fortitude.¹⁷

Both France and England experienced political turmoil, uprisings, and even civil wars in the early to mid-seventeenth century that produced portrayals of "hybrid" fighting women. These new literary figures blended the shift toward pious, less independent Amazons with true, contemporary accounts of women engaged in war-making in these countries. This hybridization produced the figures of the French *femme forte* and the English virago that appeared alongside the Amazon in European accounts of fighting women in the mid-seventeenth century. These same figures were particularly useful for writers in the New World attempting to explain and understand the women's actions in border wars that engulfed the northeastern borderlands in the seventeenth century.

Studying the use of the Amazon and the *femme forte* in the seventeenth century, Joan Dejean has argued that beginning in the early 1620s, during the regency of Marie de Medici, authors and artists increasingly portrayed female leaders in heroic situations, often as warriors. A number of aristocratic women actually took on leadership roles in the conflict of between the 1630s and 1650s. One woman, the Comtesse de Saint-Baslemont, defended her home—as well as those of her neighbors—during a war with Austria in the

¹⁶ Denis, "Ces Étranges Étrangères: Les Amazones," 97.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 99.

late 1630s and early 1640s. Literary portraits of Saint-Baslemont portrayed her as both a military figure, a more “traditional” Amazon, as well as a Christianized Amazon who never truly transgressed gender barriers.¹⁸ According to Joan Dejean, by “the 1640s the cultivated French public was virtually bombarded with images of heroism.”¹⁹ This new appreciation can be traced directly to both the regency of Anne of Austria in France and to the Fronde (c. 1648-1653), a rebellion against both Cardinal Mazarin, Anne’s prime minister, and absolutism more generally. Dejean noted that aristocratic French women took on substantial leadership roles in the Fronde, going so far as to say that “more than any other conflict in French history, the Fronde can be seen as a woman’s war.”²⁰

Alongside these images of French Amazons, a new figure emerged, that of the *femme forte*, or “strong woman.” Benedetta Caraveri noted that during the seventeenth century, “a host of mounted ‘Amazons’ in breastplates and helmets, sword in hand, made a striking appearance in the literature of the day.”²¹ She argued that the *femme forte* was “a mix of Christian and pagan, mythological and historical” and completely the creation of men. She also mentioned that two of the major supporters of this feminine ideal were two monks: the Franciscan Jacques Du Bosc and, intriguingly, Pierre Le Moyne, a Jesuit author, teacher, and scholar.²² The *femme forte* flourished during the mid-seventeenth century and drew on post-Tridentine Marian and moralistic literature, particularly the

¹⁸ Joan Dejean, *Tender Geographies: Women and the Origins of the Novel in France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 20, 24-25.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 29.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 37.

²¹ Benedetta Craveri, *The Age of Conversation*, trans. Theresa Waugh (New York: New York Review of Books, 2005), 22.

²² *Ibid.*

image of the Virgin Mary as heroic warrior.²³ According to Ian Maclean, the *femme forte* was often a single or widowed woman who enjoyed “spiritual independence.” He contrasted a more traditional “passive and introspective” chastity with the “positive, almost aggressive” chastity of the *femme forte*.²⁴ The *femme forte* combined generosity, constance, resoluteness, and courage and was perfectly suited to working in New France.²⁵

As in France, the image of the Amazon—and fighting women more generally—underwent dramatic changes in England during the seventeenth century. Garthine Walker noted a “depreciation” of the Amazon as “conventional depictions of Amazons as a noble warrior-tribe...were, from the mid-sixteenth century matched by sneering portrayals of lustful, incompetent ‘man-killers.’”²⁶ This “depreciation” occurred over the course of decades, though it was largely complete by the late seventeenth century.²⁷ Concurrent with the development of the *femme forte*, English authors and artists also introduced a new fighting woman who blended the fighting prowess of the Amazon with Christian virtues: the virago.

According to Garthine Walker, the English Civil War inspired the popularity of the “virago.” The virago was more often married than the *femme forte* and also upheld patriarchal authority. She fought like a man and even dressed like a man, often alongside

²³ Ian Maclean, *Woman Triumphant: Feminism in French Literature, 1610-1652* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 64, 74.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 84-85.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 83.

²⁶ Garthine Walker, *Crime, Gender, and Social Order in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 86.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

her husband. Using images of queens defending their realms, writers and artists encouraged women to “selflessly” defend “her monarch, husband, children, nation, or religion.” Walker pointed out that although the virago’s “violence was defensive, never offensive” and although “she was compelled to act with force and violence only by exceptional circumstances,” these actions were acceptable by legal and cultural standards.²⁸

In Europe, complex cultural, religious, political, and military conditions produced somewhat entangled figures of the Amazon, the *femme forte*, and the virago that dominated the seventeenth century. These archetypes were particularly useful in New World conflicts that blended European-style wars that blurred the sacred and the secular with wars that featured combined military and domestic spaces as well as Indian women who appeared to be classical Amazons come alive. For writers in New England and New France, the Amazon, *femme forte*, and virago provided ideal figures to both explain and exploit women’s participation in the border wars through propaganda.

Amazons, Femmes Fortes, Fundraising, and the Jesuit Relations in New France

In 1648, the Jesuit Superior of New France, Jérôme Lallemant, composed a particularly memorable narrative about an Algonquin woman. Although Lallemant did not provide a name for the protagonist of the story, he described the woman as an

²⁸ Walker, *Crime, Gender, and Social Order in Early Modern England*, 88.

“Amazon” who “bravely escaped” from her captors.²⁹ A captive of an Iroquois war party, she had spent ten days on the move when the Iroquois stopped for the night and bound her by “both feet and both hands to four stakes, —fastened in the earth, and arranged like a St. Andrew's cross.” She soon found that she had not been properly bound and was able to free herself. As she left the cabin, the woman saw a hatchet nearby, “[seized] it, and, impelled by a strange warlike fury, she deal[t] a blow from it, with all her might, upon the head of a Iroquois lying at the entrance of the cabin.”³⁰ After this dramatic moment of liberating violence, the account is laced with Biblical allusions that hint at possible liberties taken with the narrative by its Jesuit presenters. For example, the Algonquin woman spent nearly forty days in the wilderness, a likely reference to Christ’s similar experience. Insects plagued our protagonist, confounding her attempts to reach the place along the river where she had heard that her people traded with the French.

The former captive was naked and traveled by night. According to the Jesuit account, she traveled at night to protect her modesty—although she might have been exercising simple common sense. French readers of that year’s *Relation* may have been surprised to note that, although an Indian, she was fully aware of her nudity in spite of her status as a non-Christian, perhaps even living an existence similar to that of Adam and Eve before the Fall. This seeming contradiction placed her in an interesting liminal

²⁹ Jérôme Lallemand, *Relation de ce qui s'est passé de plus remarquable és missions des peres de la Compagnie de Jesus, en la Nouvelle France, sur le grand fleuve de S. Laurens en l'année 1647: enuoyée au R.P. provincial de la Prouince de France* (Paris: Chez Sebastien Cramoisy et Gabriel Cramoisy, 1648). I will quote from the Jesuit Relations from the widely used translation: *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France, 1610-1791*, 73 vols, ed. Ruben Gold Thwaites (Cleveland: Burrows Brothers, 1896-1901).

³⁰ Jérôme Lallemand, *Relation... en l'année 1647*, in Thwaites, 30: 290.

space between “native” and “civilized.” As she neared the French settlement, she encountered a group of Huron whom she warned to stay back out of respect for her modesty. One of the Huron men threw a mantle to her and escorted her to the Jesuits at Trois-Rivières, where she arrived on July 26. It is interesting to note that July 26 was the feast day of St. Anne, the mother of Mary and a patron saint of Canada and of Quebec. The Jesuit fathers questioned her about her ordeal and lamented that she had not been able to suffer “these crosses” for “her god” because she had never been introduced to him.

It is unclear what happened to the Algonquin woman after arriving at Trois-Rivières. Lallemand reported that she was very impressed by the charity of the French. The narrative hints that she became a Christian through the use of biblical imagery in Lallemand’s retelling which styles itself after biblical stories of Moses, Christ, and the French patron-saint, John the Baptist. Although the story alludes to biblical events, it is more a pastiche than an allegory. The wilderness as a liminal space of spiritual struggle and transformation as well as the vivid image of a plague of insects hints at a spiritual journey using language chosen to evoke a response from the educated Christian reader. At the end of this journey, she received clothing and, most likely, an introduction to Christianity.

The story of the escaped Algonquin woman deftly incorporates an inverted form of a trope popular in the hagiographies of nuns who journeyed to New France to minister to the region’s Indian population. In the traditional narrative, pious Frenchwomen “travel

from ‘the City’ to ‘the wilderness,’ where, like Christ in the desert, they must rely on their inner resources as they face evil.”³¹ In this situation, the courageous Algonquin Amazon and potential convert must travel from the wilderness to the relative civilization of Trois-Rivières, enduring a thirty-five day trial on her way, as the author hints, to salvation and the protection of French missionaries. In light of this reversed trope—and the long-standing European tradition of referring to active religious women as Amazons—it should not be surprising that the Jesuit missionaries in New France also referred to the subjects of the original trope, nuns, as Amazons.

It was in the foggy, mosquito-filled country of seventeenth-century Quebec that the idea of Indian Amazon and her mirror-image, the Ursuline Amazon, collided in the minds of the Jesuit missionaries. As we saw in the previous chapter, Ursulines such as Marie de l’Incarnation were familiar with some of the Indian women discussed below. This chapter, however, will examine how Jesuit missionaries employed images of Indian and Ursuline Amazons in their published propaganda, the *Jesuit Relations*. The events described in these publications took place against a backdrop of what historians now call the “Beaver Wars,” which erupted intermittently between 1609 and the end of the seventeenth century. These wars, especially the conflicts around the middle of the seventeenth century, were exceptionally brutal. During this period, members of the powerful Iroquois Confederation, particularly the Mohawk, fought from their base in

³¹ Allan Greer, “Colonial Saints: Gender, Race, and Hagiography in New France,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 3rd Ser., 57, no. 2 (April, 2000): 339-340.

what is now upstate New York to defend and expand their territory and to increase their role in the burgeoning fur trade.

In these conflicts, boundaries between secular and sacred as well as the cloister, the salon, and the battlefield blurred. Marie de l'Incarnation, who established the Ursuline order in New France, described the Iroquois Wars to her son as a "war against the enemies of God and of public peace," a telling sentence that revealed the lack of distinction between civic and spiritual order.³² Nuns in Montreal, who worked in one of the most dangerous areas of Canada, saw themselves as working in the wilderness with "savages" who might be converted in a contest for souls. In spite of the spiritual emphasis and the nuns' supposedly safe haven within the Hôtel-Dieu in Montreal, secular war was a constant presence in the lives of these women. Sister Marie Morin wrote in her memoirs that she was able to witness battles from the bell-tower of the Hôtel-Dieu in which "Amazon-like" women dressed as men ran to fight alongside men.³³ During these difficult years, authors of the *Jesuit Relations* worked to drum up support for their cause, encouraging brave Amazon-nuns to migrate to Canada and Amazon-donors to finance their project.

The nuns of New France were exemplary models of a new female saintliness, establishing schools and hospitals along the banks of the St. Lawrence River, ministering

³² Marie de l'Incarnation to Claude Martin, "Lettre CLXXVIII," 12 November 1666, in *Lettres de la Révérende Mère Marie de l'Incarnation*, 2 vols., ed. L'Abbé Richaudeau (Paris: Librairie International Catholique, 1876), 2: 327.

³³ Marie Morin, *Annales de L'Hotel-Dieu de Montreal: Rédigées par la soeur Morin*, ed. Æ Fauteux, E. A. Massicotte, and C. Bertrand, in *Memoires de la Société Historique de Montréal*, vol. 12 (Montréal: L'Imprimerie des Editeurs Limitée, 1921), 158.

to French and Indians alike. According to Dominique Deslandres, the reigning construct of holiness at the beginning of the early modern period, established in the Middle Ages, emphasized an idealized opposition of male and female holy traits in which women were passive vessels of God while holy men took action in spreading the word of God.³⁴ This medieval binary pairing began to break down in the seventeenth century, a trend most evident in France and Italy where the new ideal saint was a combination of “female contemplation intermingled with action.”³⁵

Although this new form of active female spirituality gained popularity quickly, the male-dominated, Counter-Reformation Catholic Church scrambled to come to terms with it, often attempting to restrict the activity of these pious women. In her study of female missionaries in New France, Leslie Choquette described their interactions with the Jesuits as defined by “raised expectations shattered by reinforced patriarchy.”³⁶ She even referred to these conflicts as “a running war...that was to have French Canada as one of its battlefields.”³⁷ In spite of this, Choquette argued, female missionaries in New France tended to enjoy a somewhat larger measure of freedom than their European counterparts, a condition she attributed to life on a frontier. Indeed, in this complex, dangerous environment, Amazons and *femmes fortes* capable of participating in—or financing—a

³⁴ Dominique Deslandres, “In the Shadow of the Cloister: Representations of Female Holiness in New France,” in *Colonial Saints: Discovering the Holy in the Americas, 1500-1800*, ed. Allan Greer and Jodi Bilinkoff (New York: Routledge, 2003), 129-152.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 135.

³⁶ Leslie Choquette, “‘Ces Amazones du Grand Dieu’: Women and Mission in Seventeenth-Century Canada,” *French Historical Studies* 17, no. 3 (Spring 1992), 632. Ursuline missionaries in eighteenth-century Louisiana faced additional challenges in establishing a female religious order in a slave society. See Emily Clark, *Masterless Mistresses: The New Orleans Ursulines and the Development of a New World Society, 1727-1834* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 631.

war with such high spiritual and secular stakes were greatly needed. Despite cultural contradictions inherent in the new female spirituality embraced by female missionaries in New France, Jesuits exploited and encouraged the image that these women projected.

In encouraging women to aid their mission, Jesuit authors drew on established language used in seventeenth-century French religious conflicts to appeal to readers of the *Relations*. According to Keith Luria, the images of the Amazon and *femme forte* were particularly critical in providing a common language for use in European religious conflicts of the early modern period. In his monograph *Sacred Boundaries*, Luria noted that in early modern France, particularly in bi-confessional areas, observers engaged in a “*querelle des femmes*,” a dispute over the nature of powerful women within Catholic and Protestant churches.³⁸ Both confessions relied upon the work of these women, who were described by words such as “Amazon” and “*femme forte*.”³⁹ Luria noted that “the terms for describing the ‘good’ women of one side and the ‘bad’ ones of the other were largely the same,” adding to the complexity inherent in the terms. Luria also argued that these women “did not simply become ‘men’; they were exceptional women...[who] fit into recognizable characterizations of women, though Amazons pushed such characterizations to the limit.”⁴⁰ Clearly, similar language used in Jesuit propaganda from the New World did have the potential to resonate with audiences in seventeenth-century France.

³⁸ Keith P. Luria, *Sacred Boundaries: Religious Coexistence and Conflict in Early-Modern France* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005).

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 196.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

Few historians have noted the transplantation of the language of the *femme forte* or the Amazon to the Ursuline mission in the New World. One scholar who has, Tamara Harvey, argued that the Ursulines themselves appropriated the language of the *femme forte* movement to “teach women how to negotiate the apparent paradox between spiritual withdrawal and worldly action” and crucially, “to reinforce community conceived at least partly in military terms, and to justify women’s apostolic activity in this era of colonization.”⁴¹ One other scholar working on the *femme forte* movement’s relationship to Jesuit and Ursuline missions, Heidi Keller-Lapp, has argued that the image of the Ursuline *femme forte* was the creation of “French elites and Ursulines to shape a rhetoric of resistance against the Crown’s attempts to control the French Church, not to mention the Ursuline order.”⁴² Although it is likely that some Ursuline women did appropriate the images of the *femme forte* and the Amazon, this interpretation fails to take the context of many of these references into account. A careful examination of the sources reveals that the vast majority of references to Ursuline Amazons and *femmes fortes* working in the New World, at least in the *Jesuit Relations*, were fundraising pleas written by men and addressed to female readers, the major source from which the Jesuits secured funding for their missions.

⁴¹ Tamara Harvey, *Figuring Modesty in Feminist Discourse Across the Americas, 1633-1700* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), 116.

⁴² Heidi Keller-Lapp, “Floating Cloisters and Heroic Women: French Ursuline Missionaries, 1639-1744, *World History Connected*, June 2007, <<http://worldhistoryconnected.press.uiuc.edu/4.3/lapp.html>> (28 Feb. 2009).

Although historians have established the immense importance of women's financial support in the early years of the Jesuits, few have focused on the roles women donors played in the growth of women's orders and the mission in New France in the seventeenth-century.⁴³ In her research on sixteenth-century Italy, Olwen Hufton argued that women, particularly widows with financial control over their late husbands' wealth, were prime targets for Jesuit fundraising. Their efforts often caused tension within the widow's family as large amounts of wealth were diverted away from the kinship group. Hufton also remarked on the widespread suspicion of women's, especially widows', relationships with their Jesuit confessors. Families were uneasy about the influence these young, enthusiastic, often virile men had over their older female relatives.⁴⁴

According to Hufton, many of these practices extended into the seventeenth century, used by Jesuits and nuns, particularly Ursulines in New France.⁴⁵ Many of the fundraising pleas in the *Jesuit Relations* were directed toward women and, as we will see, clearly employed the language of the *femme forte* movement, often even using the word "Amazon." Given the pressure placed upon widows to avoid Jesuit entanglements and preserve their inheritances, perhaps the act of donating to the mission in New France truly did require the courage of an Amazon or a *femme forte*.

⁴³ Olwen Hufton, "Altruism and Reciprocity: The Early Jesuits and their Female Patrons," *Renaissance Studies* 15, no. 3 (2001), 330; one exception is Natalie Zemon Davis, *Women on the Margins: Three Seventeenth-Century Lives* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

⁴⁴ Olwen Hufton, "The Widow's Mite and Other Strategies: Funding the Catholic Reformation," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th series, vol. 8 (1998), 117-137.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 135-137.

Many examples of the rhetoric connecting missionaries to the *femme forte* movement involve the widow Marie-Madeleine de Chauvigny de la Peltrie. Peltrie was a generous laywoman who, after concocting a sham marriage to a male friend in order to secure her fortune, donated the money to the Ursuline mission in New France. What was even more unusual, was that Madame de la Peltrie also traveled to Quebec to help physically build the mission and support the work of the cloistered sisters. Considering the active role Peltrie assumed in the mission, it is not surprising that she was so often called an Amazon. In addition to her vigorous work, like many literary Amazons, Madame de la Peltrie was the ultimate example of a liminal figure, in this case, a go-between who was neither secular nor a nun, an unmarried woman who acted as an intermediary between groups in New France and served as an example to other laywomen. Although the Jesuits did not necessarily expect potential donors in France to follow Madame de la Peltrie's example of journeying to New France, they did frequently hold her up as the ultimate example of a *femme forte*, a spiritual Amazon who pious French women could emulate, at least financially.

While reporting on the arrival of the group of nuns who founded the Ursuline convent and the hospital in Québec in 1639, Jesuit Superior Paul Le Jeune referred to the highly pious, hands-on Madame de la Peltrie, as an Amazon. Although he also praised the Duchesse d'Aiguillon, the hospital's benefactor who remained in France, he did not call her an Amazon. He described Peltrie as "an Amazon, who has led the Ursulines, and established them on these outer confines of the world," clearly drawing upon Amazon

lore, casting her as an Amazon queen leading an army to a mysterious “Othered” land. Of course, Father Le Jeune was quick to point out that she was a “modest and virtuous Lady,” traits befitting a model *femme forte*.⁴⁶ Again, in 1640, Le Jeune praised a new crop of nuns, “young Amazons, who, in spite of the Ocean, came to seek the salvation of these barbarians in these farthest confines of the earth.”⁴⁷

In a 1635 plea for funds, Le Jeune lamented that there were many “tender and delicate Virgins all ready to hazard their lives upon the waves of the Ocean, to come seeking little souls in the rigors of an air much colder than that of France, to endure hardships at which even men would be appalled.”⁴⁸ According to Le Jeune, these tender and delicate virgins were in need of a monetary “Passport” which would be used build a new dwelling to house “these Amazons of the great God.”⁴⁹ In appealing to the qualities of the *femme forte* frequently present in the new female spiritual ideal, Le Jeune described the nuns as at once, “tender and delicate virgins” and “Amazons of the great God.” In this *Relation*, he also asked “will not some brave Lady be found who will give a Passport to these Amazons of the great God, endowing them with a House in which to praise and serve his divine Majesty in this other world?”⁵⁰ In this plea to wealthy French women, Father Le Jeune associated the more obvious spiritual and physical bravery of the Amazon nuns and their traveling lay supporters with the bravery of those wealthy

⁴⁶ Paul Le Jeune, *Relation... en l'année 1639*, in Thwaites, 16: 11.

⁴⁷ Paul Le Jeune, *Relation... en l'année 1640*, in Thwaites, 18: 76.

⁴⁸ Paul Le Jeune, *Relation... en l'année 1634*, in Thwaites, 7: 261.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

women who, often risking the disapproval of their families, donated their fortune to the Jesuit and Ursuline missions in the New World.

In a *Relation* detailing the years 1640 and 1641, Father Le Jeune pleaded for additional funds and assistance, noting that there were any number of eager nuns willing to travel across the Atlantic to New France but that the mission needed “secular sisters who would consent to bring their fortunes and spend their lives in this New World.”⁵¹ He harshly chastised the pious rich women of France, comparing them unfavorably to Madame de la Peltrie asking: “Indeed! is it possible that all the generous sisters that were in old France have come over into the New? and that there are no longer found hearts brave enough to follow the footprints of these first Amazons?”⁵² Again Le Jeune linked the philanthropy of wealthy French women to the bravery of spiritual Amazons.

Another example, a hagiography of Mother Marie de Saint Joseph who had recently died, recounted how “Madame de la Pelterie—having read in the same Relations that it was desired in new France that some Amazon should undertake a voyage, longer than that of Æneas,” the Trojan hero who, according to Virgil, sailed across the Mediterranean to Italy bringing with him civilization and an excellent pedigree. Through his marriage to a Latin woman, Æneas would produce offspring who would later go on to found Rome. In a clear literary parallel, Madame de la Peltrie chose to attempt a

⁵¹ Paul Le Jeune, *Relation... en l'année 1641*, in Thwaites, 20: 126.

⁵² *Ibid.*

harrowing, lengthy journey to the New World “in order to provide for the instruction of the little Savage girls”⁵³

Jesuit authors were also eager to employ the language of the Amazon and the *femme forte* in accounts that displayed their encounters with converted and unconverted Indian women in a positive light. The Jesuits do not appear to have used the terms “Amazon” and “*femme forte*” indiscriminately to describe a warlike or violent woman; the Amazon and the *femme forte* were more or less respectable figures. The missionaries appropriated another classical figure for the repulsive violent woman. In the *Jesuit Relations*, women who committed violent acts against Christians and children, women whose acts were exceptionally gory, and women who attempted to prevent others from converting were described as “Megaeras.” A French word for a shrew, “Megaera” was also a reference to the Greek Fury associated with jealousy and marital violence. In other words, these were women who were likely untamable by Christianity or men, and whose acts were determined to be entirely dishonorable and often, but not always, associated with the fact that the attacker was a women.

The opposition of the Amazon and Megaera is obvious in the same edition of the *Jesuit Relations* that described the experience of the captive Algonquin woman who split her captor's head with a hatchet. Within weeks of the Algonquin Amazon’s arrival,

⁵³ Paul Le Jeune, *Relation... en l'année 1634*, in Thwaites, 38:97. According to Marie-Florine Bruneau, Marie de l’Incarnation wrote the biography of Mother Marie de Saint Joseph. This biography was allegedly later slipped into that year’s Jesuit Relation without Marie de l’Incarnation’s knowledge. Bruneau has rightly suggested that this secrecy allowed the founder of the Ursuline convent in New France to anonymously praise a member of her order without appearing to actually promote it. Marie-Florine Bruneau, *Women Mystics Confront the Modern World Marie De L'Incarnation: 1599-1672 and Madame Guyon: 1648-1717* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 83.

another female who escaped from the Iroquois approached the Jesuits. This woman was a Christian who had been taken captive along with her daughter, another woman, and that woman's daughter. The protagonist of this story patiently waited to escape from captivity for several years until she could arrange to bring her daughter with her. The non-Christian woman, a "true Megaera and hostile to the Faith," apparently mad with fear, "la[id] her hands on her child, she murdered it and threw it at the feet of the Iroquois; then, having slipped her head into a halter, she pulled with one hand to strangle herself, and with the other she cut her throat with a knife." The escaped Christian woman lamented that the other woman "soon found a more devouring fire than that of the Iroquois."⁵⁴

The word Megaera was used several other times in the *Jesuit Relations*, including references to an Iroquois woman who sloppily cut off the captive Father Isaac Jogues' thumb. Jesuits also used the word to describe a woman who beat her brother to death and forced her nephew to strangle his sister so that he would take him with her in a canoe to safety.⁵⁵ Father Le Jeune included an account from another Jesuit who witnessed an Iroquois man's torture, which described women participating in ritual torture using Greek mythology. In this incident, a woman he referred to as a Megaera "appeared, armed with a whip of knotted cords, with which she rained blows upon him around his arms, with as much rage as she had strength." Appropriately, this "Fury" was joined by two other women who attacked him with stones and a knife. After a confrontation with French observers, the Algonquins brought the prisoner to the other side of the river, where they

⁵⁴ Jérôme Lallemand, *Relation... en l'année 1647*, in Thwaites, 30: 276.

⁵⁵ Barthélemy Vimont, *Relation... en l'année 1642-43*, in Thwaites, 24: 18.

discreetly killed him in an attempt to appease French sensibilities. The men who wrote the Jesuit Relations clearly reserved “Megaera” for women whose behavior seemed beyond their ability to correct as Christian men. Unlike the Megaera, our Algonquin Amazon, for all of her “savage fury,” had possibilities, however ambivalent the Jesuits’ feelings toward her were. In her case, she fulfilled the male fantasy of the Amazon that entrusted herself to the care of a worthy man.

