MA THESIS

Mediation and Mediators in the History Plays
of Sharon Pollock and Jovette Marchessault

Presented to

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By

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Composition du jury

Médiation et médiateurs dans les pièces de théâtre à caractère historique
de Sharon Pollock et de Jovette Marchessault
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Cette thèse a été évaluée par un jury composé des personnes suivantes :

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Abstract

Mediation and Mediators in the History Plays of Sharon Pollock and Jovette Marchessault provides analysis of historical, cultural and theatrical mediation in the authors' history-based dramas with particular focus on The Komagata Maru Incident and Madame Blavatsky, spirite. In their dramas the playwrights typically re-mediate history in order to challenge official versions of the past and to encourage audiences to question their cultural heritage and collective memory. The thesis examines various kinds of mediators, including: 1) characters within the dramas who are professional mediators attempting to resolve social or political conflicts, artists who mediate through writing, performance or painting, and mediums who access a transcendent, spiritual realm; 2) meta-dramatic characters who act as narrators and intervene between the worlds of the play and of the audience, and finally, 3) the playwrights themselves whose plays are mediations of historical events.

The thesis concludes that Pollock's plays display the indeterminacy of mediation and suggest that conflicts are the fabric of life and must be continually addressed and (re)solved, whereas Marchessault's history plays defy official history by presenting forms of cultural and spiritual mediation in which creative and gifted women oppose patriarchy and achieve altruistic and transcendental goals.
Résumé

La médiation et les médiateurs dans les pièces de théâtre à caractère historique de Sharon Pollock et de Jovette Marchessault analysent la médiation historique, culturelle et théâtrale dans les drames à caractère historique des auteures et en particulier dans *The Komagata Maru Incident* et *Madame Blavatsky: Spirite*. Dans leurs drames, les auteures utilisent l'histoire comme une forme de médiation pour défier les versions officielles du passé afin que les spectateurs s’interrogent sur leur patrimoine culturel et leur mémoire collective. La thèse examine plusieurs genres de médiateurs, y compris: 1) les personnages dramatiques qui sont des médiateurs professionnels s’efforçant de résoudre des conflits sociaux ou politiques, des artistes qui à travers leurs écrits, représentations ou tableaux accèdent à la transcendance et à la spiritualité; 2) les personnages meta-théâtraux qui agissent comme narrateurs et qui servent d’intermédiaires entre le monde du théâtre et des spectateurs et finalement, 3) les auteurs dramatiques eux-mêmes dont les pièces de théâtre sont des médiations d’événements historiques.

La thèse conclut que les pièces de théâtre de Pollock exposent l’indétermination du processus de médiation et suggèrent que les conflits sont inhérents à la nature humaine et doivent être constamment pris en considération et résolus. Les pièces de théâtre à caractère historique de Marchessault défient l’histoire officielle en présentant des genres de médiation culturelle et spirituelle dans lesquels des femmes créatives et douées s’opposent au patriarcat et atteignent des objectifs altruistes et transcendants.
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INTRODUCTION

Different intertwined forms of mediation are one of the central subject matters and focuses of most of Sharon Pollock’s writings which consist of dramas for children and adults written for radio, television and the theatre, and of Jovette Marchesault’s more diversified artistic output which comprises telluric paintings, masks and sculptures, and different literary genres such as novels, essays, encyclopaedia articles, monologues, poems and plays.

Originally the terms media, mediate, mediation, mediator and medium all stem from the Latin terms *medius*, and *mediare*, meaning middle and to be in the middle. The Oxford Encyclopaedic Dictionary provides the following general definitions of the verb mediate, “1. Intervene (between parties in a dispute) to produce agreement or reconciliation. 2. Be the medium for bringing about (a result) or for conveying (a gift, etc.)” (901) and of the adjective mediate, “connected not directly but through some other person or thing; involving intermediate agency” (901).

Different social science disciplines appropriated and redefined this general concept. One of the most ostentatious and conscientious forms of mediation which takes place in most of Pollock’s and Marchesault’s published dramas, which are almost all history plays, is the mediation of history, or in accordance with the terms employed in the previously cited definition, the authors use of history as “a medium for bringing about” or an “intermediate agency” to make audiences question their cultural inheritance.

The playwrights’ angled use of history to entice audiences to consider past issues in their modern context can be labelled as mediations of history. The use of history in literature is a means to comment on and about the present rather than to restore the past. The playwrights resort to history to address contemporary issues. In *Imperialism and Culture* Edward Said
asserts, "Appeals to the past are among the commonest of strategies in interpretations of the present. What animates such appeals is not only disagreement about what happened in the past and what the past was, but uncertainty about whether the past really is past, over and concluded, or whether it continues, albeit in different forms, perhaps" (1). Freddie Rokkem in *Performing History* presents an analogous opinion pertaining to theatre and centres on the importance of history in the formation of a society's identity:

Collective identities, whether they are cultural/ethic, national, or even transnational, grow from a sense of the past; the theatre very forcefully participates in the ongoing representations and debates about these pasts, sometimes contesting the hegemonic understanding of the historical heritage on the basis of which these identities have been constructed, sometimes reinforcing them. (3)

History is already a mediated version of reality where choices have been made as to what elements, figures, documents, and/or incidents of the past are worth being retained and presented in historical writings and in what narrative or argumentative form. Until recently, history presented the past from a white Western male historian's stance which often ignored or downplayed women's and subcultures' participation. Hayden White in *Metahistory*, describes how modern continental twentieth-century historical theoreticians, such as Sartre, Lévi-Strauss, and Michel Foucault, have come to question history and "stressed the fictive character of historical reconstructions, and challenged history's claims to a place among the sciences" (1 & 2). He describes Anglo-American experts' work in the same direction and concludes that both lines of study:
create the impression that historical consciousness on which Western man has prided himself since the beginning of the nineteenth century may be little more than a theoretical basis for the ideological position from which Western civilization views its relationship not only to cultures and civilizations preceding it but also to those contemporary with it in time and contiguous with it in space.

(2)

He further summarizes this idea, "In short, it is possible to view historical consciousness as a specifically Western prejudice by which the presumed superiority of modern, industrial society can be retroactively substantiated" (2).

The first form of mediation undertaken by the playwrights is to recuperate historical events which challenge patriarchy's conceited perception of its primacy. Pollock retrieves different anecdotes from history to demonstrate the immorality of patriarchy rather than its 'presumed superiority' which can be 'retroactively substantiated'. Her plays depict inglorious elements of the past which exemplify patriarchy's treachery. She broaches numerous conflictive themes such as Canada's abuse of the First-Nations peoples and exclusion of ethnic minorities, the institutional violence of the Canadian penitentiary system, patriarchy's confinement of women to domesticity, the Canadian government's tacit silence over the death of a First-Nations woman militant, the violent background of the Loyalists who shaped Eastern Canada, and patriarchy's tolerance of the murdering of women demonstrated by the fact that the Jack the Ripper murders remain unsolved.

Marchessault condemns patriarchal history by repeatedly opting to present the past through women protagonists and through the values they incarnate. Her writings, and in particular her history dramas, are peppered with depreciative comments on the patriarchal
practice of history. In the introduction of her first history drama Marchessault accuses patriarchy of doing its utmost to eliminate women from history and announces her and her community’s intentions, “Nous voulons laisser des traces, pour qu’après le moment proche où nous disparaîtrons quelque chose de nous continue à converser avec les vivantes, les vivants, au-delà du terrorisme et des censures, des normes, et de tous les messies-à-la-gomme à effacer nos traces” (la saga des poules mouillées 10).

In a conversation with the priest and historian Albert Quinet, Madame Blavatsky condemns patriarchal history for basing its studies on material evidence alone, “plus une âme est matérielle, plus sa conception des esprits est matérielle” (Madame Blavatsky, spirite 19). When her interlocutor criticizes spiritism’s ambiguity, she states that his profession is less honourable and more extravagant than hers, “Spéculations dites-vous! Venant d’un historien, les spéculateurs par excellence” (Madame Blavatsky, spirite 19). Emily Carr also interpellates history in the beginning of Le Voyage magnifique d’Emily Carr when she wonders about her school teacher sister’s formative role as the transmitter of knowledge about the past, “Aujourd’hui je sais qu’Alice enseigne l’histoire: l’évolution des hommes, de siècle en siècle, les voyages dangereux sur des mers inconnues, les conquêtes, les drapeaux qu’on hisse au sommet des montagnes. Notre sœur essaie d’éveiller les enfants de Victoria aux grandes vérités de l’univers” (21). Emily suggests that the Victorians’ practice of history should be replaced by a more positive one where the conquering of land by men should be substituted by the study of art and individual artists’ successful efforts to change society, “Et l’histoire de la peinture, (Elle se tourne vers Lizzie avec un visage décoré des marques guerrières des Indiens.) l’action personnelle de chaque artiste sur le monde, il faudra bien un jour l’enseigner” (22). In this scene Emily is portrayed as an artist-warrior whose personal combat will eventually help to improve
society. All of Marchessault’s dramas exemplify Carr’s comment and relate similar yet different stories about women’s successful artistic quests and their positive effects on the broader community.

The second form of mediation is the dramatists’ particular rendering of history, where it is presented through one or several significant perspectives which differ from or destabilize mainstream historical sources. Authors who focus on history are obliged to establish a delicate equilibrium between informing and entertaining and must approach their subject matter in a novel manner to captivate the audience who knows the story’s plot and dénouement. Pollock makes great efforts to approximate and reconstruct history through a peculiar prism. In an excerpt quoted by Anne Nothof, the dramatist explains why she presents her dramas through various perspectives:

It’s as if truthfulness when you’re writing about life is a multi-faceted diamond. I am standing in one place, and I am the result of a certain time and place and experience, and I have a flashlight. If I never try to expand those boundaries I can only hold my flashlight one way, shine it on one part of the diamond. By being aware of how I do see through certain eyes and in a certain way, I get to expand, I get to be able to move the light. (Introduction 7)

In each of her dramas, Pollock uses this flashlight technique and illuminates the story through multiple facets to bring attention to alternative interpretations of a historical event. She presents historical data through various characters who assess the situation differently. She also uses different tactics to make the audience focus on the creative aspect of her theatrical and creative rendering of history. She emphasizes the fact that the audience is in a theatre viewing a theatrical version of a historical figure or event. According to Rokkem, history plays often resort
to the use of a ‘play within a play’, or metatheatre and metatheatrical techniques, to make the audience establish a correspondence between the theatrical and the historical praxis:

[. . .] performances about history frequently also draw attention to different metatheatrical dimensions of the performance, frequently showing directly on stage how performances about history are constructed. The audience is enticed to question itself not only about the history it is viewing, but also about history at large. The making of a performance about history and the making of history as a “theatrical” event are themes frequently dealt with in the performances. (7)

The use of metatheatrical techniques and references makes the audience highly aware of the artificial constructed elements of both the text and the actors’ performance and enables them to maintain a dialectic but distant rapport with the ongoing presentation. Anne Ubersfeld, in *Lire le théâtre I*, describes the distancing process of metatheatre as a means to make audiences realize they are viewing a manipulated version of reality to enable them to remain critical towards the information they are receiving in the theatre:

[. . .] à l'intérieur de l'espace scénique se construit, comme déjà dans Shakespeare, voire dans le théâtre grec, une zone privilégiée où le théâtre se dit comme tel (tréteaux, chansons, chœur, adresse au spectateur) [. . .] le “théâtre dans le théâtre” dit non le réel mais le vrai, changeant le signe de l'illusion et dénonçant celle-ci dans tout le contexte scénique qui l'entoure. (39, author’s italics)

When these plays concern historical material, playwrights, such as Pollock, intend audiences to be critical not only towards the play, but also towards the different forms of historical discourse delivered in the real world and to formulate general questions such as who wrote history and why, and more particular ones, such as who wrote this play and why? The ultimate objective is
to make the spectators question themselves about their personal involvement in the fabrication and transmission of history.

The playwrights are the optimal mediators of the plays which repeatedly focus on mediation and mediators in different styles and for different reasons. Pierre Bolle describes the role of the theatre and the dramatist in question form in the introduction of *La Mediation théatrale*, “le médiateur sera-t-il celui qui remet l’homme devant les contraintes de son environnement, de son époque et devant ses propres limites, en d’autres mots, qui rétablit l’équilibre entre utopie et réalité, entre pouvoir et savoir?” (9). Pollock represents herself and her theatrical praxis on stage. In her plays Pollock exposes conflict, narrative, and creative mediation processes which she criticizes, satirizes or relativizes to constantly alert and warn audiences that mediation can be unreliable and prejudicial. Her techniques encourage audiences to think critically about all acts of mediation, including her plays as examples of mediation.

Pollock uses numerous major and minor metatheatrical devices. She uses prologues in which a narrator introduces the storyline and accompanies the audience into the inner play. She also embeds plays within plays in which the characters attempt to reconstruct the sequence of events in the present so that the audience views and gets the impression that they participate in the making of history. She also inserts trials in her plays, a lesser form of metatheatre, in which characters decide on each others’ guilt or innocence about their implication in the painful historical events related within the dramas. Within these different forms of theatrical reconstructions of the past, Pollock highlights the inconsistency of individuals’ personal and society’s collective memories. Her plays are peopled with characters with a vast range of problematic memories, such as self-serving selective memories, deliberate amnesia to forget particularly painful incidents which continue to haunt them, recollections which contrast with
other participants' testimonies, characters who have difficulties consolidating childhood and mature memories, to name but a few. The creative characters—actresses, entertainers, writers, story-tellers—are generally portrayed as being endowed with sound memories. Pollock relativizes all testimonies to make the audience wary towards all information they receive.

Pollock employs two main types of mediating characters, conflict resolution mediators and narrators who often serve as connectors between the outer and the inner play or who illustrate the creative process within a play. In international diplomacy, in legal, labour and family conflicts a mediator intervenes to help opposing parties attain a consensual conflict resolution. Christopher Moore provides the following definition:

*Mediation is essentially negotiation* that includes a third party who is knowledgeable in effective negotiation procedures, and can help people in conflict to coordinate their activities and to be more effective in their bargaining. Mediation is an extension of the negotiation process in that it involves extending the bargaining into a new format and using a mediator who contributes new variables and dynamics to the interactions of the disputants. *(The Mediation Process 14, author’s italics)*

In her earlier plays the conflict resolution mediators are officially appointed ones who have great difficulty performing their duties and accomplishing their objectives. In her later plays the dispute settlement mediators assume their roles unofficially and are more successful in attaining social harmony.

Pollock's generally highly theatrical plays contain a great number of mediating artist figures who play the role of narrators and mediate between the outer world of the audience and the inner world of the play. These characters often determine the play’s rhythm, atmosphere and
style. She either uses narrator characters to guide the audience into the play, and/or introduce his/her own story and serve as a conflict mediator in a specific crisis cumulating the roles of conflict resolution and theatrical mediator, such as Ev Chalmers in *One Tiger to a Hill*. She also makes narrators and narration the principal subject of her plays, for example in *Blood Relations* one of the main characters called The Actress interacts with Lizzie Borden to narrate the double parricide, and in *Doc* a female writer narrates her past through two perspectives, those of her younger and older selves.

Pollock uses a great number of cultural mediators—narrators, actors, and writers—in order to bring attention to the artificiality of her enterprise and her personal and professional input as a playwright and veteran actress into her plays. One of her main objectives is to emphasize the fact that she presents one or various interpretations of reality rather than its mere reflection. Raymond Williams in *Marxism and Literature* discusses the view and practice of art as a reflection of reality, “The true function of art was defined in terms of ‘realism’ or less often ‘naturalism’—both nineteenth century terms themselves much affected by related concepts of science. Art reflected reality: if not it was false or unimportant” (95 & 96). The idea of art reflecting reality was challenged in literary theory and practice by the idea of mediation which is “a term to describe the process of relationship between ‘society’ and ‘art’, it is a positive process in social reality, rather than a process added to it by way of projection, disguise, or interpretation” (Williams 98 & 99). Pollock incorporates numerous artist figures as narrators or as the subject of narration to make audiences conscious of art and artists’ potential role in and effect on society.

Marchessault’s history plays deal with cultural mediation, they denounce patriarchy’s domination of the cultural realm and how this affects matriarchal culture in general and specific
creative women, mainly authors, in particular. She centres on Peter Brooker’s definition of mediation which

refers to the intermediary structures, forces or apparatuses thought to simultaneously help construct and contextualize individual literary or cultural works. Examples would be the conventions of GENRE, the chosen or available means of PRODUCTION (the written word, film or cartoon), the mode of production (determining the limited edition or mass production of a text) and considerations of GENDER, CLASS and IDEOLOGY. (Cultural Theory, a Glossary 154)

All of her characters are cultural mediators who use their creativity and their medium, principally writing, as “a means of action” to make people perceive reality differently. Marchessault portrays the authors’ creative sources and processes, which are all matri-focal. These authors are original and remarkable women often from cross-cultural or marginal backgrounds who try to establish bridges between their minority group and the greater community and ultimately contribute to the formation of a harmonious society. Marchessault’s plays feature Québécoise, Jewish, Russian, Franco-American-Hispano, lesbian and bisexual authors, whom she calls légendaires.

Similar to Pollock’s dramas, Marchessault’s focus on artists and their mediating role in society. Pollock uses artist figures as a means to have the audience question the contents of her history dramas and historical discourse. Marchessault depicts her creative heroines as cultural and religious mediators who in general suffer greatly from personal and professional doubt, who deploy great efforts and undergo sacrifices to attain and master their art to improve humankind. Pollock uses different strategies, mainly contrasting testimonies and metatheatrical devices to
draw attention to the relativity of the information transmitted in her history plays. Marchessault uses different tactics to give a sense of authenticity to her history plays. Her dramas are presented through the mediating artists’ perspectives, and their trials and tribulations are corroborated by secondary characters’ testimonies and opinions. Linda Bourgogne describes Marchessault’s biographical plays as being simultaneously erroneous and truthful in “Biographie et théâtre chez Jovette Marchessault: du ‘mentir-vrai.’” Marchessault intends to change audiences’ cultural heritage by either exposing the darker and unusual facets of famous women writers, or by introducing women authors who are unfamiliar or whose writings are challenging to the general public.

Some of her creative women are presented more as religious mediators than as cultural mediators, and their life stories are portrayed as hagiographies rather than bibliographies. This is particularly manifest in Le Voyage magnifique d’Emily Carr and in Madame Blavatsky, spirite. These heroines are presented as sacrificial sacred figures who mediate between common mortals and superior spiritual instances. “In the study of religion mediation usually refers to a person who represents the community in worship and other contacts with divine beings” (“mediation, mediator” Harper’s Bible Dictionary, 619). In Christianity, the Old Testament claims that “the priests are religious mediators between humans and Gods” (“mediation” 619). Other mediators of the Old Testament were leaders who mediated between God and Israel, such as Abraham, Jacob, Joshua, Solomen and the Prophets. The New Testament views Jesus as the ultimate mediator: “‘For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as ransom for all’” (1 Tim. 2:5-6) ” (“mediation” 619). The New Testament further explains Christ’s mediating role, “Jesus redeems humans [...] Christ is the high priest and the one perfect sacrifice [...] Jesus also meditates by praying for his disciples
[...] by healing, by teaching God's word, and by forgiving people their sins. All of Jesus' activities to save humans can be looked on as mediation between God and humanity" ("mediation" 619). Blavatsky and Carr are divine mediators in the Christian sense.

Whereas the previous references concern only male figures, Marchessault works at composing a new list of prophets and saviours which includes women and exceeds Christianity. Blavatsky is a spiritual mediator between divinities of all origins and Carr between mainly Christian and Amerindian spirituality. Because many of these plays are biographies which contain significant elements of Marchessault's own autobiography—she is a métis totem sculptor and writer who uses the visual arts and drama to express spirituality—Marchessault can also be considered a cultural and a spiritual mediator.

To further assess the dramatists' interests in mediators and mediation the present introduction provides biographical information on Sharon Pollock and Jovette Marchessault and offers an overview of their writings and of critical reception of their work. Chapter one analyzes mediation and the role of the mediators in Sharon Pollock's history dramas, Walsh, Blood Relations, One Tiger to a Hill, Doc, The Making of Warriors, Saucy Jack and Fair Liberty's Call. Chapter two examines mediation and the role of the mediators in Jovette Marchessault's history plays, la saga des poules mouillées, la terre est trop courte, violette leduc, Alice & Gertrude, Natalie & Renée et ce cher Ernest, Anaïs dans la queue de la comète and Le Voyage magnifique d'Emily Carr. Chapter three is a detailed study of Pollock's history drama The Komagata Maru Incident, its treatment of history and an in-depth analysis of the roles of the historical mediator, Inspector William Hopkinson and the fictitious iconic mediator, T.S. Chapter four closely analyzes Marchessault's history drama Madame Blavatsky, spirite, contrasting Marchessault's version of Mme Blavatsky's biography with historical sources and centering on
the roles of the historical medium Madame Blavatsky and of the imaginary spiritual mediator, Anubis.

A summary of Pollock’s and Marchessault’s personal and professional backgrounds can enable one to understand the playwrights’ thematic concerns and artistic output. Sharon Pollock was born in 1936 in Fredericton, New Brunswick, where her father, Everett Chalmers, was a renowned physician and a member of the legislative assembly. She attended the University of New Brunswick, but left before graduating in 1954 to marry a Toronto insurance broker, Ross Pollock, with whom she lived in Toronto and had five children. Separated in the 1960s, she returned with her children to Fredericton where she held various jobs, including acting at the Playhouse Theatre. In 1966 she moved to Calgary with the actor Michael Ball and went on tour with the Prairie Players and won a Dominion Drama festival for her performance in The Knack by Ann Jellico.

While expecting her sixth child she began writing her first play A Compulsory Option. A satiric comedy about a paranoid’s difficult relations with his roommates; it premiered at the New Play Centre in Vancouver and won an Alberta Culture playwriting competition in 1971. Her play, Walsh, which relates a RCMP officer’s implication in the negotiation of the Sioux chief Sitting Bull’s deportation from Canada to the United States, was first played at Theatre Calgary in 1973, and was produced at the Stratford Festival in the Third Stage Theatre in 1974. During this period Pollock moved to Vancouver where she lived for several years and wrote children’s plays for Playhouse Holiday and Playhouse Theatre School and radio plays for CBC before establishing herself definitely in Calgary in 1988. The play And Out Goes You?, a criticism of lucrative political expropriations, premiered at the Vancouver Playhouse in 1975. The plight of about nearly 400 Sikh passengers who arrived on a steamship in Vancouver, where they
requested right to entry to Canada and were finally forced to return to Indian, is the topic of *The Komagata Maru Incident*, produced at the Vancouver Playhouse in 1976. Pollock played the role of Lizzie Borden in her drama *My Name is Lisbeth*, which narrates the nineteenth century Massachusetts spinster's heinous parricide, and was first presented at Douglas College, Surrey, B.C. in 1976. Broadcast on CBC Soundstage in December 1979, the radio drama *Sweet Land of Liberty* narrates the dilemma of an American war veteran who proudly served his country in Vietnam, but was compelled to desertion because of the atrocities he committed. He ends up in a provincial park on the Alberta-Montana border where “from a cliffside covered with petroglyphs he can see the homeland from which he is exiled” (Nunn, Robert “Sharon Pollock’s Plays” 77). He eventually commits suicide to end his moral misery.

The account of the violent repression of two inmates' attempt to escape a maximum security prison, *One Tiger to a Hill*, was inspired by the hostage-taking and death of Mary Steinhauser at B.C. Penitentiary in New Westminster in 1975. It premiered at the Citadel Theatre in Edmonton, in 1980. *Blood Relations*, another version of the Lizzie Borden murder mystery, opened at Edmonton’s Theatre 3, and *Generations*, the fictive story of three generations of Alberta farmers affected by a severe drought, and who consider and finally decide not to sell a piece of their land, was produced at Alberta Theatre Projects in Calgary also in 1980. The effects of the prohibition and the illegal importation of American liquor on the inhabitants of Blairmore, a mining town in the Crowsnest Pass on the Aberta/British Columbia and the Canada/U.S. borders, is the subject matter of *Whiskey Six Cadenza* which was first produced in 1983 at Theatre Calgary. Broadcast on CBC in June 1983, the radio play *Intensive Care* discusses the issue of euthanasia in which
a nurse, who has made what seemed to her the sane and reasonable decision to pull the plug on a brain-dead patient is horrified to discover that she has breached the boundaries that until then had restrained a fellow-nurse who kills a hydrocephalic child because it would not have much of a life anyway, and attempts to take the life of an elderly man simply because he is a pain in the ass. (Nunn "Sharon Pollock’s Plays" 82)

_Doc_, Pollock’s autobiographical play about her own dysfunctional family, premiered at Theatre Calgary in 1984. It narrates how a female author, who comes home to visit her elderly convalescent father, attempts to come to terms with her and her family’s past. Her paternal grandmother and mother died prematurely under suspicious circumstances. The former was run down by an oncoming train, and the latter, an alcoholic who had become terminally ill, died of over-medication. Her father was a doctor who overworked himself out of professional commitment, but also to find a laudable pretext to elude his frustrated wife.

Pollock first interpreted her monologue _Getting it Straight_, about a fictive madwoman’s attempt to organize her emotions and thoughts into a rational discourse, at the International Women’s Festival in Winnipeg in 1989. An escapee from a psychiatric institution’s therapeutic outing to watch a sport event, the insane woman pronounces a soliloquy from under the stadium’s bleaches, surrounded by rubbish. One of the reiterate obsessions of her disjointed discourse is the contents of her husband’s briefcase which she not only perceives as containing endless formulas for massively destructive weapons, but which she believes is alive and is infused with the essence of an extremely harmful form of radioactivity. The monologue concludes with a circuitous and interrogative appeal to all women to resist patriarchy’s toxic irradiation by forming and converging on a beneficial matriarchal-centred type of illumination.
The Making of Warriors, which relates the twentieth century Canadian Native Rights militant Anna Mae Pictou Aquash's struggle and murder, in conjunction with elements of the anti-slavery and woman rights activist Sarah Moore Grimke's biography and combat, was written for the radio programme Morningside Drama in 1991. Fair Liberty's Call, based on salient events of the American War of Independence and the establishment of Loyalist families in New Brunswick in the late eighteenth century, relates the difficult adaptation of a fictive Loyalist family's to a new life in Canada, premiered at the Stratford Festival in 1993. Saucy Jack, Pollock's version and probative solution to the nineteenth-century Jack the Ripper serial murder mystery, was presented at the Gary Theatre in Calgary in 1993. Her drama Moving Pictures, which relates the life and times of the pioneer Canadian born actress, film producer and screen writer, Nell Shipman (1892-1970), was presented in 1999 at Theatre Junction in Calgary. End Dream, a drama based on the real story of a Scottish nanny who was assassinated in Vancouver in the 1920s and the consequent persecution of a Chinese servant premiered at Theatre Junction in 2000. Angel's Trumpet, a drama about the tortuous relation between Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald, also premiered in 2000 at Theatre Junction in Calgary.

Sharon Pollock's plays have been produced nationally and internationally and the author has received institutional and public recognition in Canada and abroad. She has been honoured with two Governor General Awards for Drama, in 1981 for Blood Relations and in 1986 for Doc. Her radio play Sweet Land of Liberty was awarded a Nellie for Best Radio Drama in 1981, her television script The Person's Case won the Golden Sheaf Award in 1981, and she received the Canada-Australia Literary Prize in 1988. She was the Artistic Director of Theatre New Brunswick (1984) and Theatre Calgary (1988); however, she relinquished these positions because of differences of opinion with the boards. She was playwright in residence at Alberta
Theatre Projects and the National Arts Centre and was the head of the playwrights' colony at the Banff Centre for the Arts from 1977 to 1980. She also worked as a playwright instructor at the University of Alberta. More recently she opened the Garry Theatre in 1992, "at the instigation of businessman John Kerr, Pollock and her son Kirk Campbell took over a former porn cinema on Garry street in Calgary’s rather seedy neighbourhood of Inglewood as part of a general community effort to revitalize the area" (Much, Rita "Theatre by Default" 20). Due to financial difficulties the theatre was closed in 1997. Pollock was elected president of the Alberta Playwrights Network in 1998, and received the Harry and Martha Cohen Award for her important support of Calgary Theatre. Though born in Fredericton, Pollock lives in Calgary, which she considers her home, where she writes and produces her own plays and sustains innovative drama writers and producers.

Jovette Marchessault was born in a working class family in Montreal in 1938. She left school at the age of thirteen and worked at menial jobs. Of mixed First-Nations and Québécois ancestry, Marchessault has always been interested in American aboriginal art and literature, which infuses her artistic output. In the late nineteen fifties she started a long intellectual quest which included a round trip from Quebec to Mexico in search of her personal and cultural identity. Upon her return she decided to dedicate herself exclusively to art. She became a professional visual artist and exhibited her First-Nations inspired paintings, masks and sculptures in solo and group exhibitions in Quebec, Toronto, New York, Paris and Brussels between 1970 and 1979. After 1979 she continued to work in the plastic arts, but concentrated more on writing. Selected pieces of her visual art works are often reproduced on the covers of her books. In the preface of Marchessault's novel, La Mère des herbes, Gloria Orenstein describes the artist's emblematic totemic/telluric women sculptures:
Les corps et les esprits des “Femmes telluriques” sont traversés par des antennes et un radar composés de branches et de ramiIes qui pénètrent tous leurs systèmes de communication intérieure et extérieure, leur permettant d’émettre et de recevoir des vibrations ainsi que de vivre en symbiose avec les planètes, les plantes et les animaux de leurs milieux célestes et terrestres. (16)

For symbolic reasons, these sculptures are often made out of material retrieved from the garbage, “Elles incarnent le principe de la transformation spirituelle des détritus humains de la civilisation moderne en ces forces vitales qui préfigurent la renaissance de la femme” (Orenstein Préface 16).

Her innovative autobiographic novel, the first volume of her trilogy Comme une enfant de la terre, Le crachat solaire, was published in 1975. It was awarded the Prix France-Québec in 1976, and established the author’s renown in the international Francophone literary milieu and reading public. It is a complex novel divided into twelve chants or songs rather than chapters, in honorific emulation of the nineteenth-century American poet Walt Whitman’s first edition of Leaves of Grass, which was divided into twelve untitled poems. Whitman’s longest and most praised poem of the collection was later titled “Song of Myself” and uses a symbolic “I” which embraces all peoples and places. Le crachat solaire uses various narrators, but particularly ‘je’ to recount her Québécois and Amerindian mythical, historical, and real journey from Mexico through the United States to her homeland Québec. The intellectual transposition of her journey allows her to discover her profound identity and engender her new self through the act of writing with the support and complicity of her entourage as reported in the novel’s closing sentence, “Le temps est venu, ils me font signe et je plonge, je plonge, je descends en flèche comme un crachat solaire” (le crachat solaire 348). She emulates Whitman and hopes a new type of collective

After her first novel, she adopted, mixed and matched other literary genres. The provocatively titled *Triptyque lesbien*, published in 1980, contains three distinct texts. “Chronique lesbienne du moyen-âge québécois” relates, in a virulent tone, fragmentary elements of Marchessault’s marginal childhood in Québec, in which she was unable to identify with the values advocated by patriarchal Catholicism, such as girls’ and women’s subservience to God and to men. The exposé ends positively with the author’s embrace of another woman. The lyrically titled “les faiseuses d’anges” is a tribute to all women who use knitting needles to create aesthetic and comforting objects, and to some who use these feminine accessories to create angels, or in more prosaic terms to perform abortions and liberate women from undesired maternities. In “les vaches de nuit” Marchessault transforms the negative imagery of women portrayed as stupid fat cows into a positive one where a daughter explains how she and her mother escape the drudgery of daily routine by using their imaginations to transform themselves into cows—beautiful, soft, generous and nourishing animals—and fly the milky way at night. The monologue was performed at the Théâtre Expérimental des femmes in 1979 and in English at the New York’s Woman Salon during the same year.

*Lettre de Californie*, published in 1982, is divided into two distinct parts and comprises a long poem and an encyclopaedic listing of famous women of the past. The first text titled “I Lettre de Californie” is a laudatory poem dedicated to Meridel Le Sueur whom she presents in the introduction as a proletarian militant, a victim of McCarthy’s *chasse aux sorcières*, as the daughter of a suffragette and the grand-daughter of an anti-slavery activist, and as a great traveller who crossed America to spread the word about women to women. Marchessault’s pays
homage to Le Sueur’s effort—amongst a long list of women named in the poem which includes Flora Tristan, Louise Labé, Christine de Pisan, Frederika Bremer, Idola Saint Jéan, Olympe de Gouges and Mary Wollstonecraft—for constructing, defending, and propagating a woman-centred culture and matriarchal values such as resistance, solidarity and feminist militancy. Marchessault considers Le Sueur a foremother and inserts herself in the long lineage of impressive women, and states that she follows Le Sueur’s and other predecessors’ example to make matriarchal values and feats known to the world, “Je transporte des informations / Je veux être annoncée” (25). The je is transformed at the end of the poem into a nous which includes all women and refers to the advent of ancient alternative values which are as old as the cosmos, “Nous voulons êtres annoncées car c’est de nous, / enfants de la Terre, enfants des astres, / que dépend la restauration des mondes” (25).

True to her engagement, the second part of Lettre de Californie, “Il Semeuses d’oxygène” presents and describes the accomplishments of well-known and less familiar feminists of the past. It consists of short encyclopaedic articles on famous women from different parts of the world, whose feats are described in unconventional language. The listing—which seems to be based on emotional rather than on rational criteria, such as geographical location, chronological and alphabetical order—is presented in the following sequence: Louise Labé (1520?-1566) from France, Christine de Pisan (1365- Après 1429) from the Republic of Venice, Jeanne Deroin (1805-1894) from France, Frederika Bremer (1801-1863) from Sweden, Idola Saint-Jean (1880-1945) from Québec, Emmeline Pankhurst (1858-1928) from England, Olympe de Gouges (1748-1793) from France, Théroigne de Méricourt (1762-1817) from France, Susan B. Anthony (1820-1906) from the United States of America, and Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) from England.
The positive initiatory experience with drama through the well acclaimed staging of "les vaches de nuit" of *Tryptique lesbien* inspired Marchessault to write numerous biographical plays about creative women, especially writers. *La saga des poules mouillées* (1981) narrates the encounter between four famous Francophone women writers. *La terre est trop courte, violette leduc* (1982) is about the lesbian autobiographical writer who formed part of a circle of intellectuals, which included Simone de Beauvoir, in Paris during and after the Second World War. *Alice & Gertrude, Natalie & Renée et ce cher Ernest* (1983) depicts the lesbian writer Natalie Barney's Parisian literary salon prior to the Second World War, where she and her companion Renée Vivien received another famous couple, Alice Toklas and Gertrude Stein, and Ernest Hemmingway who visits the two couples uninvited and unexpectedly. The biography of Anaïs Nin, the Parisian socialite who eventually moved to the United States where she gained notoriety after the publication of her *Journals* which recorded her relations with outstanding cosmopolitans such as the American author Henry Miller, the Austrian psychiatrist Otto Rank and the French actor, and the inventor and theoretician of the *théatre de la cruauté*, Antonin Artaud, is the subject matter of *Anaïs dans la queue de la comète* (1985). *Le Voyage Magnifique d'Emily Carr* (1990) relates the life of Emily Carr, the Victorian West Coast totemic and landscape painter and writer. The trials and tribulations of a Russian medium, Madame Blavatsky, who co-founded the Theosophical Society, an international egalitarian religious movement, is narrated in *Madame Blavatsky, spirite*, (1998). The first five dramas will be further commented on in chapter two concerning Marchessault's history dramas, and the last one is the subject of chapter four.

*Demande de travail sur les nébuleuses*, published and premiered at the Théâtre d’Aujourd’hui in 1988, is a futurist play which takes place at the eleventh hour in a North
American house floating in space. It describes how the standard family comprised of a mother, father, son and daughter are still searching and attempting to find an equilibrium between maternal, paternal and filial values in the twenty-first century. Before abandoning his family, the father, a womanizer and an inept communicator, only managed to get near to his son by taking him on duck hunting expeditions. The mother raised the children alone while maintaining an edifying epistolary friendship with Stella (a star rather than a real person). The son is a university educated Zen adept who works as a bartender in New York, and the daughter is a doctor who works in the Andes and who bears a child full of promise. The play ends on a positive note, the son, instead of floating away from his family, considers renewing relations, at least with his sister and eventually with his niece or nephew.

Based on the third novel of Marchessault’s trilogy, *Des cailloux blancs pour des forêts obscures* (1987), the drama *Le Lion de Bangor* staged at le Théâtre du Parc in Sherbrooke and published in 1993, recuperates the novel’s salient characters and events. It narrates the reunion between a father, a humanitarian doctor specialized in research on cancer and his daughter, Noria, the fruit of his short marriage to a lesbian airplane pilot. Noria also becomes a pilot and flies throughout America to rescue animals, especially dogs, from experimental laboratories. She shares her life with the novelist Jeanne. The doctor, alias the Lion of Bangor, comes to help Noria, terminally ill with cancer, to die peacefully. During his stay he becomes attached to Jeanne. In the play’s denouement the Lion de Bangor, who was embittered for many years because his wife left him for another woman and estranged him from his daughter, accepts Noria’s life style and her premature death and befriends her lover.