The imagery of the *femme forte* could also occasionally be applied to the female Indian converts whom the Jesuits and Ursulines instructed in their proper roles as Christians. In 1647, Jerome Lallemant approvingly described a session in which the Father in charge of Native students’ instruction offered the very active St. Catherine of Siena as a model of Christian womanhood, praising “the Faith and constancy of that Christian Amazon.” The Father concluded “that is what it is to be a Christian.”⁵⁶

Occasionally, Jesuits were able to reach a delicate balance in their depiction of spiritually courageous qualities of the Indian Amazon. It was in these stories that the Jesuits also demonstrated the efficacy of their conversion methods to supporters. According to a letter written by Father Paul Ragueneau, on August 3, 1657 a group of Huron women Ragueneau described as “*femmes fortes*” was attacked by the Onondaga, a nation-member of the Iroquois Confederacy.⁵⁷ The Huron Christians, along with Father Ragueneau, were traveling with a different group of Onondaga, on their way to help found a mission on the shores of Onondaga Lake near present-day Syracuse, New York.

⁵⁶ Jérôme Lallemant, *Relation... en l'année 1647*, in Thwaites, 30: 141.

⁵⁷ Paul Ragueneau, *Relation... en l'année 1656-57*, in Thwaites, 44: 153-171.

Ragueneau wrote that an Onondaga captain, frustrated by the continual rebuff of his sexual advances toward a young, converted Huron girl, allegedly split her head open with his tomahawk. The ensuing violence from this episode resulted in the deaths of seven Christian Huron men.

Upon reaching Onondaga, several men, now the Huron women's captors, began attacking several of the women in the party, stabbing and burning the women and their children alive. It was at this point in Ragueneau's narrative that he referred to the captive women as *femmes fortes*, women who, fearless of violence and death and solemnly embracing their new position in the European patriarchal hierarchy, asked that God might "mingle my blood with my husband's, and let them take my life to-day; never will they be able to take away the faith which I have in my heart."⁵⁸

According to Father Ragueneau, during the assault at the entrance to Onondaga, another Christian Huron woman, Dorothée, "was being butchered with hatchets and knives" and "seeing the tears of a little girl eight years old who had been at the Ursuline seminary, she said to her: 'My daughter, weep not for my death, or for thy own; we shall to-day go to Heaven together, where God will have pity on us for all eternity. The Iroquois cannot rob us of this great blessing.'" Upon their violent deaths, the account claims, both woman and child cried "Jesus, take pity on me" remaining exemplary models, faithful and submissive to the male Christian deity even at death.⁵⁹ Accounts such as this reminded readers that, in spite of military setbacks, the Jesuit mission

⁵⁸ Paul Ragueneau, *Relation... en l'année 1656-57*, in Thwaites, 44: 167.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 168.

produced devout Christians, *femmes fortes*, brave and unafraid of facing death at the hands of the enemy if it assisted them in achieving eternal life.

In another example of the Indian Amazon as *femme forte*, Father Paul Le Jeune wrote of “one of our old Christians,” an Indian woman, who “displayed the courage of an Amazon” during two separate rape attempts by an Iroquois and a Frenchman.⁶⁰ In this instance, Father Le Jeune equated an Indian’s Amazon nature with the spiritual strength similar to that of a *femme forte*. According to the woman’s Jesuit confessor, she had been pursued by a group of Iroquois, fleeing almost naked into the woods after leaving her possessions behind in her escape attempt. Exhausted and feeling that all was lost, she grasped her crucifix, prayed, and was filled with a renewed physical strength which allowed her to continue running. The incident is reminiscent of the story of the Amazon who killed her captors while “impelled by a strange warlike fury” and fled naked through the woods. This converted “Amazon” instead drew upon strength provided by Christianity to protect her virtue and received even greater praise than the woman in the earlier story.

Later, the woman claimed the same crucifix helped repel a violent Frenchman who had dragged her into a cabin and thrown her on a bed in another attempted rape. According to her confessor, the woman recounted that after she had brandished her crucifix at her attacker, reprimanded him and appealed to his fear of God, the man fled, leaving her bewildered, alone, and grateful. Father Le Jeune added that “this same

⁶⁰ Le Jeune, *Relation... en l'année 1657*, in Thwaites, 43: 227-231.

Amazon also performed another action as godly as it was generous.” Involved in a bitter dispute with a female relative, the Christian Indian approached the relative who had “grievously offended” her and “begged her to forget the past, and to live with her as if they were sisters.”⁶¹ In this example, we see a potential ideal women in the figure of a converted Indian woman, a spiritual Amazon relying entirely on God and on her male confessor, forgoing violence, and preserving her feminine virtue through faith, prayer, and forgiveness.

The final publication of the *Jesuit Relations*, the *Relation* of 1673, resulted from Pope Clement X’s ban on the release of accounts from missions abroad. By then, the catastrophic series of mid-century wars had ended and the stories of danger and adventure along the St. Lawrence in Quebec lost their punch as the Jesuits turned their attention to missions in the west and south. In the four decades of their publication however, the *Jesuit Relations* revealed unique strategies of gender-role negotiation as Jesuit missionaries catered to the tastes of their wealthy female donors while grappling with changing concepts of female saintliness, both in European and Indian women.

The end of the Jesuit mission in New France also coincided with a decline in the popularity of stories of fighting women in France as well as in England. Both Joan Dejean and Garthine Walker perceive a cultural shift near the end of the seventeenth century, toward a new appreciation of an increasingly passive female figure. Walker and Dejean argue that the end of mid-century conflicts and relative peace at home in Britain

⁶¹ Le Jeune, *Relation... en l'année 1657*, in Thwaites, 43: 231.

and France removed the cultural impetus that made literary forms such as Amazons, *femmes fortes*, and viragoes popular with both men and women. In France, the *femme forte* transformed into the figure of the secular *précieuse*, an often ridiculed figure who embraced the idea of the warrior-woman from the comfort of her *salon*.⁶²

“A tribe of female hands, but manly hearts”: Propaganda in New England

Although the most compelling examples of French propaganda that drew on these themes disappeared after the Jesuits ceased publication of their *Relations* in 1673, New England did not begin producing similar propaganda until the tail end of western Europe’s fascination with Amazons, *femmes fortes*, and viragoes. Indeed, Garthine Walker argued that in England, the decline of the virago and the “general reinforcement of dominant ideas of feminine passivity...meant that discourse of feminine violence were less efficacious in justifying female action than they had been during years of civil war and the Republic.”⁶³ Unlike post-Civil War England, New England did experience violent wars in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries which required the participation of women. Because New England did not experience its first major regional war until 1675, accounts of women’s participation did not exist before that time. Instead, propaganda from New England displays fascinating shifts in usage of the literary terms discussed above during the later-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries.

⁶² Joan Dejean, “Violent Women and Violence against Women: Representing the ‘Strong’ Woman in Early Modern France,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 29, no. 1 (2003), 132-134. Walker, *Crime, Gender, and Social Order in Early Modern England*, 96.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

Laurel Thatcher Ulrich chose the Biblical figure “Jael” to represent assertive or violent seventeenth and eighteenth-century women in the final section of her monograph *Good Wives*.⁶⁴ According to the Book of Judges, Jael killed the sleeping Canaanite captain Sisera with a tent peg driven in by a mallet after taking him in and feeding him milk. The “blessed” Jael provided an obvious female example of a virtuous woman who killed an enemy to protect her people. In reality, the word was used very rarely when describing women’s participation in New England’s wars. The two examples I have found are Cotton Mather’s account of Hannah Dustan’s captivity and William Hubbard’s description of the young woman holding the door at Tozer’s garrison as receiving “the blessings of Jael.”⁶⁵

Hubbard’s account also referred to her as a “virago” who was “endued with more courage than ordinarily the rest of her sex use to be.” The use of the word “virago” to describe women in the context of war largely disappeared in New England after King Philip’s war ended in 1676. Instead, a discourse of “borrowing” appeared in these later accounts. When described as Amazons in accounts written after 1676, English women, unlike their earlier English and French counterparts, were depicted as borrowing the mantle of the Amazon. In Mather’s account of an attack on Wells, Maine in 1692, women firing alongside men “took up the Amazonian Stroke.”⁶⁶ The women of Oyster River,

⁶⁴ Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650-1750* (New York: Knopf, 1982).

⁶⁵ Benjamin Hubbard, *A Narrative of the Troubles with the Indians in New-England from Pascataqua to Pemmaquid*, in *A Narrative of the Troubles with the Indians in New-England* (Boston: John Foster, 1677), 20-21. Early American Imprints, Series 1: Evans, 1639-1800, accessed online.

⁶⁶ Cotton Mather, *Decennium Luctuosum* (Boston, 1699), 94. Early American Imprints, Series 1: Evans, 1639-1800, accessed online.

New Hampshire “assum’d an Amazonian courage” in Samuel Penhallow’s narrative.⁶⁷ In much the same way fighting women in New England borrowed their husbands’ guns and took on their roles as settler-soldiers, their courage and prowess was often described in terms of gender borrowing.

More common than either the use of the words “Jael,” “virago,” or “Amazon” to describe such women was the use of generic masculine compliments. Male commentators bestowing their highest praise on fighting women honored them with borrowed adjectives associated more often with men. In an earlier chapter, we looked briefly at how Penhallow borrowed the complimentary—and masculine—word “briskly” to describe the shooting prowess of the women of Oyster River. In addition to “t[aking] up the Amazonian Stroke,” the women of Wells fired “with a manly resolution.” In a 1708 work published in London, John Oldmixon praised Hannah Dustan as “a Woman of masculine Spirit.”⁶⁸

Diane Dugaw’s study of female warriors in popular ballads suggests that from 1650-1850, a literary tradition that celebrated the exploits of fighting women flourished in Europe and America and featured “borrowing” as a staple of the genre. Although most of the women studied in this dissertation did not engage in masquerade, transvestism, or marry at the end of their exploits as so many of Dugaw’s heroines did, her insights on

⁶⁷ Samuel Penhallow, *The History of the Wars of New-England with the Eastern Indians* (Boston: T. Fleet, 1726), 32. Early American Imprints, Series 1: Evans, 1639-1800, accessed online

⁶⁸ John Oldmixon, *The British Empire in America, Containing the History of the Discovery, Settlement, Progress and Present State of all the British Colonies*, 2 vols. (London: 1708) 1: 75-76. Accessed Eighteenth Century Collections Online.

gender remain useful. Dugaw argued that in this tradition, “Female Warrior ballads are not about an anomalous tipping of the world upside down.”⁶⁹ Rather than serving as cautionary tales or brushed off as freaks, warrior women in ballads demonstrate the flexibility of the relationship between sex and gender.⁷⁰ Unlike sex, a biological category, gender, its cultural counterpart, might be “assumed” in early modern culture. Within this system, women could find praise in taking on certain traditional, manly roles.

According to Dugaw, women praised for their courage and skill in ballads earned that praise not as an “exceptional” figure but as an “exemplary” one. As Dugaw noted, “any woman could play the man as she does.”⁷¹ The celebrated woman is merely the most successful performer of this role. Extending this notion to reports of women fighting in New England’s fortified communities, all garrison women could potentially take on the male role of settler-soldier. Many of the stories that survive are accounts of these most successful performances of that role. As we will see, the notion of the fighting woman as “exemplary” surfaces in New England as women from fortified communities vied for compensation based on “exceptional” and “extraordinary” service.

The language of “borrowing” seen in descriptors such as “brisk,” “manly,” and “Amazon” derives from a much older tradition. Dugaw argued that praise for warrior women who dressed as men is related to the association between virtue and manliness as

⁶⁹ Dianne Dugaw, *Warrior Women and Popular Balladry: 1650-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 148.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

seen in the Latin root *vir*.⁷² The result of this association is that such virtue in women results from the “‘putting on’ of manliness.”⁷³ Although Dugaw was referring more literally to transvestism, the borrowing inherent in that action resembles the borrowed adjectives of real-life accounts from New England. The female who borrowed masculine traits in popular ballads after the mid-seventeenth century is quite different from Keith Luria’s depiction of Amazons and *femmes fortes* as extraordinary women remaining within, yet pushing the boundaries of their prescribed gender roles. Indeed, Dugaw’s borrowing dovetails nicely with the late-seventeenth century cultural shifts Walker and DeJean described.

One account that did involve cross-dressing, Samuel Penhallow’s tantalizing but brief description of the Oyster River incident, presents unique analytical opportunities but should be read cautiously. Both Ulrich and Ann Little have noted the evocative combination of gendered adjectives and cross-dressing in those lines but saw the author’s language as suggesting that dressing as men bestowed eligibility or capability with regard to the garrison’s defense.⁷⁴ Although these readings make valid points, particularly given the discourse of borrowing, it is important to understand the passage within a larger context of female participation in the wars of the northeastern borderlands. The cross-dressing itself was almost negligible in comparison to descriptions in Dugaw’s ballads. The women of Oyster River merely took their hair down and shoved hats on top of their

⁷² Dugaw, *Warrior Women and Popular Balladry*, 152.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Little, *Abraham in Arms*, 89; Ulrich, *Good Wives*, 178-179.

heads. The extent of the women's disguise likely was limited by the time the women had to prepare and—depending on the garrison's fortifications—the amount of a person's body visible behind the fortifications. If the disguises did play a critical role in the garrison's defense, it was for another reason entirely.

Defenders and Indians alike recognized the low likelihood of taking a fully staffed, alert garrison. Manipulating the enemy's perception of a garrison's strength was a valuable tactic employed in a number of attacks. In 1712, Esther Jones called out to a non-existent force from her garrison's watch box. Penhallow described her “courageously” “suppl[ying] the place of several men” when she cried “Here they are, come on come on.”⁷⁵ Believing the garrison had a full complement, the attackers retreated “terrified...without doing any further Mischief.”⁷⁶ Madeleine de Verchères used a similar tactic in her defense of her father's seigneurie in New France. Although in a number of instances women found success with this tactic, its use was not limited to women. Thomas Bickford single-handedly defended his garrison in 1694 by “Chang[ing] his Livery as frequently as he could; appearing Sometimes in one Coat, Sometimes in another, Sometimes in an Hat, and Sometimes in a Cap.” According to Cotton Mather, who recorded the incident, the attackers left after Bickford's plan “caused his Beseigers, to mistake this One for Many Defenders.”⁷⁷ When seen in this context, Penhallow's

⁷⁵ Penhallow, *The History of the Wars of New-England*, 73.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ C. Mather, *Decennium Luctuosum*, 122.

narrative may have simultaneously hinted at popular tropes while describing a common military tactic.

The discourse of borrowing is also visible, though in a less clear-cut fashion, in a poem from the 1670s. A satirical poem included at the end of Benjamin Thompson's 1676 history-in-verse of King Philip's War, *New Englands Crisis*, described a fascinating but unsubstantiated incident.⁷⁸ Published in both Boston and London—the title of the London edition was altered to include the sympathy-inducing word “tears”—*New England's Crisis* reflects a similar shift in language.⁷⁹ It told of a group of Bostonian women who, upon seeing that the “Neck” or strip of land connecting Boston to the mainland was vulnerable, rushed to erect fortifications. Tompson began his poem with the Latin line *Dux Fæmina Facti*, an allusion to Virgil's Dido and a medallion struck celebrating Elizabeth I's Armada victory in 1588.⁸⁰

Described as a “mock heroic” poem, “On a Fortification At Boston begun by Women” described the effort as “a Grand attempt” by “some Amazonian Dames.”⁸¹ These “Dames”

Contrive[d] whereby to glorify their names,
A Ruff for Boston Neck of mud and turfe,
Reaching from side to side from surfe to surfe,
Their nimble hands spin up like Christmas pyes,

⁷⁸ Benjamin Tompson, *New Englands Crisis. Or A brief narrative, of New-Englands Lamentable Estate at Present, Compar'd with the Former (But Few) Years of Prosperity...Poetically described* (Boston: John Foster, 1676); Benjamin Tompson, *New-England's Tears for her Present Miseries, or, A Late and True Relation of the Calamities of New-England Since April Last Past* (London: N.S., 1676).

⁷⁹ John C. Shields, *The American Aeneas: Classical Origins of the American Self* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2001), 28.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*; Tompson, *New Englands Crisis*, 40.

Their pastry by degrees on high doth rise.
 The wheel at home counts it an holiday,
 Since while the Mistris worketh it may play.
 A tribe of female hands, but manly hearts
 Forsake at home their pasty-crust and tarts.
 To knead the dirt, the samplers down they hurle,
 Their undulating silks they closely furl.
 The pick-axe one as a Commandress holds,
 While nother at her awkness gently scolds.
 One puffs and sweats, the other mutters why
 Cant you promove your work so fast as I?
 Some dig, some delve, and others hands do feel
 The little waggons weight with single wheel.
 And least some fainting fits the weak surprize,
 They want no sack nor cakes, they are more wise.
 These brave essayes draw forth Male stonger hands
 More like to Dawbers than to Martial bands:
 These do the work, and sturdy bulwarks raise,
 But the beginners well deserve the praise.

Composed at the close of the first major war in which New England's women figured in wartime policy and played defensive roles, the poem may reflect an early ambivalence regarding these policies as well as the shift in language regarding viragos that Garthine Walker noted. Although still Amazons in their own right, the women take on a role similar to that of the deputy husband. Using household imagery, the author playfully described them sewing a collar for Boston's neck, setting aside their embroidery in favor of pick-axes. As a "tribe of female hands, but manly hearts," Tompson's women represent the blurring of the household and the military, the Amazons, Jaels, and viragos of the mid-seventeenth century as well as the "borrowers" of the end of that century. Even as the language used to describe fighting women in New England shifted toward the

discourse of “borrowing,” events in New England reinforced the need for the continuous presence of women and children in fortified frontier communities.

The protracted nature of King William and Queen Anne’s Wars combined with northern New England’s dedication to its expansionist program and a new Catholic enemy resulted in even greater emphasis placed on the presence of families in garrison houses. As quotes from Cotton Mather’s tract and John Houghton’s petition in Chapter One demonstrated, life in fortified communities—especially when several families crammed into in a single garrison house—was brutal. Mather’s acknowledgment of their “uneasy condition, when you are Thrust and Heap’d up together in Garrisons, where the Common Comforts of your Lives must needs have an Extreme Abridgment brought upon them” and Houghton’s complaint that “neither men nor women can doe but very little towards the supply of their familyes: their being so much time spent in watching warding & many allarrums” had a profound affect on morale.⁸² Writers in New England turned to propaganda as well as legal remedies to discourage desertion.

Indeed, Mather’s passage above is from a longer work of propaganda meant to offer advice and bolster the spirits of garrison families. Supposedly the result of requests from desperate frontier families, *Frontiers Well-Ordered* uses the idea of order as a unifying theme. Much as the home was indistinguishable from the front, the well-ordered

⁸² Cotton Mather, *Frontiers Well-Defended. An Essay to Direct the Frontiers of a Countrey Exposed unto the Incursions of a Barbarous Enemy, How to Behave themselves in their Uneasy Station* (Boston: T. Green, 1707). Early American Imprints, Series 1: Evans, 1639-1800, accessed online; “Petition of John Houghton,” *The Acts and Resolves, Public and Private, of the Province of the Massachusetts Bay* (Boston: Wright & Potter, 1892), 7: 445.

frontier became bound up with the well-ordered community and family. At the same time, the presence of whole families—not merely men—on the frontier boosted morale throughout New England society. In this tract, Mather recommended piety as a solution to the problems of frontier families, noting that “Well-Ordered Families” might set positive examples for any “Wild, and Vain, and Lewd” soldiers sent to live within their communities.⁸³ Again empathizing, Mather observed that “such continual Watching and Warding, as you are put upon, must needs tire our an Ordinary Strength, and it cannot be wondred at, if some Remissness do grow upon your tired Vigilance.”⁸⁴ He equated piety and a community that kept watch for internal weaknesses with a community successful in avoiding surprise attacks by the enemy.⁸⁵

After recommending chastity and sobriety as appropriate virtues in frontier towns, he wrapped up his tract with a longer discussion of the importance of the well-ordered family in the defense of the frontier. The association between a well-ordered New England family and a well-ordered frontier is supported by Ann Little’s argument that English captives of Indians frequently complained about their perceived “disorder” of Indian communities.⁸⁶ To prevent the catastrophic failure of a garrison community that frequently accompanied capture, Mather recommended family prayer, noting that even “the very Salvages, by whom you are annoy’d, of whom you are afraid; These do

⁸³ C. Mather, *Frontiers Well-Defended*, 21.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁸⁶ Little, *Abraham in Arms*, ch. 3.

maintain a Family Worship among them.”⁸⁷ Of course, this “Family Worship” was not well-ordered and Protestant but disorderly and Catholic. For Mather, only the prayers of a New England Protestant family could counteract the Catholic family prayers of French-allied Indians. According to Mather, families that prayed together would also be less tempted by Catholicism if captured and separated. Using words associated with more military aspects of the frontier, Mather urged settler-soldiers to “Fortify them with strong Preservation...that you may have a People of Well-Instructed Protestants.”⁸⁸

In emphasizing an association between family, religious confession, and war, Mather’s words represent an important cultural transition. Ann Little suggests that during the first Anglo-French war, King William’s War, “English depictions of frontier warfare and captivity shifted dramatically,” focusing less on threats posed by Indians and more on the dangers of “the French and their Catholicism as the chief threat to the New England way.”⁸⁹ Indeed, these issues were so “intertwined” that “the fear of being compelled to embrace Catholicism” was inseparable from other frontier struggles.⁹⁰ The strong ties between manhood, Protestantism, family governance, and nationalism demonstrate why the well-ordered family was critical to the well-ordered frontier.

In light of evidence presented up to this point, it is not surprising that Mather did not consider stories of women maiming or killing the enemy a sign of family disorder.

The loss of English women to the French was a great blow to the patriarchy and

⁸⁷ C. Mather, *Frontiers Well-Defended*, 45.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁸⁹ Little, *Abraham in Arms*, 127.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 129.

Protestantism that were the foundations of New England society.⁹¹ If the return of a woman from Canada was a political, social, and spiritual victory for New England, women who took up arms to defend the New England way of life might serve as inspirational figures in these lengthy military struggles. Indeed, along with other writers, Mather held up these women as examples to follow. The Amazons of Wells and Oyster River were such examples, as were the women in Tompson's poem and the infamous Hannah Dustan.

Captivity narratives traditionally have provided scholars' primary evidence of women's wartime experiences while also hinting at behaviors considered proper for women in colonial New England. As Teresa Toulouse argued, captivity narratives showcased positive qualities such as obedience, submission, and "loyal[ty] to the tradition of the New England 'fathers' and their God."⁹² The captivity narrative's popularity—then and now—has contributed to perceptions that acceptable women's behavior was limited to behaviors modeled in those narratives. However, as we have seen, captivity was not the only wartime situation in which women's behavior was modeled, nor were passivity and contemplativeness the only possible behaviors.

No study of women's participation in New England's wars in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries would be complete without a consideration of the ubiquitous Hannah Dustan. Dustan became famous for killing and scalping ten sleeping

⁹¹ Little, *Abraham in Arms*, 164-165.

⁹² Teresa A. Toulouse, *The Captive's Position: Female Authority, Male Identity, and Royal Authority in Colonial New England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 9.

Indians—men, women, and children—in 1697 with the help of her nurse, Mary Neff, and a boy, Samuel Lennarson. Dustan had been recovering from childbirth when she was taken from her bed. Her celebrity was the result of an extraordinary early modern propaganda campaign organized by Hannah, her husband, and the Massachusetts elite.⁹³ Dustan scholars have focused largely on the complicated Cotton Mather’s accounts of Dustan’s exploits, a reliance that has produced a sometimes convoluted and tormented understanding of an incident which many colonial officials appear to have taken in stride. Hannah’s story had a role to play outside of Mather’s machinations, and the propaganda value of Dustan’s actions at home and abroad are best understood when examining Mather’s text alongside other colonial reactions.⁹⁴

The word “awkwardly” perhaps best describes the way in which scholars have seen Mather’s account of Hannah’s story as fitting into existing early American narratives. Ulrich suggested that “the real Hannah Duston...fitted awkwardly” within such “frames.” She argued that Mather’s use of the Jael story and later nineteenth-century retellings which emphasized domesticity and motherhood helped authors and readers come to terms with Hannah’s violent, potentially threatening behavior.⁹⁵ Likewise, Pauline Turner Strong suggested that Mather “improved” Dustan’s story so it better

⁹³ See Derounian-Stedola for another take on Dustan’s celebrity. Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola, “The Captive as Celebrity,” in *Lives Out of Letters: Essays on American Literary Biography and Documentation in Honor of Robert N. Hudspet* (Cranbury, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2004).

⁹⁴ Mather published accounts of Hannah Dustan’s exploits three times: C. Mather, *Humiliations Follow’d with Deliverance* (Boston: B. Green & F. Allen, 1697); C. Mather, *Decennium Luctuosum*; C. Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana* (London: Thomas Parkhurst, 1702). Early American Imprints, Series 1: Evans, 1639-1800, accessed online.

⁹⁵ Ulrich, *Good Wives*, 167-172. Ulrich’s allusions to Hannah’s service and heroism were much more on the mark, however.

“conformed to the image of a desolate and passive New England,” an image she believed Mather hoped to parlay into a “call for collective humility and repentance.”⁹⁶ Kathryn Derounian-Stodola even questioned whether Dustan’s “socially sanctioned act” was “heroic” or “deviant” and emphasized Hannah’s dysfunctional, abusive family of origin.⁹⁷

In perhaps the most thorough discussion of Dustan’s exploits, Teresa Toulouse’s *The Captive’s Position* placed Dustan’s actions as told by Mather within a setting of generational conflict, a political identity crisis surrounding the loss of Massachusetts’ charter and wrangling over suitable governors. Toulouse suggested that Mather, distrusting Hannah as a women, non-church member, and settler, replaced her actions in his narrative with those of the Biblical Jael and attributed her success not to “her individual agency” but to providence.⁹⁸ Toulouse also noted the differences between Mather’s account of Dustan in a sermon—with its theme of collective humiliation, its lengthy description of the deeds of Hannah’s husband, and its replacement of Hannah by Jael—and his later history, *Decennium Luctuosum*. Intriguingly, Toulouse suggested that Mather may have used some of his positive stories about active women such as Dustan and Elizabeth Heard in *Decennium Luctuosum* to chastise “certain colonial men’s inabilities, cowardice and procrastination,” failings that might lead to a dangerous breakdown of order on the frontier.⁹⁹ In keeping with the complex workings of Mather’s

⁹⁶ Pauline Turner Strong, *Captive Selves, Captivating Others* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999), 126.