Marchessault’s most recent novel, *La Pérégrin chérubinique: Confessions*, published in 2000, narrates the author’s mystic and autobiographic journey through life and through elements
of Judeo-Christianity. The title evokes an angelic pilgrim’s religious creed or request for absolution and announces the author’s intention of taking the readers on an intimate religious journey. Angelus Silesius (1624-1677), a Polish born Lutheran converted to Catholicism, wrote *Der Cherubinische Wandersmann* in German, which translated into French is *Le pèlerin cherubinique*. It is a collection of poetry, which contains over sixteen hundred rhymed couplets filled with deep religious thoughts written in epigrammatic form. Marchessault recuperated, feminized and mysticized Silesius’ original title by changing Le Pèlerin to *La Pèregrin* and by adding *Confessions*. The narrator is a woman who uses the first person singular ‘je’ and identifies herself as the pérégrin chérubinique. The use of a personal yet collective ‘je’ recalls the complex narrative strategy and prose of *le crachat solaire*. The narrator describes her early interest in religion in which the prominent icons were men or male-identified beings (saints, martyrs, Jesus and God). She takes the readers on a fragmented trip through her childhood, puberty, adolescence, womanhood, great maturity and her contemplation of death. In parallel she guides them through Judaism, Christianity, and modern materialism in opposition to spirituality and artistic creativity. At the end of the narrator’s travels and the last years of her life (and the last pages of the book), the protagonist finally perceives the supernatural being, Eve, “Dans la trève sacrée de ce jour, c’est bien sa voix que j’entends, une voix étonnament jeune qu’elle déroule dans l’espace ainsi qu’une trame de rayons vivants” (69). Eve guides her towards other women spirits, and towards Mary (Myriam). The discourse of women-centred spirituality is elating, and positive towards everything and everybody, from the first human couple to all living things and beings, “Ave Eva! Ave Adam! Ave les Vivants! Ave les humains!” (70).

Marchessault, like Pollock, has been the recipient of various literary awards. She received the Prix France-Québec in 1976 for *le crachat scolaire. Anaïs dans la queue de la comète* won
the Prix du Journal de Montréal in 1985, and she was honoured with the Grand prix littéraire de la ville de Sherbrooke in 1988 for Demande de travail sur les néeules. She was distinguished with the Lieutenant General Award for drama in 1990 for Le Voyage magnifique d'Emily Carr. She was the Présidente du Conseil de la Culture de l'Estrie (CCE) for almost three mandates. The last mandate was curtailed when she resigned in 1995 in reaction to the CCE executive committee's recommendations to change certain elements of her memoir. In a letter written to the CCE she explained her reasons for not complying, which were sentimental/stylistic, "aux yeux de c.c.e., il faut s'exprimer dans une langue de bois et de clichés" (Pierrette Roy, "La présidente du Conseil de la culture", La Tribune, 1), ideological, "J'y vois de la censure et un manque de respect pour la propriété intellectuelle" (Roy, 1) and critical towards the institution, "au Conseil de la culture de l'Estrie, il n'y pas de place pour une parole d'artiste" (Roy, 1). In protest she resigned and as a private citizen she forwarded her unchanged memoir directly to the Minister of Culture and to the Prime Minister of Quebec. At present Marchessault lives in the Eastern Townships and works as an assistant professor of drama at the École supérieure de théâtre of the Université de Québec à Montréal.

In order to fully assess the aesthetic, didactic and ideological impact of Pollock's and Marchessault's plays it is of interest to report scholars' appraisals in which they foreground the dramatists' roles as mediating playwrights who attempt to transform society. Reviews of Pollock's plays are numerous in comparison to the scant studies on Marchessault's writing. Academics have classified Pollock and her work into three main categories. She was initially considered a socially engaged didactic, then a Western regionalist playwright and, after the staging of Blood Relations, she was appraised as a feminist dramatist. Pollock shuns these classifications because they limit her work to one given perspective and negate the complexity of
her compositions. The title of Malcolm Page’s 1979 survey “Sharon Pollock: Committed Playwright” manifests his opinion that the author is dedicated to expounding social issues which often give more importance to presenting historical data than to unfolding the complexities of human character, at least in her earlier plays. He finds the delivering of information particularly problematic in *Walsh* which concerns numerous subjects, “Pollock’s task as a dramatist is to cover Sitting Bull’s four years in Canada, including the Indians’ way of life, the central situation of the conflict between Sitting Bull and Walsh and the conflicts within Walsh” (105). He found that she relied too much on messengers to deliver information and that her attempt to cram the great plains onto a stage was unsuccessful, especially in comparison to her second historical play, *The Komagata Maru Incident*, which he found more interesting because it was more stylized, “Pollock’s stagecraft is more sophisticated here than in *Walsh*. No longer is there a sense that the work should really have been a film (Pollock has said that she would have preferred her Sioux on horseback). Nor does she need representatives of each of the groups involved” (108). The play employed fewer messengers and made its point less conspicuously, “its message was direct but not obtrusive” (108).

He next analyses Pollock’s first unpublished version of the Lizzie Borden murder case which he assesses as ineffective and unconvincing on various levels. According to him, the drama is unsubstantial in content “*My Name is Lizbeth* comes out as a thin and tentative look at Victorian middle-class family” (109), in intention, “no clear view of Lizzie, nor reason for writing comes through” (110), and in character analysis by affirming that she “seems uninterested in a psychological study” (110). He also claims that the playwright does not manage to transmit her interest in the historical subject matter, “Pollock’s excited curiosity about the past, evident in the earlier plays, is almost absent this time” (110). Page considers the play’s
didactic objective unattained. “While I had anticipated that the central point was to be the oppression of women in Victorian society, with a moral for the present, this is not emphasized” (110).

Throughout his article, Malcolm Page offers constructive criticism and concludes on a positive note in which he appraises Pollock’s ideological agenda, and her endeavour to approximate and convey her subject matter in novel fashions. “Though I have drawn most attention to Pollock’s ideas and messages, equally striking is her stagecraft, her relentless determination to avoid obvious approaches and search for angles which are effective and unusual” (110).

Robert Nunn in “Sharon Pollock’s Plays” appraises the playwright’s work in the same vein as Page’s antecedent survey. He offers constructive criticism of Pollock’s first play, *Walsh* which he considers of interest because it addresses current issues: “What keeps it fresh is its passion and sincerity and its ability to arouse troubling thoughts about Canada’s treatment of aboriginal people and about its relations with the United States” (73). Nunn argues that providing historical information was problematic because it was so consuming that “the first half of the play sinks under the weight of exposition” (74). In Nunn’s opinion, the characters lacked depth “in contrast to Pollock’s later writing, the dialogue is such that every character means only what he says. There is no unverbalized subtext enriching, contradicting or counterpointing the text” (75). He considers *The Komagata Maru Incident* much more interesting than *Walsh* because the playwright offers a more profound analysis of the protagonist’s inner turmoil, “the slow return of the repressed—is more intriguing than that in *Walsh* where we indignantly watched ‘them’ destroying that fine man (make that us). Here Hopkinson’s anguish takes us farther into ourselves: the racist denies a part of his own humanity in denying the humanity of others” (75).
Nunn views *Blood Relations* as one of Pollock’s most impressive dramas because instead of elucidating the mystery, it guides the audience through the reasons which could have led Lizzie Borden, and anyone placed in her predicament, to kill their parents:

The best way to indicate its excellence is to point out that it is the most necessarily theatrical of all Sharon Pollock’s plays. *Blood Relations* treats performance not as a vehicle for conveying something else but as an activity that by its nature may lead players and audience to revelations that it has literally brought into being. (77)

He considers *One Tiger to a Hill*, one of Pollock’s least effective dramas because he finds it is “curiously detached from reality, its characters and situations too close to the clichés of television melodrama” (80). According to Nunn, besides being an undeveloped accumulation of clichés, the personal and political elements of the play are not clearly defined and its denouement is fatalistic:

The most severe problem in the play is that the jarring clash between the political and the personal aspects of the play confuses rather than illuminates. The political message, conveyed by the rapid montage of scenes with the hostage-takers and with the prison authorities, carries a depressing sense of hopelessness about changing the system or even heading off a violent end to the crisis. (80)

*Generations*, Pollock’s naturalist play about a family of three generations of farmers in Alberta, the Nurlins, and their ancestral self-imposed bondage to their semi-barren land, was appraised by Nunn, though he found it had several shortcomings. The drama evolves around the conflict between the third generation siblings, David Nurlin, an incipient farmer and his elder brother, Young Eddy, a novice city lawyer who has come home to ask his family for a loan to
start his own law office which can only be obtained through the sale of a piece of land. The land is often more a problem than a blessing. Eddy’s visit takes place during a crisis; the First-Nations people on the reserve have blocked the river to impede irrigation and pressure the government into attending to their complaints. Frustrated and in fear of the on-going drought, lack of irrigation and of an irrecoverable loss of produce, the local White farmers decide to hold a meeting to determine their course of action. No decisions are taken during the meeting, and a core group of radicals, which includes David, decides to burn the land rather than let it go to waste. The fire and the drought are resolved by a providential rainstorm. The crisis allows David to realize his attachment and commitment to the land which compels the family to conserve their property and encourage Eddy to find other means to finance his project.

Nunn states that Generations “comes close to succeeding” (82). He finds that transposing the play’s environment of “the most detailed farm-kitchen realism yet at the same time for the most abstract and mythic rendering of the prairie landscape” (82) is an “enormous and maybe impossible task” (82) and finds similar fault with the mixture of prosaic and poetic language. “When the naturalistic dialogue reaches towards the mythic level, there is a similar clashing of gears” (82). He claims that Pollock downplayed the implications and consequences of David’s irrevocable act of rebellion. “What do you do after you have burned the place down? [. . . ] A thunderstorm douses the fire, Old Eddy gives David a ‘lickin’ and tells him not to do that again. So the big moment is a throwaway” (82). Despite these negative comments he considers Generations interesting because it is a “gradual shift of accent in Pollock’s works from big issues to the characters on whom these issues have an impact” (81). “David emerges—not changed—but confirmed in what he knew already but could not articulate” (82).
Nun concludes his article by paying tribute to Pollock and acknowledging her constant efforts to point out how general concerns have a direct effect on private lives.

An overview of Sharon Pollock’s work corrects the impression often conveyed in reviews that she is a didactic playwright whose characters are merely mouthpieces for social criticism [. . . ] But ten years down the road it is clear that this stereotype has become increasingly ill-fitting. The grain of truth in it is her steady attention to the impact of public issues, and public myths, on individual lives. (82 & 83)

Denis Salter quizzically titles his review article of the playwright’s work “(Im)Possible Worlds: The Plays of Sharon Pollock”. Like Page and Nunn, he classifies Pollock as a politically engaged playwright who uses the theatre to scrutinize reality and suggest alternatives:

She is using the theatre to expose deception, to probe the origins of behaviour, to weigh the truth of character or situation, and to determine people’s responsibilities for their actions. She is using the theatre in other words, as an instrument of moral inquiry, to project (though seldom to achieve) a better world with a better set of values by which to live. (1)

He is one of the most severe critics of Pollock’s earlier plays’ pedagogical intentions, “Walsh (1973), The Komagata Maru Incident (1976) and One Tiger to a Hill (1980), lean towards simplistic ideas and holier-than-thou didactism” (1) but asserts that “her subsequent works—Generations (1980), Blood Relations (1980), Whiskey Six Cadenza (1983) and Doc (1984)—treat her subjects and her audiences much more respectfully” (1). One of the reasons he considers these plays more interesting is because “she relies on modified presentational techniques, among other things, to draw her audiences directly into the dramatic action, so that
they become, together with the characters the main subjects of the playwright’s ethical investigation” (1 & 2).

According to Salter, “Generations’ mimetic truthfulness makes an audience pay attention, as though for the first time, to a group of people whose lives have mostly been ignored by the theatre” (11). The play “urges us to believe that the kind of traditional sacrifice to a larger cause made by Old Eddy, Alfred, Margaret and David is a more powerful form of self-realization than anything Bonnie and Young Eddy can achieve through the single-minded pursuit of their shallow interests” (11). Like Nunn, he considers Blood Relations one of Pollock’s most striking plays. It goes beyond the Borden legend and explores the social causes of personal psychosis which implicates and interpellates the audience, “the play suggests that the family and personal identity are never stable, never to be trusted, and that the desire to commit murder is a product of socio-economic and psychological factors over which a single individual might have very little control” (13). He judges that in her later plays Pollock evolves positively from demonstrating the system’s implacable and hopeless destruction of individuals caught in a social or personal dilemma to demonstrating that their turmoil is not the end but the potential beginning of a fresh start.

Lizzie Borden in Blood Relations is no longer controled by her parents, but in playing the reconstructive game with the Actress is perhaps substituting one psychological prison for another; Johnny Farley in Whiskey Six Cadenza denies and affirms his ‘father’s’ self-serving myth and in this way paradoxically manages to become himself in the future; Catherine/Katie in Doc observe themselves in the mirror of the past and at the end, as an intetgretated ‘adult’
character they manage to stand free of the father whose authority they had so deeply interiorized. (19)

After Blood Relations, Pollock was hailed as a feminist playwright. In “Sharon Pollock’s Women” Diane Bessai perceives the women’s roles in Walsh and The Komagata Maru Incident as secondary ones which “function largely as devices to reveal the public conflicts of central male characters” (127) and those of One Tiger to a Hill “are intended as two of several points of view within the play’s ethical argument” (127). According to Bessai, Pollock’s artistry, especially on and about women, changes for the better in and after her play about the Lizzie Borden murders; “questions about women’s dependence and independence initiated in Blood Relations continue in the plays to follow. Women are still basically portrayed through their connections with men, but their personal perspectives are more individually articulated” (132). The critic ends her review article on the same note as the previous male critics, in which she expresses the hope that Pollock will continue to evolve to the point that she will prioritize the study of individual psychology within and especially above the presentation of an abstract conflict. “At some future time Doc may well seem the mark of a transitional phase in Sharon Pollock’s œuvre ... showing perhaps, the playwright in the process of a further move toward the exploration of personal intricacies of social and familial responsibility” (136).

Marchessault’s writing has, in comparison to Pollock’s, been reviewed by very few scholars. Her novel, le crachat solaire, was well received and reviewed principally by feminist academics. In her analysis of the novelist’s complex narration which employs multiple female narrators, evokes freakish hybrids, and iconoclastic references, Barbara Godard acclaims Marchessault’s innovative feminist procedure: “le Crachat solaire est une fiction stratégique que Marchessault élabore à partir de la mémoire, une fiction de la disjonction et de la déstabilisation
The critic claims that the author, through her unconventional narration, simultaneously undermines patriarchal reality and replaces it with a women-centred one. "Le projet féministe de la déconstruction se combine avec un projet de déploiement stratégique des fictions pour transformer le "réelle", des fictions de l'advenir-femme" (115, author's italics).

Where Gôdard and other women critics such as Gloria Orenstein ("Jovette Marchessault ou la Quête extatique de la nouvelle chamane") Eileen Boyd Sivert ("Jovette Marchessault and Marie-Claude Blais: Hybrids, Monsters and Ways of Knowing") and Marie Vautier (New World Myth) acknowledge the novel’s clever, intentionally confusing and sometimes difficult to decipher prose, male critics either ignore or attack Marchessault’s work. Jean Basile castigates Marchessault’s prize-winning novel in his sarcastically titled article ““Le Crachat scolaire” de Jovette Marchesault”:

De la littérature, et pas forcément de la meilleure, elle a pris une sorte de rage d’écrire des mots et des mots, sans aucun discernement . . . elle a pris ce qu’il y a de plus contestable dans le domaine du cosmique: une vague teinture de mysticisme, un soupçon d’animisme. Le tout inspiré, un peu imprudemment des grands textes de la tradition dite ‘ésotérique’. (12)

He first berates the novel’s content and style, and finally attacks the writer personally:

Pourquoi prétendre que “ses mains et pieds ont touché des merveilles”, dont “un crâne de tortue de mer aux orbites triangulaire en train d’occulter un astre moribond”. Qu’est ce que c’est “occulter un astre moribond”? Au carré Saint-Louis, on appellerait ça “parti”. Mais a quoi ça sert de partir, si c’est pour arriver nulle part? (12)
Whereas Marchessault’s novels, essays and monologues have been reviewed by feminist scholars, her dramas, in general have been the object of brief newspaper and theatre magazine articles. The winter 1991 edition of *Voix & Images* presented a 73 page monographic report on Marchessault, which consisted of the republication and compilation of various relatively elaborated reviews and a detailed biography. Acknowledged by an informed few, Marchessault’s work is unfamiliar to the general public, and this despite the fact that her plays were produced in Montreal in popular and established playhouses—Le théâtre experimental des femmes, Théâtre du Nouveau Monde, Théâtre d’Aujourd’hui, and the Théâtre de Quat’sous—and notwithstanding the performances of various monumental Québécois actresses and actors—Monique Mercure, played Gabrielle Roy in *la saga des poules mouillées*, and Gertrude Stein in *Alice & Gertrude, Natalie & Renée et ce cher Ernest*, Andrée Lachapelle played Anne Hébert in *la saga des poules mouillées* and Anaïs in *Anaïs, dans la queue de la comète*, and Jean Louis-Roux played Otto Rank in *Anaïs, dans la queue de la comète*.

According to Claudine Potvin, “les fictions de Jovette Marchessault opèrent un déplacement puisqu’elles instaurent un espace autre qui parachute le discours “marginal” au beau milieu de la page, remettant en question jusqu’à un certain point les notions mêmes de centre et de périphérie” (“Jovette Marchessault ” 214). She conjectures that Marchessault’s marginality will endure:

bien que l’institution tende à récupérer ses marges, on peut encore se demander quelles sont les chances d’une écriture comme celle de Jovette Marchessault de faire son chemin jusqu’au centre. Minimes semble-t-il. La bibliographie fait état de très peu d’études analytiques, essentiellement de comptes rendus. Pourtant la production de l’auteure justifie mal ces silences. Sans doute les textes renversent-
ils trop de structures, mentales, sociales, culturelles, sexuelles, raciales, spirituelles, structures patriarchales avant tout. (214)

In reference to Marchessault’s novels, Marie Vautier in *New World Myth: Postmodernism and Postcolonialism in Canadian Fiction* alleges that the writer’s feminism and hybrid identity and its inscription in her prose is one of the greatest causes of her literary exclusion:

It is my theory that the surprising absence of serious critical reception of Marchessault’s work has a great deal to do with the absence of self/other (Québécois/Amerindian) dichotomy and the creation of what I call a “double insidedness” in the text. Marchessault, unlike other writers, writes deeply within a feminist perspective and a complex Québécois/Amerindian identity. (108)

The virulent content and style of her texts have caused her to be classified as a radical lesbian militant and have possibly estranged numerous critics, including moderate feminists, and readers. Marchessault made a modest breakthrough among English language feminist critics and readers through Gloria Orenstein’s support and promotion of her work in the United States. Orenstein is an American University professor of literature and a cultural agent, involved with shamanism and who presents Marchessault’s work within this framework. She was an American feminist critic who appraised women artists’ renewed interest in matriarchal spirituality in the 1970s, as commented by Marchessault in the introduction of *la saga des poules mouillées*, “Gloria avait rédigé un long texte sur la réémergence de l’archétype de la Grande Déesse dans l’art visuel d’artistes américaines et européennes contemporaines” (8).

She befriended and supported Marchessault by presenting the artist and her work on specific occasions. As the co-founder of the New York Woman’s Salon, which she headed from
1975 to 1985, Orenstein invited Marchessault and several prominent Québécois feminists (France Théoret, Madeleine Ouellette-Michalska, Gail Scott, and Louise Cotnoir) to launch "Les vaches de nuits" in English, performed by Pol Pelletier, at the Woman's Salon in the autumn of 1979. She also backed Marchessault by having her students study her writings in her university literature courses and by writing laudatory prefaces in and appraising descriptions on the back covers of Marchessault’s books. In the preface of La Mère des Herbes Orenstein presents the novel as a means to enter into contact with matriarchy: “Ces incantations à la mémoire des femmes fortes et tendres qui furent les gardiennes titulaires de sa petite enfance tracent un itinéraire éclairé qui peut aujourd’hui servir de guide à la renaissance d’une nouvelle spiritualité féministe déa-centrique” (9). On the back book cover of Des cailloux blancs pour les forêts obscures Orenstein’s description is written almost in new-age code language, “Dans ce roman du troisième œil, qui inaugure la littérature visionnaire de l’ère du Verseau, les forces de la lumière et de l’amour triomphent”.

Anthony Purdy argues that Orenstein’s paratextual references homogenize Marchessault’s writings and evacuate its conflictive content:

[Orenstein] a joué le rôle d’interprétesse (pour féminiser une expression de Jean-Marc Lemelin) dans la réception de la trilogie ainsi que dans la production du sens de ces romans: c’est à dire qu’elle a transformé des textes littéraires en objets de culte tout en prétendant en livrer la vérité-cohérente, unifiée, sans failles—à un public qu’elle voudrait ainsi métamorphoser en congrégation. ("Des cailloux blancs pour les forêts obscures" 267)

Orenstein’s comments affect readers’ perception, but may also repel readers who are adverse to the new-age approach. For example, Le Voyage magnifique d’Emily Carr can be
viewed as a classical romantic version of the West Coast artist’s life, which insists greatly on the painter’s spiritual rapport with her medium, her subject matter and the world at large. Orenstein describes the play as a medium session: “La pièce de Jovette Marchessault ne traite pas d’Emily Carr. La pièce est l’empreinte du seuil vivant où l’esprit de Jovette s’unit avec celle d’Emily Carr, où les vivants et les morts ont communiqué” (“Les voyages visionnaires de trois créatrices féministes-matrístiques” 260, author’s italics). She concludes by proclaiming that Marchessault’s play offers the possibility of entering into contact with the absolute: “il devra devenir un moyen de transport grâce auquel les lecteurs et les lectrices voyageront à travers les œuvres de Jovette Marchessault et d’Emily Carr, de la réalité manifeste aux dimensions de l’invisible” (261).

Carr’s relation with the goddess of the woods, called Zunoqua in English and D’Sonoqua in French, is an important element of the play, which can be interpreted in Orenstein’s terms. However the drama contains a multitude of other topics: the actual biography of Emily Carr, the difficulty of being a woman artist in Victorian times, success when it is almost too late, and solidarity between women and across races and generations, and between men and women artists, to name but a few.

Marchessault in her more recent writings has been perceived as a conciliatory and redemptive author. Le Lion de Bangor ends with the embittered doctor’s serene acceptance of his wife’s and daughter’s lesbian lifestyles. In Demande de travail sur les nébuleuses the younger generations take measures to be better than their parents. The sister is a doctor who helps and cures the wretched of the earth, and the brother propagates oriental values among his New York bar clients. The younger generation intends to develop a new type of family with more positive values and ultimately create a better society.
In his comparative study of several dramatists’ recent evolution from portraying conflictive situations to depicting harmonious ones, Denis Salter assesses Emily Carr’s progression towards serenity in *Le Voyage magnifique d’Emily Carr*. Salter interprets the scene where Emily combats her father’s suspended armchair which symbolizes both his individual paternal and patriarchy’s abusive power as a daughter’s reconciliation with her father which enables her to widen her psychological and creative horizons, “Although physically she has lost to her father, spiritually she has in effect won, because the struggle teaches her that there is no point in hating him. Through this insight, she can be her independent self and her father’s daughter simultaneously” (“Spiritual Resistance / Spiritual Healing” 233). He further indicates “Above all, she is learning how to be another kind of artist: a writer who will seek to give voice to the infinite variety of the spiritual world ... with the kind of compassion that her former unrelenting hatred of her father had made impossible” (233). *Madame Blavatsy, spirite* can also be classified as a spiritual conciliatory drama. Marchessault presents a positive woman role model who worked with a male partner to eradicate sectarianism. Her latest novel, *La Pérégrin chérubinique*, calls for a woman-centred review of the Western world’s Judeo-Christian heritage which displaces rather than rejects patriarchal icons.

It has been argued that Marchessault’s initial radical feminism, her provocative style and subject matter, her double status of a lesbian and an Amerindian, and her willing appropriation by the new-age movement, have prevented her from becoming a full-fledged member of the mainstream canon, despite the appeasing nature of her later writings. In her novels, Marchessault persists in writing in a complex poetical language where the accumulation of metaphors, often a fusion of ancient Amerindian and modern North American references, have precedence over plot development. Her prose may be too challenging for contemporary readers for technical more
than ideological reasons, especially in the 2000s when feminist, lesbian, and minority group discourses have become relatively commonplace. However her dramas, which, like the novels, deal with unusual characters and themes, are easier to comprehend and are more enjoyable because they are written in a more colloquial language, and are unified by established characters in concrete situations.

Mediators' and mediation are essential themes in Pollock’s and Marchessault’s dramas. Throughout their plays, and more particularly their history plays, they suggest their own roles as mediating playwrights who use their art to challenge society’s collective memory by presenting, in Pollock’s case inglorious incidents of the past, and in Marchessault’s case by exposing history through a feminist filter which foregrounds women’s positive contribution to society in a world dominated by men. Artistic, conflict and spiritual mediators are essential characters in both author’s dramas. They are used as a means to explore and expose the role of art and artists in society, who can also be described as artistic mediators, and circuitously serve as a means to comment on the playwrights’ own artistic role and theories about their media, play writing and the theatre. Both authors address complex themes in complex forms to goad their audiences into interpreting rather than consuming the historical and cultural material presented in their plays principally through mediating figures who expose the mediation process.
CHAPTER ONE:

Mediators and Mediation in Pollock’s History Dramas:

*Walsh, Blood Relations, One Tiger to a Hill, Doc, The Making of Warriors, Fair Liberty’s Call and Saucy Jack*

Pollock’s history dramas can be read in terms of different types of mediation as discussed in the introduction. One general form of mediation is the recuperation and manipulation of history to demonstrate, in Pollock’s case, patriarchy’s treachery, and in Marchessault’s case to present a morally superior and possibly more ancient matriarchal culture which patriarchy has unsuccessfully attempted to subdue and suppress. The way they devise their plays is also a form of mediation which makes the audience question history’s reliability. Pollock uses a variety of metatheatrical techniques to simultaneously show how history, history plays and performances are contrived and orient the audience towards deriving its own conclusions about historical and theatrical discourses. Instead of using metatheatrical techniques Marchessault challenges patriarchal history by presenting her plays through women writers, the utmost protagonists of all of her plays, who illuminate reality exclusively through a matriarchal perspective.

These plays do not solely recuperate history to inform audiences about the past; they are mediations of the past located in the present with a view towards reforming the future. Pollock uses her history plays to make audiences aware of patriarchy’s self-perpetuating historical discourse and tactics, become more critical of their cultural inheritance and eventually adopt new attitudes and contribute to the consolidation of a better society. Marchessault makes audiences aware of the existence of matriarchal references and predecessors, and invites the audience to adopt the morally superior matriarchal values presented or promoted by her heroines.
The playwrights make great use of mediators. In many of her plays, Pollock opposes conflict resolution mediators or individuals caught in the midst of conflicting parties and situations who have to make choices between opposed realities and artist mediators. These multiple narrations allow the audience to view the plot and characters through various perspectives and be cautious towards the information they are receiving. Marchessault presents her plays through one or several female cultural mediators’ joint perspectives. She expects the audience to adhere to their versions of reality and sometimes presents her cultural mediators as religious mediators invested with a divine mission. Both playwrights use biographies as a metaphorical illustration of the positive and negative effects of mediation. They use concrete life cases to illustrate what is often perceived as abstract social issues which do not have a direct influence on individuals’ lives. Often in Pollock’s plays mediators’ attitudes and input into the mediating process has a direct positive or negative effect on their lives and by extension on society. In Marcessault’s plays all of the heroines are portrayed as constructive, engaged mediators who attain serenity and success.

Of 14 of Pollock’s most renowned published plays, all except three, *Getting it Straight, Generations* and *Whiskey Six Cadenza*, can be classified as history plays because they either refer to real people’s lives, including the author’s (*Walsh, The Komagata Maru Incident, Blood Relations, The Making of Warriors, Doc, Saucy Jack, Moving Pictures, End Dream, and Angel’s Trumpet*) or because they focus on real events but use fictive characters, such as the hostage-taking in a British Columbian penitentiary in *One Tiger to a Hill*, and the repercussions of the American War of Independence in the formation of the Canadian nation in *Fair Liberty’s Call*.

In general her plays either narrate the plight of individuals caught in political situations which transcend national frontiers and which surpass an individual’s capacities, or analyze an
emblematic person's or a circle of individuals' place in society, as in The Komagata Maru Incident, Walsh and One Tiger to a Hill. The harmful effects of women's forced domesticity is the theme of Blood Relations and to a minor extent of Doc. In Saucy Jack Pollock exposes the effects of corruption on influential members of the heir to the British throne's entourage. And in Fair Liberty's Call she presents Canadians', or more precisely British Loyalists', involvement in the horrors of the American War of Independence in order to demystify and destabilize Canadians' perception of themselves as an innocuous and victimized people.

The title of Pollock's first history play, Walsh, refers to Major Walsh of the North West Mounted Police who negotiated Sitting Bull's delivery to the American authorities. The drama is presented as a play within a play which serves as a means to emphasize its artificiality. It starts by a prologue in which Pollock depicts Walsh as a bitter, quarrelsome and violent drunkard, then takes the audience back in time to explain how he became such a person. Sitting Bull led his people to Canada to avoid retaliation over their successful battle against a regiment of the Seventh United States Calvary led by Lieutenant-Colonel Custer, known as the Battle of the Little Bighorn and Custer's Last Stand which took place in Montana on June 25th, 1876. Due to the fact that Walsh was the local authority in charge and had good relations with the First-Nations people, he became the mediator between the American and the Canadian governments and the Sioux. Because he was employed by the government, and was part and parcel of the conflict and was interested in conserving his job, it is difficult to conceive Walsh as a true mediator. But he belonged and exercised his functions within the parameters of another epoch, "For the most part, mediation historically and in other cultures has been performed by people with informal training, and the intervenor's role has usually occurred within the context of other functions or duties. Only since the turn of the twentieth century has mediation become formally
institutionalized and developed into a recognized profession” (Moore *The Mediation Process* 21).

Pollock portrays how Walsh evolves from thinking he was invested with a genuine mandate to negotiate a consensual solution to Sitting Bull’s unbearable situation to comprehending that he is just a pawn. The chief cannot return to the United States because he will face severe retaliation, and in Canada he has no means of subsistence. Slowly but surely Walsh realizes that his government never had the intention of following up on any of his proposals, and had decided from the beginning to hand Sitting Bull and the Sioux over to the American authorities. The initial plan was to not provide the Sioux with any livelihood, therefore they would either starve or decide ‘out of their own free will’ to return to the United States. If this devious plan did not work, there were other means. Walsh undertook his mediating role earnestly until he begins to understand that he is being used by his superiors to pacify Sitting Bull and gain time, “Do you think McCutcheon hangs me up from some damn wooden peg with all my strings dangling? Is that what you think happens? Do you think I’m a puppet? Manipulate me right and anything is possible?” (*Walsh* 86). When Walsh is given the option of quitting or complying to orders, he chooses his job over his morals and becomes the puppet he denied he was. In the play’s most climactic scene *Walsh* ensures that Sitting Bull understands that he intends to impose his superiors’ orders by throwing him on the floor and putting his foot on his back, as if he had hunted down and conquered a wild animal. Sitting Bull and his people are deported to the United States where the chief is executed and his people are partially exterminated. Pollock presents Walsh as a frustrated mediator who was personally destroyed by the system which forced him to mistreat Sitting Bull and his people against his better judgement and moral values.
The play contains another distinct mediator figure Harry, the Wagon Master, who initially addresses the audience directly in the prologue and provides historical information on Major Walsh as well as on General Custer and his underhanded military tactics and on the Americans’ dealings with the different First Nation peoples to set them up against each other. The Wagon Master guides the audience into the story and then plays a role within the play. He presents the factual information ironically. Harry’s motives for being in Canada are not clear, one suspects he is an American army deserter. Perhaps he deserted and fled to Canada because he refused to comply to his superiors’ orders and massacre “injuns”, or perhaps he was forced to move to Canada for other motives which Pollock does not specify, “I had ...what you might call vacated the U-nited States, and had myself a job as a wagon master” (19). By using this unreliable narrator to feed historical data on the American army’s Indian Wars, especially on the Battle of Little Bighorn and Sitting Bull’s exile to Canada, in ironic terms, Pollock invites audiences to question the information she presents in the play, and entices them to undertake their own historical verifications and draw their own conclusions from written accounts and from the exploration of their imaginations to fill in the gaps.

In Blood Relations, a drama about the nineteenth-century Borden family parricide in Fall River, Massachusetts, instead of using a narrator/mediator to provide historical information, Pollock has two women mediators negotiate the factual information and the evolving plot. Although Lizzie was acquitted, the Lizzie Borden case has never been fully resolved. Attempts to demonstrate who the murderer was, is the subject matter of mystery novels and a number of books, plays, operas and specialized web sites. The scene of the crime, the Borden home on Second Street, has been transformed into a museum, and the mansion which Lizzie had built in the upper part of Fall River, where she moved shortly after the assassinations and stayed until the
end of her life, is now a trendy bread-and-breakfast accommodation. In short, Lizzie Borden became a legend in her own time and still intrigues the general public a century later.

The case remains morbidly attractive for several reasons. It took place in the home of one of the richest families of Fall River. William Borden climbed his way up the social ladder through hard work, hoarding and sound investment, especially in commercial real estate. He started out as an undertaker and eventually became the owner of a cotton mill, a bank and of a large section of Fall River's downtown area. The double crime took place on a hot August morning during the week, when the streets were busy and when most people's windows were open to let in the breeze. The fact that two members of the family were butchered savagely at different times and in different places—Mrs. Borden around 9 or 10 a.m. in the upstairs guest room, and Mr. Borden towards 11 or 12 a.m. in the downstairs parlour—in their own home in plain daylight sent and sends imaginations surging. Because Lizzie Borden was the only person who had the opportunity, a motive and access to a weapon, she was the principle suspect. Yet how could Lizzie, a weak woman, a loving daughter, a commendable Victorian spinster and a Sunday-school Bible teacher, perform such horrific deeds?

There are various theories on the murder mystery which suggest other assassins, conclude that it is impossible to determine who the assassin was or uphold Lizzie's guilt. Arnold Brown in Lizzie Borden: The Legend, the Truth, the Final Chapter presents the theory that Lizzie paid Mr. Borden's illegitimate son to kill the couple and disappear. Frank Spiering in Lizzie defends the hypothesis that Lizzie's sister, Emma, who was out staying with friends when the crime was committed, rented a buggy and returned secretly to Fall River to murder her parents. Edmond Radin in Lizzie Borden: The Untold Story presents Bridget, the Irish maid as the assassin. Victoria Lincoln in A Private Disgrace argues that Lizzie killed Mrs. Borden in an epileptic
seizure, “Lizzie Borden did not kill her because she had an ambulatory seizure of temporal epilepsy. But all evidence indicates that she killed her stepmother during one” (42, author’s italics) and then murdered her father because, “she could not bear to lose her father’s love. She had to keep it unchanged; and now there was only one way that she could keep it unchanged” (97). David Kent in Forty Whacks: New Evidence in the Life and Legend of Lizzie Borden presents the hypothesis that the Borden trial had been turned into a media circus and that the case was blown out of proportion by all involved, the prosecution, the defence, the witnesses and the public, and made it difficult to establish any facts. He concludes by leaving the case unsolved. “The story will forever remain unfinished. Perhaps Lizzie was the only person who knew the truth, perhaps not” (220). Walter Hixson asserts in “Gendered Justice: Lizzie Borden and Victorian America” that Lizzie Borden was guilty and used her fortune to buy the best lawyers to obtain an acquittal, “The evidence strongly suggests that Lizzie Borden was guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. The trial was not merely a perversion of justice. It was a farce. Lizzie alone had the motive, the means and the opportunity to commit the murders” (56).

Lizzie was acquitted, but she remained accused by popular culture through the still famous child’s rhyme which is chanted twice in Blood Relations:

Lizzie Borden took an ax
Gave her mother forty whacks
When the job was nicely done,
She gave her father forty-one. (16 & 68)

The dramatist does not rehash the historical data; she takes us on a trip through and with the play’s heroines to the ‘heart of darkness’ of Lizzie’s confined Victorian life. The opening scene takes place “late afternoon and evening, late fall, in Fall River, 1902” (13). Lizzie
receives her actress-lover from Boston regularly in the Borden home where she lives with her sister Emma. During this routine visit a little more than ten years after the murders, Miss Lizzie, tired of being endlessly questioned by Emma and by the actress on whether she did or did not commit the crimes, suggests that the two friends play a game to discover the truth by re-enacting the fatal event. She imposes a condition, the Actress must play her role, and she will play the part of the Irish maid. This metatheatrical set-up is reminiscent of Walsh; however, in this case the idea that a play can be an instructive form of mediation is foregrounded.

The drama gives precedence to the women’s exploration of the reasons which led Lizzie to murder and stems entirely from the women’s imaginations: “all characters are imaginary, and all action in reality would be taking place between Miss Lizzie and The Actress in the dining room and parlour of her home” (13). Pollock has Miss Lizzie “become” Bridget and the Actress “become” Lizzie to explore the spinster’s moral, physical and economic confinement from two insiders’ perspectives, the hired maid’s and the secluded spinster’s. The characters fluctuate between adopting a second identity and preserving their primary identities and often assume both simultaneously. Pollock shows how Lizzie, the Protestant bourgeoisie has minor difficulties adjusting to her role of her Irish catholic servant and the relatively emancipated Actress from the city has greater difficulties comprehending and rendering Lizzie’s restricted provincial lifestyle and restrained personality. The playwright makes the women play their roles first tentatively and then more convincingly, but never lets the audience forget that the characters are involved in intensive role-playing which can provide clues on why Lizzie murdered her parents, but does not determine whether she did it. The slippage of the two women’s identities is further accentuated by the fact that Pollock changes their appellations to intimate the accuracy of their impersonations. Thus the Actress is also called The Actress/Lizzie and Lizzie when she is
convinced that she has mastered her lovers' personality and Miss Lizzie is called Miss Lizzie/Bridget and finally Bridget when she feels she has appropriated her employees’ identity. The two women interact with other male and female characters who emerge when necessary, and factual information is presented in the background through various excerpts of the trial presented principally by a male character who plays two roles, Dr Patrick, the married Irish doctor who flirts with Lizzie and Wendell Smith, the defense lawyer.

Pollock presents the theory that Mr. Borden wanted to will a part of his estate, the cherished family farm used for holidays, to his wife. Lizzie rejects the idea of depending on a step mother (Mrs. Borden is much younger than Mr. Borden) in the future. Miss Lizzie/Bridget describes how on the farm her father drowned a puppy rejected by its mother because it was different, and compares the puppy to herself:

Actress/Lizzie: Am I different?

Miss Lizzie/Bridget: You kill them. (49)

Lizzie judges her right to a decent autonomous life more important than her parents’ lives and brings this decision to its utmost consequences. The Actress gets so caught up in the Borden family’s oppressive atmosphere that under the designation of Lizzie she autonomously kills Mrs. Borden while Bridget is out washing windows, and then proceeds to murder her father just when Bridget returns from resting upstairs in compliance to Lizzie’s earlier recommendation. After the final murder, the Actress recuperates her own identity and Bridget becomes Miss Lizzie again. The axe changes hands and in the dénouement the Actress recuperates the axe again, while Miss Lizzie accuses everyone present—Emma who attracted by the noise has come downstairs, the Actress and the audience—of the crimes:

THE ACTRESS: Lizzie. She takes the hatchet from Miss Lizzie. Lizzie you did.
MISS LIZZIE: I didn’t. *The actress looks to the hatchet – then to the audience.*

You did. (70)

A final interpretation of Pollock’s version of the Lizzie Borden murders is elusive. It is presented as a theatrical reconstruction, in which role-playing is used as a means to discover the truth. Audiences can see why Lizzie Borden could have murdered her parents, but the uncertainty of whether she did or did not remains. Two women who change their identities are used to mediate the drama in a peculiar rendering of the past which gives precedence to the present and shows how, given the same circumstances and with different individuals, the outcome could be the same. Pollock’s play is about the effects of constraints imposed on individuals in modern society. It is not about who did it, but why Lizzie could and would have done it. The author blames patriarchal society, not Lizzie, for the deeds, by showing how Lizzie, forbidden by her father to exercise a profession, was confined to a secluded, uninteresting life which compelled her to desperation and eventually to murder. Deeds which completed her alienation from society.

The use of two women mediators to narrate the Lizzie Borden murder mystery has other significations. It puts women doubly in the centre of action; they are not only the main characters, but also the only source of information, in opposition to established literary genres which evolve around a male main character. As Rosalind Kerr in “Borderline Crossings in Sharon Pollock’s Out-Law Genres” points out, “traditional genres, including classical realist drama have reproduced and consolidated the Rousseauean notion of the universal self as white, male bourgeois, heterosexual” (2). On a more theoretical level Pollock demonstrates in her play that literary creativity is a collective not a personal enterprise: “collaborative discursive practices which expose the myth that a text has been individually authored, are very much in
evidence in *Blood Relations* where Pollock frames the play by having the actress get Lizzie to reenact her story” (Kerr 3). *Blood Relations* exposes solidarity and mutual understanding between women in opposition to the competitiveness and exploitive nature of patriarchy. It is only in allowing women to act as the mediators of the historical event that this perspective is allowed to emerge. Most women understand Lizzie’s predicament, because to a lesser or a greater degree they experienced and experience the oppression she endured.

By choosing the Lizzie Borden case out of the archives of history, Pollock demonstrates that Lizzie Borden ‘made’ history because she was accused of committing parricide and that women did not make history for other reasons because they were not allowed to undertake other pursuits. Pollock presents this mediation of the Lizzie Borden case to modern audiences to make them aware of the harmful effects of patriarchy’s discrimination against women.

*One Tiger to a Hill* is based on the New Westminster Penitentiary hostage taking incident in which Mary Steinhauser, a classification officer, was killed in 1975. Pollock does mention the specific event or prison in her play, she only mentions that the facilities are out-dated and are occupied by long term prisoners, “*the events of the play cover forty-eight hours and take place within a maximum security prison built in the 19th century*” (73). In the drama a lawyer serves as the mediator-narrator who introduces the drama, provides background information on the events which lead up to and culminate in the hostage taking, and plays the role in the drama of the mediator contracted to negotiate a solution to the crisis between the prison administrators and the two rebellious inmates. This character is named after Pollock’s real father: “My name is Ev Chalmers, Everett Chalmers” (76). Everett has always worked within the protected environment of his private law firm as a corporate lawyer, while his partner, Wetmore, specializes in criminal cases. In search of a mediator to resolve the hostage-taking crisis, the prison authorities are
unable to reach Wetmore, who represented the prison inmates in a previous court case which he
won. Chalmers is almost accidentally implicated in the conflict when he accepts to replace his
absent business partner.

Chalmers views and allows the audience to view the prison tragedy through his eyes and
takes the audience on a retrospective trip into the penitentiary system. He, like the audience, was
aware of the existence of prisons and of the possible abuse taking place within them but asks:
“What if the things you hear, the things you don’t want to hear, the things they won’t let you
hear, what if those things really happen inside? Would I be any different in essence from all of
those good Germans who passed Dachau and Buchenwald, and never asked questions?” (76).
Chalmers allows the audience to see what occurs in these obscure places, “what happens to
them—and to us—when we condemn men to that wastebasket we call the pen. This place is the
pen. These are the people. It happened like this”. (77)

Tommy Paul, an intelligent Métis inmate and his simpler-minded and unpredictable
companion, Gillie, take three hostages: Dede Walker, a progressive female rehabilitation officer,
Frank Soholuk, a cynical male rehabilitation officer, both in their early twenties, and Cecil
Stocker a visiting school teacher. Tommy Paul and his accomplice subdue the hostages with
gasoline and a knife in order to force the authorities to call in a mediator. The hostage-takers
request a flight out and fifty thousand dollars for themselves, and the improvement of the
inmates’ living conditions, the abolition of the solitary confinement tier, and an investigation into
the suspicious death of Guy Desjardins, an inmate who died in the isolation cell, and whose
death was reported by the penitentiary authorities as a suicide. When the hostage-takers are
informed that Chalmers will replace Joe Wetmore, they are wary of the establishment’s choice
and demand another mediator, Lena Benz, to assist Chalmers.
Lena Benz is a sixty year old social activist who is familiar with the prison system and with the inmates’ and state employees' files and personal histories. Pollock portrays her as a nosy professional who accesses forbidden areas and internal documents. She is presented as a provocative mediator, who threatens to denounce the prison authorities for not applying the recently approved reforms, to take measures to clarify Desjardins’ ‘suicide’ and to inform the greater community of the institution’s abusive practices. The authorities fear her because she has the know-how, the information and the contacts to instigate an investigation of the prison.

Diane Bessai describes Lena Benz as “a salty old streetcorner radical” (“Sharon Pollock’s Women” 130) and a “universal friend to all victims of oppression whether in prison or on the picket lines” (130). She finds that Lena’s radical background and tactics are out-dated and that she has little to offer in the mediation process:

Lena represents the failure of the old left as inherited from the thirties. Despite her vigorous denunciation of the system to the warden, she has little to bring to the hostage-taking situation except a mess of cold ‘Kentucky fried’ as a morale booster to the ‘boys’.

Privately she tells Ev that she would ‘Put a torch to the place’. (130)

Bessai finds that Lena is an interesting character and is “given inexplicable short shrift half way through the play, perhaps implying that rabble rousing is even more futile than humanitarian emotionalism” (130).

Contrary to Bessai’s assessment, it can be argued that Lena Benz is presented as a serious threat to the system. The head of security, George McGowen, and the warden, Richard Wallace, do not want her to take part in the mediation process because she has inside information and has access to public platforms. From the beginning of the incident they have decided to form a tactical squad of excellent marksmen to overcome the hostage-takers and don’t want Lena to
witness and report their methods, as Wallace indicates, "we got a citizen's committee coming in on Thursday. Lena Benz is on it and if there's a leak ... and Benz gets hold of this" (78). However, they accept her as a mediator to reassure the hostage-takers and gain time at the beginning of the mediation process. She brings more than 'Kentucky fried' into the prison. Bringing 'Kentucky fried' into the prison is not presented by Pollock as an ironic detail as intimated by Bessai. Lena is portrayed as a person with qualities and defects—Pollock suggests that she is an ex-alcoholic, who knows everyone and understands their problems but sides more with the inmates because their situation is more socially challenging than the prison employees'. She thinks of the inmates in terms of individuals with a difficult past and with needs, and brings in food to nourish them, but also as a means to diminish the tension, in this conflict her tactic does not work, "First time I ever been in one of these numbers they didn't demand 'tucky fried'" (One Tiger 106). Besides chicken, Lena brings in an important document, "a private copy of the paper on penal reform, hot from the office of the Solicitor General. Hasn't been released yet [. . .] says things like—autocratic administrative structure—well established resistance to significant change—bureaucratic norms that promote men with no professional qualifications in penology" (104). Chalmers, who has no experience of the prison system, uses the paper as one of the main tools of the mediation process when Lena is taken off the case.

Pollock gives Lena 'short shrift' to accentuate Chalmer's not Lena's inefficiency. The author pays tribute to Lena as a militant who is able to walk the fine line between personal and professional implication in social issues. Something Dede Walker, the rehabilitation officer whom everyone suspects of being sexually involved with Tommy Paul, has difficulties doing. The author presents Lena's personal approach as being potentially more operative than an impersonal one, such as Chalmer's. The dramatist also honours Lena's tenacity, over the years
she remained loyal to her ideals. Though she claims that she would 'put a torch to the place', she accepts to mediate and believes that her intervention could mean a difference:

BENZ: Look, you and I can be straight with each other. We know we got nothing to say.

CHALMERS: So why are you here?

BENZ: Same question for you.

CHALMERS: I told you. I thought I could help.

BENZ: Any reason I can't feel the same. (107)

Benz is depicted as a more capable mediator than Chalmers. She could have managed to make the authorities heed and respect a great number of the hostage-takers' demands and she could have reasoned them into negotiating instead of using violence, if she was given the chance. But once the authorities had formed their tactical squad and had put the final touches to their intervention plan, they ejected her in Nazi style, or in Lena's words, they 'goose-stepped' her out of the institution.

Chalmers could eventually have been a good mediator, but his inexperience of the prison culture was a handicap, especially given the hostage-takers' determination and the complexity and the gravity of the incident. The prison authorities keep him instead of Benz to exploit his naivety and to gain more time to finalize their strategy. Because Benz was distrustful she wanted to know precise details about how the hostage-takers' were going to be evacuated, whereas Chalmers accepted the administrators' vague evacuation plans and convincingly transmitted them. He attempted to guarantee the prisoners' security by putting his life in danger and accompanying Tommy Paul, Gillie and their hostages, Dede Walker and Frank Soholuk to the getaway area. At the last moment Tommy Paul decided to exchange Dede for Stocker. The
guard and marksman, Hanzuk, takes advantage of the physical separation and the confusion and shoots Paul twice, hitting him fatally the second time around. And when Dede runs and joins him, Hanzuk cold-bloodedly kills her too. Chalmers resumes his narrator character and steps out of the inner play in the play's denouement to express his continuing emotions about his participation in the event.

Through Chalmers, the narrator-mediator who introduces and concludes the play, Pollock shows how a social issue can affect a private citizen's life. Chalmer's personal experience of injustice has marked him forever. As related in the play's finale, as he goes through the gestures of daily life, he is unable to forget his experience which still drives him to tears: "Is everything lies? ...tomorrow ... I said ... I will have breakfast ... drop the kids off at school ... on Friday ... I'll go to the Y ... he weeps" (137, author's ellipses). Pollock intends the audience to also be marked by their descent into the sub-world of the penitentiary system. In *One Tiger to a Hill* Pollock's portrayal of mediation within a governmental framework is thoroughly negative. Benz is literally thrown out of the mediation process because she might make the administration comply to some of the prisoners' demands and make the authorities accountable for their acts, while Chalmers is retained because of his eagerness, earnestness and his ignorance of the prison culture-characteristics which the establishment uses to its advantage. Like Walsh, he is used to appease the hostage-takers and to gain time so that the administrators could organize a squad and prepare and execute their lethal plan, and he is partially destroyed in the process.

*Doc* is loosely based on Pollock's own dysfunctional family. "Although she has publicly tried to reject the current critical opinion that the work is consistently autobiographical, *Doc*, is in fact her most personal and confessional [...] dramatic work to date" (Paul St. Pierre, "Sharon Pollock" 304). *Doc*, as do all of Pollock's history plays, mediates history— in this case elements
of her autobiography which she elaborates to demystify the patriarchal discourse which highlights men’s professional feats, but ignores women’s roles in men’s success stories. “Reversing the Electra figure, this daughter puts the father on trial for his misuse of patriarchal privilege, and destroys the illusion of the uniqueness of his life story, showing how interwoven it was with the lives of those he had sacrificed to get there” (Kerr “Borderline Crossings in Sharon Pollock’s Out-Law Genres” 8).

In the drama Pollock has the women outnumber the men. There are three female characters, Catherine, a mature writer, and Katie, her younger self, who engages a dialogue with her mother, Rob, across time and space; and two male characters, Ev, the writer’s father, a retired doctor, and Oscar, the doctor’s lifelong friend and professional colleague. As in Blood Relations, Pollock uses two symbiotic main characters to mediate history from a woman-centred perspective. This set-up is a minor form of metatheatrical through which the author presents two versions of the past and has Katie and Catherine negotiate the meaning and implications of Katie’s childhood experience with and through Catherine’s mature perspective. “The splitting of the character of Catherine into her present and childhood self is a little reminiscent of the two Lizzie Bordens of Blood Relations, with a similar emphasis on the process rather than the product of self-revelation” (Bessai “Women Dramatists” 106). This double presentation relativizes both characters’ testimonies and enables the audience to keep its distance from the ongoing story and perceive the drama not as a re-enactment of the writer’s past, but as an exploration of the elements of the past in the play’s and the audience’s present.

In Doc, Catherine, a successful writer, returns home after a long self-imposed absence to visit her father, a retired workaholic doctor convalescing from a severe heart attack. She avoided visiting him in the home where she grew up because her presence in the family dwelling
brought back painful memories of her past and of her and her father’s responsibility in her mother’s premature death. Most of the play consists of the father’s and the daughter’s revisitation of the past “as relived by EV and CATHERINE, interacting with figures from the past” (Doc I). The plot concerns Bob’s social, physical and psychological deterioration caused by her dissatisfaction induced by patriarchal convention which condemned a doctor’s wife to idleness. Put through nursing school by her mother’s hard work of washing floors, her career ended when she fell in love and married a promising doctor, who obliged her to quit her job. Bob’s family considered her marriage a happy ending; Ev’s family perceived her as a malicious husband hunter, and she viewed herself as an outstanding and efficient nurse forced to be a homemaker. While Ev pursued an enviable career to his family’s detriment, Bob followed the path to self-destruction, became an alcoholic and finally died of an overdose of pills. Father and daughter recall and try to determine who is to blame for Bob’s suicide. In another minor form of metatheatre in the play, the two main characters put each other on trial. At the end of the play no one is accused or blamed. “Pollock is clearly sympathetic both to Catherine’s newfound understanding of her mother’s predicament and Ev’s uncompromising life-long humanitarianism” (Bessai “Women Dramatists” 105). Catherine is able to come to terms with her belligerent younger self, and become a mature single person who no longer has a split personality, “Catherine/Katie in Doc observe themselves in the mirror of the past and at the end, as an integrated ‘adult’ character, they manage to stand free of the father whose authority they had so deeply interiorized” (Salter, “(Im)possible Worlds” 19).

Katie/Catherine is depicted as a mediator in the private family conflict between her mother and her father. As a child she is caught in the ongoing feud between her parents over whether investing in one’s family is more important than investing in one’s profession, or
whether it is possible to make concessions and consolidate both realms. The core motive of their conflict is not mapped out in clear terms but is exposed through numerous anecdotal examples where Ev attends patients when his wife needs his presence desperately. Her parents attempted to solicit Katie’s sympathy and make her choose sides. Katie was too immature and too emotionally involved to understand each of her parent’s points of view and offer any solutions. She was convinced that she was the initial cause of her mother’s unhappy marriage and forced domesticity. Bob was pregnant with Katie when she got married and the daughter feels guilty about her mother’s unhappy lifestyle and thinks that Bob hates her. As a child she is unable to understand her mother’s frustrations and transgressive behaviour and rejects her mother and her family. “Well I wouldn’t want to be like her side of the family. I’d rather be like his!” (61) and finally repudiates all maternal antecedents:

KATIE: An accident? … Sometimes I look …

CATHERINE: … in the mirror, I look in the mirror…

KATIE: … and I see Mummy and I see …

CATHERINE: … Gramma, and Mummy and me …

KATIE: … and I don’t want to be like them. (108)

She sides with her father and increments her mother’s misery by tormenting her psychologically, “I hate you and I wish you were dead … someday you will be dead and I will be happy!” (Doc 118 & 119). At the end of the play Catherine realizes that she is not to be blamed for her conduct, because she was just a child obliged to intervene in a conflict which she could not comprehend or resolve, and in which she did not really choose sides. “Finally, in looking at her younger self at the approach of Bob’s last crisis, she knows that the child’s
avowed hatred is untrue and her supposed complicity is beside the point in a domestic conflict well beyond her making” (Bessai “Women Dramatists” 105).

Pollock allows the audience to view the dark side of reality, and demonstrates the negative effects of patriarchy on three generations of women, grandmother, mother and daughter. The exploration of biographical elements of the writer’s past—which pertains to Pollock’s own past—allows the main character to make peace with her younger self, and become a serene and psychologically sound person. The autobiographical drama demonstrates that facing, understanding and acting upon one’s past is the best way to overcome it in order to progress positively.

_The Making of Warriors_ is one of Pollock’s shorter published plays. It was written for Morning-side Drama, a CBC radio programme. In it she uses three women narrators from different generations to report salient elements of the lives of two historical figures, the nineteenth century abolitionist and woman-rights’ activist, Sarah Moore Grimke, and the twentieth century Micmac First-Nations militant from Nova Scotia, Ana Mae Pictou Acquash, who was murdered in South Dakota in 1976 shortly after the clashes between the American federal forces and First-Nations militants at Wounded Knee.

The first form of mediation is the recuperation and manipulation of positive matriarchal figures who attempted and succeeded to change patriarchal society. In the introduction of _The Making of Warriors_, Ann Jansen cites Pollock’s comments on how she presents these figures as winners in an ongoing battle:

“it’s very difficult for women to triumph,” says Pollock. “So how do you write a story about a woman emerging triumphant with trivialising or diminishing the real nature of the struggle, which is so great, the anguish, the struggle from which so
many of us fail to emerge victorious? And once you get to win, what do you do then? Then it becomes glorification, propaganda”. (102)

Pollock overcomes the difficulty of enshrining Sarah Moore Grimke and Anna Mae Pictou as paradigmatic models of the past by having three women narrators serve as mediators between the historical characters' past and audiences’ present. The multiple narration in the feminine impresses a sense of immediacy and urgency to the telling through which the dramatist intends to prompt the audience into continuing Sarah’s and Anna Mae’s struggle for justice, “there are three stories told in three different ways that intersect—and the three voices have a reason for telling the stories. And the reason for telling the stories is ‘Come on, let’s do something, let’s get going.’” (The Making 102).

Pollock “decided not to use a Native voice for that narration because she didn’t want any implication that she was telling the story from that viewpoint” (The Making 102). Barely identified white characters of different generations use contrasting styles and tones to present the historical figures’ stories from a collective and collaborative female perspective:

WOMAN ONE: informal, conversational tone, fifty-four
WOMAN TWO: formal neutral, factual tone, thirties
WOMAN THREE: warm, “storytelling” tone, thirties. (104)

They serve as mediators between Sarah’s and Anna Mae’s biographies and the story of one of the women’s recalling of seeing a dozen white men on the side of the road surrounding a red bundle near the Pine Ridge Reserve in South Dakota when she drove through on February 24th, 1976. The women progressively explain that the bundle was Anna Mae’s corpse. These stories are presented simultaneously and alternatively in past and present tenses in order to scramble time references, remove geographical and cultural barriers and present Sarah, Anna Mae and the
woman who witnessed the finding of the corpse as contemporaries who take part in the same struggle.

_The Making of Warriors_ is a challenging play in which Pollock provides different types of information—rumours, conjectures and historical data—on Sarah, but especially on the life and more importantly the suspicious death of Anna Mae. The information is delivered in bits and pieces, and often to further confuse matters the fragments are not presented in chronological order. The following information is extracted from the drama. Anna Mae was born on the Micmac Reserve near Shubenacadie in Nova Scotia, in 1945 she dropped out of school in 1962 and moved to Boston where she got married and had two children and became an active member of the Boston Indian Council. Then she got divorced. In the wake of the brutal murder of the American Indian Raymond Yellow Thunder by the Caucasian brothers, Melvin and Leslie Hare, in Gordon, Nebraska in 1972, Anna Mae participated in the occupation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Washington by the American Indian Movement’s Trail of Broken Treaties’ Caravan. In April 1973 she provided supplies to the Oglala Sioux and AIM members who occupied the village of Wounded Knee to voice their protest against the tribal chairman Richard Wilson’s determination to remain in power against his people’s will. Anna Mae was arrested and faced minor charges for her implication in the Wounded Knee episode and resumed her work for the American Indian Movement and participated in numerous American Indian demonstrations throughout the United States and Canada. On February 24th, 1976 the corpse of a Native woman was found on the Pine Ridge Reserve in South Dakota; exposure was determined as the cause of death and the body was buried unidentified. Anna Mae’s family pressured the Canadian and American authorities to exhume and identify the corpse, which was identified as Anna Mae’s. Her death had been caused by a bullet shot in the head. Pollock’s drama suggests the hypothesis
that she was murdered by FBI agents because she was a key witness in the shooting of American Indian Movement members by the American federal authorities. The case has been conveniently forgotten by the government:

WOMAN ONE: The Aquash affair soon slips into oblivion. It is heard of no more.

WOMAN TWO: That is, not in the House of Commons. (131)

Pollock’s drama ensures that Sarah’s and Anna’s struggles will be remembered and continued.

The drama’s complex structure which uses three narrators to merge three stories is further complicated by the insertion of a play within a play. There are ten characters in the play, the three women narrators, and seven other characters who reconstruct Sarah’s biography which includes a character who plays Sarah’s role. Though their dialogues are embedded in the narration, these characters do not interact with the narrators, except Sarah, who in the penultimate and final scenes speaks across time and space to the contemporary narrators. Sarah steps out of the inner play and joins the narrators and addresses the audience in the outer play and becomes a mediator between the world of the play and of world the audience which she addresses directly, “It’s me ... It’s Sarah. Sarah Moore Grimke” (131). Sarah offers the women narrators and the audience still valid guidelines to approach reality, expressed in her strong South Carolinian accent, “I urge my sisters to lay aside their prejudices and join me in examinin’ subjects for ourselves, and in actin’ on what we discover” (132).

The drama’s structure and plot are purposely complex and fragmented to highlight the constructed nature of her play by presenting, in this case, various versions of various stories incorporated in a play within a play. She makes the audience aware that her play is a mediation
of history, just as history is a mediation of events, so that audiences will maintain a critical
distance and draw their own conclusions, as Sarah suggests at the end of the play.

It is also highly fragmented to expose how history is mediated in the real world through
official and unofficial sources. Government sources buried Anna Mae as Jane Doe, but Anna
Mae’s family and supporters pressured the government into identifying the corpse. Unofficial
sources, such as Woman One’s witnessing how a great number of most probably Federal
investigation agents surrounded the corpse—a suspicious behaviour for the death of a presumably
unimportant Native woman—provides guidelines to discover the truth concerning the
government’s intention to dissimulate their crime. The extreme fragmentation of the text
emulates in a transparent manner how the general public is bombarded with information served
in doses so that they will get confused and bored, and will eventually forget the whole affair.
Unofficial sources such as family members’, friends’ and neighbours’ and casual passer-byers’
such as Woman One’s) testimonies are downplayed or denied by governmental sources so that it
can minimize or cover up its implication in the affair. Woman One’s herself doesn’t understand
the full significance of what she saw. The play illustrates how her collection of a great variety
of data, which includes the comprehension of the implications of her own experience, drives her
and the other narrators to conclude that Anna Mae was murdered by government forces. Pollock
focuses on and clearly identifies official and alternative sources thus allowing the audience to
choose which information is more reliable and come to its own decisions.

The case remains unsolved. This is due partly to the fact that it involves the American
and the Canadian governments, and also most probably because the Canadian government extra-
officially intends the assassination to be forgotten; it concerns the still open wound of the violent
relations of the white establishment with the First-Nations peoples. Pollock, through her play, reopens the case in the public arena.

The play is also about cultural mediators and cultural mediation. Ronald Taft affirms in "The Role and the Personality of the Mediator" that "a cultural mediator is a person who facilitates communication, understanding, and action between persons or groups who differ with respect to language and culture" (53). Sarah Grimke Moore was a cultural mediator between Afro-Americans and Caucasian-Americans and if one considers patriarchy and matriarchy two different cultures, she also mediated between these cultures. Pollock presents Grimke as a cultural mediator who contributed to improving the black slaves' lot by providing them with white-controlled cultural tools and teaching them how to read and write. This act was criminalized by the white slave owning establishment because it knew that reading and writing were essential assets for cultural, social and economic advancement. When Sarah discovers that slaves are not only exploited and beaten, but also prevented from rising out of their misery, she decides to take action, as she explains to her younger brother in her colloquial language:

SARAH: (Whispers.) The institution of slavery is a sin and I will not be part of it!

THOMAS: You’ve broken the law a South California! . . .

SARAH: When I’m a lawyer, I’ll change such laws . . . I’ll do away with slavery, I’ll—. (The Making 11)

Thomas informs her that women can’t study law and Sarah realizes that her condemnation to domesticity resembles slaves’ condemnation to eternal exploitation: “I’m no better off than a slave” (The Making 112). In collaboration with her sister Angelina, Sarah embraced the anti-slavery and the women’s rights’ and suffragette movements. She acted upon
her thoughts and used different forums and media, mainly public speeches, pamphlets and books. Her most famous book being *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes*, was intended to improve the relations between whites and blacks and between men and women in America. Pollock presents her as an accomplished mediator, in accordance with Beverly McCleod’s definition in “The Mediating Person and Cultural Identity”, “the presence and action of a true mediator should have some positive influence on the general populations, or significant sectors of the populations of the two cultures between which he is mediating” (41). Sarah was a pivotal figure in the abolition of slavery and in the incipient women’s liberation movement.

Pollock also presents Sarah as a mediator between American and foreign cultures. Sarah learns French late in life to translate a famous French author’s biography of an even more emblematic heroine. She explains her reasons in her Carolinian accent, “I’ve decided to translate Lamartine’s biography of Joan of Arc. I believe that women and men have a need to know more a this woman a great courage, this female leader a men! And I intend to introduce them to her. But first I must master French” (126). Sarah’s translation was published in 1868. As a translator, she served as a mediator who presented an extraordinary matriarchal antecedent—the national heroine and patron saint of France, the fifteenth-century woman warrior, who believed she was endowed with a divine mission, and fought battles to save France against the English invaders—to the Americans. Sarah is also presented by Pollock as the importer and distributor of the path-breaking book *The Subjection of Women*, written by the nineteenth century British philosopher, politician and author, John Stuart Mill, who advocated individual liberty and universal suffrage. “I’ve decided to ask permission to act as Mr. Mill’s agent in Massachusetts for the book’s distribution. I believe it’s important” (127). Sarah served as the mediator
between the British pre-socialist humanitarian and feminist values Mill advocated, and promoted his thoughts in America.

Anna Mae is also a cultural mediator. Pollock indicates Anna Mae’s presence in most of the American Indian Movement’s demonstrations throughout Canada and the United States and also portrays her as a cultural mediator: “Anna Mae Pictou Acquash dreams a dream of compiling a comprehensive cultural history of Native people in Canada and in the United States, cross-referencing oral and traditional research sources. She works to implement it with Native students” (125). She, like Sarah, is a collaborative cross-cultural mediator who works in a team. Whereas Sarah worked with her sister, Anna Mae worked with fellow Natives to research, collect and finally write a book about the history of all First-Nations cultures of North America. This project was potentially beneficial on many counts. It would provide First-Nations peoples with a comprehensive and all inclusive history of their societies from their own collective Native perspective, rather than generally from a single white male historian’s perspective. It would deconstruct the prejudiced concept that oral cultures have no histories, and it would serve as a means for Natives who have been acculturated to reappropriate their own culture and learn about other Native cultures, beliefs and traditions and increment their collective and personal esteem. It would also serve as a means to present the First-Nations’ cultures to the general public. Anna Mae’s implication in the project is short-lived because of her premature death, but Pollock indicates that Anna Mae’s militancy also included an educational agenda to mediate and create bridges between numerous cultures.

Pollock herself acts as a cultural mediator through the drama’s subject matter and the theatrical format in which it is presented. Pollock’s play resembles Anna Mae’s project of “compiling a comprehensive cultural history”. She presents matriarchal and feminist icons
which besides Sarah and Angelina Grimke Moore and Anna Mae Pictou Acquash, includes Joan of Arc and John Stuart Mill. Written in collaborative matriarchal terms, the play establishes a correspondence between Sarah’s, Anna Mae’s and the three white women’s struggle. Though they were from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds, their struggle was and is one and the same and still needs to be won. Pollock acts as a mediator by using the theatre as a means to rally all women from all origins to join forces and resist white patriarchal society. Pollock establishes a utopian connection between women of opposed backgrounds—a white suffragette from a rich slave-holding family and a poor Native woman from a reserve. If these women had in reality to negotiate priorities within the feminist movement, the process and the outcome most certainly would not be as harmoniously depicted as in the drama. The play was to have a sequence: as Jansen points out, “Pollock plans to expand this work into a stage play, with a second act that may introduce different contemporary characters who have somehow taken up the challenge [. . .] she is interested in what happens when put into pratice by a diverse group with many agendas” (103). The second act never did materialize, but Pollock intended in her second delivery, as explained in the interview with Jansen, to further act as a mediator and render transparent the challenging issues of heterogeneity and equality in relation to efficiency within the feminist movement.

“The women’s movement doesn’t often admit inequities and differences amongst its constituencies” says Pollock. “Basically, there are so many women with a larger voice or a bigger piece of the pie who don’t want to examine how the pie gets divided up. If you just want a bigger piece, you’re not going to examine whether perhaps the pie shouldn’t be cut the same way at all.” (103)
*Saucy Jack* is a history play based on the Jack the Ripper serial murders. Pollock retrieves and mediates the famous unsolved historical case to illustrate the inherent violence and immorality of the patriarchal power structure which is based on the exploitation and destruction of the lower classes and most particularly of one of its weakest groups, women. In the introduction she explains that her play does not focus on the who, why and how of the Jack the Ripper assassinations, but on the modern issue of patriarchal violence against women and society’s tacit toleration of this violence, “I’m not particularly interested in the why of the original Ripper murders. I suppose that’s either because it is ultimately unknowable, or because I find it to be thus: the women are killed because they can be killed with relative or complete impunity. It’s done because it can be done” (5). The author also mediates the past to make the audience analyse the nature of the patriarchal power network and examine how and why it maintains itself in power, “The play is more an extrapolation and variation of mixing historical characters, probable relationships, and possible events, with “what if” in an effort to explore a human equation of now” (*Saucy* 5). Pollock’s drama exposes the hypothesis that the murders could have been perpetrated by at least two individuals belonging to England’s most select aristocratic circle, which Pollock suggests is composed of homosexuals, headed by the heir to the throne, Prince Albert Victor, the grandson of Queen Victoria, alias Eddy, and co-headed by James Kenneth Stephen, Eddy’s former Cambridge tutor and intimate friend, who among acquaintances is called Jem. Jem organizes an encounter of Eddy, Montague—a teacher who was recently dismissed from a private school for boys while the allegations of intimidating with students are under investigation—and himself on Sunday, December 1st, 1888 around 8:00 at the week-end residence of an important senior bureaucrat of the Ministry of Justice to determine their role in the Jack the Ripper murders in Whitechapel. Jem suffers from amnesia and is
unable to remember exactly what happened, but he is sure that Eddy and himself were involved in the assassinations. Jem contracts a music hall entertainer and actress, Katie, to re-enact the deaths of Jack the Ripper's victims in order to evaluate the men's implication.

The drama does not determine who murdered the women, but it does show the corruptness of patriarchy which sacrifices a 'friend's' life to protect the British monarchy. Instead of attempting to find out the truth, Jem and Eddy eliminate Montague and map out their plan which consists of placing a suicide letter and condemning evidence at Montague's home, throwing his body into the Thames so that the investigators will conclude that he drowned himself and erroneously identify Montague as Jack the Ripper. Kate, who has been either a silent witness to the men's discussions or has replayed the last moments of the victims' lives, becomes the narrator in the play's final scene and describes Eddy's and Jem's upcoming deaths while Jem ineffectively threatens her with a knife in Eddy's silent and motionless presence. The play concludes on an unequal stand-off between two representatives of patriarchy and a representative of matriarchy. Jem and Eddy are left to their inner circle power games while Kate exits the home and the play as an empowered individual.

Saucy Jack incorporates various metatheatrical techniques which accentuate the fact that Pollock's drama is an overt exploratory version or a mediation of the historical case. She invites the audience to see how patriarchy functions and she presents matriarchy as a morally superior alternative. The drama comprises two inner plays, the framing play is the men's reconstruction of the past in order to determine their role in the Jack the Ripper murders and within this play Kate replays the victims' roles. She makes the men remember and she gives a voice to the otherwise silenced victims whose names and details of their ritualized deaths have been forgotten over time. By conceiving this testimonial and denunciatory character as an actress and an
entertainer, Pollock addresses the themes of the role of the theatre and of acting in her drama and in society, especially in relation to history. She uses the theatre and the entertaining figure as a means to develop audiences’ collective memory by recalling the case and making them aware of the possible reasons why the case was abandoned and by giving precedence to the women victims over the Jack the Ripper figure. The drama intends to alter audiences’ cultural heritage and make them focus on the women’s roles in this story and in history at large in order to bring an end to women’s silent victimization.

*Saucy Jack* contains two mediator figures, Jem the patriarchal mediator and Kate the matriarchal mediator. Jem serves as the mediator between the audience and the inner play in the drama’s opening scene. Alone on stage, he addresses the audience in a confusing soliloquy in which he attempts to communicate the drama’s time frame and has great difficulties in remembering and naming the month in question, “De ... Kember, De Kember? December! December! December!” (12, author’s ellipses). Pollock portrays him from the outset as a character who suffers from partial amnesia; his unreliable memory makes him mix fact and fiction. His consciousness of his memory problems kindles his greatest fears and drives him insane.

His mental confusion is caused by a head injury in an accident which Jem is unable to clarify, but in two different versions associates with wind mills and erections. “I was riding, a horse, of course, and I came on a wind sail and I stopped the horse to this side of the wind sail which was turning, like they do ... they ... and the horse backed ... up ... into the path of the ... turning blade ... blade ...” (14, author’s ellipses), and “There was an erection a --- an erection, a turning ... blade ... over a wall, a pumping mill worked by a small wind-wheel which I wished which I ... wished ... to examine and in so doing either by accident or ... design received a blow
to the head which you may observe” (14, author’s ellipses and italics). These passages contain distorted references to the scene in Cervantes’ novel Don Quixote in which the eponymous hero attacks windmills which he perceives as giants. Besides suffering from amnesia and incipient dementia, Jem suffers from an esprit de grandeur, he perceives the accident as a Don Quixotic quest interspersed with unconscious sexual elements.

Pollock suggests that Jem’s accident was caused by Eddy, the tutor’s former student. Jem explains how he was responsible for transforming Eddy, “They said you were dull-witted, slow, a dreamer – mentally defective [. . .] We proved them wrong! You flowered and flourished at Cambridge and that was me” (35 & 36). Pollock implies that the tutor/apprentice relation evolved into an amorous one, and alludes through Jem’s muddled and sexually loaded recollection of his accident that Eddy, who refers to something that changed his ex-lover, delivered the fatal blow(s) to Jem’s head:

JEM: … here I am hanging on – an act of intense concentration – motivated only by my love of you, my great love of you. Look. Look.

(He indicates his head.)

EDDY: You’ve changed.

JEM: No.

EDDY: I liked you better before.

JEM: Only liked … and before what? (24)

Jem will never find out the cause of his accident, “I really don’t know, I don’t remember, I have to rely on what I read or what others tell me” (15), but Pollock implies that Eddy struck Jem and because of this violent incident Eddy is the most probable suspect of the Whitechapel murders among the three gathered men.
Jem is presented by Pollock as an obviously unreliable mediator. He is totally incapable of connecting the audience with the past, and within the play he is unable to establish the accuracy of Kate’s reconstruction of the past. Pollock’s play offers a hypothesis of what could have happened, but more pointedly she exposes how Eddy and Jem conspire to kill again. *Saucy Jack* is not a demonstrative play about who perpetrated the Whitechapel murders; it is a drama about the corruption and inherent violence of patriarchal monarchy. Monarchy is presented as a corrupt system because the title and position of king are inherited rather than merited. In *Saucy Jack* the aspiring heir to the throne, Prince Albert Victor, also called Eddy, is presented as a fool who managed to assimilate basic knowledge through his tutor’s persistent efforts. In a democratic system, Eddy’s limited intelligence would have prevented him from becoming a head of state. Eddy is also presented as the sadist who caused his tutor’s head wound and who perpetrated the Jack the Ripper murders. In short, Eddy, an idiot and a serial murderer, is able to remain in power because the royal entourage, represented by Jem, does its utmost to protect the Prince in order to preserve its own privileges. In a democracy Eddy would have been submitted to greater public scrutiny and to the law and hopefully would have been punished for his crimes.

The other mediator, Kate, re-enacts the circumstances and murders of Jack the Ripper’s victims for Jem’s, Eddy’s, Montague’s and the audience’s benefit. She mediates between the audience’s present and the victims’ past. As in *Blood Relations* Pollock uses a professional actress character to reconstruct the murders and to interact with Jem, Eddy and Montague. Kate (whose name recalls the professional writer Katie/Catherine in *Doc* and her commitment to divulge women’s histories) is able to impersonate the victims easily because of her professional background and experience.
Unlike Jem, Kate is portrayed as a competent mediator who has an excellent memory and is able both to remember and relate the past clearly. Kate evolves through the drama, from a silent observer soaking in Jem's illogical, frightening discourse and hostility to an autonomous performer who reconstructs the deaths more and more confidently and aggressively. She is able to provide biographical information on the victims, recall the specifics of the victims' last moments, summarize medical reports on how the victims were ritually slaughtered and specify their names—Polly, Annie Chapman, Long Liz, Catherine Eddowes and Mary Jane Kelley. Besides re-enacting their deaths she sings songs which accuse patriarchy of feeding off the poor, especially women. By appropriating and divulging these popular accusatory songs she increments the dramatic impact of her performance and becomes the representative of all of the oppressed and silenced victims of patriarchal society. Pollock uses one woman, an actress, to portray the Jack the Ripper victims, and by extension to represent all women who are morally and/or physically subjected to men's domination and violence. Through Kate, who is alone in an isolated house surrounded by three unsettling men, she exposes women's isolation and vulnerability in a society controlled by men. Kate faces rather than downplays the facts and in the name of all women appropriates their victimization which instead of instilling fear enables her to confront the men.