⁹⁷ Derounian-Stodola, “The Captive as Celebrity,” 73.

⁹⁸ Toulouse, *The Captive’s Position*, 86-92.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 106.

mind, Toulouse posited that stories of women's courage might simultaneously have served "as a rebuke to other colonial mothers who let their children die."¹⁰⁰

Regardless of Mather's complex and ambivalent retellings, official reaction to Dustan's actions suggest immediate and unquestioned acceptance and promotion of her deeds. As Thomas Hutchinson later wrote, "the fame of so uncommon an action...soon spread throughout the continent."¹⁰¹ Members of the male New England elite ran to their diaries to record their meetings with Hannah. The powerful judge Samuel Sewall mentioned Hannah twice in his diary. Sewall's April 29 entry was dedicated to Dustan, the day "signalised by the Atchievment of Hannah Dustin, Mary Neff, and Samuel Lennerson."¹⁰² He wasted little time in arranging to meet with the trio. According to Sewall's diary, three days later, "Hannah Dustan came to see us." Dustan was accompanied by Neff and Lennarson but was the sole recipient of a gift of a "part of Connecticut Flax."¹⁰³ Her greatest reward, according to Mather, came from Governor Nicholson of Maryland who "sent 'em a ver generous Token o his Favour."¹⁰⁴ This token, a pewter tankard, reportedly held "a little more than a beer quart" and featured a portrait of William III on the side.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ Toulouse, *The Captive's Position*, 113.

¹⁰¹ Thomas Hutchinson *The History of the Province of Massachusetts-Bay, from the Charter of King William and Queen Mary, in 1691, until the Year 1750* (Boston: Thomas & John Fleet, 1767), 2: 108. Early American Imprints, Series 1: Evans, 1639-1800, accessed online.

¹⁰² Samuel Sewall, "Diary of Samuel Sewall: 1674-1729, Volume 1: 1674-1700," in *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 5th ser., vol. 5 (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1878), 452.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 453.

¹⁰⁴ C. Mather, *Decennium Luctuosum*, 143.

¹⁰⁵ Benson J. Lossing, "The Hannah Dustin and Mary Corliss Neff Tankard," in *Potter's American Monthly* (Philadelphia: John E. Potter & Company, 1875), 4-5: 339-340.

Positive opinions of Dustan were not confined to powerful politicians and ministers. The Braintree mason John Marshall noted in an April 1697 entry of his diary that Hannah and her companions had returned with a gun and “some other things.” The timing of Hannah’s success, he believed, was not random. As Marshall wrote, “this was done Just about the time the councill of this province had concluded on a day of fasting and prayer.”¹⁰⁶ Though it is impossible to know with any certainty, rather than removing Hannah’s agency by attributing her deeds to God, John Marshall’s entry seems to suggest that in response to prayer and humility, God might work through either a man or a woman to achieve Zion’s military success.

Although the overwhelming public and political response to Hannah’s actions was remarkable, perhaps the most fascinating aspect of the entire affair was Hannah and Thomas Dustan’s successful self-promotion. That Hannah Dustan returned with the scalps of her victims could only mean that she hoped to collect a financial reward. Unfortunately for Hannah and her husband—who had lost most of his assets in the attack—the bounty on scalps had expired mere months before Hannah’s return. Determined to collect a reward, Thomas Dustan prepared a petition to the General Court pleading for an exception for his wife.

Dustan framed the exploits of Hannah and Mary Neff (who he mentioned in parentheses) in dramatic terms. According to Dustan, both women had “been disposed and assisted by heaven to doe an extraordinary Action.” He acknowledged that the law

¹⁰⁶ John Marshall, *Extracts from John Marshall’s Diary: January, 1689-December, 1711*, ed. Samuel A. Green (Cambridge: John Wilson and Son, 1900), 18.

had expired but argued that “the merrit of the Action still remains the Same.” Playing politics, he noted that “it seems a matter of universall desire thro the whole Province that it should not pass unrecompensed.” Finally, Dustan appealed to his own pitiful circumstances, “Los[ing] his Estate in that Calamity...render[ing] him the fitter object for what consideracion the publick Bounty shall judge proper.” He closed with a reminder that the issue at hand stretched beyond the Dustans and Neffs. It also affected “the Generall Interest.”¹⁰⁷

Dustan appears to play to the ideas Diane Dugaw describes in her work on warrior women in popular balladry. Although Dustan and Neff had been assisted by heaven, they had also been “disposed” to commit an “extraordinary Action.” The use of the word “extraordinary” is reminiscent of Dugaw’s argument that women who took excelled at the role of woman warrior were exceptional or, in this case, extraordinary. Dustan’s use of the word was by no means the last time a petitioner described a woman’s actions in the border wars as extraordinary.

On June 16, 1667, the General Court approved a reward of 25 pounds for Dustan, and 12 pounds, 10 shillings each for Neff and Lennarson. The council agreed that the money was a “reward for their service in slaying divers of those barbarous salvages.”¹⁰⁸ Just as the term “extraordinary” became a common word in such petitions, so too did the word “service.” The word “service” implies a kind of social belonging, suggesting that

¹⁰⁷ “Petition of Thomus Dustun,” in *The Acts and Resolves, Public and Private, of the Province of the Massachusetts Bay* (Boston: Wright & Potter, 1892), 7: 562.

¹⁰⁸ *The Acts and Resolves, Public and Private, of the Province of the Massachusetts Bay* (Boston: Wright & Potter, 1892), 7: 153.

both Dustan and Neff were part of a larger wartime effort. In the decades to come, other women—and men—would petition for land grants based on “service.” As we will see in a later chapter, Hannah and Thomas Dustan would continue to milk the fame Hannah gained from her captivity and escape for over thirty years.

Although stories of women’s participation in the border wars provided female-role models and boosted morale in New England, these accounts also had value at the imperial level. On a number of occasions, Cotton Mather sent reports of women’s participation back to England for his own political purposes. Mather held a long-standing grudge against Massachusetts’ crown-appointed governor Joseph Dudley. Dudley, appointed to the governorship in 1702, initially had the support of many prominent New Englanders, including Increase and Cotton Mather. Dudley’s supporters had hoped that as a native New Englander, Dudley would eschew the imperial tendencies of other recent crown-appointed governors. Although Dudley was born in New England, his time in London and in other British colonies colored his perspective on his new job. His tendency toward thinking “imperially” and his rejection of Puritanism quickly disappointed many of his colonial supporters. Horrified by Dudley’s worldliness, Cotton Mather spent the rest of Dudley’s tenure attempting to destroy his career and reputation.¹⁰⁹

Determined to remove Dudley from office, Mather published a series of attacks in London that included accounts of women’s participation in the border wars. One such

¹⁰⁹ Toulouse, *Captive’s Position*, 121-123.

tract recounted an incident involving Hannah Bradley of Haverhill who, as we saw in Chapter One, attempted to avoid a second captivity by throwing boiling soap on her attacker. Never one to beat around the bush, Mather titled this 1707 publication: *A memorial of the present deplorable state of New-England, with the disadvantages it lyes under by the male-administration of their present Governour, Joseph Dudley, Esq. and his son Paul, &c.*¹¹⁰

In this colorful document, Mather appended his account of Hannah Bradley's experience to a longer tract accusing Governor Dudley of conspiring with the French and their Indian allies and included affidavits as proof of Dudley's wrongdoing. The second portion of the treatise, described on the first page as "A Faithful but Melancholy Account of several Barbarities lately Committed upon Her Majesty's Subjects," clearly ties Dudley's supposed perfidy with attacks he purportedly allowed on settlements on New England's frontier. In his transition from the first to the second part of the treatise, Mather argued that "for a Governour to furnish the Enemy with Powder and Shot, & to destroy his own Country-men is a Wretch not only fit to be Discarded, but to be for ever forgotten among Mankind."¹¹¹

In the parade of tearjerking accounts that followed Mather's accusations of Dudley, Hannah Bradley's story occupied a place of honor. Mather noted that Hannah had previously lived as a captive and hinted ominously "But the Clouds return after the

¹¹⁰ Cotton Mather, *A memorial of the present deplorable state of New-England, with the disadvantages it lyes under by the male-administration of their present Governour, Joseph Dudley, Esq. and his son Paul, &c.* (London, 1707). Accessed in Eighteenth Century Collections Online.

¹¹¹ C. Mather, *A memorial of the present deplorable state of New-England*, 30.

Rain.” After this introduction, Mather recounted how Hannah killed an armed Indian by “tak[ing] the opportunity to pour a good quantity of scalding Soap on him” while an unidentified man—who was quickly killed—held him down.¹¹² Mather was eager to share that after scalding a second Indian with her remaining soap, Bradley, who was only six weeks from giving birth, offered to take her sister’s place in captivity. After a description of Bradley’s unpleasant journey across New England in the winter without the benefit of snowshoes, Mather emphasized her bravery in giving birth, her piety, and her rescue.¹¹³ Mather followed his lengthy account of Hannah’s experiences with a letter from a captive in Port-Royal, a bookend to a treatise aimed at bringing down Governor Dudley. His emphasis on Hannah as a “Vertuous Woman” who killed and maimed two men supposedly in league with Dudley before suffering a second, lengthy captivity underscored his belief that publishing stories such as Hannah’s might have profound political effects abroad.

In another treatise aimed at replacing Governor Dudley and published the following year, Mather recounted a July 1707 incident involving a mob of women who met a group of officers returning to Boston after an ill-conceived attack on Port-Royal in Acadia. Describing the women of Boston as “The Good Women in Boston,” Mather praised them for confronting Dudley’s forces, and described Dudley’s officers as cowards and traitors, hearkening back to his 1707 publication. By emphasizing the female mob’s humiliation of Dudley’s men and suggesting that their actions represented ‘The Cry of the

¹¹² C. Mather, *A memorial of the present deplorable state of New-England*, 33.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 33-36.

People” that “must be Satisfyed,” Mather at once attempted to politically demasculinize Dudley while arguing that the entire city of Boston supported his removal.¹¹⁴

Whether employed to boost morale or meddle in transatlantic politics, New Englanders saw the value in accounts of women’s participation in the border wars. In stories meant to lift New Englanders’ spirits, such as incidents involving women fortifying Boston’s harbor, defending the garrison at Wells, and the publicity surrounding Hannah Dustan’s exploits, authors tended to praise the women and reinforce traditional gender, settlement, and military systems which relied upon women’s participation. Although Cotton Mather’s attempts to use similar stories to destroy his arch-rival appear less interested in boosting morale or encouraging such actions, Mather never called the propriety of the women’s actions into question and their value as role-models remained intact.

As this chapter has shown, a wide range of authors from New France and New England saw the value in deploying these stories for financial, military, and political gain on a transatlantic scale. Jesuit missionaries in New France employed Reformation-era language that cast strong pious women as Amazons and *femmes fortes* to encourage wealthy French women to donate to the mission. At the same time, the Jesuits portrayed converted Indian women as spiritual Amazons—evidence of a successful mission worthy of support. In New England, women willing to take up arms to defend the colonies’

¹¹⁴ Cotton Mather, *The deplorable state of New-England, by reason of a covetous and treacherous governour* (London, 1708, reprinted Boston: 1721), 34-35. Early American Imprints, Series 1: Evans, 1639-1800, accessed online.

Protestant, male-dominated hierarchy served as role-models in conflicts fought against dangerous, Othered enemies. During periods of intracolonial political conflict, authors such as Cotton Mather used positive depictions of women's participation in attempts to influence imperial politics. Although most of the authors of this propaganda—as well as its subjects—did not live to see the outcome of the series of conflicts in which they participated, their stories did survive. In Chapter Five, we will see how these stories continued to hold great cultural meaning as new authors retold the same stories, though with slight differences. These alterations would reflect changes in attitudes regarding religion, empire, domesticity, and gender that developed during the eighteenth century.

CHAPTER 4:

WAR, WOMEN, AND EMPIRE IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY NEW FRANCE AND NEW ENGLAND

In the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries, both New England and New France engaged in devastating regional and imperial wars that ultimately bound those colonies more tightly to their European counterparts. New France's disastrous Beaver Wars against the Iroquois led to the French Crown's seizure of the colony in the 1660s. In New England, King Philip's War, the loss of Massachusetts' charter, and the success of men such as Governor Dudley in creating closer ties to Britain resulted in a loss of some colonial autonomy. Beginning with the first of four major intercolonial wars, King William's War in 1689, both countries would take an increasing interest in the military and economic affairs of their colonies in the northeastern borderlands. As we will see, these stronger imperial connections had profound consequences for military strategy, economic policy, and gender roles during times of war.

Following the royal takeover of the colony in 1663, France forged ever-closer ties to New France. Although France's imperial wars with Britain beginning in the 1680s would have a profound impact on military strategy, it was only after the peace with the Iroquois in 1701 that France and New France turned their attention away from the forts and seigneuries of the St. Lawrence Valley. No longer threatened by Iroquois raids, Canada looked toward the sea, toward fortifications at Quebec and Acadia to protect it from the English naval attacks that became the primary threat to New France's security.

This major shift in strategy and policy had important ramifications regarding women's participation in war-making. As Iroquois attacks on settlers and seigneuries in the St. Lawrence Valley ceased, accounts of women joining battles and defending their family forts disappeared abruptly. Women who lived in the fortified coastal towns took shelter within their walls, while France's increased imperial presence and command structure negated the necessity of women taking command of the fortresses. Although women in rural Acadia did experience English raids throughout the eighteenth-century, sources are scarce and insufficient to reach firm conclusions. Through the Seven Years' War, women in New France continued to play roles in the public sphere. Due to the relative peace that persisted in the St. Lawrence Valley for most of this period, their military roles were largely economic and bureaucratic rather than physical in nature.

In New England, Native raids on settlers' homes continued throughout the period. Over the course of the early to mid-eighteenth century, colonists experienced a strengthened British imperial presence, as well as changes in ideas regarding the role of the monarchy, the identities of civilians and soldiers, and a growing distinction between home and front. Both male and female settlers on the frontier found themselves transformed from settler-soldiers to suffering subjects of a father-king. Although the task of fighting on the frontier increasingly fell to provincial and British soldiers, women continued to defend their homes, themselves, and their families. Despite the emergence of a separation between home and front, women's physical participation in these conflicts was never prohibited. Rather, it was seen as an unfortunate consequence of a lack of

British military support. This chapter explores how the above changes altered women's roles in war-making, tracing the origins of the changes and investigating the sometimes meandering paths they took during the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries.

***“Commerce Scandaleux”*: Trade, Treason, and Sex in the French Atlantic**

“Commerce Scandaleux” is a term that evokes several of this section's major themes. The French word *commerce* is a particularly rich term that can describe intimate human interaction as well as trade. An imperfect but useful English example is the word “intercourse,” which has been used to describe social and economic relationships in addition to its more modern association with sex. Many French sources that appear in this chapter use the term “*commerce*” to describe a variety of instances of women's participation in New France's wars, ranging from sexual affairs tinged with illicit trade and treason to female shopkeepers required to contribute to the defense of the colony.

This portion of the chapter focuses on New France and examines closer imperial ties between France and New France, a growing French military presence, and the shift to Quebec and Acadia as the primary targets for English attacks. It explores two trends which began in the later seventeenth century but became more conspicuous in the early to mid-eighteenth century. Both reflect changes in women's roles in war-making in New France and both are related to increased connections to empire, to the Atlantic world, and to commerce. The first section traces how concerns in France and New France over affairs between officers and Canadian and French women seemingly threatened security and morality, combining elements of sex, treason, and trade. The second section

examines women's financial roles in protecting New France, from increasing demands on women to support the construction of fortifications to wealthy women who bankrolled the construction of naval ships that fought for New France throughout the Atlantic world.

In 1711, Paul Mascarene, a French Huguenot serving in the British occupying force at Port-Royal in Acadia, reported a remarkable encounter with an Acadian woman. The woman called herself "Madame Freneuse" and had arrived "from the other side of the Bay of Fundy in a Birch Canoo."¹ Accompanying the mysterious woman across the frigid waters of the bay in mid-winter was "an Indian and a young Lad, her son." Freneuse claimed that starvation had driven her to submit to English invaders, "forc'd to come to try whether she could be admitted to live under the new Govenmt."² According to Mascarene, she was warmly welcomed by Sir Charles Hobby, second in command of the British forces in Port-Royal, and given freedom to move about the settlement.

Mascarene later came to realize that Madame Freneuse was not who she said she was. Indeed, Mascarene believed Madame Freneuse was a French spy. French leaders, unwilling to simply hand Port-Royal over to the English, had dispatched Baron de Saint-Castin to lead a joint Abenaki-Acadian resistance campaign. Saint-Castin's forces hindered British efforts to rebuild the fortifications around Port-Royal while seizing opportunities to attack exposed British troops. After a particularly successful attack in late spring, word reached Mascarene that some of Madame Freneuse's sons were among

¹ Paul Mascarene, "A Narrative of Events at Annapolis from the Capture in Oct., 1710, till Sept., 1711," in *Collections of the Nova Scotia Historical Society* (Halifax: Wm. McNab, 1885), 4: 78.

² *Ibid.*, 78.

the raiding party and “came to fetch their mother from the lower town the night that followed the Defeat of our Party.”³ The success of the raid combined with the suspicious extraction of Madame Freneuse led British officials to conclude that she had been “Sent by Orders from Canada...to keep the French in a Ferment and make them backward in supplying the Garrison with any necessary’s, and pry into and give an Account of our Secrets, till occasion should offer of endeavouring to drive us out of the Country.”⁴

Madame Freneuse’s adventures as a possible double agent working for a French guerrilla force merely capped off a remarkable life. Her life was dominated by a nearly decade-long controversy surrounding a torrid affair with a naval officer that drew the attention of Louis XIV and resulted in banishment from Acadia. Indeed, whether double agent or traitor, Madame Freneuse’s decision to join the English at Port-Royal undoubtedly stemmed from the scandal, which erupted in 1702. The scandal, which spread from Acadia to Canada as well as to France, was merely one of the more dramatic examples of Canadian, Acadian, and French women whose sexual encounters with military personnel—particularly officers and government officials—sparked fears of immorality, disorder, and even treason.

By the first decade of the eighteenth century, sex and reproduction in New France had been a matter of official interest for over forty years. The French Crown became increasingly concerned with the small size of the colony’s population following the royal takeover in 1663. It attempted to jumpstart population growth by supplying the colony

³ Mascarene, “A Narrative of Events at Annapolis,” 82.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 78.

with marriageable women and enticing French soldiers and officers to stay in New France after they completed their service.⁵ As a result of this preoccupation with creating conditions favorable for reproduction, the colony faced an ever-present tension regarding who was having sex with whom. The intersection of the military with settlement, sex, and security resulted in increasing anxiety over inappropriate or disorderly relationships between Canadian women and French soldiers and officers. By the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, concerns regarding such liaisons erupted into scandals that combined elements of sex and treason and touched women and officers across the social spectrum.

As early as 1688, the Provost of Quebec heard a case regarding Jacquette Moreau, a woman accused of living a “bad life.”⁶ According to court documents, Moreau, the wife of Adrien Lecomte, had created a public scandal that extended beyond her own home. These accusations appear to have stemmed from an affair Moreau had with a garrison soldier named Dupré. The trial documents claim that the effects of Moreau’s “bad life” and her sexual liaison with a military officer had tainted both her neighborhood and the entire city of Quebec. The idea that a sexual affair with a member of the military could threaten both the morality of a city and the security of the colony would be echoed in later scandals.

⁵ Allan Greer, *The People of New France* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 16-17.

⁶ Bibliothèque et Archives Nationales Québec, Fonds Prévôté de Québec, "Registres de la Prévôté de Québec" series, Procès de Jacquette Moreau, 21 August 1688, reproduction copy number M48/5, folio 2-2v.

Moreau's affair surfaced at a particularly inconvenient time. The trial was held in August of 1688 and France would go to war the next month when Louis XIV invaded Germany. Tensions between New England and New France were also rising, accompanied by smaller skirmishes. The devastating American front of that war would erupt in full several months later. Quebec's provost had no mercy for Moreau, who he feared would create a "new scandal," and sentenced her to jail time and banishment.⁷ Concerns over affairs between women and soldiers such as Moreau and Dupré only increased during the devastating wars of the following two decades.

In 1699, the King—through his minister—expressed concern to the new Governor General of New France, Louis-Hector de Callières, that "places of debauchery" had been established in Quebec. He also wrote that the city was rife with "public scandals" caused by officers in the military consorting with Canadian women.⁸ As Philip Riley has shown, Louis became increasingly concerned with morality in his realm during this period, influenced at least in part by members of the clergy as well as by his mistress and future wife, Madame de Maintenon.⁹ The King may have also been responding to complaints from the Bishop of Quebec, who wrote of "public places of debauchery that" were responsible for "a very great scandal." The Bishop also reported that the wife of an

⁷ Procès de Jacqueline Moreau, folio 2-2v.

⁸ "Instructions pour le Sieur Chevalier de Callières, Gouverneur et Lieutenant General pour le Roi" [May 25, 1699], in *Collection de Manuscrits Contenant Lettres, Mémoires, et autres Documents Historiques Relatifs à la Nouvelle-France: Recueillis aux Archives de la Province de Québec, ou Copiés à l'Étranger* (Quebec: A. Côté, 1884), 2: 322.

⁹ Philip F. Riley, *A Lust for Virtue: Louis XIV's Attack on Sin in Seventeenth-Century France* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001).

officer who had returned to France had established a household with another officer.¹⁰

Louis ordered officials in Quebec to consult the Bishop and Intendant and devise a plan to put a stop to “these disorders” by any practical means.¹¹

Officials in both New England and New France connected religious and sexual morality to military security and national and confessional loyalties. Unlike in New England, where Cotton Mather fretted over the moral effects of the presence of homegrown militiamen posted in frontier garrison houses, French leaders feared sexual encounters in the fortified cities that became increasingly vital components of French defense. In Montreal, where fur-traders returned from a wilderness seemingly teeming with temptation, rumors of liaisons between Montreal’s women and these men—as well as Indian men—were cause for concern.¹² As an increasingly important military center, Quebec, too, became a focal point for anxiety over inappropriate sexual liaisons.

Ridding Quebec and Montreal of this supposed debauchery was part of Louis’ larger vision for the colony and its new Governor. Louis instructed de Callières to fight drunkenness, disorder, and military unreadiness while promoting morality, piety, and discipline. Louis also believed that “fortifying” Montreal’s religious establishment would strengthen the presence of the Christian religion in the town closest to Iroquois territory.

¹⁰ Library and Archives Canada, Fonds des Colonies, R11577-4-2-F, "Correspondance générale" series, volume 120/1, Extrait des lettres particulières du Canada et des placets particuliers, 1698-1699, reproduction copy number F-121, folio 46v.

¹¹ “Instructions pour le Sieur Chevalier de Callières, Gouverneur et Lieutenant General pour le Roi” [May 25, 1699], in *Collection de Manuscrits Contenant Lettres, Mémoires, et autres Documents Historiques Relatifs à la Nouvelle-France: Recueillis aux Archives de la Province de Québec, ou Copiés à l’Étranger* (Quebec: A. Coté, 1884), 2: 322.

¹² Leslie Choquette, *Frenchmen into Peasants: Modernity and Tradition in the Peopling of French Canada* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 143-144.

Louis hoped that potential Iroquois converts might “submit” to his own rule as well.¹³

These instructions reflected the increasingly moralistic Louis’ belief that a combination of sacred and secular order with morality and military strength would bring the colony prosperity and security.¹⁴

Concern over affairs with soldiers was not limited to Quebec, with its supposed places of debauchery, nor was it restricted to women of lower social status. Indeed, the higher the rank of the participants, the greater the resulting scandal and scope of the perceived danger. This was particularly true when the women lived in somewhat liminal Acadia. Up to this point, with the exception of the early incident involving Madame La Tour, Acadia has been largely absent from this dissertation. Close ties to the local Mi’kmaq and geographic distance from the conflicts between the Iroquois and the French/Huron/Algonquin coalition prevented in Acadia the kind of violence Canada experienced. Additionally, until the late seventeenth century, England and France would avoid going to war, another factor contributing to the relative peace Acadia enjoyed. Indeed, Acadia developed throughout the seventeenth century as a French colony with strong ties to Massachusetts.

Although the Acadians largely were French culturally, for much of its early history it was dependent upon a strong, if ambivalent, trade relationship with Massachusetts to the south. A sort of “border colony,” Acadia began to feel the pressures of that status only after King Philip’s War in 1676. That same war largely secured

¹³ Choquette, *Frenchmen into Peasants*, 320.

¹⁴ For an account of his efforts to reform France, see: Riley, *A Lust for Virtue*.

southern New England for the English while reorienting New England's frontier exclusively toward French territories, a change that would have profound implications for Acadia. Indeed, Naomi Griffiths argued that this shift "fundamentally changed the relationship between Acadia and New England by encouraging the belief in Massachusetts and Maine that the French-speaking and Catholic settlers of Acadia were the covert allies of the Amerindians" who would restate their claim to the lands north of Massachusetts after King Philip's War.¹⁵ As Griffiths wrote, "what had been a porous border on the north-eastern approaches of New England was now becoming a much more impermeable frontier."¹⁶ In the years leading up to the outbreak of King William's War in 1689, Acadia would be drawn firmly into France's purview while becoming a prize New England greatly desired.¹⁷

Acadia became increasingly French in the late seventeenth century, though concerns of the allegiance of French subjects in Acadia, already visible in the Madame de la Tour incident, continued to trouble French officials. The affair between Madame Freneuse and Bonaventure that shook Port-Royal beginning in 1702 tapped into those fears that both debauchery and questionable allegiances might pose a significant risk to the French Empire. For the first few years of Freneuse and Bonaventure's scandal, it was paralleled by a "twin" scandal involving the wife of a French notary and the Governor of Acadia, Jacques-François de Montebon de Brouillan. Both of these scandals included

¹⁵ NES Griffiths, *From Migrant to Acadian: A North American Border People, 1604-1755* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005), 115.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 133-134.

salacious details and high-ranking officials known to have connections throughout the Atlantic world, including Boston. The fallout of the scandals would bring down the most powerful men in Acadia and banish their lovers.