Kate also acts as a mediator between the inner play and the outer play when she becomes the narrator and addresses the audience in the play's denouement. She announces Eddy's and Jem's deaths which will occur in 1892—Eddy will die from influenza and pneumonia, and Jem from "acute depression, melancholia, the refusal of all food, and dementia" (59). Jem, the patriarchal mediator has been displaced by a matriarchal mediator. Kate's role playing has enabled her to gain assurance and appropriate the public arena which until then was associated
with Jem. She is able to reach out to the audience and walk out on Jem and Eddy who are left to deal with the knife that Jem points at Kate and with their violent propensities. The change of mediating narrators from the beginning and to the end of the play is symbolic. Patriarchy is reduced to playing limited power games within closed interiors, while matriarchy will illuminate the world by divulging the history of women and by conquering the public arena.

In *Fair Liberty’s Call* Pollock returns to another inglorious episode of Canadian history intrinsically connected to the history of the United States of America and of England, which addresses the Loyalists role in the American War of Independence. The action is situated in 1785, and relates the annual gathering in a clearing in the woods in New Brunswick to commemorate the fall of Yorktown, in Virginia, on October 19, 1781, the date on which the British troops headed by Lord Cornwallis surrendered to the Franco-American forces and which marked the end of the Revolutionary War and the future birth of the United States of America. The play concerns a Loyalist family’s and several Loyalist veterans’ difficult adaptation to their new land in which they attempt to establish an equilibrium between remembering the painful past and building a new society. It narrates how the war affected the Robert’s family—George the family’s patriarch a once prosperous merchant has become dispossessed; his wife Joan has become insane after the deaths of her two sons during the war; Annie has become her parent’s caretaker, and Emily adopted her twin brother Eddy’s identity after his suicide to combat the Rebels. The other Loyalist veterans who participate in the annual gathering are Major Abijah Williams, Wullie, a black soldier and Eddy’s closest friend, and Daniel Wilson, another ex-soldier and Annie’s suitor.

The play is divided into two acts. The first act consists mainly of the commemorative celebration of the fall of Yorktown. It is open to all Loyalists who wish to join, and is infiltrated
by an American Rebel, Major John Andersen, who presents himself as a Loyalist officer. His presence alters the dynamics of what was to be a light-hearted festivity and makes the Loyalists consider the past war from the enemy’s viewpoint and makes them recall battle details and their personal responsibility in the murdering of other human beings. In the second act the Rebel unveils his true identity and the objective of his intrusion. He demands that the group sacrifice one of their members to compensate for his younger brother’s death at the hands of the Loyalists during the war. Annie convinces the Rebel to put an end to the endless cycle of violence; he leaves without causing any more casualties and the Loyalists transcend the past and concentrate on forming a fairer society.

In *Fair Liberty’s Call* Pollock abandons the claustrophobic spaces of most of her other plays—the prison of *One Tiger to a Hill*, the private homes of *Blood Relations*, of *Doc* and of *Saucy Jack*—and locates the action in the great outdoors as in *Walsh*, but in Eastern Canada, in a territory which appears untouched but is occupied: “it projects an aura of foreboding a sense of the unseen” (19). A large number of memorabilia objects and festive necessities are transported to organize the remembrance ceremony: “JOAN and ANNIE, each carrying a large bundle of belongings and EDDIE, carrying a long gun appear at the edge of the stage... DANIEL pulls a wagon piled high with barrels, trunks and rough pieces of wood. GEORGE has a trunk lashed to his back and carries a keg” (19).

Pollock uses different forms of metatheatre in *Fair Liberty’s Call* to highlight the fact that her play is a mediated version of history. The action takes place in 1785, four years after the end of the war. It is a retrospective play which reconstructs the chain of events several years after they occurred when the participants’ memories of details have started to blur. At the beginning of the play all of the characters act as mediators who address the audience and compete to attract
their attention and as interacting characters who behave as rivals compelled to express their personal experiences and testimonies of the war. “In the opening segment, characters speak to the audience as well as to each other. They have a compelling need to tell; to tell before they’re unable to tell, or prevented from telling [. . .] they may agree or disagree; they may harbour good or ill feelings, feel defensive or proud regarding past actions or inactions—their own or others’—as revealed in the telling” (17). Pollock uses a great number of narrators who mediate between the audience and the inner drama (the recollection session) to emphasize the fact that her play is an exposition of multiple interpretations of history. The play is not a realist rendering of the events but a mixture of historical facts such as documented data on the battles of the War of Independence and fictive elements, such as the fictive characters’ different and often contradictory testimonies.

The opening segment is followed by the informal remembrance ceremony, a metatheatrical procedure, which is a highly fragmented reconstruction of the past in which the Loyalists inadvertently provide self-incriminating testimonies of their participation in the American War of Independence. All of the characters, except Joan, the matriarch of the Roberts family, have blood on their hands or are responsible for the deaths of others either because they served in or were active in the war’s periphery. Pollock has the characters confront, compare, share and negotiate their recollections to demonstrate the relativity of all interpretations of historical events. The Loyalists’ debates over what happened is further accentuated by the American who involuntarily introduces Rebel references and further relativizes the Loyalists’ memories, or as Annie puts it: “I notice you’ve a powerful recollection of some things, and none at all of others” (43).
The second inner play is the trial in which the group has to decide who to sacrifice to the Rebel. It concerns a decision in the present to remedy the past which Eddie refuses to compare and compute: “talk about the righteousness of now, this action right now” (63). The group discusses various options, in which each envisaged victim upholds his significance to the community. The impossible trial is suspended when Annie convinces the Rebel to abandon his project and ensures his safe departure. However the exercise forced the Loyalist clan to transcend their mediation of the past and make decisions on and about the present, with a view towards the future. Through this trial Pollock illustrates that each character and, by extension, all individuals including those in the audience are important and have something to contribute to society. Or in Daniel’s more colloquial and ironic language everyone is equally worthless except those who have been treated as marketable objects: “I was gettin’ to the point of sayin’ ain’t none of us worth nothin’—cept Wully here who’s worth thirty pounds” (76).

Besides mediating history, exposing the mediation process of reassembling history through so many contradictory narratives and disclosing the difficulty of reconstructing history, the play focuses on different types of mediators. The American Rebel can be considered an involuntary cultural mediator who makes the gathered group see the war from the enemy’s point of view. The Loyalists are neither American nor Canadian; they live in a new territory which they have not yet accepted, and cling to the painful past. The annual gathering where they remember events which occurred on the other side of the border is symptomatic of their attachment to the past and their difficulty to adjust to their new reality. Major Andersen, a citizen of a different country, allows the Loyalists to demystify, expurgate and transcend their past so that they can ultimately set roots in Canada: “ironically it is Anderson, the outsider, the Rebel, the American, who forces each of the Loyalist immigrants to embark on his or her journey of
introspection and self-confession that will make a beginning in this new country possible” (Guy Sprung *Introduction* 8). His Canadian experience enables him to come to terms with his past and return to his homeland a better man whose experience might possibly have a positive incidence on his compatriots. “John Anderson, having arrived on the scene in search of justice, will return south of the border having laid grief for his dead brother to rest. The new country, Canada, has an influence on the one south of the border” (Sprung 8).

The play also includes an informal conflict resolution mediator, Annie who mediates between the Loyalists and the American. Unlike Chalmers or Walsh who operate within a structured framework, Annie is a spontaneous mediator who poses individual gestures and takes personal risks to force the opposed sides to solve their differences concerning the past. She intervenes to prevent the escalation of violence in the best interest of both sides. Pollock presents the fact that she is a woman as a major asset which allows her to mediate effectively. She is the eldest daughter who stayed with her mother and saw how her mother went insane over her children’s deaths and her forced exile to a new territory. During the war she realized that the use of weapons was not the only and the best means to attain one’s goals. She used her femininity to liberate her brother from jail and to trick a Rebel into being caught by the Loyalists. In her exchange with the avenging Rebel she uses her charms honestly; she informs Anderson about her previous feats, and reasons with him to change his attitude and walk out without provoking more causalities. She is able to make him understand and proceed because she is not in competition against him. She is not an armed war veteran; she is a supposedly defenceless woman. As for the neutralization of the men of her clan, she is obliged to violently threaten and contain them. She surprises them by first firing a shot to signify her serious intentions and then by pointing the gun at them. After a night of deciding who should die to repay for the Rebel’s
loss, the men are in an abnormal psychological state. Annie prevents them from tracking down
the Rebel and committing any unpredictable retaliative acts.

She worked in collaboration with her mother to pacify the men. Unconsciously she
realized that her mother was temporarily unbalanced, and she always treated her as a sane
person, allowing her to voice her painful memories, filling in the gaps when necessary. When
Annie orders the Rebel to leave, her mother collaboratively seconds Annie's order by repeating it
in an attenuated form and by accepting his weapon:

ANNIE: Go

JOAN: [to ANDERSON] You can go now.

[JOAN holds out her hands. A pause. ANDERSON places the
pistol in her hands. He exits]. (75)

Joan has recuperated her mind and further complies to Annie's sound judgement and throws the
guns in the river and scatters the horses. The mother-daughter team, or matriarchal elements of
the clan, break the infernal pattern of violence. Annie's mediation allows her deranged mother
and the war veterans to overcome the past and envision the future in positive matriarchal terms,
meaning pacific and compromising ones.

Pollock, through her drama, acts as a cultural mediator. Her play demonstrates that
Canada, in this case Eastern Canada, was and is a multicultural nation in that the Canadian
population was and is composed of white and black inhabitants who came from the United States
and of First-Nations peoples who inhabited the land. Her drama shows that it was and therefore
is possible for all Canadians to live harmoniously, if as in the play, they make the right
egalitarian choices. The United States of America is often presented in Canadian literature as an
imperialist nation which considers its northern neighbour culturally and economically inferior.
Pollock portrays Major Andersen, who represents the United States, as a threatening presence who forces the Canadians to practice introspection. She shows how his and Annie's mediation allowed both parties, Americans and Canadians to learn and grow out of their mutual experience.
CHAPTER TWO:

Mediators and Mediation in Marchessault’s History Plays:

*La saga des poules mouillées, La terre est trop courte, violette leduc, Alice & Gertrude, Natalie & Renée et ce cher Ernest, Le Voyage magnifique d’Emily Carr and Madame Blavatsky, spirite.*

Of Marchessault’s eight plays, all except *Le Lion de Bangor* and *Demande de travail sur les nèbuleuses*, can be classified as history plays because they are based on the biographies of renowned writers. *La saga des poules mouillées* unites four of the most famous Francophone writers, Laure Conan, Germaine Guèvremont, Gabrielle Roy and Anne Hébert in an imaginary location. *La terre est trop courte, violette leduc* narrates elements of the unconventional life of the bisexual author, Violette Leduc, and her life in Paris during and after the Second World War. In *Alice & Gertrude, Natalie & Renée et ce cher Ernest*, Marchessault unites two famous lesbian couples, Alice Toklas and Gertrude Stein and Natalie Barney and Renée Vivien, and Ernest Hemingway in Paris on the verge of the Second World War. *Anaïs dans la queue de la comète* is about Anais Nin, the Parisian writer who helped Henry Miller get published and who later moved to the United States where she became a psychoanalyst and a renowned feminist. *Le Voyage Magnifique d’Emily Carr* is about the emblematic Canadian West Coast painter from Victoria and *Madame Blavatsky, spirite* is about the Russian co-founder of the Theosophical Society.

Marchessault’s plays usually contain a fragmented but basic plot which depicts creative women’s tortuous path from social isolation or ostracism to relative celebrity. Marchessault’s first full-fledged drama, *La saga des poules mouillées*, is a play on and about creative mediation. It is about Marchessault’s writing in the feminine and her supportive rapport with other women
creators, and about four celebrated Francophone woman writers and their work. The play illustrates the importance of woman-centred creative writing and its impact in and on society.

The drama per se is preceded by numerous introductory texts in which Marchessault explains her motives for writing the play, which is principally to propagate women’s culture, “je vais parler de la culture des femmes, de reconnaissance, de transmission de savoir, de création” (7) and to break the detrimental solitude of women. “Isolément qui a tué tant de femmes écrivains. Aussi isolément qui nous conduit ou à la folie, ou au suicide, ou au silence (7). This statement of intentions is followed by a eulogy to Michèle Rossignol, the artistic director who revised and produced the drama. It also contains the author’s correspondence with Gloria Orenstein about her work in progress and her creative anxieties. Similar letters are strategically incorporated into the play proper. The long introduction and the inserted letters are Marchessault’s way of indicating that she is not only presenting a drama about the past; she also communicates contemporary women writers and creators as well as with her protagonists. They form a homogeneous nurturing community which is a source of mutual support and inspiration.

The drama unites the four foremothers of Québécois literature of different generations, Laure Conan (1845-1924) the pseudonym of Félicité Angers, Germaine Guèvremont (1893-1968), Gabrielle Roy (1909-1983), and Anne Hébert (1916-2000). The dramatist distorts history by having these real historical figures meet anachronistically and incongruously in a geographically identified but utopian nocturnal space: “Une nuit, sur la Terre promise de l’Amérique vers le nord, au cœur d’un vortex fabuleux” (37). A vortex is defined in the Merriam Websters Collegiate Dictionary as “a mass of fluid with a whirling or circular motion that tends to form a cavity or vacuum in the centre of the circle and draw toward this cavity or vacuum bodies subject to its actions, especially whirlpool, eddy”. By locating the authors in a
symbolic indefinite time zone (une nuit) and in an implausible North American space, Marchessault pays a tribute to all North American mothers from the primeval past, and in particular to their engendering functions through this reference to a dark circular cavity which symbolizes women’s reproductive apparatus—the womb. Instead of being entrapped in this enchanting but frightening space, the women explore it and eventually propel themselves out of it, and are reborn to themselves into matriarchy. In the paratextual letters inserted in the play Marchessault relates her dreams. As reported by Vautier, the dramatist writes out of a deep Amerindian perspective, which includes the belief that the contents of dreams are premonitory and are more real and reliable than reality. By situating her authors in an unreal space and a time slot associated with dreams, and by narrating her dreams in accompanying letters, Marchessault evidences that she communicates regularly with the authors and her friends, and invites the audience to pay more attention to their dreams, which are a means to enter into contact with a matriarchal network.

The play starts as an encounter between four legendary figures and ends with them leading a spiritual quest into the past. Through their mythic names Marchessault shows a progressive movement forwards into modernity in which each author stakes out and explores greater territories and opens the door a little bit more for their younger sisters. Laure is called l’ancienne to signify that she is the most veteran author who did the greatest groundwork for the generations to come. She was Quebec’s first professional woman writer who wrote historical novels which fomented Catholic patriotic fervency, but attained fame through her romantic novel about a woman’s impossible love and condemnation to celibacy and spirituality, Angéline de Montbrun. Germaine, called la paroissienne, has made a place for herself in a society determined by the parish (the Catholic church) and became famous through Le Survenant,
categorized as a ‘roman de terroir’ in which she describes aspects of rural life in Sorel. Gabrielle Roy is called petite corneille because she was the first of the four authors to write about women’s place in modern society, in particular in Bonheur d’Occasion where she relates the difficult lives and choices of urban working-class women in St-Henri, Montreal. Anne Hébert is called tête nuageuse because of the virulent anti-Catholicism contained in her writings. Le Torrent, one of Hébert’s first short stories, narrates the harmful effects of Catholicism on personal destinies. The heroine, a single mother, treats her son cruelly (he becomes deaf after she hits him on the head) and destines him to be a priest to repay for her sin of conceiving a child outside of the sacred vows of marriage. He eventually kills her in an ‘accident’, but continues to be controlled by his mother even after her death. This shocking short story was succeeded by numerous writings which manifested Hébert’s profound and violent anti-Catholicism.

The women join each other at a prearranged meeting to enjoy each other’s company and exchange opinions. They discuss their difficulty to write and be admitted as writers, and name other creative women whose feats have been downplayed by patriarchy. Mixing tragic and comic elements, the play is essentially festive and optimistic. Through the authors, Marchessault offers various possible reasons why dominant society attempts to repress and silence writers. “Peut-être qu’on y invente de la conscience et de la mémoire […] peut-être parce que les écrivains dénonçaient le terrorisme des pouvoirs, l’exploitation des pauvres, la débilité puante des gouvernements” (127) and “Peut-être aussi parce que dans les fictions, on peut se mettre en harmonie […] Quelqu’une part à la recherche d’un trésor et le retrouve” (127). A writer is feared because she(he) exposes injustice and offers alternatives to consider and eventually build a better society. The play includes a banquette which incorporates humorous sacrilegious parodies of Catholic rituals such as the Eucharist which the women transform into a symbolically
matriarchal cannibalistic one: “Prenez et mangez, ceci est mon corps!” (91). The genuine ritual is presented as a patriarchal usurpation: “Qui fait le pain, sur la terre promise? Depuis des siècles et des siècles, du grand nord au grand sud, depuis les premières lueurs de l’aube, qui donc se penche sur la nourriture, qui donc converse avec le feu dans le four?” (91 & 92) and “C’est vrai la sainte table, c’est nous qui la mettons” (92, author’s bold emphasis).

Expressing their hardships in a communal environment allows the women to personally and collectively confront and exorcise their justified or self-imposed fears. Laure and Anne fear fire, because as the latter explains, “Sur cette terre promise, on a brûlé deux choses: des femmes et des livres” (135). Tête nuageuse is one step above the other writers because she has mastered her fear of fire and uses it symbolically in many of her texts against patriarchy, as Laure describes, “C’est toi qui as écrit les choses les plus cruelles, les plus terribles, les plus brûlantes … Oui, les plus brûlantes! Tu œuvres dans le feu! Tu poursuis l’incendie! (131). Germaine, an experienced mother, is afraid of patriarchal medicine in general, and obstetricians in particular, because of the irreparable damage caused by their forceps on women’s and children’s bodies. In other words men use science to harmfully control women and the fruit of their wombs, the future generations who could bring about significant changes. Gabrielle’s fear is more spiritual: “J’ai peur de la nuit, j’ai peur du temps qui passe en dévorant ma vie” (147). This collective confessional session allows the authors to name and overcome their founded and unfounded fears and justified or self-imposed cowardly attitudes.

Their trip through their personal and women’s collective past cumulates in the sixth and last scene, which carries the same name as the play. They have decided to write in collaboration a new book which will retrace the history of women titled Comment les forceps vinrent aux hommes (137), which will analyse how men have dominated women through science. In the final
sketch they appropriate and transform a denigratory patriarchal appellation into a positive one by collectively calling themselves wet hens, and irreverently and joyously acting and clucking like wet hens.

The idea Marchessault conveys in *La saga des poules mouillées* is that behind the success story of each extremely talented and tenacious woman writer lies a story of a tremendous personal struggle. She presents these female mediators who achieved great success and were extraordinary winners during their lifetimes as partial losers so that everyday woman can envision significant women’s single yet collective combat, and sense that she is indebted to them as they are to each other. The writers are presented in an hierarchic order based on chronology, where each author surmounted social and creative difficulties imposed on them in patriarchy for the benefit of the upcoming generation. She also insinuates that for the few exemplary success stories, four in this case, there are innumerable stories of defeat.

Marchessault mediates history incongruously by uniting authors who could never have gathered together, Laure Conan having died in 1924, when the other three authors were either not yet born or were infants. She invites the audience to follow, within the parameters of their existence, these great authors’ edifying example. Recognize your fears in order to expunge them, appropriate negative patriarchal language and transform it into a positive matriarchal code, and participate in the ‘writing’ of women’s new collective book on, about and for women by taking an active role in the new matriarchal culture. This can be done by revisiting or constructing history in the feminine, as Marchessault does in her drama, but also by reaching out and consolidating an edifying matriarchal network like the representative mini-society of the four authors of *La saga des poules mouillées* and Marchessault and her collaborators whose exchanges are signified in the play.
For her second history-based drama, *la terre est trop courte, violette leduc*, Marchessault depicts the trials and tribulations of another writer, who lived in Paris during and after the Second World War. The dramatist, in accordance with her commitment to divulging women’s culture, chose Violet Leduc as her subject matter to familiarize the audience with an outstanding but barely known writer who has been either ignored or depreciated. As Louise Forsyth asserts in “Jouer aux éclats”, “La critique littéraire parle rarement de cette grande écrivaine du XXe siècle et, quand les spécialistes en parlent, c’est pour en exprimer le mépris” (239). The drama focuses on patriarchal censorship and how it affected Violet Leduc’s life, as explained by Marguerite Le Clézio in “Poétique et/ou politique” “Violette Leduc représente ici le cas paradigmatic de la femme censurée, ‘ennollée’ et finalement détruite par ceux dont il dépendait qu’elle ‘vive’ ou ‘meure’, les directeurs de maisons d’éditions” (100). Marchessault mediates history, in this case Violet Leduc’s biography, in order to denounce patriarchy’s domination of the cultural sphere.

*La terre est trop courte, violette leduc* instead of taking place in an imaginary utopian space associated with a dynamic womb as in *La saga des poules mouillées*, evolves in a more realistic setting in which each character is located in a compartmented space which signifies solitude and incommunicability. These cells are gendered spaces, which illustrate men’s dominance and greater liberty and women’s constriction—except for Simone de Beauvoir’s zone—because she has managed to occupy the public sphere in her own terms:

> On pourrait voir simultanément tous les comédiens, comédiennes dans son espace. Espace étiqueté pour les femmes, espace plus aéré pour les hommes. [. . .]

Simone de Beauvoir écrit dans un café, son espace sera plus aéré que les autres protagonistes féminines, la mère de Violette se berce dans un lieu clos. Hermine
fait de la couture dans une pièce sordide, Violette est dans sa cuisine-chambre.

(14)

One of the themes of the play is to bring the women out of their depressing enclosures through a greater communication among themselves. The drama concerns Violette Leduc’s difficult writing career. She wrote compulsively in dire conditions and only achieved relative success in her forties when her autobiographical book, *La Bâtarde*, was published through Simone de Beauvoir’s influence and was read by the general public because de Beauvoir prefaced and promoted the book.

Pollock in most of her plays, uses multiple narrators and metatheatrical devices, approximates her subject matter through different angles, and incorporates numerous interpretations. The latter accentuates the fact that her plays are an overt mediation of history to make the audience question what they are viewing. Marchessault’s mediation of history in *La terre est trop courte, violette leduc*, on the contrary, presents the Parisian writer’s biography mainly from the heroine’s perspective. The disposition of the stage metaphorically demonstrates her confinement within patriarchal parameters, and all of the other characters build and corroborate Leduc’s discourse rather than attempting to deconstruct it. Marchessault takes measures to ensure the verisimilitude of her fictive biography by, among other means, encasing numerous quotations of the author’s works in her drama. As described by Jane Moss, “Dans sa mise en scène des luttes que mène Violette Leduc, Marchessault puise abondamment dans les romans et les textes autobiographiques de celle-ci. Cette technique est garantie de l'authenticité du portrait de Leduc et ouvre la voie à un nouveau discours dramatique au féminin” (“La création recrée” 84). Having her heroines quote their genuine texts to authenticate her biographical dramas is a tactic which Marchessault uses in all of her dramas. Of a more one
dimensional essence than Pollock’s dramas, Marchessault’s plays intend the audience to believe in the veracity of her biographical plays, in this case of Leduc’s overbearing intimate turmoil and professional anxieties.

*La terre est trop courte, violette leduc,* like *la saga des poules mouillées* is about cultural mediation and cultural mediators. It denounces the patriarchal literary establishment’s domination of the cultural realm. In the play she presents the hypothesis that Leduc’s writings were not published because they threatened patriarchal supremacy and ideology. The editors, who were all men, refused to publish her work principally to preserve the domain for men, among other reasons. In the drama Marchessault narrates how the editors are particularly adamant about refusing “Isabelle et Thérèse”, a section of one of Leduc’s books, because it contained explicit love scenes between two women. The playwright establishes a comparison between the literary milieu’s endorsement of Jean Genet’s writings and refusal of Leduc’s works. Jean Genet, an imprisoned criminal and a homosexual who wrote openly and virulently about his sexual orientation and practices, was acclaimed by the Parisian intelligentsia led by Jean Paul Sartre, who pressured the President of France into revoking Genet’s prison sentence and liberating him. Marchessault’s text incorporates an ironic criticism of Genet’s virile writing and quick ascension within the literati. She infers that Genet’s homosexual writing was accepted and even glorified because, though marginal, it extolled masculinity and relations between men, while Leduc, a bisexual, was rejected because she celebrated all relations, and in particular those between women. Francine Pelletier interprets Marchessault’s opinion in the play’s introduction:

> Ce qui est blessure intime pour Violette Leduc est, pour Jovette Marchessault, une question plus politique: la censure n’est qu’une autre façon de mettre les femmes
au bûcher. Et résonne la phrase d’Adrienne Rich : “Les femmes n’ont jamais été punies pour avoir détesté les hommes mais pour avoir aimé les femmes”. (7)

Leduc’s main subject-matter also threatened patriarchy. Her autobiographic writings, especially La Bâtarde, denounced the hypocrisy of patriarchal bourgeois society in which men procreated children with their maids then abandoned and condemned them to poverty and to social exclusion. According to Marchessault, Leduc’s literary style could also challenge patriarchy’s cultural agenda. She offered a novel perception of reality through a marginal bisexual woman-centred prism and prose which could rally women readers and inspire other women writers and displace male authors. An approach and prose also used by Marchessault:

Leduc et Marchessault osent se faire abruptes, explicites, obscènes, scatologiques; elles osent décrire la face cachée de la sexualité féminine et les visions terrifiantes qui hantent l’imaginaire des femmes. Toutes les deux ont le courage d’utiliser des images et un langage non censurés afin de dire l’expérience des femmes. (Moss, 84)

Marchessault demonstrates how the patriarchal literary establishment confined women to secondary roles. Leduc was reduced to writing articles in a woman’s magazine in order to survive. At the end of the Deuxième Tableau : “être dans le ton comme le violon”, Marchessault quotes an extensive passage extracted from Leduc’s autobiography La Bâtarde in which Leduc describes the hypocritical and unethical contents of her weekly articles published in a woman’s magazine. She denounces her own patriarchal commercial writing—her only means of living from her pen because patriarchy refuses to publish her more challenging texts—addressed to and consumed by women. In her articles she treats her women readers like children, she provides them with ridiculously basic guidelines to better their lives by establishing a simple routine and
by being oblivious to the world around them. She accentuates the absurdity of her recommendations by highlighting the fact that Paris was under German occupation. In the Cinquième tableau, "monsieur Sophocle est absent ", Marchessault comically highlights the sexual division of work within the literary trade in which all the authors are men, and all the lesser jobs such as those of telephone operators and secretaries are occupied by women. Marchessault has Leduc’s mother play the implausible and unhistorical role of the telephone switch-board operator of the Gallimard publishing company in which she puts an impressive number of famous male authors through to Mr. Gallimard. In the same scene Leduc’s mother calls her mother while at work to give her the good news: "Allô, allô maman … tu es là? Oui je t’entends! Tu m’entends? Violette elle se prend pour le Messie depuis qu’elle a publié chez Gallimard” (86) and announces that her daughter will break the continuum of men writers.

Leduc is also portrayed as a cultural mediator who enables mainstream patriarchal society to become familiar with matriarchy and minority cultures. Though she is an egotistical writer whose writing is exclusively autobiographical, Marchessault presents her as a militant author. She serves as a cultural mediator who uses the trained elite’s tools (literature) to denounce the dominant classes’ ideology (a synonym for patriarchy) in her name and in the name of those who did not have her linguistic abilities. When Leduc is asked how she perceives a member of the Parisian intelligentsia she responds, “Avec les yeux des humbles. Des pauvres des mendiantes, avec les yeux des parias” (129). Through her writings Leduc voices the opinions of the lower classes and marginal individuals and allows the educated elite to perceive themselves and their values through others’ perspectives.

Another form of mediation which takes place in the play evolves around Simone de Beauvoir and her circle of women authors. One can use writing to mediate between two or
more realities in a novel form and language, but it is to no avail if the books are not published and if published, are not read. Marchessault demonstrates how Simone de Beauvoir drew upon her popularity to serve as an intermediate between Leduc’s difficult provocative prose and the public. By prefacing *La Bâtarde*, she solicited her supporters to read Leduc’s work. Marchessault portrays Simone de Beauvoir’s literary café crowd as a marginal one which grows and gains followers through her influence. This casual location and friendly group functions as an informal publishing company which succeeds in an arena defined by its women actors outside of patriarchy’s parameters.

*La terre est trop courte, violette ledue* is as much about Leduc as it is about Marchessault. The dramatist is an auto-didact from a working class family, part Amerindian and a lesbian, she experienced rejection by the patriarchal literary establishment, “le manuscrit de LA MÈRE DES HERBES refusé pour la Xe fois” (*La saga* 9), and like Leduc encountered success in middle age and through a network of women supporters. Marchessault uses Leduc’s biography, which mirrors her own autobiography, to demonstrate the effects of the patriarchal cultural apparatus on creative women.

The ‘autobiographical biography’ mediates the theory and the concrete effects of oppression. Leduc is an antipathetic character; Marchessault’s drama allows the audience to understand the reasons which cause her sexual dissatisfaction, her constant crying, the exploitation of her husband, lover and friends and her generally neurotic behaviour. Leduc becomes more sympathetic at the end of the play because she has exorcised her demons and is able to write in the feminine as she wishes, because she forms part of an intellectual circle which consists of women, and is no longer tyrannized by patriarchy. Through her play, Marchessault explains her own complicated role and personality as a lesbian cultural mediator. She also
invites modern audiences, again especially women, to emulate Simone de Beauvoir and her friends, to support, read and discuss women’s literature in order to form a great woman-centred literary salon and eventually consolidate a matriarchal culture.

_Alice & Gertrude, Natalie & Renée et ce cher Ernest_, portrays the encounter among five historical figures, Alice Toklas (1877-1967), Gertrude Stein (1874-1946), Natalie Barney (1876-1972), Renée Vivien (1877-1909) and Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961) just before the Second World War. The space is dominated by women who converge in Natalie Barney’s salon: the hostesses and the guests are all women and Romaine Brooks’ paintings, an artist who specialized in portraits of lesbians, decorate the room. Barney was an American lesbian socialite, nicknamed the _Amazone_, who was famous for her sumptuous weekly receptions of the gratin of the Parisian intelligentsia, which included a great number of lesbians. As in _La saga des poules mouillées_ Marchessault unites literary geniuses, but in a concrete location, inserts a discordant figure, Ernest Hemingway and depicts a less congenial atmosphere.

Unlike most of her other plays which are fragmented into numerous ‘tableaux’, this drama is divided into two parts, the Premier Tableau: _LA DETTE_ and the Deuxième Tableau: _L’ARCHE_. These titles summarize the play’s plot. The celebratory gathering of the lesbian couples, Natalie Barney and Renée Vivien, and Alice Toklas and Gertrude Stein, is interrupted by Ernest Hemingway, who, uninvited, imposes himself on the discontented women who finally allow him to stay. They take advantage of the situation and accuse him of not recognizing his debt towards Gertrude Stein for having given him valid counselling in professional and creative matters and for having used her influence and contacts to launch his career. In the second _tableau_ Natalie unveils her testament which consists of an arch which encloses the accumulation of all possible forms of women’s culture: “mes archives, la mémoire des silences de l’histoire!”
Threatened by the most devastating expression of patriarchy, the upcoming war, Nathalie describes this legacy as partly but not totally destructible: "je recommencerai. Nous avons l'habitude des lettres perdues, des livres brûlés" (103).

Marchessault once again mediates history through a totally feminine perspective by setting the characters in a woman-identified location and by having the women characters outnumber the single male character, Hemingway. As in *la terre est trop courte, violette leduc*, Marchessault sets the action in a realistic setting, Natalie Barney's salon, and incorporates numerous quotes from the gathered writers' works to authenticate the historical figures' characterization and to give the audience the impression that the drama is a faithful rendering of the women's reunion and of their discussions, which focus mainly on women writers' works and roles in society. The play's historical content is accurate in so far as the characters were all contemporaries and formed part of the group of American *entre-deux guerres* expatriates who lived in Paris and frequented the same literary circles. However the encounter, where the women corner and accost Hemingway, is fictitious. Marchessault united these figures in a semi-intimate gathering when Barney's legendary receptions were renowned for uniting regularly over 200 guests.

Marchessault mediates a specific historical subject matter, the contribution of lesbian writers to the literary realm. The play is a tribute to these and other female couples who lived their homosexuality openly and to lesbian writers of the past and of the present. Renée Vivien translated the ancient Greek female writer, Sappho's, poems dedicated to lesbian love into French and, "en 1901, quand paraîtra Études et Préludes de Renée Vivien, ce sera la première fois que depuis Sappho (612 av. J.-C.) une voix de femme lesbienne se fait ouvertement entendre" (Alice 125). Alice Toklas was essential to Gertrude Stein's psychological stability,
daily life, and to her literary productivity. Marchessault’s does not offer an idyllic depiction of these relations. Alice and Gertrude form a warm complementary couple, Alice the elder woman who supports her companion in all of her endeavours, calls her lover ‘Baby’ and Stein calls her partner ‘Lovey’. The second couple lives a tense relation: Natalie is presented as a potential alcoholic and a promiscuous seductress and Renée as an advocate of monogamy.

Marchessault portrays these writers as mediators who used their creative talents to present reality from a different angle and as a means to eventually alter society. In this particular case she illustrates mediators who presented a marginal matriarchal and more specifically a lesbian culture to mainstream society and who were able to live and write as they pleased because they knew how to ride the cultural divide and reap the advantages of belonging to both American and French cultures. Paris was inhabited by a large colony of foreign creators because it was the place to be between the wars, but also because it offered more possibilities than their homelands. Many Americans fled their nation’s Puritanism and cultural backwardness. Whatever the reasons for living abroad, the geographical distance allowed the American women portrayed by Marchessault to live their homosexuality openly and in turn this moral freedom nourished their creativity which was stimulated by the new art movements, especially cubism. At the crossroads of two cultures, and two religions if one includes Judaism and Catholicism, the women, Gertrude Stein in particular, created a new hybrid literary form, writing in English on American themes and transposing European cubist concepts to the literary field. Gertrude’s appreciation and literary mimesis of cubism contributed to the deterioration of her relation with her brother and mentor. As has commented Linda Wagner-Martin, “Part of the dissension between the Steins stemmed from Leo’s dislike of Cubism. Gertrude saw analogies between the
Cubism of Picasso and Braque and her portraits and the poems of the 1914 *Tender Buttons*" ("Stein, Gertrude" 846).

Besides mediating between two national cultures, Stein brought her lesbian sensitivity to her writing and mediated between traditional and modern art forms, and patriarchy and matriarchy. "Stein’s writing gave readers an intimate sense of a woman’s life and concerns [. . .] letting language find its own patterns, to express whatever meaning the reader might favor, viewing written art as a system of true and mutable communication" (Wagner-Martin 847). Marchessault has Stein describe her prose in a more provocative manner: "Chacun de mes textes est un casse-tête. Je code. Je les embrouille. Je les rends nerveux! Verbeux! Je code la vulve de Lovey, je code notre vérité, notre chicken à la Queen et tout ce qui nous rend gay. Il y a l’orgasme, je vais partout, rien ne m’arrête" (95).

In *Anaïs, dans la queue de la comète* Marchessault represents the biography of a cosmopolitan woman writer, Anais Nin (1903-1977). Born in Paris to the French-Danish singer Rosa Culmell and Cuban pianist-composer of Spanish-Catalan origin, Joaquin Nin, Anais moved to New York in 1914, and in 1926 returned to Paris with her new husband and lifelong spouse and financial backer, Hugh Guiler. She formed part of the group of American expatriates residing in Paris between the two world wars. She finally settled in the United States. Nin was a psychologist and public speaker who promoted the women’s liberation movement and defended women’s rights. As Wendy Dubow points out in “Anais Nin” “whether because she was popular or because she believed in remaining traditionally ‘feminine’ and not alienating men, Nin became an increasingly controversial figure as political proponents of the women’s movement found her influence, and attention from the media disturbing” (633). Throughout her life she frequented and had passionate illicit relations with numerous prominent personalities.
Marchessault focuses on her relations with three famous writers and theoreticians of different origins who specialized in distinct domains to emphasize Nin's cosmopolitanism, the diversity of her interests and her capacity to attract and unite some of the greatest scholars of her times. The historical male figures portrayed in the play are Antonin Artaud (1896-1948), Otto Rank (1884-1939) and Henry Miller (1891-1980).

The plot of this play, like all of Marchessault's plays, evolves around the importance of writers and writing and as in la terre est trop courte violette leduc, and Alice & Gertrude, Natalie & Renée et ce cher Ernest, she contrasts living and writing in the feminine with living and writing in the masculine through a female literary figure. The drama relates the last decades of Nin's life from the 1940s, when she established herself in America, and incorporates flashbacks of salient moments of her Parisian life, and in particular her difficulty of asserting herself as a serious writer, and her active role in forming Henry Miller's literary style and in promoting his works.

The setting and the time-frame of this play are semi-realistic. The play is fragmented into eleven scenes in opposition to patriarchy's linear dramatic development. Marchessault takes the audience back and forth in time, from the past to the present to the infinite by mixing datable events with cosmic references, all related to Nin's existence. "De la fin des années quarante au 14 janvier 1977, date de la mort d'Anaïs Nin ... Mais le temps de la pièce ne se déroule pas dans un ordre chronologique ... Il y a des bonds dans le temps, comme si les protagonistes chevauchaient une comète" (Anaïs 11, author's ellipses). In this manner, Marchessault gives her characters, especially Nin, both a mortal and immortal essence. The drama evolves in a location which associates the protagonist with the collective memory, "En Amérique, dans le studio d'Anaïs Nin, à Los Angeles ... Et dans la mémoire de chacune, de chacun" (11, author's
ellipses). The play requires five actors, the only role played by one actress is Anaïs Nin’s, all of the other actors play several roles: “June Miller sera aussi une infirmière, une névrosée et une analyste; Henry Miller, un chirurgien; Artaud (l’acteur), un chirurgien, un commis-livreur, un quidam, la mère d’Anaïs, un journaliste; Otto Rank, un chirurgien, un névrosé, un agent littéraire” (11). Nin is portrayed as a single character who undertakes a lonely combat against many forces embodied by the other actors. As in la terre est trop courte, violette leduc the author presents the biography mainly through one character, Nin, and cites the historical figures’ works—Rank, Miller and more extensively Nin’s—to give the impression that her drama is veridical. Marchessault uses Nin and her creative centre as the play’s technical mediator; she is the matri-pivotal element who holds the otherwise disjointed play together.

Nin is the main character, and the stage corresponds to her Los Angeles studio, which is featured as a communication centre in which she receives telephone calls on her answering machine, “cœur d’Amérique, mon cœur électronique” (15) and responds to her callers by letter. The callers are people in distress, mainly women, who request her counselling and offer their testimonies. Nin is portrayed as a psychological mediator who dedicates her time and energy to answering her afflicted clientele. Marchessault establishes an equivalence between this committed correspondence and her dedication to her dairy as if they were one and the same, “Elle écrit son journal, elle répond à son courrier” (15). Marchessault suggests that Anaïs’ Journal is a therapeutic collective register of people and events rather than a narcissistic form of writing on and about oneself. Besides mediating the suffering of humanity through her open telephone line and her Journal, she mediates the specific dilemmas of the characters who infiltrate her studio/communication centre.
The play is about writers who are mediators of different ideologies, Miller representing patriarchy and Nin representing matriarchy. The dramatist compares these orientations, and demonstrates the superiority of the latter. Marchessault is extremely critical towards Miller’s persona, career and output. She acknowledges the superior technical quality of Miller’s œuvre and simultaneously denounces the flamboyant vacuity of it through an excerpt of Nin’s *Journal*: “Il est clair que j’en ai plus à dire et ne le raconterai jamais aussi bien. Il en a moins à dire et le dit merveilleusement” (101). If it were only a question of over-inflated rhetoric, Miller’s work could be judged as entertainingly inoffensive, but Marchessault presents him as a self-centred homicidal writer, who, like Hemingway had difficulties or refused to recognize his debts towards women—Nin helped him improve his style and published and promoted his work and June, his muse, introduced him to transgressive sexuality, and provided him with the raw material and was the inspirational source of most of his books. According to Marchessault, he exploited and exposed June’s intimacy and destroyed her in the process.

Nin is presented as a positive cultural mediator who did her utmost to help an unappreciative Henry Miller and many other promising struggling authors in whom she believed. At times she gave their work preference to her own. Marchessault presents Nin’s *Journals* as a major literary genre which offers information which would not usually be divulged to the general public because the literary institution is dominated by men, a select men’s club which filters what is to be published and promoted and excludes non-members, women in particular. Nin’s lifetime project was only recognized late in her lifetime when feminists became interested in women’s journals and diaries. She was able to discover and unveil Miller’s inspirational source because of her privileged relation with June, which enabled her to expose the darker side (women’s side) of men’s literary triumphs.
On a more personal level she also portrays June in her Journal, but in a respectful manner. Intimately involved with both Millers, Nin acts as a mediator when she is solicited by either June or Henry to choose sides and loves. She refuses to make a choice and asks all involved to attempt to live in harmony: “ANAÏS, tourmenté et triste: Pourquoi faut-il choisir? Notre champ d’amour est-il si pauvre, si restreint?” (140). The problem is only resolved when the three characters go their separate ways. However Anaïs mediates in favour of the weaker party. She manages to reconstruct June’s self-esteem by making her respond to a pertinent question. “ANAÏS: Qu’est ce que c’est qu’un artiste? JUNE: Un artiste... c’est une âme agissante!” (61) and by recognizing her as a greater artist than her husband. “ANAÏS: “L’âme agissante, c’est toi, June!” (63) and by providing her with a beautiful portrait in her Journal which positively enhances June, while Miller’s denigrates and destroys her. Marchessault presents Nin as a comprehensive and even healing portraitist of June and of all of her contemporaries recorded in her Journal. The theme of collaborative writing amongst women is also developed in this play. The two women befriend, or more precisely belove each other, and together decide how June should be described in the Journal.

Anaïs Nin, sur la queue de la comète, like la terre est trop courte, violette leduc is about cultural mediation as defined by Brooker. It denounces the mainstream literary institution, which includes the publishing companies and literary critics. Marchessault shows Anaïs’s combativeness against publishers’ refusal to print manuscripts which they judge commercially unfeasible. She defies the institution by buying a printer and by handcrafting promising authors’ such as Miller’s and her own books for a small circle of readers. The dramatist emphasizes the importance of the printer. It is physically represented on the stage and is one of the drama’s main props along with the telephone answering machine. Marchessault criticizes the system in
which individuals, or small publishing houses take all the risks, and the greater companies reap the benefits: "les petits éditeurs protègent les écrivains de minorité. Sans eux les écrivains ne pourraient pas survivre [. . .] Elles ont bien souvent lancé des livres qui se retrouvent, quelques années plus tard, au catalogue d’un gros éditeur" (163).

She also condemns the media’s treatment of writers, in particular the newspapers and their cultural reporters, the literary critics. In the drama Marchessault portrays how a cultural columnist, surnamed by the protagonist le boucher, relates with Nin in an interview about her Journal. He denigrates Nin’s memoirs, even though he has not read them, but has consulted other critics who gave him negative feedback. Nin decries this critic’s role, which is representative of many critics’ attitudes: "Pourquoi vous tolère-t-on? Vos lecteurs sont des voyeurs, Monsieur : ils vous regardent planter vous couteaux dans l’artiste vivant, dans ses luttes, ses passions" (161). Marchessault denounces the mainstream cultural apparatus which discourages writers through the selective publishing process, and if and when the book is published form a network which is able to make or break an artist without even consulting their work. She makes indirect allusions about the critics’ moral sell-out. They are caught in a commercial set-up; they owe their jobs to the system which promotes profit-return artists over intellectually or politically challenging ones: "Vos journaux préfèrent entretenir le mythe de l’écrivain best-seller" (163). She also accuses the general public of being accomplices in this marché de dupes and circuitously invites them to read books printed by minor publishing houses, ignore critics and base their appraisal on their own criteria.

Marchessault uses Nin’s biography as a personalized approach through which she could examine the effects of patriarchy on an international level. As in Leduc’s biography the dramatist focuses on how the dominant patriarchal ideology affects an individual. Leduc was
portrayed as being seriously affected by patriarchy’s cultural agenda, which she rejected. Nin is depicted as a generous, level-headed person, who rather than denouncing the patriarchal literary establishment, created her own alternative printing company to publish the works of upcoming or marginal men and women writers whose writings were dismissed by established publishing houses. In her biographical play about Leduc, Marchessault shows how and at what price marginal women from the working class contributed to the propagation of matriarchy. In the biographical drama on Nin’s work, the playwright shows how and at what price an upper class woman from the cultural elite sacrificed herself. Nin neglected her writing to promote what she considered superior writers’ work, to increment and improve the cultural offer.

*Le Voyage magnifique d’Emily Carr* narrates the last decades of the life of the nineteenth-century woman painter and writer from Victoria who was fascinated by the West Coast First-Nations totemic art and culture and by Western Canada’s natural environment. She represented totem poles and re-created the Vancouver Island rain forests and landscapes in her canvasses, and when she became too ill to go on sketching or painting expeditions, she transcribed her experiences in her autobiographic and anecdotal writings. Marchessault narrates the struggle of Carr’s perseverance in pursuing an artistic career which enabled her to attain celebrity and recognition late in life.

Unlike her other dramas, this play is principally in an exterior setting in an attempt to mediate Amerindian and Christian beliefs and lifestyles. Carr owns a home in accordance with her Victorian Caucasian background and values, but she considers the back courtyard, the tame outside part of her property, its most noble quarters. In this area she receives visitors and lives in communion with nature. She breeds animals, cares for her flowers, plants and trees and tends a fire, which she uses to make pottery, as if she were in a First-Nations camp or village. The
property is given a poetic and symbolic name which designates Carr's home as a model mediation centre which harmoniously assembles all living things under a vague unifying form of spirituality. "Cette maison, qui est baptisée La Maison de toutes les espèces, est avant tout la maison spirituelle de toute l'humanité comme de tout ce qui est vivant sur la Terre" (15). This space is defined and occupied in matriarchal terms, it is inhabited by Carr who receives only women visitors: her Amerindian friend Sophie, who also plays the role of an Amerindian goddess, and her elder sister, Lizzie. The only male figure who accesses the hearth of Carr's home is l'Accordeur d'âmes, a benevolent guardian angel type spirit who dwells in the fire and appears only to those who believe in him. The Accordeur d'âmes also plays the role of Lawren Harris, one of the younger and most spiritually inclined members of The Group of Seven, who also permeates Carr's matriarchal universe.

The playwright situates the play in a romantic timeframe which places Carr under the sign of immortality rather than connecting her with a specific date of the past. She associates Carr's biography with a special time of day, with the effects of a special light in the forest, and with singular natural illuminating lights in the night: "Parfois celui de l'aube, parfois celui d'une lumière éclatante dans la forêt, parfois celui d'une nuit semée d'étoiles" (15). In this descriptive prism, Marchessault makes the audience view reality through Carr's artistic eyes, to comprehend and imagine her awareness of the contrasting effects of light, colour and obscurity, and particularly of her fascination for the colour green, the essential colour of the rain forests.

*Le Voyage Magnifique d'Emily Carr*, which is subtitled *Pièce de théâtre en dix tableaux dans le nouveau monde et trois Voyages dans le vieux monde* is Marchessault's most formally divided play. As in Marchessault's other plays which centre on one historical figure, Carr is the drama's principal mediator who unifies the fragmented plot and makes the audience perceive the
story through her perspective. She takes the audience back and forth from the visible world of her biography to the immortal world of the primeval forest inhabited by D’Sonoqua, also called Zunoqua, the pre-contact matriarchal goddess of the woods whom she encounters in her three introspective journeys to the old world. The drama contains a double intertwined plot associated with Carr’s gradual mastery of her primary medium, painting, and especially her domination of the colour green which, once perfected, allows her to evolve and incorporate more light and other colours into her paintings. According to Marchessault’s play, Carr would never have been able to perceive the spirits of the forest, and in particular the goddess’ spirit without her First-Nations friend Sophie’s assistance. Sophie is a woman artist who makes traditional baskets and confections porcupine quill costumes and accessories for her people and beaded ones for Caucasians. She serves as a mediator between the First-Nations and the Victorian cultures; she provides Emily with background information on and training in Aboriginal spirituality and rituals, and to a lesser extent she introduces Lizzie to elements of her people’s religion. Lizzie is the third mediator, whose interrogative interaction with Sophie enables the audience to comprehend aspects of the Amerindian culture, and whose conflictive relation with her sister allows the audience to understand Emily’s counter-reactive anti-Victorianism.

Carr performs various mediating functions. She is a technical mediator who serves as the fragmented drama’s pivotal bonder. She is also portrayed as a cultural mediator who attempts to facilitate the communication between the Western Coast First-Nations peoples and the Caucasian Victorians. Stephen Bochner provides a clarifying distinction between the mediating function and marginality in relation to cultural mediation: “The essential difference between the marginal and the mediating syndrome is that whereas the marginal individual responds to
different cultures as if they were mutually incompatible, the mediating person seeks ways of coordinating and reconciling them” (“The Social Psychology of Cultural Mediation” 17).

Carr has neither ‘gone Indian’, nor has she fully embraced Victorian values and aesthetics. She enjoys the exterior more than the interior part of her home, she keeps an oven in her courtyard which she uses to cook pottery, not meals, and she wears original hybrid clothes that are neither typically aboriginal nor Victorian. Linda Bourgogne’s article “Biographie et théâtre chez Jovette Marchessault” includes photographs of the 1990 production of the play at the Théâtre d’Aujourd’hui in Montréal in which the actress who played Carr’s role, Louisette Dussault, wore a circular cap in refusal of the Victorian cult of feminism, in which women were supposed to have neatly gathered long hair. She also wore a straight-cut baggy tunic-type dress with sleeve and collar appliqués which resembled Amerindian embroideries. This amateur replica of traditional Amerindian female attire contrasted with the constraining tailor-fitted garments worn by Victorian women which focussed on women’s waists. Many Victorian women were fashion victims who went to the extreme of wearing excruciatingly tight corsets, and the most fanatic ones had their two lower ribs extracted to attain the desired wasp waist. The historical Carr was renowned for her crudely crafted mock Aboriginal home made dresses. Marchessault recuperates this fact in her play: “Lizzie, la sœur d’Emily, fait son entrée. Elle est tirée à quatre épingles et le contraste entre sa tenue vestimentaire et celle d’Emily est évident” (21). Emily attempts to dress, live, think and act in both Victorian and Amerindian terms. Beverly McCleod claims that it is difficult to precisely define what a mediating person is and how mediation takes place, but: “In any case, the purposes of individuals located at the conjunction of two or more cultures interact with their personal, functional and ascribed attributes. The product of this interaction, from the point of view of who benefits from the
process, can be the improvement of the home culture, the host culture, both cultures, or mankind in general” (“The Mediating Person and Cultural Identity” 38).

Emily attempts in her daily life and in her interactions with other people to act as a cultural mediator between the First-Nations and the Victorian cultures. Being a cultural mediator who attempts to bridge opposed cultures is a complex task which is often perceived negatively. Such individuals are often considered ab- or supra-normal, “mediators have more often been considered to be marginal or otherwise unusual. They have been tended to be located at the fringes rather than at the heart of society. They may have had special powers ascribed to them as do shamans” (McCleod 46). Because they attempt to posit themselves between cultures they are considered suspiciously or are rejected by members of each culture and this situation affects their personality:

The problem of acceptance is a formidable one for the mediating person, but in addition, he often faces internal conflicts. In a world where mono-culturality is the norm, the mediating person cannot help but feel strange, an outsider to both of the cultures he knows. Thus, he may lack a certain basic psychological security which others gain from an unambiguous cultural identity. (McCleod 46)

To mediate successfully the mediating person has to accept his/her difference, establish his/her personal and psychology equilibrium and, "It is necessary for the mediator to convince people that the unusual is not inherently threatening, and may even be interesting and beneficial” (McCleod 46).

Usually an individual becomes a cultural mediator through family inheritance and other circumstances beyond one’s control. One may be born into two cultures, and live in a third culture. Many individuals are forced to adopt another culture in order to pursue higher studies in
foreign universities in order to eventually obtain jobs abroad or in their homeland. Emily Carr can be perceived as a capricious mediator who voluntarily embraced the First-Nations culture and alienated herself from her Victorian upbringing, family and social circle because she found it more interesting and gave her a special aura. She can be perceived as having ‘played Indian’ for self-mythologizing reasons, as the First-Nations critic Marcia Crosby in her article “Construction of the Imaginary Indian” does:

Carr paid a tribute to the Indians she “loved”, but who were they? Were they the real or authentic Indians who only existed in the past, or the Indians in the nostalgic, textual remembrances she created in her later years? [. . .] Emily Carr loved the same Indians Victorian society rejected and whether they were embraced or rejected does not change the fact that they were imaginary Indians.

(276)

Crosby presents a dismal analysis of Carr’s artistic and philosophical cross-cultural enterprise and accuses her of cultural genocide by stating that she symbolically remurdered the Indians by presenting them as a dead race and based her career on exploiting Indian themes, stories and aesthetics.

Marchessault presents Carr’s quest and accomplishments under a totally different optic and suggests that Carr’s condition of an artist compelled her to become a cultural mediator. Carr was raised on a Pacific island inhabited by an extremely ancient civilization. She was formed as a Presbyterian and Anglican, English, Victorian woman far from her parents’ beloved old country, England. She was the product of two cultures, though neither fully bicultural nor bilingual, attributes which are important but which are not necessarily essential to being an ideal cultural mediator. According to McCleod,
Perhaps the ideal mediator is one who is less than perfect, just as an ideal teacher is one who appears not to be teaching at all. [. . .] Which is the better mediator, one who knows about the other culture and is continually sensitive to cultural differences, therefore insulating those with whom he comes into contact from cultural shock, or the ignorant but good-hearted bumbler whose behaviour may surprise people but may also delight them and teach them something new? (48)

McCleod contends that one must know enough about the cultures involved not to make gross errors, but must approach them freshly: “it is also important that he be novel enough to catch the interest of the people and teach them something about his other culture. The mediator should be like a poet, who takes familiar words and allows the reader to see them in a new and different manner” (48). Marchessault foregrounds Carr’s artistry to signify that she could not help but view reality differently from her fellow Victorians and acknowledge the importance of First-Nations’ heritage and transmit this knowledge and her peculiar vision in her canvasses and writings.

Marchessault presents Emily as a disastrous cultural mediator who overtly and militantly preferred the Amerindian to the Victorian culture, at least until her journey to Eastern Canada. Emily is a biased but passionate cultural mediator, she prefers Sophie’s to his sister’s company and through her interactions with Sophie and Lizzie, allows the audience to see the positive elements of the Amerindian culture and the negative ones of the Victorian culture. It is only late in life and in the play (the end of scene IX) that Emily fully accepts her Victorian heritage and becomes an ideal mediator. One of the play’s most violent and symbolic scenes is when Emily, in reaction to Sophie’s death, fights with her father’s suspended armchair which ends when she is crushed by a massive heart attack. She does not win the battle, but she wins the war. She
literally and metaphorically appropriates and occupies the patriarchal throne out of which she writes her serene memoirs of her trip through life which comprises the narration of many others’ trips on earth for posterity.

Marchessault’s selection and reproduction of Carr’s 1931 painting *Zunoqua of the Cat Village* on the front cover of *Le Voyage magnifique d’Emily Carr* indicates the importance of Emily’s artistic-driven mediating role. It represents the wild woman goddess of the woods, who was feared because she lured and retained people into her dangerous territory which could cause death. It is a cross-cultural representation which portrays ancient totemic art in modern fauvist forms and colours. The real Carr befriended D’Sonoqua’s imagery and legend to give her moral support during her solitary incursions into the terrifying rain forest. Carr narrates her positive encounter with the goddess surrounded by cats in her short story “D’Sonoqua” in *Klee Wyck*. Marchessault draws upon these references and uses Carr’s identification with D’Sonoqua to demonstrate the beneficial effects of matriarchy and matriarchal icons, but also to prove that the goddess of the woods is still alive and well. In contrast to Crosby’s appreciation of Carr’s paintings which supposedly depicted ‘dead Indians’, Marchessault presents Carr’s oeuvre as the visual and literary chronicle of a live culture which will never die. In the drama, the totem comes to life, speaks to Carr and reinstates her vitality, “Ne te laisse pas tromper par les apparences: ceci est le contraire d’un cimetière! Une incomparable grandeur y habite, Elle refuse de disparaître” (62) and she inquisitively entrusts Carr with a mission, “Qui donc accomplira le travail de souvenir? Qui donc rappellera que les vies vécues ne furent pas inutiles!” (62).

Marchessault suggests that Emily is able to attain the desired profound colour of green because of her gender which enables her to perceive and communicate more easily with the great
goddesses of nature. Sophie alias D’Sonoqua is one of nature’s important goddesses; the moon, the celestial body associated with women’s menstrual cycle, is the other beneficial spirit associated with green which Marchessault insinuates inspires and assists Emily. Sophie describes the moon and how it takes care of the dead from her people’s perspective, which is also Emily’s:

SOPHIE:  (...) J’ai demandé à la Mère des herbes de bien vouloir prendre soin d’eux.

LIZZIE:  La Mère des herbes?

SOPHIE:  C’est la Lune, madame Lizzie. Au sommet de la montagne est suspendue la Lune. Les cœurs de tous ceux qui ont existé sont suspendus à elle.

(51)

The painter also serves as a mediator between Western and Eastern Canada. Marchessault shows how her visit to Eastern Canada gives her a new injection of energy when she meets the Group of Seven and becomes aware of their novel approach to the Canadian wilderness. Instead of representing the landscape according to the mainstream English Romantic tradition which encouraged the use of pastel colours and the portrayal of a tame bucolic countryside, the Group of Seven painted in bold contrasting colours and forms. Besides permitting her to discover the existence of a community of Canadian artists who were on a quest similar to hers, the exhibition of Carr’s work permitted Eastern Canada to become familiar with elements of the First-Nations, West-Coast culture and with the unique landscape of the West. This theme is not fully developed in the play. Marchessault is not interested in Canadian nationalism and conventional politics, but Carr has been designated by Karen Wilken as a maple-leaf modernist ("Maple-leaf modernist: the case of Emily Carr") and Federalist cultural
institutions such as Heritage Canada exploit her legend and present her as a unifying pan-Canadian artist, whose edifying and expressive love of her homeland should serve as an example to all Canadians.

Emily also mediates between the animal world and the human world. She understands the cats' language in her *deuxième voyage dans le vieux monde* and allows these animals, which are D'Sonoqua's spiritual assistants, to guide her into the dark green she uses for her paintings. She raises dogs to help returning soldiers cure their moral scars and live in harmony with their painful self-torturing memories; "Mes chiens vont les garder d'eux-mêmes" (24). She is able to experience and relive the suffering of her dog's death as if it were her own: "Je lui ai fait perdre tout sa valeur à cette balle qui nous a transpercé le cœur, mon petit chien et moi" (44).

She mediates between these realms in her everyday life and on a mythical level in which she fuses animal and human imageries and references. One recurring theme is how she associates her mother with an enormous imaginary protective cow: "Au-dessus du lopin de terre, plane encore l'esprit de la maternité: celui de la vache de notre enfance, à mes sœurs et à moi. Une grande vache blanche et rousse, aux cornes pointues" (45). At night she perceives how this protective cow, which she associates with her home, imposes a serene silence and unites the universe: "Quand la nuit tombe et les Indiens et les Indiennes s'allongent sur la terre pour le magnifique voyage du sommeil, soudain, dans les forêts de toute la côte ouest, les lumières et les oiseaux se taisent quand elle apparaît, étincelante dans l'air nocturne, celle que j'ai baptisée La Maison de toutes les espèces" (45). In a study on Maori mediating styles, James Ritchie describes the process of mediating through myth:

The mediating person, either as a prophet of the future or a priest of the past is moving or would wish to move himself or herself as well as others from now to
then. [...] the mediator may wish to move a cultural element or trait from one
culture to another, one time to another. [...] the mediator is moving not in time,
but in cultural space, or even in geographical space” ("Tam Tu, Tama Ora:
Mediating Styles in Maori Culture" 225).

Carr presented D’Sonoqua to the Caucasian audience, and now she introduces the Caucasian-
matriarchal symbol of the cow and her home into the First-Nations peoples’ dreams. This
defamiliarization tactic allows the audience to perceive elements of their own culture and of the
other culture freshly and consider them equally erratic or plausible.

The imaginary approximation of cultures through myths “allows transcendence of the
personal limitations, the frailties, and the failings of the individual. It creates a buoyant sweep of
effectiveness, and sets up the nature of the mediators’ reinforcers that will work to induct others
into the new way and support the mediating behaviour of the agent of change” (Ritchie 226).
Marchessault riddles her play with myths and spiritual references so that the audience will focus
on Carr’s romanticized global aspirations rather than on her personal shortcomings. The other
important animal symbol included in the text is Emily’s ‘elephant’, the lyric name which Carr
gave to her modern motorized trailer tent. Though it is not a real animal, Carr views the vehicle
as a protective animal, like the cow, which allows her to go on prolonged painting excursions in
the woods. Through this reference to an East-Asian animal, Marchessault makes Carr transcend
Caucasian and Amerindian mythology and incorporate an exotic animal associated principally
with Hinduism and vegetarianism, and the colour green, into her basically bi-cultural narration,
“Comme une vache sacrée, il mange de l'herbe” (81) and links Carr’s matriarchal cult of the
mother cow to the ancient adoration of cows in India.
Marchessault also shows how her heroine mediates between death and the afterlife. Emily is able to communicate with D’Sonoqua and recall all the Indians who were persecuted in the past. “Je sais tout ce que tu as vu passer: les femmes terrorisées qui fuyaient avec leurs enfants, les guerriers, les incendiaires, le grand déploiement des missionnaires” (62). This approximation allows her to immortalize these lost lives. But she also concretely accompanies her two beloved ones to the afterlife. Sophie has allowed Emily to become acquainted with and accept death. She gave birth to nearly twenty children, and in particular to a baby girl she named Emily in her friend’s honour. Almost all of them, including baby Emily, died in infancy. Sophie communicated with them daily and initiated Emily to her particular rituals and beliefs. When Lizzie’s time came, Emily was able to reach out to Lizzie in an imprecise unconscious zone: “cette scène n’a pas un lieu terrestre précis. C’est une scène du Seuil, du passage de Lizzie dans un autre univers” (87) and help her part peacefully. She also facilitates Sophie’s death by placing the painting of D’Sonoqua in front of her eyes, upon her friend’s request and by embracing her and holding her in her arms. Through these scenes Marchessault portrays one of the beneficial aspects of the Amerindian culture which Emily adopted. Death is not considered a tragedy, it is not an end but a transitional phase, as Sophie claims, “Entre une goutte d’eau et sa voisine, y a-t-il une séparation? Jamais de séparation nulle part” (96). It also is a means to indicate the perdurability of all individuals and cultures. Carr visually and textually documents their immortal vitality.

The entire play is about the importance of mediation through the arts, in this case, painting and writing. It is a lesson on why art is important and what makes Carr’s painting and writing interesting. Sophie explains why Carr’s output is more outstanding than hers. She uses her artistic gifts to as a means to achieve total mediation, the unification of mankind. “Je ne suis
pas une artiste comme mon Em’ly: dans son tunnel, elle ouvre des portes pour nous rapprocher” (55). Marchessault considers Carr’s painting original because she used colour to create form, as Emily explains, “la perspective, c’est de la pure magie! Elle s’obtient facilement par les couleurs” (69). Emily used principally greens to compose her paintings. Emily exteriorizes the least visible aspect of reality, as confirmed by Harris: “le vert est une couleur de l’ombre. C’est en partie parce qu’ils sont sombres que tes tableaux donnent cette extraordinaire impression de vie” (67). This appreciation can be extrapolated, Marchessault suggests that Emily is a matriarchal ecological advocate, she explored and executed nature’s emblematic colour, related in Amerindian tradition to the moon. Carr’s mastery of green is compared with Van Gogh’s command of yellow, the colour of the sun: “Van Gogh a peint ses lumineux tournesols dans les tons sombres parce qu’il connaissait la vraie couleur des tournesols, ces fleurs qui ont volé au soleil le secret du jaune” (69). He was able to connect with a patriarchal symbol, just as Emily obtained the recipe for her greens from the matriarchal-identified moon and D’Sonoqua. Carr’s writing is also presented as being superior because instead of being linear and developing a main plot, it is multidirectional, detailed and all-encompassing: “Tout ce que j’écrirai sera fragmentaire en regard de ceux qui l’ont vécu” (108).

The second mediating figure is Sophie. She is compelled to cross the cultural divide because she is an artist, like Emily, and because she is a philosopher. She is an ideal mediator who teaches Emily (and by extension the audience) the comparative peculiarities of the Amerindian and Christian cultures. “Sophie ne se dérange pas pour rien: elle m’apporte chaque fois, des signes, des devoirs ou des leçons” (71). She harbours hostility towards neither her Native culture nor Emily’s Victorian culture. Like Emily she cross-dresses, wears English cut clothes, but uses a shawl, which recalls the West-Coast First-Nations people’s use of a blanket
instead of a coat as an outer garment. “Elle porte une jupe écossaise, un chemisier et, sur les épaules, un grand châle qu’elle fait tenir en place en serrant les coudes, la frange glissant entre ses doigts” (31). Sophie is identified as a positive person because she wears a bright sun-coloured shawl, and through this detail, among others, the author indicates that Sophie is able to transcend her great personal suffering and illuminate Emily’s miserable life. As has been discussed Sophie initiates Emily to First Nation spirituality, and in particular to their beliefs concerning death and the afterlife. On a global level Sophie facilitates Emily’s communication with the dead spirits and allows her to communicate with D’Sonoqua, who she impersonates. On a more ‘practical’ level, she serves as a communication channel between Emily and Lizzie in life and in death. Sophie reads Lizzie’s mind, announces her extreme fatigue and the fact that she intends to will her goods to Emily, and when Lizzie passes away, she explains that the openings and new colours of Emily’s paintings come from Lizzie:

SOPHIE: Madame Lizzie est en train de broder mon Em’ly sur son manteau bleu nuit.

EMILY: (...) Dis-lui que je vois des trous bleus dans les arbres et que je ne sais pas qui les a faits!

SOPHIE: Elle dit que c’est elle: c’est là qu’elle prend les couleurs de sa broderie. (95)

When Sophie dies, Emily stops painting and starts writing because she no longer enjoys Sophie’s and Lizzie’s sustaining and inspirational closeness. The subtext of these close relations is that art, especially amongst women, is a collaborative not an individual process. Emily never could have taken the extraordinary and life-changing trip East without Sophie’s and Lizzie’s factual and moral support. They convinced her to leave, helped her pack her suitcases and
promised to take care of her animals and home. Emily also never could have painted D’Sonoqua without Sophie’s formative input, and once she discovered the green ‘queendom’, she never could have moved out of the forest without Lizzie’s metaphorical embroidery intervention, as explained by Sophie.

Lizzie is the third mediator who allows Emily to keep in contact with Victorian society and who interacts positively with Sophie despite the cultural gap. Lizzie represents the good side of Victorian culture. She sometimes justly and sometimes unjustly accuses Emily of estranging herself from Victorian society. Marchessault compares Lizzie’s and Emily’s personalities and lifestyles and allows the audience to perceive Emily as an unbalanced person, whose oversensitivity, outbursts of anger and eccentric lifestyle, whether compulsive or calculated, harmed her career, as described by Lizzie, “Victoria a le dos large, tu n’as jamais voulu prendre une attitude qui aurait pu te concilier une partie de l’opinion publique” (91). Lizzie is the one who brings the famous letter inviting Emily to participate in the Ottawa Exhibition. The audience is lead to understand that over the years Lizzie has served as Emily’s secret secretary and has maintained cordial relations with the cultural establishment, against her sister’s will and in a more subservient style.

Marchessault uses Lizzie to point out the similarities rather than the differences between the Victorian and Amerindian cultures. Forced to socialize through their mutual connections with Emily, Lizzie and Sophie realize they have much in common and become friends, to the point that Sophie is able to serve as a communicative transmitter between Emily and Lizzie, after the elder sister’s death, as seen earlier. They become aware of their mutual remote childhood memories of being physically and morally nourished through matriarchal sources, as Lizzie points out, “Une grande jatte de lait de jument ou de vache! On n’a pas idée des odeurs qui
remplissent un cerveau d’enfant” (54). The women’s common matriarchal past enables them to transcend cultural differences. They are both dextrous. A basket and costume maker, Sophie is also a potent masseuse, “mon amant, dit que mes massages lui donnent des forces surnaturelles. Nous avons de grandes fêtes avec nos corps. Frank dit qu’il a l’impression de baigner dans un fluide ensorcelé” (55). Sophie provides complete pleasure, while Lizzie is a professional masseuse who specializes in searching and curing people from traumatic childhood experiences which she believes lodges in a specific part of the body. “Elle masse les mains d’Emily […] Je masse avec plus de ferveur le petit bout de peau autour duquel le corps a grandi” (77).

As in all of her history plays Marchessault’s mediation of history in Le Voyage magnifique d’Emily Carr contains numerous minor and major fictions. Carr’s biography is a challenging subject matter because the main sources, the protagonist’s autobiographical writings, are famous for their contradictory testimonies and data. Her writings have been decried by some scholars because they are packed with lies, and others have hailed them as defiant feminist texts in which the author purposely manipulates reality—which per se is an unstable concept—in order to empower herself. Suzanne Crean summarizes the Carr controversy, “The disagreement among scholars, critics, and enthusiasts over Carr’s story have increased over the years along with her popularity, the one feeding off the other” (The Laughing One 16). Crean describes various positive and negative appraisals of Carr’s persona and œuvre:

Even feminist critics sometimes doubt her aesthetic achievements. And those writing about postcolonialism typically view her as an agent of colonialization whose use of Native art benefited only herself and Canadian culture but never any Native community. We are unsure even as we embrace her. And which version of the Carr story are we to believe? The one about the star-crossed modern artist
who prevails against the current of conformity to finally make it in the end? The one about genius tempered in pain and trapped in Victoria, or, for that matter, the one about the neurotic, sexually repressed social misfit who is hailed in her dotage despite her patently crazy behavior? Or perhaps the more recent version featuring the lonely, depressed, postmenopausal woman, who brings about her own spiritual transformation? (17)

Marchessault offers another alternative version of Carr’s biography in which she presents her heroine as a propitious artist who tried to approximate cultures at large, and who on a personal level allowed Sophie and Lizzie to become friends. Marchessault shows how the three women—a matriarchal trinity rooted in a matri-focal culture—worked collaboratively to nourish and sustain Emily in her multi-cultural enterprise. Sophie is presented as one, if not the most important facilitating element of Carr’s successful quest. Marchessault can not be accused of exploiting Carr’s legend to promote Canadian nationalism at the First-Nations expense. A Québécois-métis, she speaks out of a peripheral Canadian and Caucasian/Amerindian perspective and posits both Emily and Sophie on elevating pedestals.

She can however be accused of over-indulging in forcing facts to embellish her heroines. The most relevant falsifications are that Emily’s favourite sister was Alice the school teacher and not Lizzie the physiotherapist. The playwright preferred to star Lizzie in her play in order to embroider around her curing personality and talents, to establish a profound connection between Sophie and Lizzie, and to emphasize her British ascendance through her name which recalls the powerful Renaissance monarch Elizabeth I and the present Queen of England, Elizabeth II. The playwright also upgrades and intensifies the relation between Emily and Sophie. Sophie lived on a reserve in Vancouver. Because of the distance and transportation problems between
Vancouver Island and the British Columbian mainland, the women met only occasionally. Emily found out late in life that Sophie was a drunkard and a prostitute. She narrates this discovery in the short story ‘Sophie’ in Klee Wyck. Some biographers, like Susan Crean in The Laughing One: A Journey to Emily Carr, see Emily’s relationship with Sophie as superficial and condescending:

Her representation of the interactions between the two of them are stylized and two-dimensional: Sophie disappears behind a haze of platitudes and invented jargon, jargon that gets so mannered that Emily herself ends up speaking fractured Chinook to Sophie’s English in an early version of “Sophie”. Carr’s Sophie is quiet, unassuming, and unschooled, and thus conformed nicely to contemporary White prejudices about Native women. Some might argue that Carr had her bigoted audience in mind and was merely inventing a Sophie she thought would be more palatable to the public—more “Indian,” in any case—but the fiction was accepted as truth. [...] the story of Sophie’s “funny” English led many to assume the friendship with Emily was romantic projection, more symbol and surface than real exchange. (389)

Marchessault portrays the relationship under an entirely different light in which Sophie is presented in the limelight and is identified with Amerindian mythology and D’Sonoqua.

Emily Carr is as famous to the Canadian art milieu and dilettantes as Lizzie Borden is to the American legal profession and to murder mystery amateurs. One might wonder what prompted Marchessault to retell Carr’s possibly all too known and controversial biography to modern audiences. The biographical drama on the life and times of Emily Carr is Marchessault’s most autobiographical play. Through this play on a woman artist obsessed with goddess totems,
Marchessault explains her own relation to and production of matriarchal First-Nations totemic art and her cross-cultural agenda. In this case Marchessault, through Carr, explains what she considers artists’ role in society. She presents Carr as an artist whose total domination of her medium, painting and particularly the colour green, is due to her professional formation, but mainly to her spiritual contact with the goddess of the woods. The playwright presents the artist as more than a gifted individual, she presents her as a divine mediator—in the Deuxième Voyage dans le vieux monde when she enters into communication with several cats, the goddess’ spirit guides, Marchessault intimates she is a saint: “La lumière change, Emily semble environée d’un halo” (29). The play enables the audience to decode what can be described as Carr’s erratic behaviour, and conceive her as a spiritual artist charged with a divine mission and rationalize with hindsight her complex personality and creative trajectory.
CHAPTER THREE:

Patriarchal Mediators and Mediation in The Komagata Maru Incident

_The Komagata Maru Incident_ relates the biography of a cosmopolitan figure, the Inspector William Hopkinson (1878-1914) who lived during the height of British imperialism, who held strong cultural and emotional ties with India and England, and who attempted to integrate different cultures in the adverse framework of colonialism. He acted as a diplomatic mediator between different races, cultures and religions.

_The Komagata Maru Incident_, a crisis of international magnitude, took place in Vancouver prior to the outbreak of the First World War. The play recounts the six-week ordeal of 376 Asian passengers, mainly Sikhs, who arrived in the port of Vancouver on the Japanese steamer, the Komagata Maru, where they were detained while their request to enter Canada was first discussed, then judged in court, and was finally denied. Most of the passengers were obliged to sail back to India. Hopkinson was the principal mediator between the Sikhs and the Canadian authorities. The prolonged dealings, the sufferings and deprivations imposed on the passengers, the failed naval attack to seize and expel them, and the ordeal’s unjust outcome created resentment amongst the Vancouver Sikhs as well as the Komagata Maru’s passengers. The ‘incident’ culminated in violent events in Canada and in India. It led to a chain of retaliatory murders in Vancouver, which included the assassination of the inspector, the hanging of his Sikh murderer, and the death of approximately twenty people during the riot which took place at the Komagata Maru’s arrival in the port of Budge-Budge near Calcutta.