Madame Freneuse was born Louise Guyon and married Mathieu Damours as a nineteen year old widow on October 1, 1686.¹⁸ Damours, the seigneur of Freneuse in Acadia, was the son of Mathieu Damours, the seigneur of Chauffours and a member of New France's *Conseil Souverain*.¹⁹ Although a second son, Mathieu soon secured a place on the *Conseil* after the death of his father.²⁰ After moving with her husband to their seigneury in Acadia, Madame Freneuse's husband died in 1696 following an English attack on Acadia that devastated his seigneury.²¹ Several years after her husband's death, Madame Freneuse moved to Port-Royal where she began her affair with Simon-Pierre Denys de Bonaventure.

Her liaison with Bonaventure, a naval officer who also served as the lieutenant governor of the colony, first appeared in the historical record in 1702. In a letter largely concerned with Acadia's fortifications and military operations, Mathieu de Goutin, a high-ranking royal official, dedicated a sizable section of the letter to discussing an

¹⁸ Registre de Notre-Dame de Québec (1686), 178, *Quebec Vital and Church Records (Drouin Collection), 1621-1967*, www.ancestry.com, accessed online.

¹⁹ Registre de Notre-Dame de Québec (1686), 178.

²⁰ Bibliothèque et Archives Nationales Québec, Fonds Conseil Souverain, "Jugements et Délibérations" series, Commission au sieur de Villeray pour informer de la vie, des moeurs et de la religion catholique apostolique et romaine de Mathieu Damours..., 10 Jul 1690, reproduction copy number M9/3, folio 73-73v.

²¹ Library and Archives Canada, Fonds des Colonies, R11577-4-2-F, "Correspondance générale" series, volume 14, Relation d'une expédition anglaise en Acadie - prise de Menagoèche, 18 October 1697, reproduction copy number F-14, folio 16.

extramarital affair.²² He noted that Port-Royal was in an uproar over the birth of a son to Madame Freneuse and de Bonaventure. The scandal had created “great disorder” and was causing parents to fear that their children would be damaged by the example it set. Their son, Antoine, was born in September 1703 and baptized two months later as the “natural son” of “Louise Dion de Freneuse.”²³

The Bishop of Quebec weighed in on the matter, proposing the banishment of Madame Freneuse, “who had been the cause of much scandal.”²⁴ He referred to her “*mauvais commerce*,” a phrase that suggested an immoral sexual relationship. In his letter, the Bishop suggested sending Madame Freneuse and her children to Canada or to her late husband’s land in Acadia.²⁵ In a letter sent in the second year of Queen Anne’s War, de Goutin wrote to France describing wartime conditions and military operations in Acadia. Again, he stopped to discuss the matter of Madame Freneuse, noting that she had finally been sent away from Port-Royal to her husband’s lands.²⁶ In June 1705, Louis

²² Library and Archives Canada, Fonds des Colonies, R11577-7-8-F, "Correspondance générale" series, volume 4, Le sieur Degoutin au ministre. Vivres envoyés à la colonie, 29 November 1702, reproduction copy number F-171, folio 200v. Note: The Library and Archives Canada misdates the letter as written in 1702. According to the letter, it was composed in 1703.

²³ Dion was an alternate spelling of Guyon. Registre de Port-Royal (1703), 19, *Acadia, Canada, Vital and Church Records (Drouin Collection), 1670-1946*, www.ancestry.com, accessed online.

²⁴ Library and Archives Canada, Fonds des Colonies, R11577-7-8-F, "Correspondance générale" series, volume 4, Extrait d'une lettre non-datée de l'évêque de Québec. Propose d'éloigner ..., 29 November 1703, reproduction copy number F-171, folio 316v-317.

²⁵ Library and Archives Canada, Fonds des Colonies, R11577-3-0-F, "Lettres envoyées" series, volume 25, Le ministre au Sieur de Bonaventure sur ses débauches et..., 4 June 1704, reproduction copy number F-205, folio 64-65.

²⁶ Library and Archives Canada, Fonds des Colonies, R11577-7-8-F, "Correspondance générale" series, volume 22, Mémoire du sieur de Brouillan pour réponse à la lettre, 5 March 1705, reproduction copy number F-22, folio 135v-136; Library and Archives Canada, Fonds des Colonies, R11577-3-0-F, "Lettres envoyées" series, volume 27, Mémoire du roi à M. du Brouillan, 3 June 1705, reproduction copy number F-207, folio 171-171v.

XIV maintained his order for Madame Freneuse's banishment in spite of Governor Brouillan's request for mercy sent that spring.²⁷

Governor Brouillan's plea came from a position of weakness as, he too, was embroiled in a scandal resulting from an alleged extramarital affair. His mistress was Jeanne Quisence, the wife of a French-born Newfoundlander, the notary-turned-embezzler, Claude Barrat. In the wake of her husband's crime, Madame Barrat fled to Port-Royal where she opened a tavern and supposedly lived with Brouillan as his mistress.²⁸ In the same letter in which he recommended banishing Madame Freneuse, the Bishop of Quebec also asked that authorities return Barrat to her husband in Plaisance, Newfoundland. He was particularly concerned that her liaison with Brouillan had created a "*mauvais esprit*," an evil pall that had settled over Acadia and that threw the colony into a state of confusion.²⁹

When an expeditionary force led by New England's Benjamin Church attacked Acadia in July 1704, Brouillan's affair with Barrat became tinged with accusations of military negligence and even treason that would reverberate throughout the region. According to Pierre-Paul de Labat, an officer and engineer of the fort at Port-Royal, officials in the town hurried to prepare for the raid, having been given little notice of their

²⁷ Library and Archives Canada, Fonds des Colonies, R11577-7-8-F, "Correspondance générale" series, volume 5, Extrait d'une lettre du frère Justinien Durand, récollet, faisant les ..., 1705, reproduction copy number F-172, folio 197.

²⁸ Library and Archives Canada, Fonds des Colonies, R11577-7-8-F, "Correspondance générale" series, volume 22, Mémoire du sieur de Brouillan pour réponse à la lettre, 5 March 1705, reproduction copy number F-22, folio 136v. In this letter, Brouillan denies living with Barrat, but does refer to her as a tavern-keeper.

²⁹ Library and Archives Canada, Fonds des Colonies, R11577-7-8-F, "Correspondance générale" series, volume 4, Extrait d'une lettre non-datée de l'évêque de Québec. Propose d'éloigner ..., 29 November 1703, reproduction copy number F-171, folio 317.

approach. De Labat described officials as “surprised” that they had not been given adequate notice by the soldiers on watch, though “their surprise ceased” when they learned that “Brouillan, at the request of Dame Barrât” had reduced the guard to a mere two soldiers who were unable to provide the needed notice.³⁰ It is unclear why Barrat would make such a request or why Brouillan might agree to it. De Labat had clashed with Brouillan in the past over matters relating to the fort and it is possible that this information was merely a rumor. Even as a rumor, the belief that a governor engaged in an extramarital affair might risk the safety of his colony based on his mistress’ whims suggests clear cultural connections between moral disorder and military security. Brouillan defended himself in a letter and claimed to have sent proof of his innocence, namely that he had never lived with Barrat.³¹

The stakes of the scandal rose even higher when Governor Brouillan died in September 1705. As his likely successor, Bonaventure came under renewed scrutiny. He justified in November of that year that he had not sent Freneuse away because her late husband’s land was deserted and she had taken two of her sister’s children into her household while her brother-in-law, M. de Chauffour, was languishing in a Boston prison.³² Around the same time, the Recollet priest Justinian Durand reported that

³⁰ “Invasion des Anglois de Baston par Monsieur de la Bat,” [1704], in *Collection de Manuscrits*, 2: 417.

³¹ Library and Archives Canada, Fonds des Colonies, R11577-7-8-F, "Correspondance générale" series, volume 22, Mémoire du sieur de Brouillan pour réponse à la lettre, 5 March 1705, reproduction copy number F-22, folio 135.

³² Library and Archives Canada, Fonds des Colonies, R11577-7-8-F, "Correspondance générale" series, volume 5, M. de Bonaventure au ministre l'informant qu'il a pris le ..., 30 November 1705, reproduction copy number F-172, folio 124v.

Madame Freneuse had gone to France and that she must be prevented from returning to Acadia.³³ In December, Félix Pein, the chaplain of Port-Royal sent a letter arguing that the allegations against Freneuse and Bonaventure were true, claiming that “this woman has led a scandalous life” and that she had a child with Bonaventure.³⁴ The following spring, word reached Port-Royal that Madame Freneuse would return to New France, but to Canada, not Acadia.³⁵ By 1707 it was clear that Madame Freneuse did not intend to go quietly into exile, as a royal order to leave Acadia showed.³⁶ One such report again referred to her “*commerce scandaleux*.”³⁷ Bonaventure received a letter from the minister in June of 1707 that was very clear that his “public scandal” had cost him his chance to become governor of Acadia.³⁸ It also noted that rumors had reached the King that Bonaventure had sold a ship filled with coal to some men from Boston. The minister hinted that if Bonaventure was engaged in illicit trade with Boston, his conduct would have serious consequences.

³³ Library and Archives Canada, Fonds des Colonies, R11577-7-8-F, "Correspondance générale" series, volume 5, Extrait d'une lettre du frère Justinien Durand, récollet, faisant les ..., 1705, reproduction copy number F-172, folio 197.

³⁴ Library and Archives Canada, Fonds des Colonies, R11577-7-8-F, "Correspondance générale" series, volume 5, Extrait d'une lettre du père Félix Pein, aumônier du fort Royal, December 1705, reproduction copy number F-172, folio 195.

³⁵ Library and Archives Canada, Fonds des Colonies, R11577-3-0-F, "Lettres envoyées" series, volume 27, Le ministre à M. Bégon, 28 April 1706, reproduction copy number F-207, folio 343v-344.

³⁶ Library and Archives Canada, Fonds des Colonies, R11577-3-0-F, "Lettres envoyées" series, volume 29, Ordre du roi pour faire sortir la Dame de Freneuse de l'Acadie, 24 August 1707, reproduction copy number F-209, folio 237.

³⁷ Library and Archives Canada, Fonds des Colonies, R11577-3-0-F, "Lettres envoyées" series, volume 29, Pontchartrain à M. l'Évêque de Québec, 6 June 1708, reproduction copy number F-209, folio 380v.

³⁸ Lettre du Ministre à Monsieur de Bonaventure [Jun 30 1707], in *Collection de Manuscrits*, 2: 472-473.

In 1708, the King's minister wrote to Daniel d'Auger de Subercase, Governor of Acadia, with instructions regarding English threats to the colony.³⁹ Of major concern was what the minister described as "scandalous commerce" between Bonaventure and Madame Freneuse. The King had received "new complaints" that the affair had continued and had even produced several children, though no one seemed to know where they were. The letter also reflected fears that the affair would push Bonaventure—a man with suspected trade connections to New England—to betray France. The King again ordered Madame Freneuse out of Acadia and commanded that Bonaventure be watched carefully. Indeed, officials in Acadia remained concerned about her presence in the colony until May 1710, when word arrived that she had settled in Canada.⁴⁰

The two lovers ultimately met very different fates. Bonaventure remained part of Acadia's military, participating in battles relating to the fall of Port-Royal, and dying in 1711 with a still-tarnished reputation. Madame Freneuse made her way back to Canada after spending time with the English in Port-Royal. She last appeared in the historical record in 1714, creating a formal plan for the guardianship of her children, a routine act.⁴¹ In this document, she is described as "Louise Guyon, widow of the late Monsieur Mathieu Damours...Sieur de Freneuse" and "Councillor on the *Conseil Supérieur*."⁴² This

³⁹ Lettre du Ministre a Monsieur de Subercase [6 June 1708], in *Collection de Manuscrits*, 2: 490-491.

⁴⁰ Library and Archives Canada, Fonds des Colonies, R11577-3-0-F, "Lettres envoyées" series, volume 32, Le ministre à M. de Bonaventure, 20 May 1710, reproduction copy number F-214, folio 96. Between 1707-1710 government officials and clergymen composed at least twenty documents regarding the location and activities of Madame Freneuse. Many of these can be found on microfilm rolls F-209, F-213, F-214, F-173 at the Library and Archives Canada in Ottawa.

⁴¹ Bibliothèque et Archives Nationales Québec, Fonds Cour Supérieure, "Tutelles et Curatelles" series, Tutelle aux mineurs de feu Mathieu Damours de Freneuse, 16 May 1714, number 296.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 1.

title suggests that she had been restored to at least some degree of respectability. No longer the scandalous “Madame Freneuse” in official documents, the court recognized her as Louise Guyon, widow of a seigneur and former member of the *Conseil*. This return to respectability suggests that there was some truth to Mascarene’s account; either Madame Freneuse had proven her loyalty to France or her sons succeeded in convincing others that she had.

A number of public figures became caught up in sexual scandals throughout the final decades of the French regime in Canada. None of these scandals however, matched the sensationalism—or the volume of correspondence—of the cases of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Reports of scandals that did come to the attention of French officials received replies instructing officials in New France to make the problem disappear.⁴³ It is unclear why sexual scandals involving military officers diminished in importance after Queen Anne’s War. Perhaps the death of Louis XIV, the relative peace New France enjoyed following the war, or even the fall of Port-Royal itself had an impact. The succeeding decades would see the growth of the French military bureaucracy in New France as well as the development of women’s roles within that system.

⁴³ See for example: Library and Archives Canada, Fonds des Colonies, R11577-3-0-F, "Lettres envoyées" series, volume 57, Le président du conseil de marine à M. Hocquart, 1 April 1732, reproduction copy number F-259, folio 613; Library and Archives Canada, Fonds des Colonies, R11577-3-0-F, "Lettres envoyées" series, volume 29, Le Sieur Robert, qui va remplacer M. Bégon, a ordre, 30 May 1724, reproduction copy number F-242, folio 1115.

Women's Roles in the New French Military Society

In the aftermath of the royal takeover of 1663, New France became increasingly militarized as French military institutions were woven into the fabric of Canadian society and politics. At the same time, the colonial elite became intertwined with the French military as social status and military rank merged.⁴⁴ Louise Dechêne observed that these changes were particularly visible in New France's system of taxation. The French military and the government of New France began demanding more in the way of mandatory labor to repair fortifications (*corvée*), military service, the requisitions of goods, and the quartering of soldiers. In its final decades, Canada, in the words of Dechêne, “resembled more and more a great garrison, commanded rather than governed” in an attempt to maintain military security and public order.⁴⁵

Although the primary participants within this new system were men, evidence suggests that women also took on roles within a militarized New France. One way the government incorporated certain women into the new order was by requiring their participation in a new welfare system for veterans. In 1709, the French government issued an order establishing a tax to fund pensions and half-pay for wounded and aging soldiers.⁴⁶ This safety net for veterans was funded by a tax on the pay of a wide variety of people who benefitted from the French military and affiliated institutions, including

⁴⁴ Louise Dechêne, *Le Peuple, L'État et la Guerre au Canada sous le Régime Français*, ed. Hélène Paré, Sylvie Dépatie, Catherine Desbarats, and Thomas Wien (Montréal: Les Éditions du Boréal, 2008), 147, 222-223.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 223-224.

⁴⁶ Arrêt du Roi pour la retenue des quatre deniers pour livre applicables aux Invalides de la Marine [May 1709], in *Édits, Ordonnances Royaux, Déclarations et Arrêts du Conseil d'État du Roi Concernant le Canada* (Quebec: E.R. Fréchette, 1854), 313-320.

officers, sailors, and even workers in the armory. As the Crown refined its policies regarding pensions and half-pay for former soldiers over the subsequent decade, it included space for women within this system.

In a 1720 order that clarified and further established the role of the military and the Crown in providing for former soldiers, the Crown also defined the duties of the wives and widows of these men.⁴⁷ Although disabled veterans were exempted from providing *services personnels* that would have obligated them to labor to strengthen their city's defenses, this exemption did not always apply to their wives. For example, if their wives were shopkeepers or participated in trade, the women were required to contribute part of their earnings to the defense of the town or local militia. The order also noted that these women, "as in the case of widowhood," might also provide a man to serve in her husband's place. Although the 1691 order regarding the role of widows in this system is unavailable to researchers, the 1720 order hints that in some cases, widows were also required to contribute to the new military order. By partially delineating the boundaries of the French military establishment in Canadian and Acadian society, the order—and subsequent supplemental orders—provide a unique window into women's roles in New France's war-making.

The demands placed on female shopkeepers and tradeswomen in the 1720 order hints at the ways in which gender, commerce, national loyalties, and war-making were intertwined in New France's increasingly militarized society. The case of Madame

⁴⁷ Edit du Roi Concernant les Invalides de la Marine [July 1720] in *Édits, Ordonnances Royaux, Declarations et Arrêts*, 405-425, 410.

Thiersant, the Canadian-born wife of a French officer who managed his career while becoming involved with the *Compagnie des Indes*, provides an excellent example of a woman maneuvering within New France's military society via commercial activity.

Marie-Joseph Fézeret, was born into a family of social climbers, the daughter of a gunsmith who was awarded a seigneurie later in life. She made an advantageous marriage to Francois-Gabriel Thiersant, the son of a French nobleman. Madame Thiersant was active in promoting her husband's career, requesting a lieutenancy for him in 1717.⁴⁸ She based this request on her father's and brothers' service in the war against the Iroquois and the English and on her father-in-law's position as President of the *Parlement* of Metz.

Throughout much of their marriage, she acted as his agent, managing their financial and legal affairs.⁴⁹ In addition to managing the seigneurie her husband received in the 1720s, Madame Thiersant also inherited land from her father and feuded with her step-mother over his legacy.⁵⁰ Madame Thiersant also struggled to attract *censitaires* to work the land, according to a letter she wrote in 1731.⁵¹

That same year, Madame Thiersant, in dire financial straits due to debt, turned to the Crown in the hope of receiving a pension or other monetary reward for her own

⁴⁸ Library and Archives Canada, Fonds des Colonies, R11577-4-2-F, "Correspondance générale" series, volume 37, Délibération du Conseil de Marine au sujet de la "lieutenance ...", 12 April 1717, reproduction copy number F-37, folio 170-170v.

⁴⁹ See for example: Bibliothèque et Archives Nationales Québec, Fonds Intendants, "Aveux et Dénombrements" series, Aveu et dénombrement de dame Marie-Josephe Fezeret, 23 April 1723, reproduction copy number M6/1.

⁵⁰ Bibliothèque et Archives Nationales Québec, Fonds Juridiction Royale de Montréal, "Dossiers" series, Procès entre Marie Philippe, veuve en secondes noces de René Fezeret, 31 October 1721, D2667.

⁵¹ Library and Archives Canada, Fonds des Colonies, R11577-4-2-F, "Correspondance générale" series, volume 55, Délibération du Conseil de Marine au sujet de la "lieutenance ...", 15 October 1731, reproduction copy number F-55, folio 378-379v.

“service” to her “country” and her “state” amidst ongoing tension regarding the French fur trade.⁵² One side effect of the thirty-year peace between Britain and France that followed Queen Anne’s war was increased competition in the fur trade. According to David Lee Preston, both governments contested the right of the other to control the fur trade between Montreal and Albany—though he argued that Iroquois traders truly dominated the region.⁵³ Iroquois demands for English goods pushed Montreal’s merchants to violate the law and carry foreign merchandise.⁵⁴ Preston noted that in response to these demands, a significant portion of French furs were “diverted from Montreal to Albany.”⁵⁵ Despite the loss of revenue and economic disorder, Preston claimed that “what ultimately made the Albany-Montreal trade so threatening to French and British officials was...the way it unhinged national loyalties and allegiances.”⁵⁶ It was into this conflict over trade and loyalty that Madame Thiersant allegedly waded.

In a petition to the Crown, Madame Thiersant claimed she provided assistance to the *Compagnie des Indes* in Montreal that was instrumental in “removing the English from the colony” commercially and protecting the fur trade.⁵⁷ Madame Thiersant claimed that the *Compagnie* had promised her a payment of 100 guns, which she asked be awarded to her in the form of a cash payment from the Crown. In a second, longer letter

⁵² Library and Archives Canada, Fonds des Colonies, R11577-4-2-F, "Correspondance générale" series, volume 55, Lettre de Mme Thiersant au ministre - elle a fourni..., 5 September 1731, reproduction copy number F-55, folio 378-379v.

⁵³ David Lee Preston, *The Texture of Contact: European and Indian Settler Communities on the Frontiers of Iroquoia, 1667-1783* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 54.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 54-55.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 56.

⁵⁷ Lettre de Mme Thiersant au ministre - elle a fourni..., 379v.

written in 1733, Madame Thiersant claimed that she had uncovered fraud and helped establish millinery in Montreal while reducing the English commercial presence in New France and helping to halt illicit trade with New England.⁵⁸ She also provided proof that the colonial government of New France had awarded her 500 *livres* for her service in 1727.⁵⁹ Evidence suggests that this reward for service was tied to the “good of the nation” and was seen as crucial to the security of the colony’s trade in the wake of fraud and British threats to the beaver trade.⁶⁰ As we saw earlier in the discussion of sexual scandals, trade, treason, and security were bound tightly, and Madame Thiersant’s service to the *Compagnie des Indes* was framed as service to country.

Although Madame Thiersant left for France in 1735, she stepped up her efforts to receive further compensation.⁶¹ She even went so far as to enlist the support of a former Intendant of New France, Claude-Thomas Dupuy, and a high-ranking official of the *Compagnie des Indes*, Nicolas Lanoullier de Boisclerc.⁶² Records show that Madame Thiersant continued her requests for assistance through 1743, though it is unclear why those requests ceased after that time.⁶³

⁵⁸ Library and Archives Canada, Fonds des Colonies, R11577-4-2-F, "Correspondance générale" series, volume 60, Mémoire de Mme de Thiersant au ministre - lui accorder ..., 1733, reproduction copy number F-60, folio 410-413.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 411v-412.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 413.

⁶¹ Library and Archives Canada, Fonds des Colonies, R11577-4-2-F, "Correspondance générale" series, volume 64, Liste des personnes qui passent en France sur le vaisseau ..., 19 October 1735, reproduction copy number F-64, folio 138-138v.

⁶² Library and Archives Canada, Archives de la Bastille: Prisonniers, MG7-II, Mémoire présenté au cardinal de Fleury par Mme de Thiersant..., June 1737, reproduction copy number C-12869.

⁶³ Library and Archives Canada, Archives de la Bastille: Prisonniers, MG7-II, Autre mémoire de Mme de Thiersant au cardinal de Fleury..., 1743, reproduction copy number C-12869.

In addition to these connections between New France's militarized society and the fur trade, the business of shipbuilding and fortifying New France had an even greater impact on women. Although women frequently sought financial support from the French military bureaucracy in the form of pensions and positions for their male relatives as officers in the French military, women in New France also contributed to the French military buildup through the funding of fortifications and the building of ships for the Navy. As early as the late 1670s, Madame de Frontenac, wife of the Governor of New France, successfully petitioned for over 8000 *livres* that she claimed her husband had advanced to the government to fortify Canada.⁶⁴ It is unclear why she took the lead in this process, though it may have been due to his shaky standing with the colony's leadership and her own position as the daughter of a French nobleman. Despite this one example, it was not until the 1720s and 1730s that more reports of women's participation in the fortification of New France surfaced. In September of 1731, Madame de Ramezay requested a position for her son as well as reimbursement for land that had been lost due to the expansion of fortifications.⁶⁵ Records also show that the widowed Madame

⁶⁴ Library and Archives Canada, Fonds des Colonies, R11577-4-2-F, "Correspondance générale" series, volume 5, Résumé d'une lettre de Mme de Frontenac - demande le ..., 25 September 1731, reproduction copy number F-5, folio 265.

⁶⁵ Library and Archives Canada, Fonds des Colonies, R11577-4-2-F, "Correspondance générale" series, volume 56, Lettre de Madame de Ramezay au ministre - demande une ..., 25 September 1731, reproduction copy number F-56, folio 246-247v. This was not the first time Madame de Ramezay submitted this type of petition. See: Library and Archives Canada, Fonds des Colonies, R11577-4-2-F, "Correspondance générale" series, volume 50, Lettre de Mme de Ramezay au ministre - réclame le ..., 8 October 1728, reproduction copy number F-50, folio 353-354v.

Planton, née Antoinette Isabeau, took over her brother's work as a fortifications contractor in the late 1720s.⁶⁶

Beginning in the mid-1720s, the Treasurer General of the Marine began regularly issuing both annual and supplemental reports regarding "*Lettres de Change*," payments for supplies and services provided by residents of New France in support of the colony's military operations. The majority of these reports that have survived include payments made to married and unmarried women. Although most of the recipients of these payments were men, most reports include payments to several different women in a given report.⁶⁷ *Lettres* drawn up in the 1720s and 1730s were often vague regarding the nature of these services and supplies. By the 1740s, some reports were dedicated to the construction of specific ships and included the names of payees and amounts owed. Shipbuilding projects were particularly important in the mid-eighteenth century, as France hoped to develop Canada's shipbuilding industry into vital part of a French Atlantic empire that relied heavily upon its navy.⁶⁸ A report from 1744 shows that three

⁶⁶ Library and Archives Canada, Fonds des Colonies, R11577-38-8-F, "Conseil Supérieur de Louisbourg" series, volume 180, Succession du sieur Isabeau, entrepreneur des fortifications..., 1725-1731, reproduction copy number F-681, 616-687; Library and Archives Canada, Fonds des Colonies, R11577-3-0-F, "Lettres envoyées" series, volume 54, Le président du conseil de marine à M. Verrier..., 20 June 1730, reproduction copy number F-254, folio 499. For additional context regarding the roles of widows such as Madame Planton in Louisbourg, see Josette Brun, *Vie et mort du couple en Nouvelle-France: Québec et Louisbourg au XVIIIe siècle* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's Press, 2006), 66.

⁶⁷ This does not include smaller supplemental reports regarding payments made to a handful of people, often one or two recipients.