The drama centres on the historical mediator’s role intervening in the conflict principally between East-Asian Sikhs and Canadian officials. The play intimates the ideal qualities,
functions, conditions and objectives of a diplomatic mediator of international conflicts and allows the audience to appraise Hopkinson's mediating capacities. The other mediator character, T.S., participates in Hopkinson's mediating functions, and acts as an iconic mediator who symbolizes realities which transcend the stage. He also serves as a mediator in his role of chorus linking the play’s and the audience's worlds.

The play addresses complex historical events and figures which evolved in a vast and rapidly changing international scene and which involved a large number of people of different cultures and social spheres. Pollock has condensed the historical data and transformed it into theatrical form. The playwright separates the stage into four symbolic playing areas and uses a relatively small cast of six characters to relate the plight of the 376 passengers, to describe the Vancouver municipal, the British Columbia provincial, and the Canadian federal bureaucracies', as well as the British and American governments' involvement in the operation, to illustrate the media's coverage and to present the reaction of the Vancouver Sikh community and of Vancouver citizens to the event. Each of these manoeuvres brings attention to mediation and the play itself as a form of mediation.

An area above and behind the main playing stage area is occupied by Woman, the iconic representative of the Sikh passengers, “An open grill-like frame in front of her gives both the impression of a cage, and of the superstructure of a ship” (The Komagata Maru Incident  IV). She is permanently exposed like a circus animal to make the audience continually aware that the play’s predominant theme is the denunciation of the Canadian institutions’ and people’s racism towards visual minorities who are portrayed as being exposed, ostracized, and prevented from publicly expressing their side of the story.
The second and centre stage acting area, where most of the interaction between the characters occurs, is a brothel where Inspector Hopkinson has established his clandestine spy headquarters. Pollock situates the main action in a brothel to evidence the immigration department's underhanded and opaque tactics, to symbolize Hopkinson's moral sell out, and finally to demonstrate the opposition between the Inspector's self adulating discourse about his Britishness and his stark reality. He is actually a pariah who lives in the margins of mainstream Caucasian society amongst prostitutes and coloured spies—'brown rats' as the brothel madam Evy calls them—who are paid to betray their brethren and who report clandestinely to the inspector at the brothel's back door.

An arching runway which surrounds the brothel, is the third playing area occupied by T.S. Pollock situates this character in this frontier space between the play and the audience to signify his mobile and controlling role. He regulates much of the incoming and outgoing information, supervises what happens inside and outside of the play and orchestrates the action within the inner play.

The fourth playing area consists of benches situated stage left and stage right, where the actors, when not playing a specific role in the drama, sit and watch the show. They represent the audience symbolically implicating and including the spectators in the action, yet creating a distance and preventing the audience from identifying with the individual characters caught in the unfolding drama. This technique allows Pollock to constantly remind the audience that they are viewing actors 'playing history' and suggest that the audience forms part of that history.

Because of the complexity and magnitude of the Komagata Maru ordeal, each of the six characters is invested with a highly symbolic role. T.S. is the play's most flamboyant figure. He is a master of ceremonies who runs the play in circus/carnival style and plays numerous roles. In
the inner play he acts as Hopkinson’s commanding officer at Immigration. He is a highly metaphorical figure who has no real name and is only designated by his enigmatic but significant initials, “[...] because T.S. Eaton’s initials stuck in her mind, says Pollock, although various critics have given the initials other meanings, notably The System” (Gilbert, “Sharon Pollock” 116). Pollock endows him with an entertainer’s costume and banter style to allow him to present the tragic ordeal as an amusing show. He represents the patriarchal establishment in contrast to the matriarchal symbolic figure, Woman.

Pollock chose to have Woman represent the Sikh passengers, who were almost all men. Her generic, rather than specific name, Woman, emphasizes that the play is about a coloured group’s plight rather than about personal destinies. She presents the story through the weakest passengers’ perspective, that of a woman and her unseen and unheard son. In her essay “Broken Toys”, Heidi Holder underlines Woman’s fictitious identity, “[...] the passengers themselves are represented by one figure who is flatly unhistorical, since the only two women on the Komagata Maru were travelling with their husbands” (134). The fictional character Woman accentuates the passengers’ innocent victimization. Her plight demonstrates how unjust treatment sows the seeds of political militancy in even the least predisposed. Woman also serves as a stylistic instrument to counterbalance T.S.’s ubiquity and manipulative verbosity and as a psychological device to haunt Hopkinson and remind him of his Indian mother whom he repudiates.

Hopkinson, the main ‘mortal’ and the only genuine historical character, is presented as an ambitious, efficient civil servant who, because of his privileged knowledge of the British, Canadian and Indian bureaucracies and cultures, is appointed to serve as the mediator in the Komagata Maru ordeal. Depicted as a confused individual torn between professional obligations and personal accountability, he disapproves of the government’s inhumane policies but
implements them nonetheless. His moral dilemma is further exacerbated by his schizophrenic psychological make up. Of hybrid maternal Indian and paternal British ancestry, he compulsively conceals the former and boasts about the latter. Hopkinson only comes to terms with his double heritage at the end of the play. Accepting and playing out his death as a Sikh mortuary dance and perceiving his slayer as a destructive purifying god allows Hopkinson to pay his dues and attain eternal peace.

The brothel manager and Hopkinson’s mistress, Evy, is “the stereotypically good-hearted whore who has sympathy for the plight of the would-be immigrants” (Bessai, “Sharon Pollock’s Women” 128). She reproaches Hopkinson’s use of her facilities and employee for his undercover activities. She rejects Canadians’ reactions to the potential immigrants, sees through Hopkinson’s dilemma, “senses that Hopkinson’s racism may have a hidden cause in his own ambiguous racial background” (128), and finally reveals his secret.

Georg Braun is a German landed immigrant who has been installed by T.S. in Hopkinson’s informal intelligence centre to keep tabs on him. Braun enthusiastically offers his help and entertains the hope of receiving further compensation by being granted Canadian citizenship and by possibly obtaining a good job at immigration. By setting him up in the brothel Pollock evidences the Canadian Immigration Department’s unequal and interested treatment of immigrants. It places potentially dangerous white Aryans from an enemy country on the brink of the First World War in the heart of Hopkinson’s intelligence headquarters while it keeps brown allies at bay.

Sophie, Evy’s ‘employee’ and Georg’s ‘lover’ is an ignorant arriviste, who hopes to ‘go places’ with her German client. Bessai describes her as “a specific example of the racist ambience to which the master of ceremonies is constantly drawing attention: her interest in the
sensationalism confirms her own bigotry” (Bessai “Sharon Pollock’s Women” 129). Younger than Hopkinson and Evy, Georg and Sophie represent the generational shift, and are potential social climbers who support the Canadian government’s racist and pro-war policies out of self-interest.

The inner play’s plot concerns Hopkinson’s growing confusion over his role as the intermediary between the passengers and the Canadian authorities. He becomes despondent to his boss who drives him harder and harder and becomes more and more haunted by Woman whom he wishes and manages to reach through death. The play concludes with a competing duel between Woman and T.S., while Sophie and Georg, like the audience, contemplate the action from the benches. Evy has exited the stage to get away from it all: “I can leave... I can leave... And I will” (45, author’s ellipses), and Hopkinson has died. Woman claims that she will remember Mewa Singh (the Sikh priest who was hung for murdering Hopkinson) and repeats his last words, while T.S. “does a shoe shuffle [. . .] and makes a large but simple bow” (47), and presents himself ironically as the audience’s servile entertainer. These two characters address the audience in the denouement to show that patriarchy and matriarchy are two forces that are alive and well.

Pollock manipulates factual material, compressing, omitting, downplaying or exaggerating historical data in order to intensify her dramatization. The Komagata Maru Incident does not mention that the trip was planned, organized and largely financed by the charismatic Sikh Punjabi-born businessman Gurdit Singh. Hugh Johnston provides the following description of the instigator of the Komagata Maru odyssey in The Voyage of the Komagata Maru: “Gurdit Singh was fifty-five in 1913: an old man of good appearance, white-bearded, with smiling eyes, patriarchal, a self-taught, self-made man” (25). He was in Hong
Kong to reclaim debts from a previous partner and stayed at the Sikh gurdwara (temple) out of which he conducted his business. He witnessed the desperation of Sikhs who had intended to travel to Canada, but whose plans were thwarted by the recently approved laws which prevented East-Asian immigration to Canada.

Asian immigration had risen at the beginning of the twentieth century. Euro-Canadians resented the massive influx of immigrants of colour, “Politicians and labour leaders in British Columbia had campaigned against oriental immigration since C.P.R. contractors had imported Chinese coolies in the 1870’s and 1880’s” (Johnston 4). Chinese immigration declined and the Canadian government attained a gentleman’s agreement with the Japanese government which “promised to limit Japanese emigration to 400 a year” (Johnston 4). Emigration from India had increased and the Canadian government, headed by the Prime Minister Sir Wilfred Laurier, was reluctant to take measures to obstruct emigration within the British Empire. The Viceroy of India and his Council preferred that Indians remain in their homeland to avoid the spreading of the incipient independence movement within the expatriate Indian community. The Canadian government found a means to satisfy the Indian authorities and to contain emigration from India:

all they [Indian authorities] asked was that discrimination be disguised, and, respecting this wish, Laurier’s government drafted two ingenious orders-in-council, one requiring that all Asian immigrants entering Canada possess at least $200, and the other prohibiting the landing of any immigrant who came other than by a continuous passage [. . .] They were issued in 1908, and they brought Sikh immigration to an abrupt halt. (Johnston 4 & 5)

During his sojourn in Hong Kong, Gurdit Singh endorsed the ideas of the Ghadr (Mutiny) party and roused the Sikhs in speeches delivered in the temple to adhere to the
movement's ideas. Har Dayal, the founder and leader of the Hindu Association of the Pacific Coast, established in San Francisco, explained the significance of *Ghadr* in the first issue of the American weekly published in November 1913 called *Ghadr*, which was distributed to Indian expatriates and nationals. Johnston reproduces excerpts which describe the party's objectives, "'What is our name? Mutiny. What is our work? Mutiny. Where will this mutiny break out? In India. When will it break out? In a few years. Why should it break out? Because the people can no longer bear the oppression and tyranny practised under British rule and are ready to fight and die for freedom'" (15 & 16). The Sikhs whose trip to Canada had been interrupted by the 1908 orders-in-council convinced Gurdit Singh to act upon his words.

He chartered, through a German shipping agency, a small steamer owned by a Japanese company used to carry coal, which was sparsely reconditioned to also carry passengers. He used personal capital and sold tickets to finance the expedition. The passengers were aware of the venture's provocative nature and uncertain outcome. Singh got involved for humanitarian, but also for political reasons: "He saw in it an act of patriotism which, win or lose, would win him recognition amongst nationalists in India" (Johnston 25).

As Johnston outlines, despite great and costly efforts, Gurdit Singh and the passengers did not win the moral and judicial battle against colonialism and were obliged to sail back to India. Back in their homeland, the passengers' difficulties continued. The boat was forced to dock at Budge-Budge, twenty seven miles from the intended landing point, Calcutta, on the 29th of September 1914. The Indian authorities had unilaterally decided to board the passengers on a train and send them to the Punjab. Exasperated, most of the passengers refused to comply and decided to march to Calcutta to deposit the *Granth Sahib*, the Sikh holy book, in a temple in Calcutta, and to meet the Governor. The Governor's representative intercepted and convinced
the marchers to return to Budge-Budge where he promised to heed their grievances. In the meanwhile, various colonial forces had congregated in Budge-Budge to confront the marchers on the road between the two cities. The ordeal ended in what is now recalled as the Budge-Budge riots which caused the deaths of over 20 people, almost all of them were Komagata Maru passengers. The authorities spent the following days, and in some cases years, pursuing marchers who had managed to flee in the dark.

Gurdit Singh was amongst the fortunate escapees. Considered the leader of an audacious anti-colonial enterprise, his mysterious and successful disappearance transformed him into a symbol of resistance and a celebrated hero. He decided after over seven years of hiding to resurface at a politically opportune moment. Arrested, imprisoned, and released on numerous occasions, he was elected in 1929 as a delegate to the All-Indian Congress session in Lahore and further pursued his political career until 1935. He spent his last years pursuing the British government over his great economic losses due to the Komagata Maru venture, writing his account of the journey and lobbying for the Indian government to raise a memorial in honour of the Budge-Budge riot victims. The monument was inaugurated on January 1, 1952 by the first Prime Minister of India, Nehru. Gurdit Singh died on July 24th, 1954, at the age of ninety five.

Many other key players are also omitted or are impersonally embodied by T.S. on the Canadian side of the Komagata Maru ordeal. The principle local anti-Sikh authority was Hopkinson’s superior, Malcom J. Reid, the Vancouver immigration agent who owed his job to the local Conservative M.P. H.H. Stevens, “a rabid opponent of Indian immigration, and he acted like Stevens’ minion” (Johnston 19). Johnston describes Reid’s and Hopkinson’s collaboration, “In Hopkinson Indians encountered the long arm of the Indian government, but in Reid and Stevens they ran into local prejudice pure and simple” (19).
Pollock presents Hopkinson as an asocial person who lives on the fringes of society, which was not the case. He was married to a British woman and had two daughters, “Nellie a girl from London’s Highgate district trained as a stenographer [...] and daughters Jean and Constance [...] both born in Vancouver” (Johnston 129). She also exploits unconfirmed suppositions about Hopkinson’s racial identity. Johnston contrasts information provided by Hopkinson with administrative data and conjectures that his mother was Indian. “Agnes may have been the European name of an Indian wife” (143). According to Holder, it is not clear whether his mother was English or Indian, but “Pollock has latched on to this rumor and made it the central motivating force for Hopkinson” (“Broken Toys” 137).

Pollock and Johnston differ about Hopkinson’s attitude and role. Pollock presents Hopkinson as an obedient civil servant who implements his superiors’ orders and who relates with Sikh informants condescendingly and has minimal contacts with the Sikh passengers. According to Johnston, Hopkinson was an important, conspicuous and respected figure at immigration and he frequented the Sikh community openly. Johnston portrays him as actively engaged in the Komagata Maru negotiation process. He was expressly requested by the passengers on numerous vital occasions to impart their objections and demands, and channel information between the boat committee and the Canadian authorities. At several crucial moments his intervention prevented an outbreak of violence. Pollock portrays him as a mentally unstable mediator who over-served his superior because he didn’t want his ethnic background to be discovered.

Pollock makes few references to the Shore Committee. She explains that the Immigration Department prevented a launch from delivering the mandatory $200 per person expense money to the steamer. She does not describe the Shore Committee’s permanent
involvement in the incident—it supported the passengers financially, legally and morally. The Committee collected funds which it used to help supply the passengers, to promote their cause, and to hire a lawyer, Mr. Bird, to present their case to the Vancouver population, but especially to the courts. Mr. Bird is not referred to in the play, yet he was the legal counsel who enabled the passengers, through the case study of two passengers, to present their case in court.

The Sikhs are also presented as accidental victims of colonialism. As previously mentioned, the trip was planned and undertaken with the intention of defying Canada’s new immigration laws, especially the continuous passage clause. Admittedly, many of the passengers were illiterate peasants, who even though informed that their expedition could be perilous, were unable to grasp and foresee the upcoming complications, but Gurdit Singh, the educated Sikhs and the veteran soldiers who had served in British wars could. And on the Canadian side, most Canadians were not unfavourable to Sikh immigration, as portrayed by Pollock. The Khalsa Diwan Society and the United Indian League held a meeting on Sunday, June 21st in Vancouver, in which “Four hundred Indians attended and 125 whites from the Socialist party” (Johnston 48) showed support for the Komagata Maru passengers. The dramatist mentions the running of guns, but avoids the issue of the installation of radical independence movements of the Third World in the First World.

The historian and the playwright also diverge in their interpretation of Mewa Singh’s profession and role. Pollock presents him as a pacific Sikh priest and a loving son who refused to communicate with Hopkinson, and who was pushed to murder the inspector to avenge the flagrant injustice and unethical handling of the Komagata Maru ordeal. Johnston claims that Mewa Singh was a layman who, in order to avoid a prison sentence for running guns, befriended Hopkinson and became an informant. The reasons why Mewa Singh murdered Hopkinson have
never been clarified. Johnston affirms that Canadian authorities preferred to publicize the theory that he was “a weak-minded man who had betrayed his own countrymen, and, when they put the pressure on him, had shot Hopkinson to atone” (130), yet suspected him of executing ghadrites’ instructions. The Sikhs were prompted to consider his gesture as self-sacrificial, “But the Sikhs were told by their people that Mewa Singh had endeared himself to Hopkinson and had acted as his informer so that he could get a chance to take revenge. He was, they said, a true hero and martyr” (Johnston 130).

Various accounts acknowledge the rowdiness of the Komagata Maru affair. Johnston affirms that the steamship and its ‘exotic cargo’ had transformed the Vancouver harbour into a fascinating pubic attraction. It became the city’s most exciting spot after the spectacular but disastrous Sea Lion night attack and the announcement that the Komagata Maru was to leave on July 22nd under the supervision of a freshly refurbished battleship, the Rainbow Warrior. On that day great crowds congregated: “The roofs of the post office and other large buildings near the water and even some buildings further back, were congested with spectators. Thousands of people had gathered at the ends of the streets opening onto the harbour, and thousands more had pushed onto the wharves and piers. Vancouver had taken the day off to see the show” (Johnston 81 & 82). Pollock takes the situation a step farther and exaggeratedly transforms the animated Komagata Maru site into a circus/carnival show orchestrated by a master of ceremonies.

Pollock opted to mediate an event of Canada’s past to familiarize the audience with an unjust occurrence of their collective history to demonstrate to Canadians that Canada was and is a residually racist nation. Nothof quotes Pollock’s unpublished programme note from the first production of the play in which she articulates her main ideological objective:
To know where we are going, we must know where we have been and what we have come from. Our attitude towards the non-white peoples of the world and of Canada is one that suffers from residue effects of centuries of oppressive policies which were given moral and ethical credence by the fable of racial superiority. [. . .] The attitudes expressed by the general populace of that time, and paraphrased throughout the play, are still around today, and until we face this fact, we can never change it. ("Crossing Borders", 479)

Her purpose is to make the audience aware of their own racist attitudes and its effects in and on society at large and in Canada in particular.

_The Komagata Maru Incident_ is a drama about mediation. Because The Komagata Maru ordeal concerns so many figures, nations, and involves international espionage, that it is difficult to recompile and establish a single and reliable account of the event. Whereas Johnston, as a professional historian, does his utmost to convince readers of the veracity of his documented and conjectural historical discourse, Pollock goes out of her way to highlight the relativity of the contents of her history drama. In her initial introductory notes Pollock professes that her play is based on a biased interpretation of history: "_The Komagata Maru Incident_ is a theatrical impression of an historical event seen through the optique of the stage and the mind of the playwright" (III). In effect, five out of six characters are imaginary, the event is depicted as an over-sized circus number, and it is presented mainly through a burlesque character, T.S.

Pollock’s history play is an obtrusive mediation of history in which she brings the audience’s attention to mediation. In _The Komagata Maru Incident_, as in almost all of her plays, she resorts to metatheatrical devices to highlight the constructed nature of her history play, as most history plays do, as mentioned in the introduction. Through T.S., Pollock shows how white
patriarchal history is made and audiences' responsibility in the production of historical discourses. *The Komagata Maru Incident* is neither a realist nor a naturalist play, it exposes the creative process through a fictive character, T.S. who mediates between the inner play which contains the other characters and the outer play in which he addresses himself to the audience.

The metatheatrical set-up, technique and character makes the audience perceive how history is made through the symbolic narrator's filtering discourse. Through T.S. Pollock presents white patriarchal establishment's fabrication of history. Through Woman she insinuates the missing gaps of patriarchal history and through Hopkinson she shows how the predominant narrative of patriarchy can undermine and destroy an individual, and by extension a nation. The metatheatrical references make the audience formulate questions such as: Is T.S. a trustworthy and complete source of information on the Komagata Maru ordeal? Why is Woman exposed and allowed only to speak to an imaginary child? In other words why she so well seen and never heard? What are audiences role in history? Why do they vituperate Woman instead of letting her speak and listening to her? What is their relation to T.S? Does he impose his discourse on the audience or does the audience tacitly adhere to his discourse because it benefits them? What do the Sikhs have to say about the Komagata Maru ordeal? Why is their experience of the ordeal neither recorded nor transmitted to the general public? These questions lead to more general ones, such as; who writes history, and why?, and to more particular ones, who wrote this play and why?, and what is my personal involvement in the making of history?

*The Komagata Maru Incident* is also a drama about a conflict resolution mediator, as defined by Christopher Moore. Pollock's drama could have put more emphasis on the charismatic ghadrite leader, Gurdit Singh, on the plight of the boat people and on the Canadian authorities' and people's reaction to their presence and on the sustained political repercussions
on the passengers in India. She opted to focus on the mediator, Hopkinson, who was used and abused by the system. In reference to Walsh and The Komagata Maru Incident, Holder affirms that Pollock is not concerned with general historical events, "Pollock's use of the material in these two plays indicates that her interest lies not primarily in the conflict among different nations, factions or ethnic groups. She focuses attention on the men in the middle, the administrators or investigators, who function in the area between the power of governments and the resistance of the unwanted immigrants" ("Broken Toys" 135, author's italics).

As in Walsh's case, one can argue that Hopkinson was not a mediator, he was a Canadian civil servant who out of self and professional interest was obliged to follow orders and was conditioned to persuade the passengers to comply to his government's will. Similar to Walsh, he belonged to a period of the past in which government employees were appointed as mediators because impartial mediation was not on the agenda and professional mediators were in existent. Within the context of his lifetime, Hopkinson theoretically and practically was potentially an ideal mediator fully capacitated to negotiate a consensual outcome of the complex transnational conflict engendered by the arrival of the passengers on the Komagata Maru. He had first hand experience with all of the governments (American, British, Canadian and Indian) implicated in the crisis. His intelligence functions made him cognizant of North American and East Asian Indians' antecedents, and enabled him to differentiate between violently inclined Sikh separatists, earnest Sikhs in search of a better life in Canada and war veterans who considered they had a right to immigrate to a country within the British Empire in compensation for their services. He was fully aware of the British forces' recruitment tactics and promises; he served as a police instructor in Lahore and knew why the East Asians enrolled, and what they were encouraged to expect in return for their loyal services to the Crown.
A polyglot, he was able to deal with the English Canadians' and Sikhs' claims in their native languages and with full knowledge of their customs, "There was no one else like him in the immigration service, no inspector with special language skills who was so exclusively concerned with a single ethnic group" (Johnston 2). Edward Said, as a cross-cultural literary critic of Arab origin living in the United States, considered himself qualified to evolve within and approximate two worlds: "Although I feel at home in them, I have remained, as a native from the Arab and the Muslim world, someone who also belongs to the other side. This has enabled me in a sense to live on both sides, and try to mediate between them" (Said, Culture and Imperialism, xxiii). An Anglo-Indian who moved from India to Canada, Hopkinson came from a background similar to Said's and would seem able to succeed in mediating between the Canadian government and the Sikh passengers, as Said did in the intellectual realm.

The literature on dispute mediation contains opposing opinions on the importance of a mediator's partiality or impartiality in the resolution of a conflict. Mediation theorists agree that complete impartiality is impossible, as Moore explains, "No one can be entirely impartial [...] What impartiality and neutrality do signify is that the mediator can separate his or her opinions about the outcome of the dispute from the desires of the disputants and focus on ways to help the parties make their own decisions without unduly favoring one of them" (15). Moore concludes by stating that "The final test of impartiality and neutrality of the mediator ultimately rests with the parties. They must perceive that the intervener is not overtly partial or unneutral in order to accept his or her assistance" (15). Moore defends the position that impartiality, as much as it can be achieved, is essential to mediation.

Other analysts observe that outsider mediators brought in to resolve a conflict which does not concern them can be counterproductive. Their obsession to appear or achieve impartiality
can lead them to intercede in an unrealistic manner. Jacob Bercovitch claims that partial mediators who are able to identify themselves with both adversaries are theoretically the most qualified ones, “The traditional emphasis on impartiality stems from the failure to recognize mediation as a reciprocal process of social interaction in which the mediator is the major participant” (Resolving International Conflicts, 25). Bercovitch further emphasizes the positive aspect of partiality, “Mediators are accepted by the adversaries not because of their impartiality but because of their ability to influence, protect, or extend the interests of each party in conflict” (25). He finds partiality an especially determining asset in cross-cultural mediation, “an “insider and partial”, is more likely to succeed than an “impartial outsider”. This is certainly the case when a mediator is connected to and known by both conflict parties, shares their culture, and is expected to live with the consequences of mediation. Such mediators inspire trust, an effective resource in mediation” (6). In accordance with Bercovitch’s postulate, the fact that Hopkinson identified himself with both cultures and was motivated by his desire to ‘save face’ was an advantage. His mixed racial identity enabled him to identify with both sides.

The international ramifications of the conflict were overwhelming, the centres of decision were far removed (Ottawa, London, and New Delhi) and all involved lent a deaf ear to the whole affair until the situation became critical. The Canadian, the British and the Indian governments were afraid to get involved and attempted to gain time. Britain did not want to open its doors to massive immigration from its numerous and densely populated colonies, and India did not want its nationals to become aware of Britain’s double standard. Britain accepted white European immigrants from any provenance and barred coloured members of the Empire. The public and international exposure of this practice would additionally fuel the incipient Indian independence movement. Pollock doesn’t highlight the British and the Indian governments’ involvement or
more precisely their attempts not to get involved, but she does indicate that the problem was a transnational one by insisting, through T.S., that the legislation on immigration was based on membership of the British Empire: “We are gathered here in the sight of God, and in the spirit of the British Empire to rule on the Komagata Maru’s contention that Catch 22, Regulation 23, Paragraph 4 is invalid” (10).

Canada was reluctant to take any decisions, because in 1907 Vancouver had experienced Caucasian riots organized by the recently created Asiatic Exclusion League to force the Premier of Canada, Wilfred Laurier, to check Asian immigration, “In September, a parade organized by the League became a riot after provocateurs directed marchers through the Chinese and Japanese headquarters” (Johnston 4). The local authorities were afraid to stir these old demons, and they also had to contend with the growing Vancouver East-Asian population. Pollock does not specifically mention these riots, but she does suggest that the matter had become conveniently and publicly a Canadian problem. The dramatist indicates that the affair concerned and transcended the British sphere of influence by exposing deceitful dealings between Hopkinson and the German, Georg, and between T.S. and the Japanese captain who is pressured to denounce the Sikh passengers against his better judgement and will. In appearance Hopkinson mediated between two parties, but in reality there were so many instances and parties involved that without all parties’ participation, the inspector’s mediating role was rendered futile.

Another adverse factor in the mediation process was the physical environment in which Hopkinson performed his duties. The passengers were confined to the boat anchored near the harbour where they were controlled by authorities and observed by passer byers. According to Bercovitch, “One of the central tasks of mediation is to accentuate cooperation and tendencies toward agreement. This is best achieved when the parties’ conflict management takes place in a
neutral environment, free from the external pressures and influences of constituents and media” (29). The environment is important to the mediation process because it:

allows the mediator to have procedural control over the process and the parties to concentrate on the more substantive issues. In a neutral environment, a mediator is able to create a level playing field by guaranteeing each party free equal access to information and resources, maintaining the flow of communication between the parties, and, where necessary, balancing power differences between the parties. (Bercovitch 29)

Hopkinson worked in a hostile framework where his mediating services were required during crises not to improve the situation but to prevent it from deteriorating. Despite Hopkinson, the Sikhs were treated inhumanely. The media, represented by T.S., nourished the population’s animosity by designating the Sikh passengers as a military threat, “The first wave of an Asian Invasion sits at anchor in Vancouver Harbour!” (10). Additionally, in his role of circus barker, T.S. constantly goads the spectators to perceive the Sikhs as beasts and incites them to violence. The Canadian people also actively antagonized the Sikhs. Pollock features the crowd’s (the Canadian people’s and the spectators’s in the theatre) hostility towards the Sikhs through Woman’s observations, “They say we are the enemies of Christ, the Prince of Peace; they will hate us with a perfect hatred; they will blast us with grape shot and rockets; they will beat us as small as dust before the wind!” (23). Evy’s testimony confirms the crowd’s volatile viciousness:

When we came round by the creek there was a queue for employment, a long line of men looking for work. [. . .] there was a man in a turban at the end of the line, [. . .] The man in the turban started to speak, he got out a few words, I didn’t
sense anger—and then it exploded. They knocked him down, the man in the turban, they were kicking, and then pushing and shoving to get in a blow. (16)

Hopkinson’s lack of leverage determined his inefficiency. He was never really allowed to act as a genuine mediator, he was exploited by immigration as a public relation agent to pacify and deceive the passengers. S. Touval states that “leverage is the ticket to mediation—third parties are only accepted as mediators if they are likely to produce an agreement or get them out of a predicament, and they can only help the parties or produce an agreement if they have leverage” (International Mediation in Theory and Practice, 12 & 13). Leverage implies the use of carrots and sticks, in which the mediator can make concrete promises and threats to cajole and intimidate the parties into moving towards agreement.

If Hopkinson had been attributed with genuine mediating functions to resolve the conflict with all of the concerned interlocutors in the appropriate conditions and atmosphere, he had the potential to move the cultural agenda. One of the important elements that prevented him from intervening between the Sikhs and the Canadian authorities was the Sikhs’ confinement to the boat, which evidenced their status of second class citizens of the British empire. Also immigration is a complex issue. It is understandable that the Canadian government was not willing to accept a large group of nearly 400 new immigrants without analysing each individual case, especially if the group came to sound the Empire’s immigration policy and if it included charismatic revolutionary activists (elements which are not pointedly mentioned in Pollock’s play).

Hopkinson could have capitalized on his double British-Indian ancestry and present his persona and career as the paragon of cross-cultural integration. Though Pollock places him in a seedy brothel, he was in fact a potentially edifying model for Canadians and Sikhs. In public
meetings he could have demonstrated that East Asian immigration could be salutary to Canada by signalling his success story, where a native from India, he learned English, became a top ranking Western civil servant, yet conserved his Oriental spiritualism, as Evy mentions, he “gets himself all dolled up, goes to the temple in disguise” (32).

Instead of being propitious, Hopkinson’s cross-cultural make up prevented him from being a competent mediator. One of Pollock’s recurring themes is Hopkinson’s abnormal pro-British chauvinism. He continuously proffers heinous remarks against the Indians such as, “The Calcutta coolie, Georg, belongs in India” (8), “Now, there’s your difference between white and coloured -- the Gift of Responsibility [...] if it weren’t for the British, they couldn’t construct a canoe, much less charter a steamer” (12) and, “The bastards! [...] The foolish bastards! [...] I’ll see it wrapped round with rot and rust and manned by skeletons before one bastard disembarks!” (23). He is obsessed with being perceived and accepted as a full-blooded British citizen because he believes that being British is better than being Indian. He chose to publicly identify himself with his British (white) side as he explains to Evy:

**HOPKINSON:** One has to make decisions. Commitments. To one side or another.

**Evy:** What side are you on?

**HOPKINSON:** The winning side.

**Evy:** Are you winning? (40 & 41)

While Edward Said accepted and conceived his dual cultural background positively and was able to “live on both sides, and try to mediate between them”, Hopkinson never accepted his Indian side and therefore he could never successfully navigate the cultural divide.
Pollock illustrates Hopkinson’s mental desequilibrium and how it affects him professionally in the tug boat attack episode. He was supposed to follow his commanding officer’s instructions and lead the assault. Instead of centring on performing his duties Hopkinson, dressed in a gold braided white uniform, made himself a highly visible, immobile and willing target, “I stand as straight as I can” (37). He ignored Georg’s repeated recommendations to get under cover and Georg exclamatively narrates that “Hopkinson’s hit again and again!” (37). Pollock presents Hopkinson’s attack as an unconscious submission to Woman and to his brethren to pay for his inhumane treatment of them and for his rejection of his mother. During this scene he allows himself to be bombarded with coal which blackens his skin and exteriorizes his concealed coloured ethnicity. Sophie comments on his changed aspect, “He looks like a chimney sweep, doesn’t he Georg?” (38). Though this episode marks a turning point in Hopkinson’s relation with T.S. (he no longer runs at his beck and call), the inspector is still not yet willing to accept his Indian heritage. He angrily orders Sophie to help him recuperate his whiteness as quickly as possible:

HOPKINSON: Get me some water!

SOPHIE: If you yell you can get it yourself. (38)

Hopkinson suffered from an inferiority complex which forced him to repress his Indian identity and transformed him into a neurotic individual which disqualified him as a mediator.

Pollock’s play encloses a double plot in which Hopkinson’s professional mediation in the Komagata Maru crisis affects his attitude towards his Indian otherness. The dramatist presents a story about racism at large exercised against the Sikh passengers, and analogously illustrates and demonstrates the real and personal effects of racism on an individual, “Hopkinson’s private racial conflicts are at the heart of this play” (Bessai, “Sharon Pollock’s Women” 128). Bessai
claims that the use of the particular to demonstrate the general is inoperative: "In the play as a whole, however the problem of trying to make the personalization of issues work within a presentational political structure is not resolved. For one thing, the potentially tragic figure of Hopkinson is a special case rather than a typically motivated example of racist thinking" ("Sharon Pollock's Women", 129). Denis Salter offers a similar opinion:

The emphasis on individual psychology, with its concern for the dignity of atonement, gives the audience relatively little to think about, beyond something lame or perhaps self-righteous (e.g. "too bad he had such trouble accepting his mother’s race", or "oh well, everything’s all right now that he’s able to come to terms with himself and behave properly by dying for his cause"). The audience is in effect left off the hook; it doesn’t have to pass judgement on itself, since it can all too readily pass judgement on him. ("(Im)possible worlds" 8)

These comments do not do justice to the full content of Pollock’s play. The mediator was a victim of white Western patriarchal ideology in which he was manipulated to believe that the white side was the winning one. Pollock demonstrates that not only the cross-cultural mediator who passes as a white, but all citizens can become victims of patriarchal imperialism. In one of the plays most extensive monologues, T.S.’s interruption and appropriation of Evy’s childhood memories, the master of ceremonies ironically recounts her communist past. He describes how her people’s flight from persecution and injustice ended in their acceptance of farming land in Manitoba if they could work the land communally and neither swear allegiance to the Canadian flag nor fight in wars. Their prosperous homesteading and farming provoked envy which the authorities exploited, "And Canada said - - Now about this allegiance! And which of you owns this particular piece of land? Be precise and sign here! And my goodness, friends, isn’t all this
worth killing and maiming for" (30). T.S. explains how her people marched in protest but eventually signed the new deal under the pressure of the arrival of whiter and more submissive immigrants, which Evy confirms: "My brother stood in line for three days, he got a section-next to my father's" (31). She ends her recollection by saying that everyone, whether for racial or for ideological reasons, are potential victims of the system: "It can happen to any of us" (31).

Hopkinson's intervention in the mediation process is presented by Pollock as a failure. After prolonged moral and physical suffering, almost all of the Sikhs are forced to go back to India, the ordeal causes the deaths of over thirty Sikhs in India and in Canada, and the mediator is murdered. The concepts of success or failure in mediation are relative ones which are under constant debate. As Bercovitch observes:

The definition of success in a mediating effort, however, is nearly always obscure. Even if the mediating activity is followed by movement towards accommodation, it is not necessarily valid to credit such progress to the mediating effort. Failure is usually easier to recognize than success, but even the constitution of failure is unclear and disputed in actuality. Failure is always relative to the goal that was sought and not attained. (125)

In view of the former reflections, Hopkinson's intercession can be viewed as either successful or disastrous. In the play, Pollock clearly chooses to focus and highlight Hopkinson's failure as a mediator. Evidently there is more to learn from seeing the process fail then from seeing it succeed. She intimates that Hopkinson was chosen as the mediator primarily because of his racial complexes and secondarily because he was a state employee. He would be compelled to side with the strongest party against the weaker party and would defend the former's interests, which he identified as his own. Pollock chose a racist event which took place at the beginning of
the twentieth century, when mediating individuals and institutions were state ones, to expose the pitfalls of governmental-driven mediation in which the mediator, the mediating system and environment are used and controlled to ensure the strongest party's victory. The drama warns audiences against this form and by extension any form of mediation and cautions them against this mediator's and by extension all mediators' hidden personal and professional bias in the mediation process.

The other significant and comparable mediator of *The Komagata Maru Incident* is the fictive and iconic character T.S. As the narrating master of ceremonies he is the only character who has a privileged and direct relation with the audience and mediates between the play's interior and audiences' exterior worlds. He provides audiences with important background information, channels their attention to specific details and events, and affects their perception of the inner play. He is the only character who addresses the audience directly and plays a role in the inner play where, as the commanding officer at immigration, he interacts principally with Hopkinson and participates in the mediation process.

Besides being able to serve as a mediator between the inner and outer plays he has special relations with other worlds, which includes and exceeds the world of the audience. T.S. is depicted as being knowledgeable of how the external world works. He represents the patriarchal power system and has intimate knowledge of its workings and far-reaching tentacular ramifications. T.S. plays principally the role of a master of ceremonies and wears a costume to this effect. He is a professional entertainer who ultimately forms part of the audience; he knows how to captivate and please audiences and fulfil and/or express their desires and needs. T.S. incarnates and illustrates pragmatic mediation—he personifies the different forces
which constrain and influence Hopkinson’s mediating role—within the patriarchal power structure.

T.S. is a theatrical device which Pollock uses to represent the patriarchal power system to show how it works in socially challenging situations such as *The Komagata Maru Incident*. One of the difficulties of history plays is to attain a balance between informing and entertaining. Pollock solves this problem by inventing a character who does both. T.S. is an aggressive narrator who takes control of everyone in the theatre in patriarchal style. He presents the poignant drama of the Sikh boat people as a travelling side show; he establishes the play’s tempo; he governs the other characters’ movements by ‘stopping and starting’ their actions with a bang of his cane. He directs the audience’s attention, decrees the chronology and provides important historical background information in a self-serving manner to inflame latent or active chauvinism. Efficient and clever, he can monitor the occurrences in the inner play, assess the general situation in the outer play and evaluate the audience’s reaction, while keeping track of the direction of the spotlights. Physically and intellectually nimble, he is able to assume other identities, quote legislation and newspaper titles, execute sleight of hand magical stunts, joke with the audience and not deviate from his main objective, which is to present the Sikhs negatively, rouse the audience against them and in the inner play ensure that Hopkinson works in the right direction to deport the Sikh passengers.