⁶⁸ Roch Samsom, *The Forges du Saint-Maurice: Beginnings of the Iron and Steel Industry in Canada, 1730-1883* (Laval, PQ.: Presses de l'Université Laval, 1998), 223; Dale Miquelon, "Canada's Place in the French Imperial Economy: An Eighteenth-Century Overview," *French Historical Studies* 15, no. 3 (Spring, 1988): 432-443.

women provided assistance in the fortification of a ship called the “*Caribou*.”⁶⁹ One woman, Madame Berthier, received 2,200 *livres*, while another woman, Mademoiselle Pommereau, received two separate payments of 1,000 *livres* each. The third payment was for 150 *livres* to Madame Laporte. That same year, two other women received payments of 300 and 618 *livres* relating to the construction of the frigate “*Castor*.”⁷⁰

In addition to payments made to women who provided supplies and services that supported the construction of warships, women also received compensation for aiding in the preparation of war. In 1744, the first year of King George’s War, the Treasurer of the Marine paid Madame Duburon 1,577 *livres*, while Mademoiselle Lestage received 2,879 *livres* according to a report regarding “expenditures made in preparation of war.”⁷¹ The following year, Madame Duburon received another disbursement of 3,000 *livres*. Four other women received payments ranging from 500 to 1,500 *livres* in the same report, which covered expenditures regarding “preparations of war” and “the construction and armament of royal vessels” among other related categories.⁷² These reports are unavailable for the period following the end of King George’s War in 1748, with the exception of 1749-1750. The reason for the absence of the reports is unclear, though the

⁶⁹ Library and Archives Canada, Fonds des Colonies, R11577-4-2-F, “Correspondance générale” series, volume 80, État de quarante-huit lettres de change premières et secondes tirées ..., 30 October 1743, reproduction copy number F-80, folio 217-218v.

⁷⁰ Library and Archives Canada, Fonds des Colonies, R11577-4-2-F, “Correspondance générale” series, volume 82, État de 19 lettres de change tirées triples..., 31 October 1744, reproduction copy number F-82, folio 246-246v.

⁷¹ Library and Archives Canada, Fonds des Colonies, R11577-4-2-F, “Correspondance générale” series, volume 82, État de 66 lettres de change tirées triples..., 31 October 1744, reproduction copy number F-82, folio 254-255v.

⁷² Library and Archives Canada, Fonds des Colonies, R11577-4-2-F, “Correspondance générale” series, volume 84, État des lettres de change tirées triples la présente année ..., 30 October 1745, reproduction copy number F-84, folio 200-205.

existing reports suggest that women's participation New France's later wars had largely shifted to financial involvement.

The focus of this chapter has been on women's participation in New France's eighteenth-century military operations via commerce and bureaucracy. As I noted earlier, peace with the Iroquois, and the English reliance on Naval attacks largely eliminated the need for women's physical participation in the wars of the eighteenth century. This was particularly true along the St. Lawrence River. The English did continue to attack Acadia, culminating in the expulsion of much of Acadia's French population beginning in 1755 and lasting until the end of the Seven Years' War in 1763.⁷³ Although it seems likely that ordinary Acadian women resisted or even fought the English invaders, evidence for this is lacking. In New England, where raids on settlements continued through the first six decades of the eighteenth century, women continued to take on physical roles in these conflicts. Changes in the political and cultural climate reduced the need for their participation, and by the end of the Seven Years' War, both male and female settlers on the frontier lived in a society where the distinction between settlers and soldiers had become less blurred and the idea of a homefront had begun to emerge.

⁷³ For more on the Acadian expulsion, see: John Mack Faragher, *A Great and Noble Scheme: The Tragic Story of the Expulsion of the French Acadians from their American Homeland* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2005); Geoffrey Plank, *An Unsettled Conquest: The British Campaign Against the Peoples of Acadia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001).

From Settler-Soldier to Suffering Subject: Political Identity in New England

In October of 1757, The *Boston Gazette and Country Journal*, which advertised itself as “containing the freshest Advices Foreign and Domestick,” reported a story from eastern New York.⁷⁴ According to the *Gazette*, an Indian “seized a young Woman that was washing at the Door” but was delayed by the appearance of another woman who “ran to her Assistance, rescued her, beat off the Indian, and shut the Door.” The man had not come alone, and his friends “fired into the House, and killed 2 Women.” Although they were eventually driven off, the author—or perhaps an editor—added a note to the story in an italicized font. The note argued that “‘Tis Matter of very great Concern, that notwithstanding the Number of Soldiers we have now in this Province, his Majesty’s Subjects shou’d be thus savagely butcher’d on the Frontiers, and no Provision made for their Protection!”⁷⁵

Published in the second year of the Seven Years’ War, the story reflects larger changes in New Englanders’ attitudes toward gender, the Crown, and the identity of the proper defenders of the frontier. Despite the fact that the attackers “were repulsed by two Men who fired out on them,” both the women and men in the house were portrayed as in need of protection from real soldiers provided by the King to his subjects. By the Seven Years’ War, the line between home and front, which had been blurred throughout the seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries, became increasingly fixed. No longer settler-

⁷⁴ *Boston Gazette and Country Journal*, October 31, 1757, 3. Early American Newspapers, Series 1, 1690-1876, accessed online.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

soldiers in their own right, men and their families in the northeastern borderlands became civilians, subjects under the tender—if inconsistent—care of a father-king. Women also saw their roles change, from the auxiliary duties they performed as members of settler-soldier families to dependent subjects forced by necessity to defend themselves.

Brendan McConville has argued that a critical transformation occurred during the first decades of the eighteenth century in British America. During this time, Anglo-Americans began to conceive of their monarch as a “caring figure who expressed his affections to them in royal proclamations, in political rites, and in his behavior as reported by the colonial newspapers.”⁷⁶ Emerging after the Glorious Revolution of 1688, this royal love, McConville argued, was tied to an increasingly popular image of the empire as a Protestant kingdom ruled by a benevolent father-king. As a part of this new political identity, the monarch became a “beloved figure” who, out of parental concern and love, “would protect the empire” from danger—especially popery and attacks from Catholic countries.⁷⁷ McConville identified 1740 as the approximate end date for this transformation, a date that coincides with the conclusion of a shift in policy and language regarding frontier families and women’s participation in the border wars. This period also saw calls for a larger imperial role in colonial defense that paralleled a trend toward a greater British presence in America.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Brendan McConville, *The King’s Three Faces: The Rise and Fall of Royal America: 1688-1776* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 108.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 222-226.

Ann Little has also argued that the early to middle decades of the eighteenth century saw a profound shift in the relationship between colonial men and their empire. Little noted a change in manly identity in the eighteenth century, from “a masculinity based on household headship, Christian piety, and the duty to protect both family and faith by force of arms” to an Anglo-American nationalist manhood grounded in “anti-Catholicism” and “soldiering for the empire.”⁷⁹ Little drew many of her conclusions from published “artillery sermons” preached to companies of active soldiers that do indicate such a transition in language. These same sermons, however, suggest that settlers were not included in this rhetoric. Instead, artillery sermons, legislation, and reports from the press indicate that this shift paralleled a larger transition from the defensive conflicts fought by settler-soldiers in the late seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries to the more offensive struggles waged by British forces and colonial militias. Between 1713 and 1760, New Englanders described a growing distance between home and front, spaces that had been nearly indistinguishable in previous decades. At the same time, male settlers became increasingly infantilized, children under the protection of a father-king and the “men” he benevolently ordered to protect vulnerable settlers.

Women’s physical participation became less necessary due to changes in both military strategy as well as ideas regarding political identity and gender roles. In *Separated by their Sex*, Mary Beth Norton described a widening of gendered spheres in

⁷⁹ Ann Little, *Abraham in Arms: War and Gender in Colonial New England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 167.

the British Atlantic world as gender overtook rank as a method of organizing society⁸⁰

Women who had once stood above men of an inferior rank found themselves beneath these same men by virtue of their sex. At the same time, the formal public, informal public, and private—that is, personal or secret—spheres of the early modern period were replaced by a masculine public sphere and a domestic, feminine private sphere. Norton placed the culmination of this transition in the 1730s and 1740s, though as we will see, sources only start to hint at these changes beginning around 1740.

Queen Anne's War, which dominated the first decade of the eighteenth century, marked the beginning of a new Anglo-American military alliance.⁸¹ Cotton Mather's enemy, the cosmopolitan Governor Joseph Dudley of Massachusetts, had a major role in securing the support of the British military. The greater professionalism, manpower, and strategy British military leaders brought to the table slowly began to transform the nature of war in the northeastern borderlands. Most of this assistance came in the form of manpower, strategists, and supplies in support of offensive expeditions against Canada, not along the frontier.⁸² The sometimes painful transition that began with Queen Anne's War lingered through the first half of the eighteenth century. The greater focus on

⁸⁰ Mary Beth Norton, *Separated by their Sex: Women in Public and Private in the Colonial Atlantic World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011).

⁸¹ For more on British and American soldiers in eighteenth-century North America see: Stephen Brumwell, *Redcoats: The British Soldier and War in the Americas, 1755-1763* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Fred Anderson, *A People's Army: Massachusetts Soldiers and Society in the Seven Years' War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984); Guy Chet, *Conquering the American Wilderness: The Triumph of European Warfare in the Colonial Northeast* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003); John Grenier, *The First Way of War: American War Making on the Frontier, 1607-1814* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

⁸² Steven C. Eames, "Rustic Warriors: Warfare and the Provincial Soldier on the Northern Frontier: 1689-1748" (Ph.D. diss., University of New Hampshire, 1976), ch. 5.

offensive action, which initially siphoned resources away from garrison communities, eventually began to shift the geographic focus of the wars.⁸³ The eighteenth century also saw the process in which “colonial society,” particularly land-owning segments of society, “detached itself from military obligation.”⁸⁴ At the same time, the construction of larger, dedicated forts manned by provincial soldiers in more remote areas established a new first line of defense that would eventually replace the older settler-soldier/garrison house model.

Queen Anne’s War was the first border war in which colonists and British soldiers partnered closely, though the transition away from the settler-soldier model as the first line of defense took time. The 1722-1725 Anglo-Abenaki war known as Dummer’s War or Ralé’s War relied heavily on the settler-soldier/garrison house strategy. Lacking British support for a local conflict fought between Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and an impressive Abenaki coalition, colonial leaders turned to garrison houses and “scalp-hunting rangers” as solutions in this more “traditional” conflict.⁸⁵

Although the official government position maintained the tradition of frontier families as the first line of defense, dissent became more common as war seemed increasingly inevitable. In a September 1, 1721 report prepared by a committee in response to the governor’s speech, the committee noted that families in “our Eastern parts” were beginning to suffer the effects of increasing hostilities. The committee

⁸³ Chet, *Conquering the American Wilderness*, 98-99.

⁸⁴ Eames, “Rustic Warriors,” 314.

⁸⁵ Grenier, *The First Way of War*, 47.

worried that without “relief and succour” provided by the government, these families might be forced “to quit their habitations.” The authors noted that they were “very sensible their feeble condition and posture to defend themselves” and supported posting “a number of men for their safe-guard.”⁸⁶ The governor, however, was not moved by the sympathetic arguments of the committee.

On September 25, 1721, the Boston Gazette reprinted an August 1721 proclamation in response to reports that settlers on the western frontiers had joined their eastern counterparts in deserting their towns. The governor noted that “very considerable Sums of Money have been lately expended in the Defence and for the Preservation of the Settlements in the Frontiers.” Clearly outraged, he chastised “the many Persons and even whole Families” who “have quitte their Habitations in those Frontiers and removed into other Towns.” Arguing that this “desertion” weakened “the Strength of those Settlements” and gave “great Encouragement” to their adversaries, the governor commanded that “all Persons by Law fit to bear Arms who have deserted the Frontiers immediately and without Delay return to their Habitations.” This action was not unusual, given the legislation passed in the previous two wars. The governor took the additional step of requiring that “no Person whatsoever upon any Rumor of Danger from the Indians do presume to leave their Settlements upon Peril of what may ensue upon their Desertion, and as they expect the Protection of this Government.”⁸⁷

⁸⁶ *Journals of the House of Representatives of Massachusetts: 1721-1722* (Boston: The Massachusetts Historical Society, 1921), 106-107.

⁸⁷ *Boston Gazette*, September 25, 1721, 3-4. Early American Newspapers, Series 1, 1690-1876, accessed online.

A statement presented by Isaac Taylor and Robert Temple to the Massachusetts government in March 1722 reported that families in the Eastern settlements continued to struggle. According to Taylor and Temple, “some Families have gone down, and others that were ready to fly off, have been Induced to stay in Obedience to his Excellencies Proclamation, forbidding the Remove of any from the Eastern Frontiers.”⁸⁸ In August 1722, Massachusetts passed a law ordering the fortification of frontier towns and setting out penalties for men who left the town or who refused to assist in building fortifications.⁸⁹ The law is remarkably similar to laws passed in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. This law, along with the governor’s proclamation, suggests laws relating to the defense of the frontiers during Dummer’s War were a continuation of earlier policies.

Dummer’s War is also notable for the number of women who offered to partner with the Massachusetts government to secure the return of captives. Although women had petitioned for the return of impressed husbands and sons in earlier wars, petitioning for captives was less common. Dummer’s War was a smaller conflict in which hostage taking on both sides was key. In an attack on Merrymeeting Bay in 1722, Indians captured nine families, kept only five adult men as hostages, and released the other sixty inhabitants.⁹⁰ In three of the following cases, Indians captured husbands and children at sea. Most of

⁸⁸ *Journals of the House of Representatives of Massachusetts: 1721-1722*, 173.

⁸⁹ “An Act for Putting the Inhabitants of the Frontier Towns within this Province into a Posture of Defence” [1722], *The Acts and Resolves, Public and Private, of the Province of the Massachusetts Bay* (Boston: Wright & Potter, 1874), 2: 259-260.

⁹⁰ Emma Lewis Coleman, *New England Captives Carried to Canada* (Portland, ME: Southworth Press, 1925), 2: 136.

the cases break from the more traditional accounts of captivity, in which the women and children of garrison houses were the primary targets. It is likely that the higher number of female petitioners reflects the specific tactics and strategies of Dummer's War.

Christian Newton and Margaret Blin filed the first of the Dummer's War petitions after fitting out a sloop with the intention of retrieving Newton's son and Blin's husband. Christian Newton was the widow of Thomas Newton, a Massachusetts judge and attorney general who had died the year before. Her son Hibbert, one of the captives, was a customs collector in Nova Scotia. Margaret Blin's husband, James, had been captain of the ship the group had been sailing on when they were captured.⁹¹ Newton and Blin submitted a petition to the General Court requesting the use of "some of the Province Arms for their Defence."⁹² It is unclear from the record whether Newton and Blin hoped to accompany the sloop or if they planned to send a search party. It is likely that the women's ability to finance part of the mission, Christian Newton's status in Massachusetts society, and the prominence of the captives attracted the attention of the House of Representatives, who agreed to their proposal.⁹³

In 1723, two pairs of women approached the Massachusetts General Court in an attempt to recover relatives who had been captured. Abigail Cabbott and Miriam Johnson submitted a petition "praying this Court would engage to Restore them."⁹⁴ The Court

⁹¹ Coleman, *New England Captives Carried to Canada*, 1: 99.

⁹² *Journals of the House of Representatives of Massachusetts: 1722-1723* (Boston: The Massachusetts Historical Society, 1923), 51, 55-56.

⁹³ According to Coleman, the upper house failed to support the original decision based on the short duration of the captivity. Coleman, *New England Captives Carried to Canada*, 1: 99.

⁹⁴ *Journals of the House of Representatives of Massachusetts: 1723-1724* (Boston: The Massachusetts Historical Society, 1924), 8.

rejected this petition, as well as another petition from Jane Edgar and Margaret Watt.⁹⁵ Edgar and Watt had each lost their husbands and seven of their children to captivity. They hoped that the Court would agree to a prisoner exchange, their families for an Indian woman named Elizabeth and her children who were prisoners of Massachusetts. Again, the court refused. It is unclear why the court rejected their petitions, though the decision may have been based on the lower social status of the petitioners or the politics of hostage-taking.

The Dummer's War petitions may have also been inspired by the actions of a woman named Christian Baker, who first approached the General Court in 1721, one year before Dummer's War. Baker was born Margaret Otis, daughter of Richard and Grizel Otis of Cochecho, New Hampshire. Only three months old when her father was killed in the famous 1689 attack on the town, Margaret was taken captive along with her mother Grizel. Grizel took the name Marie Madeleine and married Philippe Robitaille in 1693. Her daughter, three-month-old Margaret, was baptized Christine and raised away from her mother. She eventually married Louis Le Beau, a carpenter from Ville-Marie in 1707 at the age of eighteen. Two of her children with Le Beau survived infancy, Marie-Anne and Marie-Madeleine. After the death of her husband, Madame Le Beau was forced to leave both girls behind when she married Captain Thomas Baker, an interpreter traveling with John Williams and John Stoddard on their 1714 journey to recover captives in

⁹⁵ *Journals of the House of Representatives of Massachusetts: 1723-1724*, 163.

Canada. Before leaving Canada, Christine left the property she inherited from her husband to her daughters, who remained with Christine's mother in Canada.⁹⁶

Known as Christian Baker in Massachusetts, the former captive and her husband approached the Massachusetts government in 1721 with the hope of securing backing for an expedition to recover her children. Perhaps to sweeten the deal, the Bakers offered to try to persuade other captives to return home with them. Christian's connections to both the French and Anglo-French population and Thomas' experience as an interpreter who participated in a similar expedition likely seemed an ideal combination. In March of 1722, the House of Representatives presented Christian Baker twenty pounds from the public treasury in support of her mission to recover her children and "to perswade many others, in the Hands of the French & Indians to return to their Countrey, & Religion."⁹⁷ New England was not at war with New France and Christian and Thomas Baker were accompanied by Joseph Kellogg, who carried a letter from the Governor of Massachusetts addressed to Governor Vaudreuil of Canada. Baker was able to persuade several captives to return, though her own children remained behind in Canada.⁹⁸

After her husband became sick, Baker began seeking new sources of income. In 1734, the House of Representatives of New Hampshire later granted her permission to

⁹⁶ Coleman, *New England Captives Carried to Canada*, 1: 149-153.

⁹⁷ "Resolve Allowing £20 to Christian Baker" [1722], *The Acts and Resolves, Public and Private, of the Province of the Massachusetts Bay* (Boston: Wright & Potter, 1902), 10: 152.

⁹⁸ "Vote Impowering Mrs. Christian Baker to Survey Lay Out and Sell 500 Acres of Land" [June 26, 1735], *The Acts and Resolves Public and Private, of the Province of the Massachusetts Bay* (Boston: Wright & Potter, 1904), 12: 31; Coleman, *New England Captives*, 1: 153.

run a public house.⁹⁹ The following year, Baker successfully petitioned the House of Representatives of Massachusetts in June of 1735, receiving a land grant of 500 acres in York County that she would be able to sell for monetary support.¹⁰⁰ The decision to grant the petition was based on “the particular Circumstances of the petitioner,” and the fact that “she has been Instrumental in Regaining Divers persons who were formerly Carried Captive to Canada.”¹⁰¹ In granting Christian Baker a twenty pound allowance in her own name and in basing the land grant on her “instrumental” participation in persuading captives to return home, the House of Representatives made a critical distinction between Christian Baker’s actions and those of her husband, Thomas. They would make the same distinction several more times over the course of the following decade when approving land grants for women’s participation in the border wars.

Between 1727 and 1739, Massachusetts began awarding land grants in Maine, New Hampshire, and northeastern Massachusetts to veterans of earlier wars, particularly King William’s War.¹⁰² Most of these grants went to veterans or descendants of veterans, particularly those who showed exceptional merit on expeditions and other campaigns outside of fortified communities. For the most part, they were not awarded to men who served as settler-soldiers in garrison houses. Over this period of intense land distribution, several women and their descendants successfully petitioned the government for land

⁹⁹ Nathaniel Bouton, ed., *New Hampshire Provincial Papers: Documents and Records Relating to the Province of New-Hampshire* (Manchester: John B. Clarke, 1870), 4: 677, 689.

¹⁰⁰ “Vote Impowering Mrs. Christian Baker,” *Acts and Resolves*, 12: 31.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² Roy Hidemichi Akagi, *The Town Proprietors of the New England Colonies, a Study of their Development, Organization, Activities and Controversies, 1620-1770* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1924), 191-194.

based on the women's service to the colony. It is interesting to note that, as in the case of Christian Baker, each of these grants rested on the woman's individual service. In another parallel to Baker's experience, all of the women left their fortified communities and ventured into the wilderness of the northeastern borderlands, seemingly taking on roles similar to those of the offensive, expeditionary troops the grants were designed to reward.

The first of these women to request a land grant was Hannah Dustan, who was apparently unsatisfied with her award of twenty-five pounds in 1697. Her earlier reward had taken the place of a recently-expired scalp bounty and Hannah's 1731 petition was designed to reward her military service, not the physical presentation of scalps. The House first responded to her petition for a "Quantity" of land in return for her "Services" by forwarding the petition to the Committee for Petitions in December 1731.¹⁰³ Two weeks later, the House granted Hannah and her husband 200 acres of land.¹⁰⁴

Eight years later, the son of Mary Neff, Hannah's partner in the killings and scalplings, submitted a petition for land based on his mother's service. After several months of consideration, Joseph Neff received 200 acres of land for his mother's actions in assisting Hannah Dustan in "killing and scalping divers Indians."¹⁰⁵ According to the award, "Mary never had a reward from this Government," a finding that rendered her son eligible to receive the grant.¹⁰⁶ It is unclear whether the House was aware that Mary Neff

¹⁰³ *Journals of the House of Representatives of Massachusetts: 1731-1732* (Boston: The Massachusetts Historical Society, 1929), 10: 313.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 351.

¹⁰⁵ "Vote Impowering Jos. Neff to Survey and Lay Out 200 Acres of Land" [1739], *The Acts and Resolves Public and Private, of the Province of the Massachusetts Bay* (Boston: Wright & Potter, 1904), 620-621.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 620.

had received a portion of the bounty in 1697.¹⁰⁷ Regardless, the fact that Massachusetts rewarded a woman's son for his mother's "killing and scalping" of "divers Indians" in King William's War—in the same way that the dependents of male veterans received land—demonstrates the complexity of early modern gender roles in early America.

In seeking the land grant for his mother's service, Joseph Neff enlisted the help of Hannah Bradley, the twice-captive resident of Haverhill, who was taken along with Dustan.¹⁰⁸ Bradley was also known for killing attackers with boiling soap in an attempt to avoid her second captivity. According to local tradition, Bradley also shot and killed an Indian when defending her home alongside her husband in a third attack in 1706.¹⁰⁹ In addition to supplying a deposition in support of Joseph Neff's petition, Bradley also petitioned the House of Representatives in 1737 requesting a land grant as a reward for "extraordinary sufferings and services in the late Indian wars."¹¹⁰ The House agreed, awarding her 250 acres "in consideration of the very great sufferings as well as service of the petitioner" and to "her heirs and assigns forever."¹¹¹

The previous petitions employ the terms "suffering" as well as "service" in their pleas for land. Their use of the word "service" refers to acts taken in the service of the government or the "publick," such as Daniel Tucker's 1715 petition for relief while

¹⁰⁷ *The Acts and Resolves, Public and Private, of the Province of the Massachusetts Bay* (Boston: Wright & Potter, 1892), 7:153.

¹⁰⁸ George Wingate Chase, *The History of Haverhill, Massachusetts: From its First Settlement, in 1640, to the Year 1860* (Haverhill, Mass.: George Wingate Chase, 1861), 308.

¹⁰⁹ B.L. Mirick, *The History of Haverhill, Massachusetts* (Haverhill: A. W. Thayer, 1832), 112.

¹¹⁰ *Journals of the House of Representatives of Massachusetts: 1737-1738* (Boston: The Massachusetts Historical Society, 1934), 199.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 201.

recovering from “a Gun-shot Wound he received in the Service against the Indian Enemy, in the late War.”¹¹² The term “suffering” referred to hardships such as injury and captivity. The use of the word “suffering” alone and in combination with “service” was not confined to women’s petitions. In 1716, the House of Representatives recorded that John Arms of Deerfield had argued that he deserved compensation for both his “forward Service in the late War against the Indian Enemy, and his Sufferings by them, having been Wounded and carried Captive to Canada.”¹¹³ These women’s petitions, though few in number and confined to women who participated in more noteworthy incidents, suggest that the public sphere was not entirely closed to women, even by the mid-eighteenth century.

Massachusetts’ decision to expand the frontier via land grants was accompanied by a new, unprecedented fort-building initiative. Prior to this, New England had only a handful of forts at any one time. Built even further out into the northeastern borderlands than the new land grant communities, these forts acted as quarters for provincial forces and as symbols of Massachusetts’ presence in the region. These forts also acted as “magnets,” diverting attacks away from towns and toward these new military installations.¹¹⁴ Although some soldiers stationed at these forts did bring their families, the gender ratio was very different from those of garrison communities.¹¹⁵ Their presence

¹¹² *Journals of the House of Representatives of Massachusetts: 1715-1717* (Boston: The Massachusetts Historical Society, 1919), 21.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 86-87.

¹¹⁴ Eames, “Rustic Warriors,” 103-104.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 121-122.

was closer to that of camp followers than inhabitants of communities that blurred lines between home and front.¹¹⁶

“We that tarry at home”: A Homefront Emerges

Connections between the growing professionalization of the military and changes in gender roles in Britain and New England is wonderfully demonstrated in a British editorial re-published in Boston. The *Boston Evening Post* published an opinion piece in October 1739 reprinted from the English London newspaper *Craftsman*.¹¹⁷ The article discussed women’s behavior and considered whether the young ladies of the time were especially frivolous. The author pointed back to “past Ages” when women “were not only good Wives, but useful Subjects.” He noted that in Britain’s past, “Female Patriots...sacrific’d their Money, Plate, Jewels, to the Good of their Country” and that queens “conquer’d with their Arms abroad, as much as with their Eyes at home.” He seemed to lament that “such Military Virtues” would not appeal to “our modern polite Ladies.”¹¹⁸

He attributed the lack of military-minded females to the presence of standing armies which negated Britain’s need “to call in the Female Powers to our Aid.”¹¹⁹ This article can be seen as part of a larger debate in eighteenth-century Britain over the

¹¹⁶ Eames, “Rustic Warriors,” 122.

¹¹⁷ *Boston Evening Post*, October 15, 1739, 1. Early American Newspapers, Series 1, 1690-1876, accessed online.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

masculinity and the benefits of a standing vs. volunteer military.¹²⁰ Questioning the masculinity of the standing army, he suggested that its members “look as smug, and make as pretty a Figure at a Review, when their Hair is nicely ruck’d up and well powder’d as, if They were to make their Appearance in Petticoats, (for which I am told there is actually a Project in Agitation.)”¹²¹ He concluded that although women were not needed as warriors, they might act as sensible wives and daughters, making their own clothes and reading good books. The author’s notion that there had once been a time when women were needed in war is one that will return in the final chapter of this dissertation. Despite his doubts regarding the masculinity of the standing army, the author alone could not reverse the trend which separated fighting men from men at home.

Government proclamations during Dummer’s War and its willingness to award land grants to female veterans suggests continuity in practice. However, the rhetoric of the homefront and the suffering subject began to emerge at approximately the same time. As early as May 1725 we begin to see a separation between soldiers and civilians in a sermon given in Bradford, Massachusetts by Thomas Symmes. Bradford, a community adjacent to the perpetually sacked town of Haverhill was still firmly within the designated frontier area during this conflict. In this sermon, Symmes responded to the death of Captain John Lovewell, a hero of Dummer’s War. He reminded his audience that prayer was the most powerful weapon New Englanders wielded. After noting that “our

¹²⁰ Matthew McCormack, “The New Militia: War, Politics, and Gender in 1750s Britain,” *Gender & History* 19, no. 3 (Nov., 2007): 483-500.

¹²¹ *Boston Evening Post*, October 15, 1739, 1.

Soldiers...must be a Praying Legion,” Symmes announced that “we that tarry at home” must also pray, suggesting that civilian men lingering in the frontier region near Haverhill might do their duty through prayer. Ignoring decades of women’s participation, Symmes suggested that “a good Woman in her Closet, (tho’ she’s afraid to take a Gun in her Hand) may serve her Country to very good purpose, even in respect of the War.”¹²²

In a sermon given in June 1737 to an artillery company in Boston, Rev. William Williams expressed concern with Massachusetts’ preparedness and strategy in previous wars that placed a large defensive burden on settler-soldiers. Williams cautioned that although the colony had deliberately settled “a line of towns on our Frontiers, in as defensible a manner as may be,” the defense of the colony should “not be left only to the Care and feeble Attempts of the Grantees” of these towns. Instead, he argued, defense must “be directed and very much encouraged and assisted by the Government...[that] these may prove a Barrier and Defence to the scatter’d Plantations and Villages which lie expos’d to be an easy Prey.” Williams’ solution included “repairing and strengthening the Forts and Garrison of this Province.” He appealed to the governor’s “natural and paternal concern” for New England and noted that his authority derived from “our rightful Sovereign King George.” In doing so, Williams made the connection between paternal

¹²² Thomas Symmes, *Historical memoirs of the late fight at Piggwacket, with a sermon occasion'd by the fall of the brave Capt John Lovewell and several of his valiant company, in the late heroic action there* (Boston: B. Green, 1725), 30. Early American Imprints, Series 1: Evans, 1639-1800, accessed online.

concern, royal authority, and the intervention of a professional military into conflicts that had earlier been fought by settler-soldiers and impressed town militias.¹²³

In his August 1745 declaration of war published in the *Boston Weekly News-Letter*, Lieutenant Governor Spencer Phips declared war in the name of the suffering settlers.¹²⁴ Although already at war with France, Phips composed this declaration against Native nations such as the Penobscot, Norridgewock, their confederates, and French-allied Indians. Phips wrote that the army would fight for “his Majesty’s good Subjects, dwelling on the Frontiers of this Province [who] have many Months past endured most of the Inconveniencies and Disasters of War.”¹²⁵ He also noted that many of these inconvenienced settlers had struggled to make a living and had even been “driven off from their Estates,” something that would have been illegal in previous wars.¹²⁶

In 1746, the Massachusetts government passed a law raising money and men “for the defence of the Frontier.” The government argued this step was necessary because “the inhabitants as are so exposed to the Enemy as to be unable to support themselves by their Labour.”¹²⁷ Bounties on scalps were paid to soldiers or civilians who killed in “his own

¹²³ William Williams, *Martial wisdom recommended. A sermon preach'd at the desire of the Honourable Artillery Company in Boston, June 6. 1737. Being the day of their election of officers* (Boston: Fleet, 1737), 16. Early American Imprints, Series 1: Evans, 1639-1800, accessed online.

¹²⁴ *Boston Weekly News-Letter*, August 29, 1745, 1. Early American Newspapers, Series 1, 1690-1876, accessed online.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ “Orders and Votes Allowing Pay and Subsistence for Garrisons at Divers Points on the Eastern and Western Frontiers and Appointing Committees for Building New Blockades” [1747], in *The Acts and Resolves, Public and Private, of the Province of the Massachusetts Bay* (Boston: Wright & Potter, 1905), 13: 702-703.

Defence or in the Defence of any of his Majesty's Subjects."¹²⁸ The government ordered that stockades, garrisons, and forts be placed in "the most prudent manner...for the Security & Defence of the whole Inhabitants of each place."¹²⁹ The order took a practical approach, rewarding the military actions of settlers, though without the angry demands of the declarations of Dummer's War. Indeed, the furthest the government was willing to go was Governor Shirley's April 1746 "direction" to militia officers asking them to require "Inhabitants" to carry arms and ammunition "from Time to Time...as they shall judge needful, to prevent a Surprize" attack.¹³⁰ A law passed a month later required all men in frontier towns to have a gun and that towns have a sufficient supply of guns. The law also required the military companies stationed in frontier towns be "in constant Readiness for the Relief of any neighbouring Frontier-Town."¹³¹

Some writers in New England initially seemed pleased with the government's newly expressed commitment to the safety of frontier inhabitants. In a dedication to his published military sermon delivered at the opening of King George's War in June 1744, Rev. Joseph Parsons praised Governor Shirley for his "unwearied Application" in which "we see our Fortifications in a Condition to free us from perplexing Cares about the Enemy; and such speedy and vigorous Measures taken to guard our exposed Frontiers as

¹²⁸ "Vote Allowing a Premium for Indian Prisoners and Scalps" [1747], in *The Acts and Resolves, Public and Private, of the Province of the Massachusetts Bay* (Boston: Wright & Potter, 1905), 13: 712-713.

¹²⁹ "Vote Granting Allowance for Fortifying Divers Towns in the County of York" [1743], in *The Acts and Resolves, Public and Private, of the Province of the Massachusetts Bay* (Boston: Wright & Potter, 1905), 13: 313.

¹³⁰ *Boston Evening Post*, April 28, 1746, 4. Early American Newspapers, Series 1, 1690-1876, accessed online.

¹³¹ *Boston Evening Post*, May 26, 1746, 1. Early American Newspapers, Series 1, 1690-1876, accessed online.

calm our Minds under the sad Apprehensions we had entertained of a War.” Parsons went on to thank Shirley for his paternal “Concern.”¹³²

Despite the smattering of gratitude for the parental concern expressed by Massachusetts’ leaders, King George’s War and the Seven Years War were marked more by dissatisfied articles in newspapers and other publications demanding British protection. An article in the June 5, 1746 issue of the *Boston News-Letter* reported that “the poor People on the Frontiers are in great Distress, the Indians being very numerous, and divided into many Parties.”¹³³ One anonymous author who appended his observations to the publication of Benjamin Doolittle’s *Narrative of the Late War* sought to maintain newer divisions between settlers and soldiers.¹³⁴ The author complained that “great Injustice is done the Inhabitants in the Frontiers in pressing them out of their Business” to pursue the enemy without compensation. He also noted that these men were “sent out Day after Day with their Horses, and have not half so much per Day as they must give a Man to labour for them in the mean Time.”¹³⁵ His remarks suggest a tension between the demands of life as a farmer and as potential manpower. In the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the concern would have been with adding additional militia soldiers

¹³² Joseph Parsons, *Religion recommended to the soldier. A sermon preach'd to the Ancient and Honourable Artillery-Company, June 4. 1744* (Boston: Green, 1744), 6-7. Early American Imprints, Series 1: Evans, 1639-1800, accessed online.

¹³³ *Boston News-Letter*, June 5, 1746. Early American Newspapers, Series 1, 1690-1876, accessed online.

¹³⁴ Anonymous, Remarks Appended to Doolittle Narrative, in Benjamin Doolittle, *A Short Narrative of Mischief done by the French and Indian Enemy* (Boston: S. Kneeland, 1750), 20-22. Early American Imprints, Series 1: Evans, 1639-1800, accessed online.

¹³⁵ Doolittle, *A Short Narrative of Mischief*, 22.

to assist overworked settler-soldiers and their families, not whether settlers should be asked to serve in that capacity in the first place.

One incident perfectly illustrates the transference of masculinity from settler to soldier. Reverend Doolittle wrote that during King George's War, a group of Indians in western Massachusetts "Way-laid the Road; and as one Matthew Clark with his Wife and Daughter, and three Soldiers, were going from the Garrison to Clark's House, they fir'd upon them." These first lines indicate that Clark was not the main protector of his wife and daughter. That position fell to the three soldiers acting as body-guards. During the chaos, "they kill'd and scalp'd said Clark, and wounded his Wife and Daughter." With Clark proven ineffectual as a protector and dead as a result, Doolittle reported that "one Soldier play'd the Man, fir'd several Times—defended and bro't off the Woman and her Daughter to the Fort, who are recovered of their Wounds." It is interesting that with three soldiers as protection, the Indians still had an opportunity to reach and scalp Clark and that only one soldier appears to have had any real role in their defense. In spite of an incident that comes off as a failure for the three soldiers, the surviving soldier still retained the title of "man."¹³⁶

Despite changing attitudes toward the responsibility of families on the frontier, women's attempts to defend their homes, themselves, or their families did not elicit disapproving responses. Benjamin Doolittle reported that in May 1746, a soldier alerted the inhabitants of a fortified building in Falltown that an attack was imminent. Although

¹³⁶ Doolittle, *A Short Narrative of Mischief*, 5.

there were “but three Men in the fort,” the women in the fort “assist[ed] in charging the Guns,” helping to foil the attack.¹³⁷ In a similar August 1755 incident in Walpole, New Hampshire, John Kilburn and three companions returned to Kilburn’s house ahead of an impending attack.¹³⁸ After securing the door, Kilburn and the other men in the house prepared to defend the home, helped by “Kilburn’s wife and his daughter Hitty, who contributed not a little to encourage and assist their companions, as well as keep a watch upon the movements of the enemy.”¹³⁹ According to the account, “the women, with true Grecian firmness, assisted in loading the guns, and when their stock of lead grew short, they had the forethought to suspend blankets in the roof of the house to catch the enemies’ balls,” which had lost much of their force when they hit or passed through the roof.¹⁴⁰

In April 1746, six Indians surprised the sleeping inhabitants of the Woodwell garrison in Hopkinton, New Hampshire. Mrs Woodwell, who was “being closely embraced by a sturdy Indian, wrested from his side a long knife.”¹⁴¹ According to the account of Mrs. Woodwell’s daughter, she “was in the act of running him through, when

¹³⁷ Doolittle, *A Short Narrative of Mischief*, 4.

¹³⁸ “Indian Attack at Walpole,” in *Collections of the New Hampshire Historical Society* (Concord: Jacob B. Moore, 1827), 2: 49-58. The editor noted that the account was reprinted from an article in the *Cheshire Gazette*. This incident was also reported in “Letter from Rev. Thomas Fessenden to Jeremy Belknap, January 22, 1790,” in *Collections of the New Hampshire Historical Society* (Concord: Marsh, Capen, and Lyon, 1834), 4: 290-292.

¹³⁹ “Indian Attack at Walpole,” 56.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 57. This account—particularly its Classical allusions—will be discussed in great detail in the following chapter.

¹⁴¹ “Captivity of Mary Fowler,” in *Collections, Topographical, Historical, and Biographical Relating Principally to New Hampshire*, ed. John Farmer and Jacob Bailey Moore (Concord, NH: Hill and Moore, 1822), 1: 284-287.

her husband prevailed with her to desist, fearing the fatal consequences.”¹⁴² Knowing that she would not be allowed to keep the weapon, she threw it into a well before they began their trek north. It is interesting to note that Mrs Woodwell’s first instinct was to arm herself and attack; although Mr. Woodwell persuaded his wife to spare her captor’s life, his objection was practical, not moral or based on a sense of proper female behavior. He knew that if she stabbed the man, his companions likely would kill the rest of the family.

In 1755 *The Boston Evening Post* reported that three Indians approached a home near the border between Massachusetts and New York, where “they found a woman who was at Work, ironing Clothes.”¹⁴³ According to the *Evening Post*, one of the Indians grabbed the woman by the hair and informed her that she had been taken captive. She responded by hitting him on the head with her “Box-iron...which made him sally [silly].” When another man from the group trained his gun on her, she was able to use her arm to hit the gun so that the shot “went off over her Head.” Finally, the third man “wounded her in the Side” with his gun and took her from the house. After attacking another house, a male settler shot one of the Indians, dispersing the party and rescuing the woman with the wound in her side. In another, somewhat similar incident, a woman in Maine was caring for her ill son in June 1757 when a small group of Indians killed her husband. One of the men forced his way into the house and aimed his gun at the young man in his sickbed.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² “Captivity of Mary Fowler,” 285.

¹⁴³ *Boston Evening Post*, July 8, 1755, 3. Early American Newspapers, Series 1, 1690-1876, accessed online.

¹⁴⁴ *New-Hampshire Gazette*, June 24, 1757, 2. Early American Newspapers, Series 1, 1690-1876, accessed online.

After his shot missed, the mother “resolutely took hold of the Indian and ramm’d him out of the house, and fastened the Door against him.” The mother was later killed by a stray bullet and her son was not expected to recover from his illness.

Each of the preceding examples of women’s participation in the wars of the 1740s and 1750s suggests that a woman’s courage and her willingness to defend herself and others remained admirable qualities. Still, the fact remains that as the gap between settler and soldier, home and front expanded, so too did the distance between men and women grow. In New England, greater integration into the British Empire placed settler-soldiers under the protection of a benevolent father-king and a masculinized, increasingly professional military. The de-emphasization of the role of the settler-soldier and the garrison house in favor of manned forts slowly changed the nature of frontier warfare and the need for women to participate in those wars. This transition took time, progressing even as women continued to receive praise and rewards for their actions in earlier wars.

Changes in women’s roles in New France depended more upon shifts in military strategy and geography than transformations of ideology. Although a new strategic reliance on fortified towns along the coasts initially produced anxiety over relations between female inhabitants and the soldiers stationed in those cities, reports of sexual scandals diminished greatly following the end of Queen Anne’s War in 1713. As New France became increasingly militarized during the first half of the eighteenth century, women continued to participate in war-making, albeit through economic means rather than physical combat.

Reports and stories of women's participation in the border wars eventually faded into memory. Authors retelling these stories in late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century New England portrayed the women's actions as appropriate for women of the past, though perhaps not for the women of a newly formed United States. The final chapter of this dissertation traces the survival of colonial stories and explores how authors employed these stories in the creation of local and national identities. It also examines how writers altered these stories to reflect changes in ideas regarding separate spheres, motherhood, and domesticity.

CHAPTER 5:

MEMORY AND WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE BORDER WARS IN NORTHERN NEW ENGLAND

In 1832, Benjamin Mirick published *The History of Haverhill, Massachusetts*, one of many local histories of New England towns written in the nineteenth century.¹ As a former designated frontier town of strategic importance, Haverhill was the site of some of the most famous raids in the history of the northeastern border wars. It was also the home of several noteworthy female figures from those wars such as Hannah Dustin, Mary Neff, Hannah Bradley, and Susannah Swan. Mirick's work drew on a wide range of firsthand accounts, oral histories, and written histories from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Mirick's sources reveal chains of transmission between generations as well as between oral and written sources. They also attest to the cultural persistence of stories of women's participation in the border wars.

In addition to providing evidence of the stories' continuing presence and relevance, Mirick's history also hints at how Americans remembered the colonial period. It also shows how American authors re-appropriated these accounts to reflect the creation of a masculine public and a feminine private sphere that Mary Beth Norton described in *Separated by their Sex*.² For example, Mirick's account of Hannah Bradley's violent self-

¹ B.L. Mirick, *The History of Haverhill, Massachusetts* (Haverhill: A. W. Thayer, 1832).

² Mary Beth Norton, *Separated by their Sex: Women in Public and Private in the Colonial Atlantic World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011).

defense against her attackers considered a passage from the Rev. John Pike's journal, which noted that six Indians had killed thirteen settlers and captured five more. Dissatisfied with this ratio, Mirick pondered whether most of the victims had been children. Certainly they could not have all been men. He also dismissed the idea that Haverhill's women had succumbed to six Indians. Women from the colonial period, Mirick believed, "seem[ed] to possess, at times, as much courage and fortitude as the men."³ This comment, which suggested that nineteenth-century women were somehow more delicate than colonial women, was part of a larger local, state, and even national project of identity-building and memory-making that took place in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries in New England.

One feature of this project was the identification and celebration of female heroines from the seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries. As Jean O'Brien has pointed out, "including Indian hostilities in local histories underscored the heroic nature of colonial histories," crafting a narrative of brave forerunners who replaced savagery with civilization.⁴ This process also painted colonial women as brave frontier heroines who held the line against Indians and French soldiers alike. These women belonged to an earlier time however, and their heroics did not necessarily fit changes in gender roles that increasingly cast women as domestic creatures. Indeed, in some nineteenth-century accounts of earlier incidents, authors emphasized motherly instincts or the women's

³ Mirick, *The History of Haverhill, Massachusetts*, 108.

⁴ Jean M. O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians out of Existence in New England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 33.

defense of a previously absent domestic sphere. In exploring the cultural transmission of these stories, this chapter has two major goals: to demonstrate that these stories survived and thrived throughout the colonial period and beyond and to examine how authors in the late eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries adapted these accounts for projects that included nation-building and the reconsideration of gender roles in the early republic.

Historians have increasingly appreciated the cultural importance of the memory of the border wars for residents of the northeastern borderlands in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The cultural significance and survival of the captivity narratives of figures such as Mary Rowlandson and John Williams have been well-studied.⁵ As Evan Haefeli and Kevin Sweeney have pointed out, the publication of colonial captivity narratives—and presumably other wartime accounts—suited specific political moments and cultural needs.⁶ Both Williams’ and Rowlandson’s narratives were particularly useful during the American Revolution and early republic. Each was republished several times during this period in attempts to encourage resistance to oppression.⁷

Scholars such as Colin Coates, Cecilia Morgan, and Kathryn Derounian-Stodola have investigated the lasting impact of the two best-known fighting women from the

⁵ Evan Haefeli and Kevin Sweeney, “*The Redeemed Captive as Recurrent Seller: Politics and Publication, 1707-1853*,” *The New England Quarterly* 77, no. 3 (Sep. 2004): 341-367; Denise Mary MacNeil, *The Emergence of the American Frontier Hero: 1682-1826, Gender, Action, and Emotion* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Michelle Burnham, *Captivity and Sentiment: Cultural Exchange in American Literature, 1682-1861* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1997).

⁶ Haefeli and Sweeney “*The Redeemed Captive as Recurrent Seller*,” 344.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 356-358; Michelle Burnham, *Captivity and Sentiment: Cultural Exchange in American Literature, 1682-1861* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1997), 67.

period, Hannah Dustan and Madeleine de Verchères.⁸ Although their work will be considered later on, it is the survival of stories of women’s participation which have not remained famous that form the heart of this chapter. By analyzing their survival through the early nineteenth-century, we can see how accounts of women’s participation in the border wars remained central to New Englanders’ understanding of their own history as well as how the same stories served different cultural purposes at the local, regional, and national levels.

Unlike earlier chapters in this dissertation, this chapter—which focuses on New England—does not have a French “counterpart.” There are two key reasons for this choice. First, as noted in Chapter Four, the royal takeover of New France in 1663, the decline in missionary publications and chronicles, the lack of a press in New France, and low literacy resulted in a dearth of written sources suitable for this type of analysis. Second, France lost the majority of its North American land claims—including Canada and Acadia—to the English over the course of the 1750s and 1760s. As a result, the community-building and nation-building efforts that took place via New England’s histories were not undertaken by the French-speaking settlers abandoned to the British. After a brief discussion of two French stories that did survive, the remainder of the chapter will investigate stories from New England.

⁸ Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola, “The Captive as Celebrity,” in *Lives Out of Letters: Essays on American Literary Biography and Documentation in Honor of Robert N. Hudspet* (Cranbury, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2004); Colin M. Coates and Cecilia Morgan, *Heroines and History: Representations of Madeleine de Verchères and Laura Secord* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002).

Writing about French Canada, Colin Coates and Cecilia Morgan noted that figures such as Madeleine de Verchères essentially disappeared in the mid-eighteenth century before Quebecois nationalists rediscovered them around the turn of the twentieth century.⁹ There is evidence however, to suggest that de Verchères' story would have been included in a French "canon" of accounts related to colonial history and war. In 1716, Claude Bacqueville de la Potherie included a version of the incident in his broad history of French North America.¹⁰ De la Potherie, an acquaintance of the Verchères family, published an account very similar to the one Madeleine sent to the Countess de Maurepas in 1699.¹¹ Perhaps the most famous history of New France written during the colonial period, Pierre François Xavier de Charlevoix's *History and General Description of New France*, also mentioned Madeleine, as well as her mother.¹² Clearly drawing from de la Potherie, Charlevoix's history, originally published in 1744, was partly based on letters written to the Duchess de Lesdiguières during Charlevoix's visit to New France in 1721; Madeleine de Verchères' story was contained in one of these published letters.

In addition to the published accounts of Madeleine de Verchères' defense of her father's seigneurie, officials in New France also remembered the incident. Coates and

⁹ Coates and Morgan, *Heroines and History*, ch. 2.

¹⁰ Claude Charles Le Roy Bacqueville de la Potherie, *Voyage de l'Amerique Contenant ce qui s'est Passé de plus Remarquable dans l'Amerique Septentrionale depuis 1534 jusqu'à Present* (Amsterdam: Henry des Bordes, 1723), 324-325.

¹¹ Letter from Marie Madeleine de Verchères to Comtesse de Maurepas in *Supplement to Dr. Brymner's Report on Canadian Archives*, ed. Edouard Richard (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, 1901), 6-7.

¹² Pierre François Xavier de Charlevoix, *Histoire et Description Générale de la Nouvelle France avec le Journal Historique d'un Voyage Fait par Ordre du Roi dans l'Amérique Septentrionale* (Paris: Ganeau, 1744), 3: 124-125.

Morgan noted that in a 1730 court case involving Madeleine, a priest remarked that ““God fears neither hero nor heroine,” suggesting that colonists still remembered her actions.¹³ Further confirming that her story was culturally persistent during the colonial period, a married, middle-aged Madeleine de Verchères wrote a second narrative of the attack in 1726 at the request of the colony’s new governor, the Marquis de Beauharnois.¹⁴ This new account, which several authors have noted is less believable than the first, enhanced de Verchères’ bravery by increasing the element of danger, adding in endangered relatives floating by in a canoe, and offered more details of her command of men within the fort.¹⁵

She also included an additional, later encounter with a group of Abenaki who she claimed entered her home and threatened the inhabitants.¹⁶ According to the account, after a French man subdued one of the two Abenakis, Madeleine killed the second with a tomahawk before he could kill her husband. After killing the man, she “found herself in the hands of four Indian women” who “seized me by the throat and another by the hair, tearing off my cap” before attempting to throw her “into the fire.” Madeleine noted that she “felt like a victim in the grasp of these furies” who had been “driven to desperation” by the deaths of their relatives only moments before.¹⁷ Eventually, Madeleine, her

¹³ Coates and Morgan, *Heroines and History*, 37.

¹⁴ Ibid., 20; “Narrative of the heroic deeds of Mlle Marie-Madeleine de Verchères....,” in *Supplement to Dr. Brymner’s Report on Canadian Archives*, ed. Edouard Richard (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, 1901), 7-12.

¹⁵ Coates and Morgan, *Heroines and History*, 20-21, Louise Dechêne, *Le Peuple, L’État et la Guerre au Canada sous le Régime Français*, ed. Hélène Paré, Sylvie Dépatie, Catherine Desbarats, and Thomas Wien (Montréal: Les Éditions du Boréal, 2008), 161.

¹⁶ “Narrative of the heroic deeds of Mlle Marie-Madeleine de Verchères,” 11.

¹⁷ Ibid., 11.

husband, and her son of twelve years were able to gain control of the situation. Madeleine placed special emphasis on her own rescue of her husband and on her son's brave actions, seeming to suggest that heroism ran in her family line, not in her husbands' family. To add authenticity to the account, Madeleine noted that the previous Governor of New France, the Marquis de Vaudreuil, had looked into the matter and declared it true.¹⁸

Intensifying the drama of the scene, she added that "a painter, seeing me at that moment, could have made a picture of Mary Magdalen; bareheaded, my hair tossed and disheveled, my clothing all in tatters, I was not unlike the saint, except as to the tears, which never flowed from my eyes."¹⁹ That Madeleine compared herself to a tearless Mary Magdalen is particularly interesting. In her 1699 account of her defense of Verchères, Madeleine scornfully dismissed "the lamentations of the women, whose husbands had been carried off."²⁰ She also noted in her second account that one of the women involved had been from Paris and was "extremely timorous, as is natural to all Parisian women." This is a tantalizing sentiment that hints at a difference in the perception of Canadian-born and French-born women and that, unfortunately, cannot be explored further due to the scarcity of records. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the Mary Magdalen comparison is that the saint, who was also Madeleine de Verchères' namesake, was a highly complex figure, strong, favored by Christ, but thought to be far

¹⁸ "Narrative of the heroic deeds of Mlle Marie-Madeleine de Verchères," 11-12.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

²⁰ Letter from Marie Madeleine de Verchères to Comtesse de Maurepas in *Supplement to Dr. Brymner's Report on Canadian Archives*, ed. Edouard Richard (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, 1901), 7.

from innocent. According to Coates and Morgan, by the turn of the twentieth century, the figure of Madeleine de Verchères had merged with Joan of Arc and transformed “from a woman warrior into a domesticated, if brave, young woman.”²¹

There is evidence that some stories from New France may have also survived in oral tradition. The story of an Algonquin woman who was taken captive, who freed herself, and who escaped to safety after killing one of her Iroquois captors survived through the mid-nineteenth century.²² The original Jesuit account played upon ideas of her supposed Amazon nature and was filled with biblical allusions, citing her insect-plagued journey through the wilderness that lasted nearly forty days until she emerged at a French settlement. According to the account, she arrived at Trois-Rivières aware of her naked state, seemingly eager to be embraced by French clothing and Christian civilization. Her story appears to have survived in both oral and written form and was transmitted to European audiences in both English and French accounts in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries.