Critics disagree about the necessity and/or the effectivity of this narrator figure. Some claim that the purpose of his existence is too obviously expository and hinders the development of the inner play. Salter considers him too flamboyant and argues that he stifles the real characters’ potential evolution, “The sinister ringmaster T.S. steals the limelight, so that the real-life characters — Hopkinson and Sophie, Georg and Evy — tend to become merely pawns in
his own manipulative games. This works to good effect when he is playing Hopkinson’s superior in the Department of Immigration” (“(Im)possible worlds”, 7). Salter also views T.S. as an unnecessary invention, “as a controlling theatrical technique, [ . . . ] of limited use apart from the expedient of imparting historical information” (7). Bessai presents a similar opinion and finds T.S.’s disruptive style overshadows Hopkinson and his personal dilemma:

The more compelling the playwright attempts to make his particular conflict, the more intrusive seem the facts and figures of the sardonic T.S. who is the voice of the system she is attacking, and through whom she invites the audience to self-judgement. The constant interruptions by the narrating figure both truncate and intrude on the development of the personal fable and its ironies. (“Sharon Pollock’s Women” 129)

Other scholars find that T.S. is a fortunate device which enables the playwright to distribute historical information in an interesting and significant manner. Nunn considers that Pollock resolved the problem of feeding information in a critical message-carrying mode, “The problem of exposition, which loomed so large in Walsh, is neatly overcome here by being dashed off by the Master of Ceremonies with a briskness which is itself a harsh comment on the ugliness of the incident” (“Sharon Pollock’s Plays” 76). Reid Gilbert thinks that T.S. redeems the play by tackling the oppressive subject matter creatively, “The figure of T.S. gives the play a momentum it would not otherwise enjoy and relieves the rather obvious social criticism by giving it a less didactic treatment” (“Sharon Pollock”, 116).

Pollock features The Komagata Maru Incident as a history play, and in accordance with the genre and her educational and constructive objectives she is obliged to provide background information, especially if the audience is unacquainted with the events due to the patriarchal
censoring of sensitive historical material on racism in Canada in a not so distant past. T.S. fulfils this essential requirement and does 'give the play a momentum' and serves as 'a harsh comment on the ugliness of the event' and more. He performs multiple mediating functions and assumes numerous identities at an amazing speed in short successive sequences which also make a statement on how patriarchy deals, or more precisely wants to be perceived dealing, with potentially disturbing situations which involve a weaker party; expediently and frivolously. He attempts to present situations as if they were already decided and resolved so that the public is presented with a 'fait accompli' and is not encouraged to formulate a pondered opinion or alternative solution. T.S. uses publicity campaign tactics to sell his product. He bombards the public with elementary partisan data to promote his position and drives the message home in as many arenas as possible. This is the visible program which is backed by an invisible one.

Through T.S. the playwright exposes the patriarchal power network which controls the mediation process through which events become known to the public. It openly uses all the public forums to democratically manipulate the public opinion and set it against the Sikhs, and covertly uses all of its resources to oust the Sikhs. To this effect, T.S. assumes numerous high profile administrative or media-related identities. As Hopkinson's commanding officer, he shows how he controls the medium, the legal framework, and serves as its mediator by smugly and proudly describing his subjective interpretation of immigration laws, "see how we operate, Hopkinson? Never a mention of race, colour, or creed - - and yet - - we allow British subjects to enter; they are British subjects; we don't allow them to enter" (7). He also serves as a mediator when in the guise of a circus ring master, or carnival barker he harangues the crowd constantly to foster their hostility towards the Sikhs. He also performs numerous mediation functions when he assumes different roles in which he represents the Canadian people and voices their opinions. As
a Federal Member of Parliament, a politician elected to represent and express the electorate's opinion, a political mediator, he makes a sentimental heart breaking plea to his peers to vote anti-Sikh laws to preserve Canada's British heritage in the interest of their constituents—and out of self-survival to conserve their seats.

On two occasions he acts as court officials. The courts are supposed to be a democratic institution in which all citizens have a right to present their cases, generally through lawyers whose primary function is to serve as a legal mediator between individuals and the state. Pollock presents the courts as a biased institution and their star employees, the lawyers, as partisan mediators. In the first case T.S. acts as a crown prosecutor who denigrates the Japanese captain of the Komagata Maru, who speaks for the Nippon, and intimidates him into signing a document prepared beforehand accusing the Sikhs of mutiny. In the second court-related impersonation T.S. acts as the crown prosecutor who supposedly cross-examines Hopkinson, in order to determine the reliability and credibility of the inspector's Sikh informants. Once again he controls Hopkinson's testimony and leads him to corroborate his prejudiced anti-Sikh exposition. In his impersonation of a newspaper vendor, in which he represents the media which influences how events are transmitted and perceived, he cries out satirical news headlines such as "War Declared! [...] Factories Hum the National Anthem! [...] Check your programme for casting -- the enemy's the Kraut! The Sikh's on our side!" (43). He plays this role while the *Komagata Maru* is on its forced return to India. In other words, he intends the incident is to be forgotten, so that the Sikhs will fight in Britain's which is also Canada's war. T.S. also plays the role of an intelligence agent who keeps tabs on everyone, and in particular on Hopkinson. He is able to appropriate Evy's narration of her communist past because he is familiar with her file. If he
knows this second-rate citizen's antecedents, he is fully knowledgeable of his head informant's racial complexes which the system exploits to its advantage.

T.S.'s ubiquity exemplifies the patriarchal power network which dominates the mediation process between public and private domains. In public, T.S. conforms to the decorum of the democratic institutions which he uses to decree in his favour and in less official forums he remains within the confines of his role of an entertainer which he uses to convey the system's point of view. However, in private, principally when he interacts with Hopkinson, he pushes his employees to extremes. He acts as a mediator who uses different means to have others perform his dirty deeds, but never acts directly himself. When, despite the pressure he puts on Hopkinson, the Komagata negotiations become more and more entangled, he squats and howls repeatedly like the leader of a pack of wolves. He appeals to his immigration officers' predator instincts and incites them to hunt the Sikhs, "Do your Duty for God and the King, and Obey the Law of the Pack. (howls, then stops abruptly and rises)" (26). His most ignominious and final gesture, is to indifferently confirm Hopkinson's death with a touch of his patriarchal cane. By having T.S. confirm Hopkinson's death Pollock shows that he did not perpetrate the murder, but he was the mediator who enabled and encouraged others to make it happen. She also makes it obvious that her play focuses on mediation and a mediator, rather than character and a character. The exposure of T.S.'s public and private behaviour makes him the drama's fascinating main character. Pollock has him outshine Hopkinson and the other mortal characters for aesthetic and political reasons. T.S. is still alive and well and is as clever and omnipresent as always, while the mortal figures are dead and gone.

T.S. mediates between the audience's present and Canada's past, and between the port of Vancouver and the theatre. T.S. fixes the dates and the location of the drama and inserts the
audience in *The Komagata Maru Incident*, “This is Vancouver, ladies and gentlemen, the 21\textsuperscript{st} of May, nineteen hundred and fourteen” (1), “Ladies and gentlemen! The turbaned tide is flowing! May 23\textsuperscript{rd}, 1914 (10), “Hurry! Hurry! Hurry! Final immigration ruling on the Komagata Maru! Right this way, folks! Right this way! July 16\textsuperscript{th}, 1914!” (20), “Sept. 5, 1914 ... Bella Singh goes to the temple [. . .] October 21\textsuperscript{st}, 1914... My God, what a day! (46). He sets the drama in audiences’ present to show how their attitude determined and determines visible minorities’ plight, “in *The Komagata Maru Incident*, the playwright is using much more direct presentational strategies to engage the audience’s attention, to persuade it to take responsibility now for the pattern of racial prejudice found throughout history” (Salter “(Im)possible Worlds” 6). One of his longest satirical racist discourses occurs when he entreats his fellow members of parliament to vote against the Sikhs’ right to immigrate to British Columbia. In this passage he truly represents the audience, situated in 1914, because they elected him. He opens and closes his speech with overstated sentimentalism, “Today I’m opening my heart to you [. . .] I’ve told you here today what’s in my heart. For God’s sake show me what’s in yours” (17), and in between he delivers a heinous discourse against the Sikhs. In this excerpt Pollock openly demonstrates how mediation becomes manipulation and enables audiences to realize how their vote contribute(d)s to Canada’s racist immigration policies.

The Master of Ceremonies is also a satirical means to expose the hollowness of racist argumentation. In his heart bleeding discourse to fellow parliamentarians and to the nation, T.S. presents the Sikhs as an abject community which he describes through a singular male-gender identity, “he is totally unsuited to this country. He is criminally inclined, unsanitary by habit and roguish by instinct” (17). In another cynical excerpt T.S. explains the advantages of immigration for Canadians at large, but especially for the capitalist system:
It provides cheap labour for your factories, and a market for your goods! All this plus a handy scapegoat! Who's responsible for unemployment? The coloured immigrant! Who brings about a drop in take-home pay? The coloured immigrant! Who is it creates slum housing, racial tension and high interest rates, and violence in our streets? The coloured immigrant! (24)

He concludes his invective by claiming that it is a question of quantity, "It makes good sense to keep a few around -- when the dogs begin to bay, throw them a coloured immigrant!" (24). In this excerpt, by exposing the mediator, Pollock shows how the system, which comprises the audience, takes economic advantage of the Sikhs, and uses them to take the blame for serious problems and preserve unity among the mainstream white population.

Besides being a theatrical mediator who connects the inner and the outer play, the real world and the world of the theatre, the past and the present, T.S. has the qualities and the competencies required to be a diplomatic mediator in the cross-cultural Komagata Maru conflict. Like the inspector he is fully informed of the Sikhs' background and expectations, of Canada's and Britain's immigration policies, and is familiar with the Canadian Sikh community. He is the one who explains the inconsistent immigration laws, "If an immigrant wishes to enter the country through a western port, he must make a continuous voyage from his own country to here. Have they done so?" (7) and describes why the Sikhs contravene these laws, "There's not a steamship line in existence with a direct India-to-Canada route and for our second ace-in-the-hole a tax, $200.00 per head, to be paid before entry. Do they have it?" (7). He again provides the answer which alludes to the Sikhs' great efforts and sacrifices to obtain a passage to Vancouver, the mandatory $200.00 amount in cash per person being an extra restrictive regulation, "Again, not surprising. In the land of his birth, the average Indian's wage is $9.00 a
year” (7). He also indirectly refers to and acquiesces the Sikhs’ claim of their right to land based on their belonging to the British dominion, and especially for having served in British wars, “we don’t mind them dying for us, we just don’t want them living with us” (7). He knows that the Indians are unjustly oppressed and he also knows that the immigration laws are contestable and could, if expertly challenged, be interpreted in their favour.

T.S. displays greater potentiality than Hopkinson to mediate positively between the Sikhs and the Canadian authorities. He is neither a polyglot who speaks several East-Asian languages, nor an Anglo-Indian raised amongst the British and the Indians, therefore he cannot belong to both worlds and mediate between them. However he does speak Canada’s two official languages, “If given formal notice to sail, then sail you must -- toute suite -- it’s a bilingual law” (34). He dominates the rhetoric of the Federal government of which he is portrayed as being an insider when he plays the role of a Federal Member of Parliament. Hopkinson’s double insider status was more an obstacle than an advantage, his siding with one culture against the other caused his schizophrenia and impeded him from functioning rationally. T.S. belongs to the world of power, but also to the world of the audience, he could have altered the mediation process by making the public opinion understand the Sikhs’ situation. Pollock uses T.S. to show audiences both the potential and the shortcomings of the mediation process.

An unemotional character, T.S. is a persuasive speaker who has influential contacts, prestige and most importantly, leverage, which as seen is a determinant asset. T.S. could have used these facets to enforce a genuine mediation process in decent conditions—equal consideration for both parties, neutral territory, consensual determination of the issues to be discussed, an agreement on a time-frame to regulate the negotiating process, guarantees over an unbiased press coverage, public information assemblies, and the implication of the community in
the ordeal. He could have resorted to the alternate offering of 'carrots or sticks' to reinforce or quicken negotiations. T.S. has numerous positive assets which concord with Bercovitch's enumeration, "Among the attributes that experienced international mediators cite as particularly important are intelligence, stamina, energy, patience, and a sense of humour" (25). T.S. has a great sense of humour, whereas Hopkinson seems humourless and morose.

T.S. could have been an excellent mediator in the Komagata Maru crisis, but he opted to champion the white patriarchal power system over coloured immigration and the possibility of forming a harmonious mixed racial society. In the end he is not mediating, he has chosen one side and concentrates all of his efforts to make his side, which is also the audience's, win. He uses his artistic talents, particularly sarcasm and over-exaggeration to gratify the audience, which on several occasions he calls 'my friends'. The Master of Ceremonies does not perform the functions of a cross-cultural conflict mediator, but through him, Pollock reveals how the mediation process can be corrected.

Pollock exposes the illusion of mediation and warns the audience against accepting mediation as a solution in itself. In order for mediation to work one must be conscious and vigilant of the mediation process. The Komagata Maru Incident demonstrates that a mediation process which involves two parties of different size, strength and with unequal resources, has slight chances of attaining a consensus which satisfies the weaker group, especially if the mediator is a manic-depressive and in a racist environment where the overwhelming majority is hostile to the vulnerable element.

Pollock does not offer any explicit solutions but she does allude to alternatives. The play contains another potential mediating figure, Woman, who is presented in contrast to T.S. She is a matriarchal and maternal figure whose principle interest is to ensure a better future for her
young son. She is not corrupted by the white patriarchal system, like T.S. and Hopkinson. The only woman on board, she could have brought new insight and impressed a new style on the mediation process. The male partners, T.S. and Hopkinson, are portrayed as being caught up in complicated power games which include the audience. Woman could have used straightforward language and functioned as a down to earth mediator with maternal qualities of responsibility, patience, endurance, a sense of community and comprehension. Woman cannot publicly express her experience of the Komagata Maru ordeal. She is fully aware of her antagonists’ contempt, “physical death is no evil for us […] they will hate us with a perfect hatred; they will blast us with grape shot and rockets; they will beat us as small as dust before the wind!” (22 & 23). Instead of taking advantage of her mediating potential, the antagonists transform her, her people and her son (the future generations) into anti-British and more broadly anti-Caucasian militants.

Pollock through her exposure of mediation induces audiences to change their cultural memory as Canadians. She presents a chapter of Canadian history which evidences the country’s racist policies and practices and possibly familiarizes them for the first time with these inglorious antecedents in which she accuses them of the ostracism and exploitation of visible minorities. The use of a play within a play to narrate The Komagata Maru Incident allows the dramatist to expose the system’s use of licit and illicit resources in conformity with the public opinion which allows itself to be manipulated, persuaded and included.
CHAPTER FOUR:

Matriarchal spiritual mediation in *Mme Blavatsky, spirite*

*Mme. Blavatsky, spirite* centres on the life and times of the Russian medium Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831-1891) and covers principally the period between 1868 and 1887. Salient episodes of the heroine’s youthful years in Russia are narrated through a medium séance which evoke her innate supernatural powers, her oppressive past and her early knowledge and simultaneous practice of Christianity and Slavic paganism. The drama also relates the heroine’s worldly and spiritual travels and encounters which substantiate her mystic faculties and knowledge of diverse geographical areas, cultures, religions, and of specific mystics. It describes her stay in the North American wilderness where she became familiar with shamanism and was challenged by a medicine man; her experiences in Egypt in the Valley of the Kings where she was initiated to occultism by the magician Paulos de Métamon and to the Ancient Religion of the Pharaohs by the Egyptian goddess of magic and fertility, Isis; her mystic formation in Tibet where she learned about Ancient Eastern religions, especially Buddhism under the guidance of a wise woman, the Rimpoché, her sojourn in New England where she became familiar with spiritism and in New York where she and Colonel Olcott cofounded the Theosophical society; her stay in Bombay to where she transferred the international religious movement’s headquarters and her final residence in London where she continued to promote the pancultural and panreligious philosophy and teachings of the Theosophical Society. Though Marchessault depicts her vast and profound cognizance of most emblematic religions, the playwright associates her more particularly with the religions of Ancient Egypt and of precontact North
American shamanism, through her relation with the play’s iconic mediator, Anubis, and with Eastern spirituality, through her tutelage to her personal Tibetan guide, Kout Houmi Lal Sing.

Marchessault narrates the heroine’s evolution from a mystic who undertakes and supersedes a spiritual quest, becomes a medium and culminates her pursuit when she and Colonel Olcott co-founded in New York the Theosophical Society in 1875 and established its principal goals as summarized by Olcott, “Nous n’avons qu’un seul objectif: travailler à la fraternité universelle de l’humanité sans distinction de race et de religion” (61). The play presents the heroine as a medium who became a spiritual mediator and permitted the encounter among people from different cultures during the height of British chauvinism. She is depicted as a charismatic visionary religious mediator who facilitated the communication between principally the West and the East, when she moved to Bombay, but who more particularly introduced Eastern philosophy, ideas, beliefs and practices to the West, when she moved to London, the epicentre of the British Empire. Marchessault portrays Mme Blavatsky as the spiritual mediator who permitted Gandhi to appreciate the merits of his maternal culture, encouraged him to abandon Western attire and convinced him to return to India to transmit and instill the newly acquired pride of his millenial maternal cultural heritage to his people. The play terminates with Mme. Blavatsky busily writing her opus magnum, The Secret Doctrine, at her desk in London in the benevolent company of Colonel Olcott.

Marchessault mediates history by presenting the biography of a unique woman who constructively and pacifically attempted to approximate cultures through spirituality at the height of British imperialism and Western materialism, when the Western world was convinced of its economic, moral and cultural superiority. The author aspires to change audiences’ cultural heritage by familiarizing them with a nineteenth-century matriarchal predecessor who rejected
the roles imposed on women in Russian society in particular and in patriarchal society in general. Marchessault presents her as an idealist who evolved in and mapped out new territory, the comparative study and experience of all religions and cultures, for the benefit of mankind. In *Madame Blavatsky, spirite*, the dramatist displaces or replaces emblematic male religious mediators, especially Jesus Christ, and presents the heroine as an active female religious mediator who surpasses Christ because she intervenes between all humans and all forms of spirituality. Marchessault places Mme. Blavatsky and her achievements in a woman-centred lineage, a feminist strategy she uses in all of her works, "Traversée par une conscience féministe, toute son œuvre est parcourue de la même volonté de faire vivre la culture des femmes. Elle tente en récitant des espaces imaginaires, de reformuler l’Histoire, de fonder une mémoire qui permettrait aux femmes de trouver des modèles" (Bourgogne, "Biographie et théâtre chez Jovette Marchessault", 113).

Marchessault had to compress and reformulate historical data to transform Mme Blavatsky's complicated global biography into a drama. Marchessault specifies in the introduction of the play that Mme Blavatsky’s life and accomplishments were and still are controversial, “à sa mort elle était considérée par ses admirateurs et ses admiratrices comme la plus grande magicienne que le monde ait connue et tous lui attribuaient des pouvoirs surnaturels. Par contre, ses détracteurs estiment qu’elle est le plus bel exemple de charlatanisme et de mystification du XIXe siècle” (7).

In effect Blavatsky’s biography is a controversial subject, she was a high profile polemic woman who evolved within the marginal milieu of the world of spirits and spiritualism. The principle sources of information on Blavatsky, are the medium's autobiographical writings and biographies written by members of the Theosophical society. The most renowned one,
Cranston’s *H.P.B.*. *The Extraordinary Life and Influence of Helena Blavatsky Founder of the Modern Theosophical Movement* presents the spiritual leader as a precocious and predestined communicator with the other world endowed with genuine magical powers. Non theosophical sources are generally skeptical towards the anecdotes which presumably prove her magic powers and confirm her world adventures. Peter Washington asserts that her flee from her short lived marriage is documented: “the fact that she married Nikifor Blavatsky, Vice-Governor of Yerevan in the Caucasus, on 7 July 1848, when she was seventeen and he just over forty, is certainly a matter of record, as is her flight from him a few weeks later” (*Madame Blavatsky’s Baboon* 30). According to Washington, this escape marked the beginning of a new, often invented life, “But from that moment on, myth and reality begin to merge seamlessly in Blavatsky’s biography. Typically as the years passed and she retold the story of her first marriage, the age gap widened, until the general became in fancy an antique lecher in pursuit of a barely pubescent girl” (30). Except her own accounts, there are no documented records of Blavatsky’s activities and whereabouts between her departure from Russia and her arrival in America, “until she arrived in America twenty-five years later, Blavatsky’s life (as narrated to friends and would-be biographers) makes a series of anecdotes which are tall enough to provoke disbelief without being entirely incredible” (Washington 30). However Washington relativizes his statements and suggests, in accordance with the epoch, the plausibility of Blavatsky’s accounts, “And although few of Blavatsky’s claims are verifiable, it must be said that the nineteenth century is prodigal in extraordinary lives and remarkable travels. Nor would she have been the first European woman to venture into the heart of a dark continent with only an umbrella and supreme confidence to support her” (32).
Mme Blavatsky’s biography is however documented after she co-founded the Theosophical Society in New York. Marchessault’s version of Blavatsky’s life deviates from historical sources on several major points and downplays some aspects of the Theosophical Society’s activities to enhance her theatrical character. All sources describe Olcott as an extremely active ground worker who preached to crowds throughout East Asia to convert or affiliate them to Theosophy. He was not Blavatsky’s dedicated submissive office-confined secretary.

According to Washington, the medium was forced to leave India after the publication of the Hodgson report in 1884 undertaken for the Society for Psychological Research (S.P.R.). Dr. Hodgson, a specialist on spiritism, investigated the Adyar compound (the Theosophical Society’s headquarters were and are established in Adyar, not Bombay) and discovered that the medium produced fraudulent magic stunts using secret panels in what was called the Occult Room adjacent to her living quarters. Hodgson also declared that Blavatsky was the author and calligrapher of over some hundred letters written supposedly by Hoot Koumi Lal Singh and Master Moyra, another Eastern holy guide, to a prominent Anglo-Indian citizen, Alfred Percy Sinnett, then editor of the Government paper, *The Pioneer* of Allabad. In the drama, Marchessault intimates that the letters under discussion are personal ones exchanged between Mme Blavatsky and Emma Coulomb. The scandal affected membership, pressured by Olcott and discontented affiliates, Blavatsky was ‘invited’ to leave India, and became the head of the European chapter of the society in London, while Olcott remained the head of the international headquarters in Adyar until his death. Therefore the play’s final scene where Blavatsky and Olcott work in harmony is fictitious. Marchessault also avoids presenting the more ludicrous aspects of the Theosophical Society’s teachings, for example, that their members are descendants
of gallowic root races and that outstanding members of the Theosophical Society are reincarnations of the fantastic leaders of these outer space beings. She also avoids mentioning that the spiritual society was and is a lucrative business.

Though Blavatsky’s magical feats, accomplishments, personal and global objectives were and are debated, most authors concur in recognizing that she played an important role in mediating between the East and the West. Bruce Campbell in Ancient Wisdom Revived claims that the Theosophical Society was not only the most influential movement which introduced oriental thought to Europe, it also revitalized oriental religions in the East:

Helping the East to feel pride in its religious heritage could by itself have led to a reactionary flight from contemporary. Learning the techniques of the West could have led to a loss of soul. The accomplishment of Theosophy was to join together these two types of influence. It passed on modern Western ideas but did so in a context of national pride and self-confidence. The combination of contemporary techniques with a reaffirmation of indigenous values was a powerful combination for modernization and development. (173)

Marion Meade in Madame Blavatsky offers a similar opinion in more colloquial terms concerning Mme Blavatsky’s personal mediating role in ingraining pride and hope to colonial subjects during her stay in India, “she was [. . .] a hopeful presence to Hindu intellectuals: if a foreign woman of importance, a countess it was rumored, came all the way to their poor country to seek the truth, Indians must be more than mere slaves of the British Empire” (206).

Marchessault, like Pollock concerning The Komagata Maru Incident, professes her creative input into her play by inferring that Mme Blavatsky is an essentially theatrical, rather than realist figure, who is bigger than nature, “Pour moi, dramaturge, c’est un merveilleux
personnage de théâtre que dévore un feu intérieur, et c’est une leçon de planète” (Madame 8). Marchessault specifies that she is one of Blavatsky’s admiratrices and mediates the history of her heroine’s biography from an overt positive aggrandizing perspective. She describes the period in which the play takes place as a philosophically turbulent one, “les cinquante dernières années de ce XIXe siècle seront celles d’un temps de révolution spirituelle et de réaction contre le matérialisme, le scientisme et l’athéisme” (9) and presents Mme Blavatsky as a personage who serves as a mediator between materialism and an infinite spiritual realm: “beaucoup d’artistes se tournent [. . .] vers ceux et celles qui scrutent autant le ciel des étoiles et des comètes que la poussière des tombeaux, à la recherche de ce courant de lumière splendide et étoilée qui peut [. . .] révéler la clef des trésors célestes et terrestres” (9). Marchessault is not concerned with the historical accuracy of her play or of her historical figure’s biography, she is more interested in focussing on her positive mediating role.

Marchessault, through her mediation of Blavatsky’s biography, presents Blavatsky as a precursory medium who reintroduced Eastern sacredness to save the world from materialistic nineteenth-century capitalism and its ensuing discourse which promulgates the superiority of the Western world. She invites the audience to consider the anti-imperialist and anti-materialist stance proposed by Mme. Blavatsky well over a century ago. She entices them to return to that tradition and adopt beneficial spirituality which is identified as a matriarchal value, because it is presented by a woman, and discard malignant materialistic capitalism which is identified as a pre-eminently masculine value represented through such figures as the historian and priest, Albert Quinet, the British missionary, Joseph Cook and small time social ladder climbers like Mr Coulomb. She focuses on showing how Blavatsky used her imagination positively to counter mainstream society and its materialist ideology and to bridge cultures in antagonistic conditions.
Marchessault focuses on the process of mediation itself and portrays her heroine as an optimal medium and mediator.

Whereas Pollock used a complex spatial frame to represent her chronicle of Canadian racism in The Komagata Maru Incident, Marchessault divides the stage minimally. In her introductory notes the dramatist explains that the play evolves on two planes. The first one is Mme. Blavatsky’s office which is identified as the salon and informal library of Comtesse de Ségur’s home in Paris, “Le premier est le salon parisien de Sophie Rostopchine ou Comtesse de Ségur : salon meublé [. . .] de quelques piles de livres. C’est un lieu de fermentations, de communications” (9). Marchessault associates Mme. Blavatsky spatially with the Comtesse de Ségur to locate the protagonist in a matriarchal-identified territory, as in all of her plays:

Le jeu dramatique du théâtre de Jovette Marchessault, se matérialise dans des lieux de femmes, c’est à dire dans des lieux fondés par la présence charnelle et intellectuelle de femmes qui exercent le contrôle de la langue, de l’espace, et du temps. Dans ces lieux, le désir des femmes est à l’origine de l’action: leur perception, leur parole et leur réflexion y construisent l’identité, la réalité, la mémoire collective. (Forsyth, “Jouer aux éclats” 230 & 231)

In this case, Marchessault links Blavatsky to another erudite Russian expatriate who wrote literature for children in French. Her books, translated into numerous languages, nurtured and still nurture children’s imaginations throughout the world. This spatial and cultural reference indicates that Blavatsky is imbued and sustained by a matriarchal culture of which she forms part. The second playing area is hardly discernible from the first one, “le deuxième lieu, sur un plan un peu plus élevé, est celui de l’Astral” (9). She describes it as the, “Plan des désirs et des
réminiscences” and from which “proviennent les esprits-guides des spirites” (9). Marchessault uses the stratagem of barely separating the real and the unreal worlds to emphasize their interconnection and interdependence and has Blavatsky mediate between the real and the astral zone.

Madame Blavatsky, spirite contains twenty nine characters. Mme. Blavatsky is conceived as an immutable and unique character, while all of the other characters adopt other identities. For metaphorical (and practical) reasons, the playwright specifies that approximately three actors and four actresses are to play different roles: “à l’exception de l’actrice qui sera l’interprète de Mme Blavatsky, chaque acteur, chaque actrice jouera plusieurs rôles comme souvent on voyage dans la vie, à travers différents métamorphoses” (10). Marchessault devises the main character as a distinctive one to draw attention to her singularity and to her mediating capacities. Blavatsky serves as the stable technical mediator who allows the other interchangeable characters to come into contact with each other. The use of many characters also illustrates Madame Blavatsky’s vast social and spiritual network. If one is to mediate between numerous cultures and individuals from different backgrounds it is important to have personal and public relations with as many people as possible.

Most of the twenty nine characters pass briefly and fleetingly through Mme. Blavatsky’s life. The ‘permanent’ characters who are manifestly or imperceptively present for the most part of the play besides Mme Blavatsky, are the colonel Olcott, Anubis the equivalent of the heroine’s guardian angel, and Kout Houni Lal Sing, the medium’s spiritual guide. Marchessault has these characters either question, test, support or help the protagonist throughout the play to demonstrate that Blavatsky’s mediating enterprise is neither an eccentric nor an egotistical one.
The characters are a mixture of historical and obviously fictitious figures. By including and having Blavatsky frequent recognizable historical figures in the drama, Marchessault signifies that the medium was a distinguished individual solicited by important contemporaries, rather than an eccentric who lived on the fringes of society. Her medium séances and her role as a spiritual mediator are presented as significant ones which affected a great number of people in important social circles, and therefore had the potential of changing society. Minor and major historical figures, such as the Colonel Olcott, Comtesse de Ségrur, the historian and churchman, Albert Quinet, the magnetiser Alice Rebaud, the magician Paulus de Métanom, the founder of the French chapter of The Theosophical Society, La Duchesse de Pomar, Mr and Mrs Britten, popular figures of the nineteenth-century American spiritist milieu, and Mahatma Gandhi are portrayed in the play. Real members of Blavatsky's family, such as her grandfather, grandmother, and more specifically her father, Alexis von Rottenstern Hahn, and her husband General Nicephor Blavatsky, are also characterized in the play. Contrary to Hopkinson in The Komagata Maru Incident, Blavatsky is depicted as an equilibrated individual who is deeply attached to her ancestors and to her Russian homeland. Her mental and emotional stability facilitate her mediating capacities. The other reason why the drama contains a great number of characters is to substantiate Blavatsky's medium talents and exploits. If many people were drawn to Blavatsky and believed in her magical and mystical dons, they must have been meaningful and worthwhile.

The play also includes notably fictitious characters such as the protagonist's spiritual guides, the Tibetan wise woman, the Rimpoché whom Blavatsky meets in her interior travels, and Kout Houmi Lal Singh the protagonist's master, Anubis, a standing and speaking jackal. And Cadichon, a speaking donkey. The latter is presented as the Comtesse de Ségrur's childhood pet,
but in reality he was the protagonist of her prescriptive book *Les mémoires d’un âne*. The play also incorporates a speaking mummy who incarnates death. Marchessault combines real and ostentatiously invented characters in the play to demonstrate that unconscious beings form as much part of reality and are as important as genuine ones. Marchessault has all of these imaginary characters exchange dialogues exclusively with or through Blavatsky, except Anubis who also interacts with the audience, with Paulos de Metammon and with Koot Houmi Lal Sing. Blavatsky’s mediating presence allows audiences to perceive these fantastic beings.

The play’s plot resembles Marchessault’s other history dramas which evolve around women writers’ painful creative trajectory but personally and collectively enriching success. However in *Madame Blavatsky*, spirite Marchessault resorts to a major framing metatheatrical device. Anubis, like T.S., addresses the audience in the drama’s overture and explains what and why Blavatsky is writing busily at her desk. He acts as the mediator between the inner and the outer play and is Blavatsky’s protector in the inner drama. Marchessault uses Anubis to draw audiences’ attention to Blavatsky’s writing sources and to her vast role of a mediator between all cultures. This character’s mediating functions will be further analyzed subsequently. By having Anubis launch the drama and emphasize the importance and constructiveness of Blavatsky’s writings, Marchessault signifies that the drama centers on cultural mediation.

In effect the drama takes the audiences on a spiritual journey, primarily through Mme. Blavatsky and secondarily through Anubis, to the heroine’s most important sources and allows them to witness her mystical experiences. Pollock in *The Komagata Maru Incident* used ‘a play within a play’ to create a distance between the audience and the ongoing drama, and used a provocative character to expose the the conflict mediation process. In contrast, Marchessault resorts to metatheatre to allow the audience to enter into Blavatsky’s imaginary realm and uses
an iconic mediator who is familiar to the audience, is empathetic towards the spiritual mediator, and whom she intends audiences to believe. The drama is of a liturgical nature; Anubis is a figure associated with an immortal Egyptian god, who presumably allows the audience to perceive Blavatsky who in turn enters into communion with a great number of spiritual sources. Marchessault introduces Blavatsky and her œuvres, which are presented as all-encompassing holy scriptures dictated by spirits and invites audiences to further communicate directly with the author and her divine sources by consulting her religious writings.

_Madame Blavatsky, spirite_ and _The Komagata Maru Incident_ conclude similarly. Despite Mme Blavatsky’s wide social circle only two characters of different genders, Colonel Olcott and Mme Blavatsky, share the stage and interact in the drama’s denouement. Whereas Pollock has symbolic characters, Woman and T.S. competitively close her play, Marchessault’s finale shows the historical couple working harmoniously together while reflecting upon whether their lifelong joint effort was worthwhile. These considerations are preceded by Gandhi’s visit in which he confides his positive reappropriation of his maternal culture through Theosophy. The implicit conclusion is that yes the co-founders’ efforts were worthwhile, through Mme Blavatsky’s mediation Gandhi led a spiritual and cultural renewal movement which culminated in the independence of India and he became an inspirational international icon of pacific resistance against oppression. An excerpt of _The Secret Doctrine_ illuminated in the astral zone, “Qui sommes-nous? Une flamme allumée à la source inépuisable...” (96) actually terminates the play. The denouement suggests that Blavatsky’s scriptures, which mediate between cultures and religions within an egalitarian framework, will enable other individuals to follow Gandhi’s example, rediscover the value of their own culture and religion through Blavatsky’s writings and
use this information to empower themselves and oppose modern Western imperialist materialism.

*Mme Blavatsky, spirite* is a drama about a spiritual mediator whereas *The Komagata Maru Incident* is about a political/diplomatic mediator. Besides a mortal spiritual mediator the play incorporates a symbolic mediator, Anubis who is comparable to T.S. because he plays the role of a narrator and mediates between the outer and the inner play, but for different reasons and in a solemn manner. T.S. represents patriarchy and makes the audience aware of the adulteration of the mediation process within patriarchal parameters. Anubis represents universal spirituality and exemplifies the unconscious. He makes the audience focus, perceive and comprehend otherwise unintelligible elements of Mme Blavatsky’s unusual spiritual and worldly biography. Whereas Pollock, through T.S., allows the audience to view history in the making, and ponder on whether T.S. is a reliable or credible source of information on *The Komagata Maru Incident*, Marchessault draws upon Anubis’ imagery, familiar to audiences through printed reproductions of Egyptian frescoes. She exploits his religious imagery related with death and has him mediate between the inner and outer plays as a priest intercedes between worshipers and God. As a priest, he expects the audience to believe in the play’s contents and especially in Blavatsky’s mediating capacities.

Marchessault presents Mme Blavatsky as an ideal religious mediator because she was predestined to become a medium or spiritual mediator. She was born in special circumstances on a prophetic day, “Je suis née à minuit, le dernier jour de juillet. En Russie, c’est une heure et une nuit magique et éprouvante puisque le Domovoy, petit lutin terrible des maisons, tend ses pièges” (26). Though she belongs to the Russian Greek Orthodox church, she is portrayed as being stigmatized by Slavic pagan and folkloric beliefs. Her baptism is depicted as another
prophetic event in which the pope accuses her of burning his soutane to defy the established church, “C'est elle la cause de cet embrasement” (27). Her grand-father confirms the pope's perception, “On chuchote que le Domovoy lui a fait cadeau de particularités psychiques extraordinaires” (27), and the heroine invokes her special relation with the Slavic female water spirit whom she commands to antagonize the pope, "Un geste et je lance la Roussalka à vos trousse... Roussalka, chatouille-moi ce pope jusqu'à la mort!” (27, author's ellipses).

The heroine is characterized as someone haunted by supernatural forces, “Depuis ma naissance, mon plus grand tourment est de comprendre les forces inconnues qui m'habient” (45), who has undertaken serious studies “Tu étudies des livres incompréhensibles pour ton grand-père” (27), and eccentric projects, such as her Palais de liberté and Académie des fantomes. She was always aware that she had a religious calling which made her suffer and doubt until Kout Houmi Lal Sing provides her with a mission, similar to Christ's, of founding a new religion. Her spiritual origins are however different than Christ's; they are infinitely more distant and ancient, as the Tibetan spiritual guide explains, “Dans chaque famille, l'esprit qui s'y incarne, lui appartient par la loi des correspondances. Parfois s'y incarne aussi un esprit étranger qui n'appartient même pas à la même galaxie, au même système planétaire: c'est l'enfant comète” (42).

The playwright incorporates Christian references and presents her heroine as a Christ figure through content and form. One of the drama's salient correspondences between Christ and Blavatsky is to make the play start and have the heroine perform what can be considered a miracle or highly successful medium seance on Christmas Eve. Just as Christ was supposedly born on Christmas, Blavatsky starts a new life on Christianity's most important celebration, "Held on December 25, to celebrate the Nativity, or the birth of Christ, the origin of the festival
is unknown. Scholars believe that it is derived in part from the rites held by pre-Christian
Germanic and Celtic peoples to celebrate the winter solstice” (Encarta encyclopaedia,
“Christmas”). She enables Cadichon, the comtesse’s childhood pet donkey to speak. And more
importantly, on this special occasion, the heroine symbolically becomes Anubis’s celestial
spouse. Blavatsky like Christ is related to a God, Marchessault presents Blavatsky as the human
wife of the spiritual figure, Anubis. Another important Christian celebration, Epiphany, also
links Blavatsky to Christ. This emblematic festivity commemorates the revelation to the
Gentiles of Jesus Christ as the Saviour; the Three Wise Men followed the Star of Bethlehem to
present gifts to the Messiah. Marchessault exploits the Christian parable and has Koot Hoomi
Lal Singh give her heroine a peculiar gift on this special day, “Je ne suis pas un Roi mage, mais
je respecterai la tradition: voici un magnifique présent. (Une odeur d’encens se répand, musique
de l’Astral.) Vous allez former un noyau de fraternité universelle” (37).