The first of these later accounts was in Pierre Charlevoix’ 1744 *Histoire et Description Générale de la Nouvelle-France*.²³ The story then resurfaced in 1809 in the published journal of Roger Lamb, a British soldier who traveled through the Trois-

²¹ Coates and Morgan, *Heroines and History*, 41.

²² Jérôme Lallemand, *Relation de ce qui s’est passé de plus remarquable és missions des peres de la Compagnie de Jesus, en la Nouvelle France, sur le grand fleuve de S. Laurens en l’année 1647: enuoyée au R.P. prouincial de la Prouince de France* (Paris: Chez Sebastien Cramoisy et Gabriel Cramoisy, 1648), 30: 290.

²³ Pierre François Xavier de Charlevoix, *History and General Description of New France*, trans. John Gilmary Shea, vol. 2 (New York, NY: Francis P. Harper, 1900), 198-200.

Rivières area during the American Revolution. Lamb wrote that he included the story “for the sake of many of my readers who perhaps have never read the following anecdote.”²⁴ It is unclear where Roger Lamb first encountered the story, though it matches up quite well with the major points of the account in the *Jesuit Relations* and in Charlevoix’s work. Nineteenth-century historian Francis Parkman also included the story in his 1867 *The Jesuits in North America in the Seventeenth Century*.²⁵ Although it is possible that more of these French stories survived via oral tradition, the sources necessary to conduct a meaningful historical analysis simply do not exist.

The Cultural Persistence of Women’s War-Making

In 1773, Boston printer John Boyle published a new edition of Mary Rowlandson’s 1682 captivity narrative, *The Sovereignty & Goodness of God*. Although the work had been reprinted in 1720, three times in 1770, and once in 1771, Boyle’s 1773 edition is particularly intriguing.²⁶ In Boyle’s 1773 version, Mary Rowlandson appears on the cover, standing next to her home, musket trained, prepared to fight her attackers in defense of her Lancaster home. Rowlandson, dressed in cap and apron, is alone, stationed in the foreground, and appears to be using the home as cover. Four Indian men in European clothing and armed with an assortment of tomahawks and muskets approach

²⁴ Roger Lamb, *An Original and Authentic Journal of Occurrences During the Late American War from Its Commencement to the Year 1783* (Dublin: Printed by Wilkinson & Courtney, 1809), 105-107.

²⁵ Francis Parkman, *The Jesuits in North America in the Seventeenth Century* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1867), 2: 313-316.

²⁶ Mary Rowlandson, *A Narrative of the Captivity, Sufferings and Removes of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* (Boston: John Boyle, 1773); Additional editions include: (Boston: T. Fleet, 1720); (Boston: Z. Fowle, 1770); (Boston: Nathaniel Coverly, 1770); (Boston: Nathaniel Coverly, 1771).

the other side of the house. Three years earlier, Nathaniel Coverly and Z. Cowle published separate editions of the narrative featuring an identical illustration of Rowlandson in a tri-cornered hat and a gown that would have been far more at home in the 1770s than the 1680s.²⁷ Rowlandson is holding a powder horn—correctly, so as not to spill the powder—and grasping a musket approximately her own height. In the background is an anachronistic, fortified structure flying a flag.

The militarization of Mary Rowlandson’s image served an important cultural function in 1770s New England. In her excellent monograph, *Captivity and Sentiment*, Michelle Burnham suggested that the 1773 image of Rowlandson—and presumably the unmentioned 1770 illustration—represented a desire to place Rowlandson in a Revolutionary context.²⁸ Noting that narratives such as Rowlandson’s were important in creating “an appropriate image of colonial oppression,” Burnham convincingly argued that the image “provid[ed] an effective rhetoric for imagining and justifying colonial resistance.”²⁹ Burnham also suggested that this “refiguration” was “grafted” on the “more violently aggressive captive such as Hannah Dustan.”³⁰ Although Dustan’s story undoubtedly influenced Rowlandson’s new image, Dustan was only one of many women remembered for defended their homes, themselves, and their families in the wars of the northeastern borderlands.

²⁷ Mary Rowlandson, *A Narrative of the Captivity, Sufferings and Removes of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* (Boston: Z. Fowle, 1770); Mary Rowlandson, *A Narrative of the Captivity, Sufferings and Removes of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* (Boston: Nathaniel Coverly, 1770).

²⁸ Burnham, *Captivity and Sentiment*, 63-69.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 67.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

Despite the fact that no contemporary source ever reported that Mary Rowlandson even held a gun, the 1773 image placed Rowlandson within a larger tradition of women wielding firearms. Many women throughout the northeastern borderlands of the seventeenth and eighteenth century had both access to guns as well as the ability to shoot them. Stories of women's participation in New England's wars, particularly from the period prior to 1713, were culturally persistent, retold in written and oral form throughout the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. Although the accounts were transmitted largely intact, slight changes reflect shifts in society and culture and demonstrate the importance of early colonial history in shaping local and national identities.

The three major histories of northern New England's political and military past written in the mid-to-late eighteenth century integrated women's participation in the border wars into their narratives.³¹ Thomas Hutchinson's *The History of the Province of Massachusetts-Bay* was published in the mid-1760s, Samuel Niles finished his *A*

³¹ Thomas Hutchinson, *The History of the Colony of Massachusetts-Bay, from the First Settlement thereof in 1628. until its Incorporation with the Colony of Plimouth, Province of Main, &c. by the Charter of King William and Queen Mary, in 1691* (Boston: Thomas & John Fleet, 1764); Thomas Hutchinson, *The History of the Colony of Massachusetts-Bay, from the Charter of King William and Queen Mary in 1691, Until the Year 1750* (Boston: Thomas & John Fleet, 1767). Early American Imprints, Series 1: Evans, 1639-1800, accessed online. Hutchinson's third volume was published posthumously and is available in Thomas Hutchinson, *The History of the Massachusetts-Bay*, ed. Lawrence Shaw Mayo, 3 vols. (Cambridge Harvard University Press, 1936). Niles' work was published in two stages in different editions of the *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*: Samuel Niles, *A Summary Historical Narrative of the Wars in New-England with the French and Indians* in *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 3rd ser. (Boston: John H. Eastburn, 1836); Samuel Niles, *A Summary Historical Narrative of the Wars in New-England with the French and Indians*, in *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 4th ser. (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1861). Jeremy Belknap's *History of New Hampshire* was published in three volumes: Jeremy Belknap, *The History of New Hampshire*, 3 vols. (Philadelphia and Boston: Robert Aitken, Isaiah Thomas, Belknap and Young, 1784, 1791, 1792). Early American Imprints, Series 1: Evans, 1639-1800, accessed online.

Summary Historical Narrative of the Wars in New-England in 1760, and Jeremy Belknap published his *History of New Hampshire* in the 1790s. Samuel Niles' history of New England's border wars was, in the author's words, "some account of all the slaughter and bloodshed committed by them [France and New England's Native adversaries] that I could find, from the beginning to this day."³² Writing during the Seven Years' War, Niles hoped his work would provoke his fellow New Englanders "to awaken, reform, and quicken us to our duty, civil and religious."³³ Niles' history did not cite, but often borrowed verbatim from many of the sources featured in earlier chapters of this dissertation. For example, Niles used Benjamin Doolittle's language when he wrote that "the women also assisted in charging the guns" in an attack on Fall Town in 1746.³⁴

Massachusetts Governor and future loyalist Thomas Hutchinson's three-volume history of Massachusetts included more political history than Niles' military history of New England's wars. It was meant to serve as a unifying work, a history written as rioters in Boston increasingly threatened Hutchinson's own life. According to Hutchinson, he wrote it "for the sake of [his] own countrymen," a history of a colony he saw as "the parent of all the other colonies of New-England."³⁵ As a more general history of Massachusetts, Hutchinson's work had fewer accounts of women's participation than

³² Niles, *A Summary Historical Narrative of the Wars in New-England* (1836), 5: 154.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Niles, *A Summary Historical Narrative of the Wars in New-England* (1861), 5: 368; Compare to Benjamin Doolittle, *A Short Narrative of Mischief done by the French and Indian Enemy* (Boston: S. Kneeland, 1750), 4. Early American Imprints, Series 1: Evans, 1639-1800, accessed online.

³⁵ Hutchinson, *The History of the Colony of Massachusetts-Bay*, 1: ii-iii.

Niles' military history. Both histories served the purpose of creating a greater history of the region based on colonial events.

Despite the popularity of a more militant version of Mary Rowlandson's captivity narrative, few publications from the Revolutionary Era included accounts of women's participation during the colonial border wars. Major histories written during the American Revolution often focused on the colonies as a whole, and the grand scale of these works may have contributed to the absence of incidents involving women.³⁶ Works such as William Gordon's *History of the Rise, Progress, and Establishment of the Independence of the United States of America*, begun in 1776 and published in 1788, hoped to integrate the colonies into a larger history.³⁷

Jeremy Belknap's three-volume *History of New Hampshire* had a different aim when he published it in the 1790s: creating an identity for a new state that had long been in the shadow of Massachusetts. Belknap, whom Russell Lawson dubbed "the American Plutarch," was an historian, a scientist, Congregational minister, and constant

³⁶ The lack of publications during the American Revolution that retold accounts of women's participation during the border wars was not due to disapproval of their actions. The new editions of Rowlandson's captivity that portray her with weapons, as well as the acceptance of Revolutionary-era women's participation in that war suggest that women continued to act as deputy husbands, camp followers, and even as combatants. See: Alfred F. Young, *Masquerade: The Life and Times of Deborah Sampson, Continental Soldier* (New York: Knopf, 2004); Holly A. Mayer, *Belonging to the Army: Camp Followers and Community during the American Revolution* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996); Julie Wheelwright, *Amazons and Military Maids: Women who Dressed as Men in the Pursuit of Life, Liberty and Happiness* (London: Pandora, 1989); Dianne Dugaw, *Warrior Women and Popular Balladry: 1650-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Daniel A. Cohen, ed., *The Female Marine and Related Works: Narratives of Cross-Dressing and Urban Vice in America's Early Republic* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997); Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1980), ch. 7.

³⁷ William Gordon, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Establishment, of the Independence of the United States of America: Including an Account of the Late War; and of the Thirteen Colonies, from their Origin to that Period* (New York: Hodge, Allen, and Campbell, 1789), first published (London: 1788).

correspondent.³⁸ His *History of New Hampshire* served as part of what George Kirsch referred to as “an intense examination of colonial history” in the wake of the American Revolution.³⁹ Creating a history for New Hampshire while placing it within the new nation was his key task in this major work.⁴⁰ Although the nature of his work as a history of New Hampshire prevented Belknap from bringing in the many accounts of women’s participation in Massachusetts, Belknap included all major accounts from New Hampshire. Clearly, Belknap saw the actions of these women as part of the history of his state and the nation as a whole.

All three of these eighteenth-century histories drew largely from primary sources, mainly earlier written accounts of New England’s history. Most of these sources, such as Benjamin Hubbard’s, Increase Mather’s, and Benjamin Church’s histories of King Philip’s War, Cotton Mather’s narratives of King William’s War, and Samuel Penhallow’s work on Queen Anne’s War and Dummer’s War have supplied material for this

³⁸ Russell M. Lawson, *The American Plutarch: Jeremy Belknap and the Historian’s Dialogue with the Past* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1998).

³⁹ George B. Kirsch, “Jeremy Belknap: Man of Letters in the Young Republic,” *The New England Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (March 1981), 35.

⁴⁰ Sidney Kaplan, “The History of New Hampshire: Jeremy Belknap as Literary Craftsman,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 21, no. 1 (Jan. 1964), 37-38.

dissertation.⁴¹ In addition to these written sources, Belknap also collected accounts from across New Hampshire in an attempt to preserve previously undocumented stories.

Before exploring these three histories further, the importance of Samuel Penhallow's 1726 *The History of the Wars of New-England with the Eastern Indians* must be considered both as a literary turning point and a major influence on future histories.⁴² Penhallow's history was perhaps the last early colonial military history written in the mold of Hubbard, the Mathers, and Church. Penhallow focused mainly on Queen Anne's War and the Anglo-Abenaki conflict, Dummer's War, which lasted from 1722-1725. He was also the last author to use the grand biblical or classical language of the earlier writers when describing women's participation in the border wars. Although some authors in the early republic would rely on classical themes, as we will see, their language more often referred to ideas about republican motherhood, not mythological warriors. Penhallow's work is also important as the last of the major narratives from the earlier period that historians from the mid-eighteenth century onward relied upon when

⁴¹ For example: Benjamin Hubbard, *A Narrative of the Troubles with the Indians in New-England* (Boston: John Foster, 1677), 84. Early American Imprints, Series 1: Evans, 1639-1800, accessed online; N.S. *The present state of New-England, with respect to the Indian war...till the 10th of November, 1675* (London: Dorman Newman, 1676), 6. Early English Books Online; Benjamin Church, *Entertaining Passages Relating to Philip's War which began in the Month of June, 1675*, ed. Thomas Church (Boston: B. Green, 1716), 3. Early American Imprints, Series 1: Evans, 1639-1800, accessed online; Increase Mather, *A Brief History of the Warr with the Indians in New-England* (Boston: John Foster, 1676), 4. Early American Imprints, Series 1: Evans, 1639-1800, accessed online; Cotton Mather, *Decennium Luctuosum* (Boston, 1699), 94. Early American Imprints, Series 1: Evans, 1639-1800, accessed online. Samuel Penhallow, *The History of the Wars of New-England with the Eastern Indians* (Boston: T. Fleet, 1726). Early American Imprints, Series 1: Evans, 1639-1800, accessed online.

⁴² Samuel Penhallow, *The History of the Wars of New-England*.

crafting their histories of the colonial period. As such, he is the main source on Queen Anne's War and Dummer's War for nearly all subsequent histories of the period.

One major incident recorded by Penhallow that was included in all major eighteenth-century narrative histories of the region was the 1706 attack on Oyster River, New Hampshire. In this incident, women in a fortified house pretended to be a large force of men, shooting muskets and successfully discouraging attackers who had already killed eight to ten people at an unfortified house nearby. Thomas Hutchinson's history of the attack borrowed from Penhallow, briefly noting that the women of Oyster River, "their husbands being abroad at their labour, or absent upon other occasions...put on their husbands' hats and jackets, and let their hair loose, to make the appearance of men." His only compliment was for their "brisk" firing that "saved the house and caused the enemy to retreat."⁴³ Samuel Niles' 1760 *History of the French and Indian Wars* also borrowed directly from Penhallow in its description of how "the women assumed an Amazonian courage; seeing nothing but death before them, they manfully ascended the watch-box and made an alarm."⁴⁴ Niles then went on to repeat the rest of Penhallow's account nearly word-for-word.

In his retelling of the attack on Oyster River, Jeremy Belknap clearly drew from Penhallow's 1726 account, even reusing the line, "the women...seeing nothing but death before them."⁴⁵ He more clearly spelled out for the reader that the reason the women of

⁴³ Hutchinson, *The History of the Colony of Massachusetts-Bay*, 1: 163.

⁴⁴ Niles, *A Summary Historical Narrative of the Wars in New-England*, (1836), 5: 275.

⁴⁵ Penhallow, *The History of the Wars of New-England*, 32.

Oyster River put on hats and “loosen[ed] their hair” was so that “they might appear like men.” Unlike Penhallow, who reported that the women “assum’d an Amazonian courage,” Belknap made no mention of mythology, contenting himself with noting that the women had fired “briskly” and fooled the enemy into thinking that the garrison was at full strength. The inclusion of the incident at Oyster River in larger histories of the period was not limited to narratives of the border wars, or even to histories of specific states or colonies. William Robertson’s grandly titled “The History of the United States of North America,” part of the equally grand *A General History of North and South America*, contained a version of the Oyster River story. Unlike earlier works that repeated the story, Robertson did not borrow directly from Penhallow’s account. Instead, he chose to copy Thomas Hutchinson’s account.⁴⁶

Jeremy Belknap also included the incident involving a young woman at Richard Tozer’s house. In this incident, the young woman used her body weight against a door to allow over a dozen women and children to escape through another door during King Philip’s War. Belknap drew from Benjamin Hubbard’s account of the incident, which described the woman as “endued with more courage than ordinarily the rest of her sex use to be, (the blessing of Jael light upon her).”⁴⁷ Hubbard also referred to her as a “virago,” a term that, like the character Jael, derived from a European tradition of acceptable warlike behavior for women. Belknap toned down the language, merely

⁴⁶ William Robertson, *A General History of North and South America: including the Celebrated Work by Robertson* (London: Mayhew, Isaac, and Co., 1834), 297.

⁴⁷ Hubbard, *A Narrative of the Troubles with the Indians in New-England*, 20-21.

referring to her “intrepidity” and noting that “the adventurous heroine recovered.”⁴⁸

Borrowing from Belknap in 1820, Samuel Drake cited her “intrepidity,” though he called her a “valiant heroine,” rather than “adventurous.”⁴⁹ Belknap also referred to Penhallow’s account of Esther Jones, who climbed the watch box at Heard’s unguarded garrison during an attack, as “resolute.” According to Belknap, her “commanding voice called so loudly...as made the enemy think there was help at hand, and prevented further mischief.”⁵⁰

Both Thomas Hutchinson and Samuel Niles included the 1692 defense of Storer’s garrison in Wells, Maine, reporting that “the women not only tended the men with ammunition and other necessaries, but many of the took their muskets and fired upon the enemy.”⁵¹ Samuel Niles borrowed directly from Cotton Mather’s 1699 account in *Decennium Luctuosum*, which described how the women of Wells “took up the Amazonian Stroke” and fired with “a Manly Resolution,” when he wrote that the women “acted their part in this engagement with an Amazonian sprit and courage, not only in supplying the men with ammunition as they wanted, but firing off the guns as there was occasion.”⁵²

⁴⁸ Jeremy Belknap, *History of New Hampshire* (Philadelphia: Robert Aitken, 1784), 1: 135. Early American Imprints, Series 1: Evans, 1639-1800, accessed online.

⁴⁹ “Appendix” in *History of Philip’s War; Commonly Called the Great Indian War of 1675 and 1676* ed. Samuel Gardner Drake (Boston: Thomas B. Wait and Son, 1827), 312. (Page number to the second edition.)

⁵⁰ Belknap, *History of New Hampshire*, 1: 135.

⁵¹ Hutchinson, *The History of the Colony of Massachusetts-Bay*, 2: 68.

⁵² Niles, *A Summary Historical Narrative of the Wars in New-England*, (1836), 5: 230; Cotton Mather, *Decennium Luctuosum* (Boston, 1699), 94. Early American Imprints, Series 1: Evans, 1639-1800, accessed online.

Some knowledge of New England women's participation in the border wars survived solely thanks to oral tradition and the collection of these stories in the early republic. Communities took pride in the actions of women they dubbed "heroic" and seemed to enjoy including such stories in the local histories that formed a basis for their identities in the early republic. The story of John Minot's servant girl who hid his children while she threw hot coals at, shot, and killed an intruder during King Philip's War in 1675 is an excellent example of an incident that survived in oral tradition and in print. In this case, the oral tradition may add details of the incident missing from the contemporary report. The original account appeared in Nathaniel Saltonstall's *The Present State of New-England*, one of several accounts Saltonstall penned during the war and published only in England.⁵³ Although Thomas Hutchinson's *History of Massachusetts Bay* mentioned Saltonstall's publication as a "letter to London" and recounted that section in a footnote, the story appears to have been passed along in a parallel, oral version.⁵⁴

The first available written account of the oral version appeared in the English periodical *Sporting Magazine* in 1803.⁵⁵ The periodical reached a wide audience in the English-speaking world and relied upon submissions from readers for some of its content. Based on the use of specific and even obscure names and place-names in the article, it is likely that the editor received it from an American reader or copied it from an earlier

⁵³ N.S. *The present state of New-England*, 6.

⁵⁴ Hutchinson, *The History of the Colony of Massachusetts-Bay*, 1: 288.

⁵⁵ *The Sporting Magazine* (London: J. Wheble, 1803), 149-150.

written source that is now unavailable. This version, either from the magazine or the possible earlier source, formed the basis of all other nineteenth-century American publications that referenced the incident. The basic narrative is comparable to Saltonstall's, though this version contains many more details. According to the later version, Minot had refused a request from a group of Indians for food and drink the previous night. The attack the following day was in retaliation for the lack of hospitality. Minot had given his servant instructions before he left for services, which may explain her preparedness. The account ends with an interesting—though unsubstantiated—claim that the “young maid was honoured” with the “approbation” of the government of Massachusetts and “presented with a silver wrist-band, on which her name was engraved, and this motto: ‘She slew the Naraganset Hunter.’”⁵⁶

The story of Mary Woodwell, whose mother seized her captor's knife and attempted to run him through when the family was taken from their Hopkinton, New Hampshire garrison in 1746, survived thanks to the efforts of New Hampshire scholars Jacob Bailey Moore and John Farmer.⁵⁷ Moore and Farmer dedicated their *Collections, Topographic, Historical, and Biographical* to “collecting and preserving what remains of the antiquities and curiosities of a country” in the hopes of saving “those details, which alone may be unworthy of regard, but which in the aggregate form the most valuable

⁵⁶ *Sporting Magazine*, 150.

⁵⁷ “Captivity of Mary Fowler,” in *Collections, Topographical, Historical, and Biographical Relating Principally to New Hampshire*, ed. John Farmer and Jacob Bailey Moore (Concord, NH: Hill and Moore, 1822), 1: 284-287.

sources from which to learn the exact condition of a people.”⁵⁸ The authors wrote that they hoped to continue the work of Jeremy Belknap, to seek out stories from rapidly aging survivors of the colonial period and spur interest in the creation of historical societies similar to those in other new states.⁵⁹ Woodwell herself was in her early nineties when interviewed for Moore and Fowler’s publication.⁶⁰ This desire to preserve colonial history at the state and local level in the early years of the republic included accounts of women’s participation in the border wars as part of “learn[ing] the exact condition of a people.”⁶¹

Although these oral accounts add interesting details and offer further evidence that such stories possessed cultural staying-power, a confusing incident from King Philip’s War only becomes clear when local tradition is taken into account alongside contemporary written chronicles. Two chroniclers of King Philip’s War, William Hubbard and Increase Mather, reported on a battle that took place in Hadley, Massachusetts on June 12, 1676. Although by that point, the tide of the war had turned in favor of New England, this particular battle was fiercely contested, and the English fared poorly at the outset. Much of the action of the battle took place on the south side of town, which Mather claimed was a diversion. While English troops were engaged on Hadley’s south side, a group of Indians—possibly the main assault force—attacked the north side of

⁵⁸ John Farmer and Jacob Bailey Moore, eds., *Collections, Topographical, Historical, and Biographical Relating Principally to New Hampshire* (Concord, NH: Hill and Moore, 1822), iii-iv.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, v-vi.

⁶⁰ “Captivity of Mary Fowler,” 287.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, iv.

town. Mather reported that as the group attacked the north side of town, they set a barn on fire and attempted to enter a house filled with “inhabitants.” According to Mather “the inhabitants discharged a great Gun upon them, whereupon about fifty Indians were seen running out of the house.”⁶² Hubbard gave a similar account, noting that the firing of the “ordnance...so affrighted the Salvages...that although they had just before surprized & possessed an house at the North end of the Town, they instantly fled, leaving some of their dead upon the place.”⁶³

Both accounts describe the incident as if it had been relayed by someone watching the scene from a distance. The authors were unsure who had actually fired the “great gun.” It was only after the war that the identities of the gun’s operators were revealed. According to Henry Trumbull, a group of Hadley’s women loaded an eight pound gun with “small shot, nails, &.” Trumbull claimed that after mounting the gun, the women delivered this gun to some English soldiers, who “discharged [it] with the best effect upon the enemy.”⁶⁴

Although Trumbull’s history claimed that the women turned the “great gun” over to English soldiers, Mather’s account tantalizes with the possibility that the women set

⁶² Increase Mather, *A Brief History of the Warr with the Indians in New-England* (Boston: John Foster, 1676), 33. Early American Imprints, Series 1: Evans, 1639-1800, accessed online.

⁶³ Hubbard, *A Narrative of the Troubles with the Indians in New-England*, 94.

⁶⁴ Henry Trumbull, *History of the Discovery of America, of the Founding of our Forefathers, at Plymouth, and of their Most Remarkable Engagements with the Indians* (Norwich: James Springer, 1812), 66-67. Trumbull’s account was supported—or perhaps repeated—by John Woodbridge, Hadley’s minister, in a sermon celebrating the 200th anniversary of the founding of Plymouth. John Woodbridge, *The Jubilee of New England: A Sermon, Preached in Hadley, December 22, 1820, In Commemoration of the Landing of our Fathers at Plymouth* (Northampton, MA: T.W. Shepard & Co., 1821), 10.

off the gun. According to Mather, the blast came from within a house filled with inhabitants, likely taking refuge from the battle outside. Indeed, the town records of Billerica, another frontier town during King Philip's war, suggest that rather than send women away, town leaders sometimes gathered women and children in a single garrison house when time permitted. During a town meeting in the summer of 1675, Billerica passed a resolution that "in case of need, the women and children shall be conveyed to the maine garison, if it may bee with safty."⁶⁵ In the case of Hadley, a more plausible scenario involves the town's women filling the gun with shot and nails to use if their sanctuary were breached. The story that the women left their refuge to deliver the gun to proper soldiers may have been an invention of later decades. As Trumbull later wrote, "thus it was that the English in a great measure owed the preservation of their lives to the unexampled heroism of a few women!"⁶⁶

From Amazon to Spartan Mother

Although the cultural persistence of these stories is noteworthy in its own right, additions, subtractions, substitutions, and even shifts in emphasis between earlier and newer editions suggests that authors used these stories to encourage and reflect cultural change. This is particularly true in local histories published in the nineteenth century. Local histories became increasingly popular in New England beginning in the 1820s and

⁶⁵ "Billerica Records," in *Massachusetts County and Township Records*, vol. 37, pt. 3: 59-60. Series of bound manuscript photocopies available at Webster Library, Concordia University, Montreal.

⁶⁶ Trumbull, *History of the Discovery of America*, 66-67.

1830s with publications peaking mid-century.⁶⁷ Often combining oral accounts, primary, and secondary sources, local histories employed both well-known and less-famous accounts of women's participation in the border wars. In doing so, authors hoped to craft colonial histories that reflected how they saw both their communities and women as a group fitting into the new nation.

As Jean O'Brien noted in *Firsting and Lasting*, local histories "constitute a vital vernacular history that shaped the ideological predispositions of nineteenth-century New Englanders."⁶⁸ Arguing that these local histories shaped both local and national identity from the ground up, O'Brien identified local histories as "locations of ideological production and consolidation."⁶⁹ O'Brien specifically focused on how New Englanders used local histories to justify their occupation of Indian lands, "seizing indigeneity" for themselves, while positioning themselves as the first truly modern residents of New England.⁷⁰ At the same time, these local histories attempted to establish the claim that Indians had been removed from the region and replaced by a superior group. Although O'Brien's project begins in the 1820s, just as this chapter is wrapping up, her arguments regarding the crucial role of local history in memory making and the creation of community origins and identities are vital to this examination of the memory of women's participation in the border wars.

⁶⁷ O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting*, xx.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, xii-xiii.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, xvii.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 50.

In light of O'Brien's research, it is interesting to note that the process of writing Indian women's participation in the border wars out of New England's history began in the eighteenth century. Both Hutchinson and Belknap largely wrote Indian women out of their histories. Belknap did not mention Weetamoo, Quaiapen or any other female sachems. Hutchinson mentioned "the Squaw Sachem" in passing in a footnote dedicated to a different issue.⁷¹ The only female Indian that Belknap mentioned in the context of King Philip's War was the wife of the sachem Squando, who was assaulted by two English men. The men had heard that Indian babies "could swim as naturally as the young" of animals and "in a thoughtless and unguarded humour overset the canoe."⁷² Although the mother was able to pull the baby from the water, it later died. Belknap believed that this act helped bring the Indians of New Hampshire and Maine into the war on the side of the Wampanoag and the Narragansett. In spite of the major role Indian women played in this conflict, Belknap's only example of an Indian woman was of a suffering mother. This is not unexpected, given shifts in attitudes toward the idea of women working with in the formal public sphere. Indian women remained written out of the earlier local histories, though they reappeared as romanticized versions of themselves in the second half of the nineteenth century.

The combination of written and oral accounts so often present in local histories adds important details to the attack on John Kilburn's garrison while also reflecting

⁷¹ Hutchinson, *The History of the Colony of Massachusetts-Bay*, 1: 294.

⁷² Belknap, *History of New Hampshire*, 1: 132-133.

cultural and literary trends of the early nineteenth century. This 1755 incident near Walpole, New Hampshire originally entered the historical record via a letter sent to Jeremy Belknap by Walpole's Reverend Thomas Fessenden in 1790. The letter was later published in the *Collections of the New Hampshire Historical Society*.⁷³ In his account, Belknap merely noted that John Kilburn, John Pike, "two boys and several women...bravely defended the house and obliged the enemy to retire with considerable loss."⁷⁴ From Fessenden's account, it appears that a large force attacked the "garrisoned house" and, finding it to be defended and not worth the loss of further life, abandoned the assault.

Seven years prior to the publication of Fessenden's 1790 letter, the New Hampshire Historical Society republished an article from Walpole's *Cheshire Gazette*, a publication founded in 1825. The 1827 reprint of this article added important details to our knowledge of the women's actions at Kilburn's garrison while also superimposing a fascinating, classically-influenced narrative on the event. From the article, we learn that Kilburn's wife Ruth and daughter, Mehitable (Hitty) "contributed not a little to encourage and assist their companions, as well as keep a watch upon the movements of the enemy."⁷⁵ According to the author, Mrs. Kilburn and Hitty "assisted in loading the guns"

⁷³ "Letter from Rev. Thomas Fessenden to Jeremy Belknap, January 22, 1790," in *Collections of the New Hampshire Historical Society* (Concord: Marsh, Capen, and Lyon, 1834), 4: 290-292.

⁷⁴ *Collections of the New Hampshire Historical Society* (Concord: J. B. Moore, 1827), 2: 56.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 2: 57. Hamilton Child's 1885 *Gazetteer of Cheshire County* lists Kilburn's wife and daughter as Ruth and Mehitable, likely short for Hitty. It also noted that the story of Kilburn's defense "forms an episode of Indian warfare familiar to every school boy." Hamilton Child, *Gazetteer of Cheshire County, N.H.: 1736-1885* (Syracuse, NY: Journal Office, 1885), 487-488.

and recycled bullets by catching their opponents' shot in a blanket suspended from the roof of the house.

The article's author, who inflated the number of Indians to 197 from Fessenden's already high count of 170, portrayed Kilburn as the Spartan king and military leader, Leonidas, who "reap[ed]...a brilliant crown of laurels" that day.⁷⁶ The attack on his garrison was an American Thermopylae—with a less tragic ending for the Kilburns. Crediting this "matchless defense" with "rescuing hundreds of our fellow citizens from the horrors of an Indian massacre," the article went on to describe "our intrepid Leonidas, not with 300 but only three followers."⁷⁷ Although the "three followers" did not include Ruth and Hitty Kilburn, the author did extend his classical allusion to them. Rather than followers of Leonidas, the women of the Kilburn household assisted in the defense with "true Grecian firmness."⁷⁸

Although it is unclear precisely what the author meant by "Grecian firmness," the term suggests the resolute and courageous—yet no longer Amazonian—quality attributed to women who took action in the border wars by historians of this period. These characteristics were also associated with Spartan women in particular. Caroline Winterer has noted that "the mythologizing of the Spartan mother became especially prominent after the Revolution," a phenomenon tied to the creation of a shared national history, perceived ties between the United States and the ancient world, and the evolution of the

⁷⁶ *Collections of the New Hampshire Historical Society*, 2: 57.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

concept of republican motherhood.⁷⁹ Winterer also observed that the highly active Spartan women served as a focal point for questions over the role of women in the new republic.

As proud mothers of warriors who possessed some military training themselves, Spartan women caught the attention of authors such as Judith Sargent Murray. Sargent Murray—who appears to have believed that Spartan women’s desire for their sons’ glory went too far—wrote that “the character of the Spartan women is marked with uncommon firmness. At the shrine of patriotism they immolated nature...the name of Citizen possessed, for them greater charms than that of Mother.”⁸⁰ Her words criticized reports of Spartan women celebrating their sons’ injuries and deaths in battle, not Sparta’s emphasis on raising strong, patriotic sons. As Winterer noted, even Sargent Murray “recoiled from the most radical implications of the Spartan woman, embracing the Spartan mother instead.”⁸¹

According to Winterer, despite connections made between fighting Spartan women and the military potential of American women, the image of the Spartan mother sending her sons to war won out as the preferred model of feminine behavior.⁸² Ruth and Hitty Kilburn showed courage and “firmness” supporting John Kilburn, John Pike, and

⁷⁹ Caroline Winterer, *The Mirror of Antiquity: American Women and the Classical Tradition, 1750-1900* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010), 77, 71-79.

⁸⁰ Judith Sargent Murray, “Observations on Female Abilities,” in *The Neglected Canon: Nine Women Philosophers, First to the Twentieth Century*, ed. Therese Boos Dykeman (Norwell, MA: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999), 236-237.

⁸¹ Winterer, *The Mirror of Antiquity*, 79.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 76-79.

their sons in their colonial skirmish-turned-classical allegory. The story of the Kilburn garrison is far from the only example of an account of colonial women's participation in the border wars re-imagined for Americans in the early republic. These women, though still described as heroic, were no longer associated with divine favor or biblical characters, nor were they portrayed as "assum[ing] an Amazonian courage" or "taking up the Amazonian stroke." Rather, their heroics stemmed from intrepidity, courage, resolution, firmness, and a desire to act as the last line of defense of the domestic space and of children.

The account of Susannah Swan's 1708 defense of her home with a fire poker or spit after attempting to help her husband keep the door shut with the weight of their bodies was one such story. Swan's episode first appeared in B.L. Mirick's *The History of Haverhill, Massachusetts*, published in 1832.⁸³ This oral tradition was passed down through the Emerson family of Haverhill who, according to Mirick, lived in a garrison near the Swan's house. The account implies that the Swans were not in a designated garrison at the time of the attack; the overall success of the attack suggests that a number of families were surprised by the assault and not in safe structures. Emerson and Mirick's report described the Swans choosing to stand together, "to save their own lives, and the lives of their children."⁸⁴ After fending off the attack for a time with their body weight against the door, the couple began to lose the upper hand.

⁸³ Mirick, *The History of Haverhill*, 123-124.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 124.

According to the account, the failure of the defense laid at the feet of Mr. Swan, who the narrator described as “rather a timid man” who “almost despaired of saving himself and family.”⁸⁵ It was only after her husband’s failure to play his role as a man, husband, and father that Susannah Swan took command of their miniature fort, realizing that “there was no time for parleying.”⁸⁶ At this point, “the heroic wife...seized her spit, which was a nearly three feet in length, and a deadly weapon in the hands of woman” and “collecting all the strength she possessed, drove it through the body” of the first intruder.⁸⁷ Seeing their dead companion, the others left the Swan home. The narrator described the Indians as surprised by both the means of Swan’s defense and by the source of it. The attack on the home, the defense, and the retreat, though perhaps more inventive than some, fits a standard pattern of an attack. In this type of attack, a small group of Indians approached an unfortified home and attempted to break through the feeble defenses. Although successful in wearing down the defenders, the death of a comrade combined with the promise of lower-hanging fruit elsewhere in the settlement prompted the retreat.

Susannah Swan’s astute decision to allow the men to enter through the narrow doorway of her Haverhill home in 1807 while she skewered them with a spit stemmed from “the fortitude and heroic courage of a wife and a mother” protecting her family,

⁸⁵ Mirick, *The History of Haverhill*, 124.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

according to author Benjamin Mirick.⁸⁸ The narrative employed language that, although not unusual for 1832, would have been out of place in an account from the seventeenth or early-eighteenth centuries. When describing the Indians breaching the narrow doorway, the author's language suggests a violent sexual assault of the space of the wife and mother, as one man was "crowding himself in, while the other was pushing lustily after."⁸⁹ Swan, the "resolute and courageous" woman, twice-described as "heroic," virtuously protected the home. As noted in Chapter One, doorways were frequently the natural sites of attacks for tactical reasons. Prior to the nineteenth century, however, accounts of such incidents did not equate the defense of the doorway with the protection of a virtuous domestic space or sphere.

Benjamin Mirick's account of Hannah Bradley's wartime experiences in *The History of Haverhill, Massachusetts* illustrates the value of local and oral histories in understanding both the persistence of women's participation in the border wars as well as changes in cultural emphasis.⁹⁰ Hannah, the wife of Joseph Bradley, was captured in Haverhill during raids in 1697 and 1704. In the 1697 attack, Hannah Bradley was taken along with Hannah Dustan and Mary Neff. Although living with a different group of Indians during the march north from Haverhill, Bradley later deposed that she had heard

⁸⁸ Mirick, *The History of Haverhill, Massachusetts*, 124.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Mirick, *The History of Haverhill, Massachusetts*. Hannah Bradley's story also appeared in abbreviated form in Leverett Saltonstall, *An historical sketch of Haverhill, in the county of Essex and commonwealth of Massachusetts* (Boston: John Eliot, 1816), 9. Early American Imprints, Series II: Shaw-Shoemaker, 1801-1819, accessed online.

of Dustan and Neff's actions at her camp from survivors of Dustan's escape.⁹¹ Having lived through this earlier attack, Bradley was determined to resist captivity a second time when a group of Indians approached her Haverhill home in 1704. As noted earlier in this dissertation, Bradley, who was standing near her doorway, used boiling soap to kill the first Indian who entered while using the remaining soap to maim a second man. Eventually subdued, the pregnant Hannah Bradley traveled north once again and was eventually redeemed by her husband.

Bradley's story, in which she gave birth on her trek and watched her baby die of starvation, is an excellent example of how authors' emphases shifted over time from woman to mother. In Cotton Mather's account of her defense and captivity—the earliest surviving version—Mather focused on her qualities as a “Vertuous Woman” and described in a matter-of-fact manner how she poured boiling soap on the face of the intruder while one of the men in her house held him down.⁹² Praising her agility on snowshoes while pregnant, Mather, who was known for his gruesome depictions of children's deaths in captivity, described her ordeal as she gave birth but spared little time describing the eventual death of the child or Bradley's reaction to its death.⁹³ Samuel Penhallow also mentioned her use of boiling soap and noted that she gave birth on the

⁹¹ George Wingate Chase, *The History of Haverhill, Massachusetts: From its First Settlement, in 1640, to the Year 1860* (Haverhill, Mass.: George Wingate Chase, 1861), 308.

⁹² Cotton Mather, *A memorial of the present deplorable state of New-England, with the disadvantages it lyes under by the male-administration of their present Governour; Joseph Dudley, Esq. and his son Paul, &c.* (London, 1707), 33. Accessed in Eighteenth Century Collections Online.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 35.

journey.⁹⁴ As with Mather's account, Penhallow focused on Hannah's experience in childbirth. Although he contributed additional details to the newborn's decline in health and noted that the captors placed hot embers in the baby's mouth, he did not discuss Bradley's response to the death. Samuel Niles, who also mentioned the incident, borrowed heavily from Penhallow, retaining his details and his emphases.⁹⁵

When Mirick composed his history of Haverhill, he made a special effort to draw from Penhallow's account as well as Rev. Pike's journal and local oral tradition. He also interviewed her surviving family members and borrowed from a mysterious manuscript written by Haverhill's recently deceased minister, Abiel Abbot. The account itself, though remarkably accurate in many of its details, is far more dramatic than any previous version in its description of Hannah Bradley's experiences. Mirick described how Bradley "seized her ladle, and filling it with the steaming liquid, discharged it on his tawny pate—a *soap-orific* that almost instantly brought on a *sleep*, from which he has never since awoke."⁹⁶

Following this series of ghastly puns, Mirick turned his attention to Bradley's "delicate circumstances, and slender health," lamenting that "no situation of woman would ever protect her from their demon-like cruelties."⁹⁷ Romanticizing motherhood, Mirick noted that "they obliged her to travel on foot, and carry a heavy burthen, too large

⁹⁴ Penhallow, *The History of the Wars of New-England with the Eastern Indians*, 10-11.

⁹⁵ Niles, *A Summary Historical Narrative of the Wars in New-England*, (1836), 5: 251-252.

⁹⁶ Mirick, *The History of Haverhill, Massachusetts*, 107-108.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 108.

even for the strength of a man.”⁹⁸ Framing Bradley as a mother, Mirick turned his attention to the “persecution” of an “innocent and almost friendless babe,” describing local tradition that claimed Hannah’s captors cut the baby’s face with knives.⁹⁹ The child’s death, which Mirick claimed came on the edge of a pike, was “shocking to a mother, and to every feeling of humanity.” Appealing even further to the image of Bradley as suffering mother, Mirick noted that the infant “was born in sorrow, and nursed in the lap of affliction.” He described Hannah as “dot[ing]” on the child “with maternal fondness” and lamented that “its mother could only weep over its memory.”¹⁰⁰

The increased emphasis on Hannah Bradley as Indian-slayer and icon of motherhood is visible in scholars’ analyses of changes in Hannah Dustan’s narrative.¹⁰¹ Some scholars who have pored over accounts of Hannah Dustan have erroneously noted that she faded into obscurity after her moment of celebrity. In addition to obtaining land grants later in life, Dustan, like Bradley, appeared in Niles’ history of New England’s wars as well as in Thomas Hutchinson’s history of Massachusetts. Although perhaps more interested in the Salem witchcraft trials, to which he devoted a substantial portion of the second volume of his *History of Massachusetts*, Thomas Hutchinson did pause to

⁹⁸ Mirick, *The History of Haverhill, Massachusetts*, 109.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 109.

¹⁰¹ Derounian-Stodola, “The Captive as Celebrity,” 74-75; Barbara Cutter, “The Female Indian Killer Memorialized Hannah Duston and the Nineteenth-Century Feminization of American Violence,” *Journal of Women’s History* 20, no. 2 (Summer, 2008): 10-33; Sara Humphreys, “The Mass Marketing of the Colonial Captive Hannah Duston,” *Canadian Review of American Studies* 41, no. 2 (August 2011): 149-178; Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650-1750* (New York: Knopf, 1982), 172.

note that “there was a woman (Hannah Dustan) a heroine, made prisoner at this time, whose story, although repeatedly published, we cannot well omit.”¹⁰² Hutchinson devoted two pages of his history to Dustan. Commending her “resolution,” Hutchinson also noted that “from women, ordinarily, attempts of this sort are not to be expected” and that “the fame of so uncommon an action...soon spread throughout the continent.”¹⁰³

Despite scholars’ tendency to underestimate Dustan’s continuing relevance throughout the colonial period, their analysis of the transformation of her narrative in the early nineteenth century is compelling and informs our earlier discussion of the stories of women such as Susannah Swan, Ruth Kilburn, and Hannah Bradley. In her study of connections between the nineteenth-century popularity of Dustan’s narrative and national expansion, Barbara Cutter noted that captive Dustan became a symbol of an innocent, feminized violence that justified Indian removal and territorial conquest.¹⁰⁴ In Cutter’s words, “the gendered notion that men were more violent than women, in conjunction with their feminized representations of the nation itself...meant the embrace of excessive violence, called forth to protect the always feminine, always innocent nation.”¹⁰⁵ She also observed that beginning in the 1820s and 1830s, authors began to emphasize Dustan’s motherhood, to “erase” the children she killed from their accounts, and to “transform Duston’s violent actions into a justified defense of the ‘natural’ ideals of motherhood.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² Hutchinson, *The History of the Province of Massachusetts-Bay*, 2: 106-108; Niles, *A Summary Historical Narrative of the Wars in New-England*, (1836), 5: 240-241.

¹⁰³ Hutchinson, *The History of the Province of Massachusetts-Bay*, 2: 107-108.

¹⁰⁴ Cutter, “The Female Indian Killer.”

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 20.

As Cutter pointed out, 1831 marked the first appearance of the phrase “The Mother’s Revenge,” the title of a John Greenleaf Whittier poem as well as the words found on the statue later erected in her honor.¹⁰⁷

Present in Cutter’s analysis, though she did not note it, was a possible shift between her earlier sources from the 1820s and her sources from later in the century. These earlier sources, which form the foundation for later representations and ideologies, drew upon the language of resolute motherhood, the preservation of the home as a feminine space, and colonial and national virtue that emerged in other accounts from the same decades. When compared with changes in Dustan’s story, the alteration of accounts of the actions of the Kilburn women, Susannah Swan, and Hannah Bradley appears to have served a similar purpose. By employing the stories of colonial women, who Benjamin Mirick believed “seem[ed] to possess, at times, as much courage and fortitude as the men,” authors in the early nineteenth century created an image of an often violent colonial woman as a prototype for republican motherhood and virtue.¹⁰⁸ Although perhaps authors believed that such behavior belonged to a different era, their violent defenses of themselves, their children, and their home—now portrayed as evidence of domestic or maternal instinct—might serve as an example of the passion a woman should feel for her role in the new, expanding nation.

¹⁰⁷ Cutter, “The Female Indian Killer,” 20.

¹⁰⁸ Mirick, *The History of Haverhill, Massachusetts*, 108.

The continued popularity of Hannah Dustan's account throughout the nineteenth century also extended to other stories of women's participation in the border wars of the colonial period. A more thorough analysis of later sources is outside the scope of this work. However, sources suggest that versions of these stories from the second half of the nineteenth century took a more romantic—sometimes tragic—and nationalistic approach to their subject matter. These stories survived beyond the colonial period thanks to a combination of oral and written accounts. Appearing in both local and regional histories that drew from sources dating back to the seventeenth century, stories of women's participation in the border wars helped shape identities and justify past and future colonization. The emphasis of the stories changed over time, adopting—and perhaps driving—separate spheres ideology by the early nineteenth century. In doing so, they remained culturally relevant, part of New England's shared memory of the past as well as its vision of the present and future.

CONCLUSION:

Scholarly and popular interest in accounts of women's participation in the wars of the northeastern borderlands persisted through the nineteenth and even early-twentieth centuries. Despite this popularity, very few women who took part in these conflicts remain part of modern scholars' understanding of the history of the region. Only Hannah Dustan, Madeleine de Verchères, and perhaps Weetamoo—via her association with Mary Rowlandson—remain widely-known to scholars. Until now, many more incidents of women's participation in the border wars and the context in which they occurred have remained unexplored. Scholars who have noted those incidents that have survived frequently see them as anomalous or, in the case of Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, as pieces of a larger puzzle that we lack the sources to complete.¹

This dissertation has brought together a wide variety of sources, many of which have escaped the notice of modern historians. In doing so, it presents the first large-scale study of women's participation in the wars of the northeastern borderlands. In this dissertation, we have seen how government policies and cultural ideas regarding the role of women within their families and societies resulted in women assuming central and supporting roles in these conflicts. Government and religious authorities then used accounts of women's participation in the border wars as propaganda that served local, regional, and imperial agendas. We have also examined how larger, often transatlantic

¹ Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650-1750* (New York: Knopf, 1982).

developments regarding the roles of women and men in increasingly militarized, imperial societies shaped—and were shaped by—women’s participation in these wars. Finally, we explored how stories of women’s participation in these conflicts remained culturally persistent, as nineteenth-century authors employed these accounts to reflect and forge new identities and agendas on local and national levels.

As a result of this and other recent studies, we are also better able to conceive of the region as one in which warfare and violence influenced nearly every aspect of life. The image of New England and New France as primarily religious or trade-based societies is being challenged as we learn more about how warfare was intertwined with these other aspects of society. From the work of scholars such as Ann Little, Louise Dechêne, and Mary Beth Norton, we now know that issues of religion, gender, nationalism, trade, and war were culturally and socially inseparable.² This was particularly true as New England and New France became increasingly militarized societies in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In regions dominated by the type of ambient warfare Dechêne described, violence and war were a part of life; women, members of these societies, played significant roles in war.

In addition to demonstrating ways in which women participated in warfare in the northeastern borderlands, this dissertation has raised serious questions regarding gender

² Ann Little, *Abraham in Arms: War and Gender in Colonial New England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007); Louise Dechêne, *Le Peuple, L'État et la Guerre au Canada sous le Régime Français*, ed. Hélène Paré, Sylvie Dépatie, Catherine Desbarats, et Thomas Wien (Montréal: Les Éditions du Boréal, 2008); Mary Beth Norton, *In the Devil's Snare: The Salem Witchcraft Crisis of 1692* (New York: Vintage Books, 2002).

roles in early America. In Chapters One, Two, and Four, we have seen how women took on traditionally male roles alongside their husbands, not merely as deputy husbands in their absence. Women's actions in war were only very rarely questioned; more often than not, members of colonial society praised and sometimes even rewarded women for their actions.³ As New England and New France became increasingly militarized, women were woven into these evolving regimes, barred from fleeing the front and granted pensions and land as combatants. In eighteenth-century New France, women also took on roles in the administration and construction of fortifications and ships.

Women's participation in the border wars provided writers in New England and New France with valuable propaganda. As we saw in Chapter Three, accounts of women's war-making assisted Jesuit fundraising activities, bolstered wartime morale, and even attempted to encourage and reward women's participation in the border wars. In Chapter Five, which investigated the transmission of these stories into the early-nineteenth century, we learned that many of these accounts were culturally persistent in both oral and written form. Although later authors often altered these stories to reflect a growing divide between the new masculine public and feminine, domestic private spheres, accounts of women's violent participation in colonial wars was an important aspect of emerging local and national identities following the American Revolution.

³ The only examples I have discovered of disapproval expressed for women's participation in these wars was directed toward Indian women who took part in ritual torture and Indian women who killed members of their family.

Additional work on women's participation in wars in other areas will help determine whether this dissertation's findings are specific to the northeastern borderlands. Newspaper reports from New York and Pennsylvania in the mid-eighteenth century suggest that women in those colonies took on defensive roles in King George's War and the Seven Years' War. In one instance, a newspaper praised a Pennsylvania woman who "bravely defended herself and Children for a while, wrested the Gun out the Indian's Hand who assaulted her, as likewise his Tomahawk, and threw them away" in July of 1757.⁴ The variety among British colonial governments in particular may yield intriguing comparisons.

A more comprehensive examination of women's participation in the American Revolution would also add to our understanding of gender and war in early America. Monographs such as Holly Mayer's *Belonging to the Army* and Alfred Young's recent biography of Deborah Sampson have provided valuable information regarding women who traveled with the Revolutionary armies.⁵ Despite their contributions, there is still more to learn about the thousands of women throughout British North America who lived in areas vulnerable to attack.

Finally, the findings presented in this dissertation demand that historians of early America reassess the boundaries of permissible vs. transgressive behavior. Women's participation in the wars of the northeastern borderlands was neither transgressive nor a

⁴ *The New York Mercury*, July 28, 1757, 2.

⁵ Alfred F. Young, *Masquerade: The Life and Times of Deborah Sampson, Continental Soldier* (New York: Knopf, 2004); Holly A. Mayer, *Belonging to the Army: Camp Followers and Community during the American Revolution* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996).

crime. Most men in the northeastern borderlands applauded women who defended themselves, their homes, their families, and the patriarchal societies in which they lived. Even when women challenged male leaders as members of the informal public sphere, some men continued to support them. This was particularly evident when Cotton Mather endorsed the actions of a female-led mob in Boston that attacked representatives of a failed expedition against Acadia led by Mather's enemy. In New England of the mid-eighteenth century, where the line between the home and the front became increasingly distinct and where English ideas regarding a masculine public sphere and a feminine private sphere began to take hold, women's participation in war was more an unfortunate side effect of poor military strategy than a transgressive action.

Determining the social and cultural spaces between criminal, transgressive, discouraged, and permitted acts will greatly enhance our understanding of gender in early American history. We must also consider the possibility that borders between male and female behaviors were more permeable than previously assumed. Although historians have attempted to complicate traditional images of women's lives in early America over the past thirty years, there is more work to be done. Acknowledging and fully integrating a broader range of permissible activities a woman might perform will allow historians to construct a more complex, more accurate picture of early modern gender roles.

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