These Christian references are also riddled with pagan elements. As seen Christmas was
celebrated long before the birth of Christ to celebrate the winter solstice by the Germans, Celtics
and before them by the Romans to honour their god of agriculture, Saturn, “Beginning on Dec 17
of each year, during the festival known as the Saturnalia, the Golden Age was restored for seven
days. All business stopped and executions and military operations were postponed” (“Saturn
[mythology]” Encarta Encyclopaedia). As for Cadichon’s ability to talk, it is based on the
Christian belief that animals are miraculously endowed with speech at midnight on Christmas
Eve, a dubious but orthodox conviction. Besides comparing Blavatsky to Christ and presenting
her as a religious and a cultural mediator, Marchessault devises her play in a succession of
“tableaux” reminiscent of the Twelve Stations of the Cross. The play’s “Onzième tableau: La
cité des douleurs” establishes a correspondence between Christ’s and Blavatsky’s immolation to
save humanity. As Emily Carr in *Le Voyage Magnifique d'Emily Carr*, Marchessault has Blavatsky use mythology to mediate between several cultures, transposing and displacing icons, legends and beliefs from one culture to another.

Marchessault uses different devices to emphasize the fact that Mme Blavatsky was profoundly Russian, and presents this as an asset in relation to her mediating possibilities. The play evolves out of the exiled compatriot Sophie Rostopchine’s personal library. In the dramas’ first two medium séances Blavatsky vivifies beloved Russians. She first enables the Comtesse de Ségur to communicate with her grandmother and her pet donkey. Later she transforms the gathered guests into receptacles of members and acquaintances of her family, whose spirits possess their bodies to relate elements of the medium’s past. Marchessault particularly demonstrates her heroine’s attachment to her homeland by exposing her love for her father, by having her smoke Russian cigarettes “(Helena a une cigarette russe à la main et Olcott s’approche).” (62). She also has her talk about her habit, “Je me retire pour enlever cette vieille robe de chambre qui sent trop fort le tabac russe” (69), and mention her nationality repeatedly “En véritable Russe, c’est à dire en extrémiste, je ne crains pas la douleur” (73), and have other characters refer to her origins throughout the drama.

Marchessault underlines the fact that she is not of ‘pure’ Russian extract by having her grandfather call her by her Russian first name; Helinka, or by her full Christian name: Helena Petrovna Dolgorouky von Hahn Blavatsky, which contains Hellenistic, Russian, Slavic and German components. Marchessault has Blavatsky’s grandfather specify his family’s ancient mixed German and Russian ancestry and also features her French education imparted by her French governess, Henriette Peigneur. Blavatsky was conditioned by the retrograde Russian culture where serfdom still prevailed, as insinuated by Henriette Peigneur, “nous sommes loin de
l’Europe éclairée” (33) and was personally exposed to the new ideas and agenda of the French Revolution through her governess who is depicted as an important actor in the event, “Mais j’y ai participé: on m’a choisie, entre toutes les jolies femmes de Paris, pour incarner la Déesse de la liberté” (28).

Knowledgeable of at least three cultures, Blavatsky personally experienced the negative effects of a retrograde culture and the positive influence of the modern revolutionary ideas of liberty, fraternity and equality. Marchessault makes a point of having her heroine explain that she fled Russia not because she rejected her native culture but to escape patriarchy and gain liberty. If one is to form a universal brotherhood which respects and culminates all religions, one of the minimal prerequisites is to accept and transcend one’s own cultural background. Blavatsky was a polyglot whose triple culture (Russian, German, French) and intimate knowledge of the East and the supposedly progressive West, enabled her to mediate between these two opposed and other cultures.

Russia is traditionally perceived as an essentially spiritual nation at the crossroads of the Western and the Eastern world. Through Paulos de Métamon the playwright signifies Russia’s mediumistic tradition, “Les femmes russes ont souvent des dons de voyance et de médiurnité remarquables” (51). The playwright suggests that not only her psychological complexion, but also her physical appearance is the result of the fusion of the numerous Russian ethnic groups, “Olcott, vous m’embellissez. Il a vu une femme sans âge dont les traits kalmouko-bouddho-tartares n’ont jamais été séduisants” (62).

Even though Mme Blavatsky forms part of the Russian elite, she comes from a humble nation exploited by the British Empire and has first hand experience of oppression. In the play, despite the fact that Russia was an imperial power, it is depicted as a third-world nation exploited
by British capitalism in general and by the banks of London in particular. She is able to mediate between the rich and the poor, because she supposedly comes from a subjugated satellite country. Her intentions are presumably void of economic, political or cultural ambitions, at least in comparison to a British colonizer, and she has the background which enables her to fully understand the feelings of the subjugated and of visionary anti-materialist Westerners.

Blavatsky undertook extensive real and spiritual travels to become familiar with the most ancient and most modern cultures and religions of the world. Mme Blavatsky explored all cultures, and moved to the United States and officially became an American citizen. This can be perceived as as a renunciation of her origins or as an opportunist gesture, and is, by Anne Braude in Radical Spirits. Marchessault, however, has Olcott present it emphatically as a modern pioneer action, “Madame Blavatsky est citoyenne américaine: elle a été la première femme russe à le devenir!” (72). From an old country, she also becomes a subject of one of the nineteenth century’s most dynamic nations; her dual identity capacititates her to mediate between millenarian and modern cultures.

An ideal cross-cultural and religious mediator, Mme Blavatsky carries out different types of mediation in the drama. Besides meditating between the absolute and mortals, like Christ to redeem humanity, she undertakes other more specific mediating roles. Her first and foremost mediating role is to serve as an intermediate between the conscious and the unconscious realms for specific individuals as a spiritist or medium or for all of humankind’s benefit, as a spiritual mediator. Medium sessions and mediumship reached its peak in England and in America during Blavatsky’s lifetime. Alex Owen in The Darkened Room, argues that mediumship was principally a woman’s activity or profession, because it was based on Victorian preconceptions about female qualities, especially women’s inherently passive nature, which enabled spirits to
'possess' their bodies and minds. Spiritualism exploited but also undermined these prejudices because it gave women a central role in a controversial arena:

The medium attained power with powerlessness, but such power allowed her to move beyond the confines of ordained female role and into new forbidden territory. At one level this could mean escape from a dull or rigidly circumscribed existence. At another, whilst much of seance behaviour took place without an overt or even conscious awareness that it constituted a deep-seated challenge to systems of inscription and dominance, it was a manifestation of unconscious resistance to an order which sought to define women and contain them. (234)

Blavatsky takes control of the Comtesse’s private realm and leads the small group into the unexplored territory of the unconscious. Mme Blavatsky explains a medium session in the following terms, “c’est le moment privilégié où chaque âme peut jeter un regard dans les silencieuses galeries où l’histoire de sa vie est peinte en couleurs impérissables” (23). Her description derives from mystic sources, which the magnetiser Alcide Renaud cites, “Les occultistes de toutes les époques l’affirment: tout est photographié sur une grande toile invisible, tendue sur notre univers matériel” (23). These references to colours, paintings and art evoke Freud’s theory that artistic creations and dreams stem from one’s unconscious and their decoding is an important element of psychoanalytic treatment. Many sources attribute the discovery of the unconscious to the nineteenth-century spiritualist movement, “It can be argued that through the development of mediumistic trance techniques, in what Freud later designated as ‘the return of the repressed’, the unconscious mind found expression” (Owen 203). Marchessault attributes the discovery of the unconscious to her heroine, “Madame Blavatsky a l’immense mérite d’avoir
ouvert très grande cette porte mystérieuse, enveloppée de brouillard qui sépare deux mondes: celui des phénomènes rationnellement explicables [. . .] et [. . .] l'inconscient” (Madame Blavatsky, back cover). In the play she presents Mme Blavatsky’s medium sessions as positive experiences which enable the assistants, through her, to sound the unknown and gain serenity.

In the ‘personalized’ medium session, in which Mme Blavatsky narrates through the assembled guests how she was ‘sold’ to an over-aged general by the patriarch of her family and was forced to flee her culture’s antiquated practices, the medium addresses history from her point of view as a woman and denounces patriarchy in which women were treated as marketable objects and reclaims her right to be a full-fledged subject. She is able to communicate with the key actors of her past because she has a profound affection for them, despite their malfeasance. This re-enactment is more symbolic than real; the bride marries a bird, the ‘vieux corbeau déplumé’, instead of a man and she perceives the governess’ role in the ceremony as a mystical premonition rather than as a conventional function, “Ce sera donc la Déesse de la liberté qui me couvrira la tête du voile de l’esclave” (32). The heroine construes her wedding, an objectively horrendous event, in a highly poetic and symbolic manner which enables her to overcome the incident and forgive her father, and informs the audience that to gain liberty one must make sacrifices, especially if one comes from a backward country.

Mme Blavatsky also serves as a spiritual mediator in her mystic quest. She comes into contact with a Tibetan wisewoman, an Amerindian medicine man, and she is in permanent contact with Anubis and Kout Houmi Lal Sing, characters who train her and facilitate her contact with greater divine beings. Her most important and dangerous communication with a specific divinity is her encounter with Isis, the Egyptian goddess of magic and fertility. On the behalf of humanity, Mme Blavatsky renews relations with a matriarchal deity and tradition. The contact
with Isis is portrayed by Marchessault as the principal source of inspiration of *Isis Unveiled*. Written in the company of Colonel Olcott at the Theosophical Society in New York, she describes her eclectic woman-centred subject matter, “j’écrit sur toutes les merveilles psychologiques de l’univers, sur notre Mère, l’Inde, […] mais surtout j’écrit sur Elle, Isis, sur le divin féminin de l’être” (68). She also explains the transcribing process in which numerous spirits drive her to write ‘automatically’, “non seulement j’écrit sur des sujets que je n’ai jamais étudiés, mais je donne des citations de livres que je n’ai jamais lus de ma vie. J’écrit ce qu’on me dicte, je suis une machine à écrire” (68). Blavatsky defies the patriarchal concept of authorship in which a gifted personality (traditionally a man) writes original individualized works. Marchessault offers an alternative model and illustrates that her heroine’s creative output is inspired and produced by a cumulative and infinite source (preferentially feminine) of sacred and profane knowledge. *The Secret Doctrine*, the other spiritual manifest featured in the drama, is also portrayed as being the output of the collective wisdom of the universal unconscious.

When acting as a medium Blavatsky enables individuals to communicate with the spirits of their past. She ‘materializes’ spirits and she makes momentous objects appear to retain old and to prompt new membership and to demonstrate the existence of the unconscious. These intercessions can be classified as intangible mediations where belief and personal investment are important factors in the phenomena’s occurrence. The co-founding and consolidation of The Theosophical Society in which she promotes and secures the affiliation of members determined to study other religions and form a universal brotherhood, and the automatic writing and the publication of books which enable her (or more precisely the spirits’) work to transcend spiritist circles and the Theosophical Society and reach out to the general public are more tangible forms of mediation.
In the play she plays the role of a concrete mediator on several occasions. She becomes involved with the incineration of a body in the city of New York. Marchessault shows Blavatsky's influence on American culture by presenting her as the mediator in the introduction of an ancient Indian custom to America. The playwright does not develop her role in the actual ritual burning of the corpse, except to specify that she encouraged the press to cover the event, which a journalist found inadmissible, "En Amérique ça ne se fait pas! C'est diabolique!" (63) and which Blavatsky justifies in Oriental terms, "En Inde c'est une idée philosophique" (63).

Again while in New York, she becomes implicated in resolving the plight of a group of shipwrecked Arabs. Because all charitable organizations are Christian and only offer succour to Christians, the Muslims are lodged temporarily and inappropriately on the mayor's orders in a hospital until a better solution is found. Appalled by these segregationist policies and by the group's defencelessness, Mme. Blavatsky decides to intervene on their behalf. She contacts the mayor and appeals to the general public via the newspapers to procure assistance for these forsaken aliens. This anecdote, like the incineration one, is not fully elaborated. The author refers to the episode to demonstrate that Mme Blavatsky was more than a spiritual mediator confined to the Theosophical Society's headquarters. Marchessault shows how Blavatsky was socially conscientious, put the theory of universal brotherhood and mutual solidarity into practice, and also mediated actively to improve an oppressed collectivity's situation.

Blavatsky also acts in the play as a concrete mediator between the Indian and the Western cultures in India. The missionary Joseph Cook states, "Il n'y a pas de véritable compréhension entre les deux races" (78). He insinuates that he prefers this status quo and accuses Mme Blavatsky of choosing sides, "vous semblez entretenir des préjugés contre la population anglaise des Indes. Vous avez dit que le gouvernement anglais était de beaucoup le pire que les Indes
puissent avoir” (78). Olcott retorts by defending Mme Blavatsky’s neutral position, “Madame Blavatsky a dit exactement le contraire! Les personnes qui vous ont rapporté ses paroles sont ou ignorantes ou très malicieuses” (78). Cook, the representative of the British authorities, out of fear of the Theosophical Society’s pernicious influence ‘on the natives’ attempts to demoralize Mme Blavatsky. He threatens to intimidate the Indians who frequent her Society, announces his intention of calumniating her society in the media and forewarns her that if she confronts the colonial authorities she will be expelled from India. Her response consists in the creation of her own newspaper to publicize the Society’s teachings. Aware of the patriarchal media’s bias against her egalitarian ideology, Blavatsky created her own journal to divulge the Theosophical Society’s teachings.

Mme Blavatsky was primarily a medium of imaginary beings and a mediator of abstract concepts. Marchessault simultaneously exposes Blavatsky’s equitable cross-species’, cross-cultural, cross-gender, cross-religious mediation—in which she also takes into account the conscious and the unconscious realms and the past and the present—and shows how her just mediation transforms her into a constructive model of harmonious entente. Within this perspective Marchessault makes Mme Blavatsky’s objectively incredible biography—filled with stories of Russian goblins and water spirits, Egyptian gods and goddesses, Tibetan masters, Astral travels to the holiest epicentres of the most ancient religions, medium sessions and the magical materialisation of cherished objects—less far-fetched and more acceptable to the audience.

Blavatsky also plays the role of the technical mediator of the drama. She is the link between the other characters, she gives the discontinuous plot a sense of cohesion, she establishes the play’s tempo and functions as a connector between the close realms of the
conscious and the unconscious, and as the merger of remote and opposed realities which have little in common. She gives a sense of coherence to incongruent subjects, geographical areas and disparate epochs where one can be catapulted in a short tableau from America to India, from the dream world to harsh reality and from almost prehistoric to modern times. In all of the tableaux, the protagonist evolves in numerous imaginary or real locations jumping back and forth in time and place. Cooperation, collaboration, solidarity and the equality of the sexes are important themes which are discussed but also illustrated in Marchessault's drama. The principal go-between of logically inconsistent realms, she is seconded in her endeavours by numerous characters. Anubis helps Mme Blavatsky at several levels, one of his main technical roles is to support her in the narration of the drama. The heroine is the main astral and geographical traveller, but her displacements are ordered and beneficially supervised by her male guide, Koot Houmi Lal Singh. In her 'daily' life, she works in harmony with the co-founder of the Theosophical society, however she is the most creative and mobile element, while Olcott ensures the secretarial work. Centring on and stemming from a matriarchal source, Marchessault's play counters traditional patriarchal drama by presenting an eccentric woman's biography in a totally unconventional style where extreme fragmentation is preferred to linear development and in which the plot consists in the transmission of novel imaginary associations, ideas and thoughts.

The play's iconic mediator, Anubis, is the only character who is able to step out of the drama and address the audience directly. As an influential insider in the inner drama, he has the potential of altering the turn of events in the on-going plot and as an outsider who is familiar with the audience, he is able to provide important information and influence their perception or comprehension of the issues, atmosphere and development of the inner drama. Anubis serves as a theatrical device which establishes the play's time frame, tone and rhythm. He removes time
barriers and mediates between the past and the present. Through Anubis the playwright recasts the time and life of the nineteenth-century heroine in the audience’s immediate present. Actualizing the biography allows the narrator to implicate the audience in the drama; as the conductor of lost souls, and as the dream cleaner who frequents the astral zone, he allows us to perceive Blavatsky who presumably transcribes endlessly spirits’ words. Anubis informs the audience that the main contention of the play is the exploration and combination of all religions. He interpellates and accuses the audience of being the cause of her and his tremendous workload. If people were not so narrow minded and segregationist and did not place members of other faiths after death in their religion’s hell, he would not have to use most of his energy to lead the dead souls out of this abyss, “Sur la terre vous vous plaignez d’être trop nombreux... Mais savez-vous que là-dessous dans mon grand parc souterrain, on vous compte par cent milliards de milliards. Dans ce grand parc, il y a plusieurs zones de stationnement [...] Nul n’est prophète de son Enfer! (15). Also if people were more sensitive to spiritual matters, Blavatsky would not be condemned to transcribing the spirits’ thoughts for humankind.

Anubis is a discrete narrator who appears on a limited number of occasions. When acting in the outer play, Anubis generally appears from the shadows (the unconscious) to provide essential background information to the audience. His discrete appearances illustrate how the unconscious functions, Anubis emerges unexpectedly, just as unconscious data or references can emerge inadvertently in one’s mind. When partaking in the inner play, usually when Mme. Blavatsky is probing her unconscious, dreaming or travelling the astral zone, he appears unannounced or in compliance to Kout Houni Lal Singh’s recommendations to assist the heroine. Anubis serves as Blavatsky’s mentor and cross-examiner and once he is thoroughly convinced of her vocation, he helps her achieve her objective of mediating between all cultures.
Anubis forms part of a circle of benefactors who collaborate in the spiritual mediation process and sponsor the mediator. It is sometimes difficult to assess when Anubis is acting as an insider or an outsider in the play. This potential confusion, where one takes time to realize whether Anubis is speaking to the other characters or to the audience or to both, creates a continuum between the real and the unreal realms.

Anubis also mediates between the dream and the real world. In the Cinquième tableau, Secret est-tu la? he is characterized as a bored expert on the interpretation, cleansing, and the recycling of dreams. He makes the audience realize the original content of Mme Blavatsky's dreams and explains to audiences that the heroine’s dreams can be transformed into reality, “De grands rêves utopies? Des rêves contagieux de changements? Des rêves qui deviendront des actes!” (56).

Besides serving as a narrator who actualizes the past, sarcastically implicates and orients the audience and presents and modulates the play in a peculiar fashion, Anubis is a metaphorical character who mediates between numerous realms and epitomizes universal spirituality. He mediates across time, species, space, cultures, religions, the conscious and the unconscious and the dream world and reality. Anubis is an extremely ancient and unique mythological creature whose aspect and symbolism, especially his connection with death, is still familiar to modern audiences. Anubis conserves his essential identity onto which additional ones are superimposed. Manfred Lurker describes Anubis's legendary appearance and role:

The god of the dead and of embalming, with the epithets ‘lord of the hallowed land’, i.e. the necropolis, and ‘he who is before the divine booth’, in which mummification took place. He usually had canine form, although the species, whether dog or jackal, cannot be exactly identified. Anubis guarded the mummy
from evil forces in the night. The image of a recumbent black jackal was included on the doors of numerous rock tombs for he was the guardian god. When the body was embalmed a priest wearing a jackal mask acted as Anubis’ representative. *(The Gods and Symbols of Ancient Egypt 28)*

The playwright’s Anubis is an adulteration of the original Egyptian icon. Anubis was portrayed as a stylized pure-bred canine, either a dog or a jackal, and he was associated with embalming and death, not ressurrection and dreams. Marchessault opted to transform the jackal into a humanoid creature, who has the body of a jackal but stands and speaks like a human. He is more reminiscent of the Egyptian high priest wearing a jackal mask, then of the protective canine effigies.

Marchessault validates Mme Blavatsky’s theory of the common origins of all religions through Anubis. His image and sacred attributions were able to survive throughout the ages because many cultures and successive generations made a cult of him due to the fact that he belonged to a fascinating species. The jackal is a particularly intriguing animal which is related to the dog, regarded in many cultures as man’s best friend. An adaptable animal, it is able live in the wilderness or on the fringes of civilization and changes its habits to conform to its environment. In nature it is diurnal and in areas inhabited by humans it is nocturnal. The jackal lives in small groups, in pairs, or alone and either hunts or lives off carrion. Though it is wild it interbreeds with domestic dogs. Its presence in countries such as Egypt demarcates the limit between the town and the country or in more general terms between civilization and nature. Structuralists define the jackal as belonging to an anomalous category which is:

one that does not fit the categories of the binary oppositions, but straddles them,
dirtying the clarity of their boundaries. Anomalous categories draw their
characteristics from both of the binary opposed ones, and consequently they have too much meaning, they are conceptually too powerful. Their excess of meaning which is drawn from both categories and their ability to challenge the basic sense-making structures of a culture means that they have to be controlled—typically by being designated ‘the sacred’ or ‘the taboo’. (John Fiske, *Introduction to Communication* 118)

It is understandable that the Egyptians, and numerous other cultures chose this animal as an idol. Fiske explains why,

The other type of anomalous category is one constructed by the culture itself to mediate between two opposed categories when the boundary appears too stark, too terrifying. Thus many cultures mediate between gods and people by anomalous figures (angels, Jesus Christ) who partake of both. Similarly, there are numerous mythological or religious creatures who mediate between humans and animals (werewolves, centaurs, and sphinx) and between the living and the dead (vampires, zombies, ghosts). (118)

Marchessault exploits the jackal’s nature, Egyptian beliefs, and further endows Anubis with speech and provides him with allegoric attire. Marchessault has Anubis wear a symbolic costume where the colour code, black and gold, is more important than the outfit’s cut and style. She specifies and explains the significance of these colours, “c’est Anubis, qui apparaît mi-noir, mi-doré, couleurs de la mort et de la renaissance en Égpte” (15) and implies Anubis’s familiarity with life and death, with day and night, with the visible and the invisible, and with the dark and bright side of humanity. Marchessault portrays Anubis as not only being familiar with but as
being the ultimate symbol of these contrasting realms and thus presents him as the ideal mediator between these realms.

In the play, Anubis remains in or on the edge of the shadows and triggers the audience's imagination, and asks them to recognize him, not from his presence on stage, but from the exploration of their collective cultural memory. He repeatedly presents himself in an interrogative manner: "Me reconnaissez-vous? C'est moi Anubis, conducteur des âmes trépassées" (15), "Me reconnaissez-vous? C'est moi Anubis, laveur de rêves" (60) and "Me reconnaissez-vous?" (88). The fact that the audience is able to identify him, understand his symbolism proves the continuity of archaic religions in modern societies. Whereas Pollock used T.S. to provoke the audience and make them question his methods and comments, Marchessault expects the audience to trust Anubis because of his ancientness and solemnity.

Marchessault transformed Anubis into a hybrid human and canine to exploit the possibilities of his animal and homo sapiens antecedents which enable him to cross the species borders and mediate between these two domains. His animal filiation makes him older than the human race. For this reason and because he emanates from Egypt, one of, if not the oldest of recorded literate cultures, he is able to reach back beyond this point. His existence precedes humanity and the invention of language. He was there when it was born, and therefore he is endowed with the possibility of understanding all languages, whether animal or human. This enables him to mediate between all animal species, all human cultures and between animals and humans. He understands all animals, and in particular birds, which are considered one of the most ancient vertebrate animals and whose imagery in most cultures is used to symbolize the spirits. One of the plays' leitmotifs associated with Anubis, is his antediluvian origins, biological kinship to birds (the spirits), his closeness to reptilians, and his ability to understand various
languages, especially that of the birds. Marchessault alternatively insists on his preferential relations with the spirits, and more particularly with the raven and makes his jackal make-up manifest.

In the overture, Anubis is busy listening to the spirits with his acute jackal ears which permit him to hear sounds that are imperceptible to the human audience, ‘‘*(Tendant sa grande oreille)* Les entendez-vous?’ ‘‘ (15). Therefore in this case his jackal complexion makes him superior to most humans, including the audience, except Mme Blavatsky. He describes in a convoluted manner that Mme Blavatsky, like himself, is listening to the spirits. He suggests however that she is more adept than him, because she can not only hear and understand the spirits but can also write what they dictate. In this introductory monologue he serves as a mediator between the inner play and the audience and explains the nature of Blavatsky’s writing. Both characters work towards the same goal which is to liberate humans from their narrow-mindedness.

In his first role in the inner drama he impersonates the heroine’s suitor and husband, Général Nicephore Blavatsky, as a specific bird: ‘‘*un vieux Corbeau, joué par Anubis déguisé en corbeau*’’ (30). In this excerpt Marchessault demonstrates Anubis’s familiarity with the Greek Orthodox church and practices and in parallel reiterates his animal ancestry. Mme. Blavatsky’s wedding to the General is presented as a liberating pantomime in which she does not marry a real human, but Anubis alias the Old Raven. In this surrealist wedding scene, Marchessault has Mme Blavatsky point out Anubis’s antediluvian features: ‘‘Il a la peau d’un lézard, d’un serpent!’’ (31). It is a means of presenting the nuptials as a spiritual union and of skirting the subject of the physical encounter between husband and wife. In this case the heroine weds a spiritual emissary of ancient ancestry in order to gain freedom.
Anubis next emerges in the inner play in Mme Blavatsky’s interior travels in the North American wilderness disguised as an Amerindian medicine man and chanting in an Amerindian language. Marchessault signifies this culture’s contribution to universal spirituality by having Anubis use this characterizing chant thereafter to announce his arrival or departure: “Hi-ey-hey-ii. Hay yi! (44, 45, 56) and “Hay yi!” (88). In this scene Marchessault exposes his intimate knowledge of the North American Native cultures, languages and esoteric practices and credos. On this occasion, instead of presenting himself as a bird, he quotes the Sioux chief Black Elk’s religious teachings which describes his people’s and the birds’ mutual cult of the circle, “Toute chose tend à être ronde. Le vent dans sa plus grande force tourbillonne. Les oiseaux font leurs nids en forme de cercle car ils sont de la même religion que nous” (44). Blavatsky accepts this revelation, but finds it too limited, and continues her search.

At a crucial moment during the protagonist’s dangerous astral trip in the Valley of the Kings, Anubis manifests his presence when Mme Blavatsky confronts death—a female mummy surrounded by singing birds (spirits) and by the shadows of prehistoric creatures cast on the chamber’s wall. The heroine, morbidly fascinated by these apparitions, hesitates in pursuing the path towards the light. The mummy warns her to progress without looking back. Anubis signifies his invisible proximity when the mommy exits, “*(Ricanement de la momie qui se retire, cri du chacal Anubis. Obscurité)*” (53). Once again Marchessault has Anubis coincide with Mme Blavatsky to signify that he is always present in her travels, on this occasion he joins her in the most sacrosanct epicentre of Ancient Egypt spirituality, in a burial chamber which he traditionally guards. The signification of Anubis’s presence in this extract is ambiguous. He is either testing or assisting the medium. By distracting her, he can make her get off her course towards the light, or he can assist her by signifying his protective company in his home territory,
and encourage her to go on without fear. Paulos de Métauron partly explains the meaning of Anubis’s cry, and presents it as beneficial and unifying one, “Les lamentations du chacal sont un chant et nous faissons partie de cette harmonie” (54). Because Mme Blavatsky and Paulos de Métauron are on a positive quest they perceive Anubis’s proximity positively.

The protagonist is followed by Anubis to Tibet, her last and most illuminating destination before she decides to transform her ideas into actions. Anubis watches over and exposes Helena’s and Paulos’s dreams. While he undertakes this task, he explains that birds of the same species have different languages, and insinuates that he and Mme Blavatsky, because of their common universal spiritual experiences are able to understand them. “C’est moi Anubis, laveur de rêves dans un pays où rien ne se fait comme ailleurs. Même le langage des oiseaux est différent et les hirondelles du Nil n’entendraient rien au langage de celles de Lhassa” (60).

Marchessault’s Anubis is not only an adulteration of the original Anubis, his personality is also tailored to make him an ideal representative cross-cultural mediator. He resembles but is not as solemn as the god of death familiar to the audience through the reproduction of Ancient Egypt sources. In comparison to the genuine Egyptian Anubis, he is portrayed as an informal, humorous, mobile and imperfect character. For example he likes and insists on playing music even though it is bound to be substandard because of his encumbering claws.

A jackal, he is also continuously associated in different manners with the raven. In short he is a mixture of the Egyptian Anubis and the North American trickster. Marchessault draws upon the legends of the coyote and the raven in First Nations culture to typify Anubis. The trickster is particularly appealing because of his inconsistent nature and approach where his vile intentions can accidentally become beneficial or his good intentions can bring on great disasters. He has sublime qualities and defects, like humanity itself, “the trickster, whether he is a coyote
or raven or one of the other animal gods, is many kinds of character wrapped into one—a silly
fool and a splendid hero, a god-like gift-bringer and a trouble-making practical joker. And
because of this he seems human” (Douglas Hill, Coyote, The Trickster 6). Though Anubis is
neither as serene as the original Egyptian god, nor as hilarious or troublesome as First-Nations
tricksters can be, Marchessault demonstrates through him, the analogous reference to and esteem
of canine-identified gods or icons in at least two distant cultures and religions.

In her play Marchessault also refers to the darker type of trickster, the black beast which
inhabits one’s unconscious. Anubis’ howl instills in some of the drama’s characters admiration
and in others fear. Blavatsky and Métamon are not frightened by the jackal’s howl because they
have thoroughly explored their unconscious which is filled with predominantly positive thoughts,
feelings and philanthropic intentions. In Emma, Anubis’s immediacy provokes panic. His howl
activates Emma’s fear of herself which she expresses through a quote of Richard III, from
Shakespeare’s drama about this over ambitious and treacherous king, “‘Des gouttes de sueurs
froides perlent sur ma chair qui tremble. De quoi ai-je peur? De moi même.’ J’ai cru que les
âmes de tous ceux dont j’ai causé la mort venaient” (53). Emma is more aware and frightened of
the jackal because her unconscious is unclean: “dans l’obscurité un chacal m’a frôlée ... Il se
lamentait ...” (author’s ellipses) and she construes his howl as the expression of her guilt, “Moi,
j’ai cru que c’étaient mes fautes et mes actes mauvais qui élevaient la voix après le coucher du
soleil” (54). Marchessaut portrays her as a remorseful character who has committed great
wrongs and is fated to commit more.

Anubis makes his final physical manifestation in the play to recuperate Mme Blavatsky
from death in Bombay and accompany her to culminate her mission in London. Extremely ill and
dying, the heroine calls out for Kout Houmi Lal Sing who informs her that she must pursue her
mission and sends Anubis to recover her from death, “je vous envoie quelqu’un qui vous reprisera les reins et le coeur” (88). Anubis mediates between life and death and manages to revive Blavatsky and escort her to her final destination.

During the trip to London he serves again as a mediator between different geographical areas, cultures, and different historical periods. He quotes *The Divine Comedy* in Italian and translates it for the audience’s benefit. This is the third human language which Anubis demonstrates that he masters in the play, besides French and Amerindian. This reference allows Marchessault to have Anubis conduct the heroine and the audience forwards yet backwards in time. He guides Blavatsky from Bombay to London, from an ancient Hindi spiritual centre to the most modern metropolis of the Nineteenth century, just as the 1st century BC Roman author Virgil (70 - 19 BC) guided the medieval Italian poet Dante (1265-1321 AD) through Hell in *The Divine Comedy*. Anubis inscribes himself and Blavatsky in a European pagan and Christian tradition within a modern context.

In summary Anubis is a practical mediator who serves as the mediator between the inner and outer drama. He presents the play and explains its content, he interrogates and accuses the audience and implicates them in the drama by transferring Mme Blavatsky’s biography to the spectators’ present and he regulates its rhythm by separating the play into two distinct parts and announcing a happy ending. He is an iconic mediator who represents universal spirituality. He takes the audience continuously back and forth in time and place and demonstrates that prehistory and modernity are coinciding realities inhabited by animals and humans which he presents as harmonious and complementary species. He connects what can be judged as unrelated religions from different epochs and lands—Ancient Egyptian religion/Africa, Greek Orthodox Christian Church/Eurasia, Amerindian shamanism/America, Tibetan Buddhism/Far
East, and Indian Hinduism/East Asian. Within Europe he links Parisian progressive cosmopolitanism with Russian backwardness, and Northern Europe’s (London’s) regressive ethnocentrism with the progressive visionariness of a medieval erudite poet, Dante, from Southern Europe, Italy, who in turn relates his travels with a pagan Roman, Virgil, who takes Dante on a guided tour which starts in hell and ends in heaven.

He presents the world as a small, unified and interdependent realm rather than an endless series of divided territories and isolated cultures unrelated over space and time. He is a secondary character who works in collaboration with Mme Blavatsky, the play’s undisputed protagonist. He emphasizes similarities rather than differences and invites the audience to view the world as a harmonious whole to which it belongs. Anubis also mediates between the visible and the invisible worlds, between life and death, the living and the dead, light and darkness, good and evil, the conscious and the unconscious, which includes the dreamworld, and allows the audience to perceive these spheres as interconnected ones. He enables the audience to visualize, explore and domesticate these traditionally unrecognized, suppressed and/or disturbing territories. A paramount mediator, Anubis embodies universal spirituality, and personal harmony which entails psychological serenity and even physical integrity. Marchessault uses him as a means to signify that if one leads a positive exterior life, one can enjoy a rich interior life, and can, like Mme Blavatsky, escape death through his intervention.
CONCLUSION

History is important to Pollock and Marchessault because it is the subject matter of almost all of their dramas. The first form of mediation undertaken in their history dramas is to select themes and events which challenge and undermine patriarchal history. Pollock recuperates a large range of topics: Canada’s unjust treatment of First-Nations peoples (Walsh) and of coloured immigrants (The Komagata Maru Incident), Canada’s violent past (Fair Liberty’s Call), the inhumane brutality of the penitentiary system (One Tiger to a Hill), the predicament of women within patriarchy who are compelled to murder (Blood Relations) or to suicide (Doc) to evade forced domesticity, and the system’s tacit condoning of the individual and serial slaughtering of women (The Making of Warriors and Saucy Jack). Marchessault’s history plays are variations of one theme, creative women’s difficult but successful paths to artistic attainment and public recognition. She subverts patriarchal history by offering an alternative matriarchal history in which exceptional heroines use their imaginations to explore, map out new territories, and divulge their discoveries and feats to the public through their writings. Both playwrights’ objective is to change audiences’ cultural heritage and collective memory.

Pollock’s history plays focus principally on conflict and cultural mediation. They concern either clashes between opposed parties in which conflict mediators intervene or the juxtaposition and exploration of opposed or contradictory interpretations of a past event through cultural mediators. In both cases Pollock uses a great number of strategies to highlight the artificial nature of her dramas which makes audiences aware of the constructed nature of all discourses, including her own. She employs major and minor metatheatrical techniques such as plays within plays, trials in which characters attempt to determine who is responsible for a given
event, and reconstructions of an event which instead of demonstrating what happened, makes the audience envision the hypothetical causes of horrendous events and link them to their modern context. The historical events are presented through multiple perspectives; the characters present contrasting and often opposing opinions. All of these tactics make the audience critical towards the information presented in the history dramas and entices them to draw their own conclusions.

Marchessault’s history plays centre more on the creative process and on cultural mediation. Contrary to Pollock, Marchessault uses few metatheatrical devices, but the subject matter of her historical dramas is creative writing in the feminine within patriarchal parameters. When she does use metatheatrical techniques, such as having Emily Carr conduct audiences into the old world of the forest or having Anubis frame the inner play in Madame Blavatsky, spirite, they are employed to draw audiences closer to the heroine and make them understand or join in on the heroines’ mystical or introspective experiences. In Marchessault’s plays metatheatre is used to convince audiences of the verisimilitude of the protagonists’ intentions, sources and output. These specific metatheatrical devices give a religious touch to these plays, Carr comes into contact with D’Sunoqua and Blavatsky with all spirits symbolized by Anubis. Marchessault encourages audiences to believe that Carr and Blavatsky are saintly figures in direct contact with divinities. The playwright also employs intertextual references to authenticate her biographies; her heroines quote the historical figures they impersonate profusely and other renowned authors are cited throughout her plays.

Whereas Pollock explicitly destabilizes the information she transmits, Marchessault concentrates on giving a cohesive version of her heroines’ biographies. She presents the drama through a one dimensional perspective, generally the heroine’s, and the secondary characters corroborate and validate the protagonist’s opinion. The main recurrent theme is women’s
difficulty to create under patriarchy, and once they have accomplished their objective, the hardship of making their work known to the general public. By presenting her creative women as individuals who are personally or socially tortured by their creativity, Marchessault portrays them as altruistic martyrs of a greater cause. She expects the audience to believe that they are endowed with superior and even divine missions rather than egocentric ones, such as creating for personal and intellectual pleasure. All of her heroines overcome their dilemma by either re-establishing contact with ancient matriarchal sources or by creating their own matriarchal culture and network. For example in La saga des poules mouillées the women overcome their patriarchal past through matriarchal bonding and decide to write a book together which lays the foundations of a new collective matriarchal culture.

The presence of a great number and different types of mediators–conflict dispute, cultural, narrative and artist mediators–illustrates the importance Pollock attaches to mediation in her dramas. The artist or creative mediators are particularly interesting because they bring attention to Pollock’s investment as a playwright into her dramas and make audiences focus on the role of art in society. Pollock deliberately uses generic and partially identified artist figures, such as The Actress in Blood Relations and T.S. in The Komagata Maru Incident to depict character rather than a character and to illustrate the potentiality of the theatrical praxis. The other artistic figures are associated with Pollock, the writer and the performer. Katie and Catherine, the split-personality writer in Pollock’s autobiographical play Doc are her alter egos, and the name of the music hall entertainer and actress of Saucy Jack, Kate, is very similar to the protagonists of Doc’s names, and in the introduction of The Making of Warriors Pollock identifies Woman One as herself. All of these characters represent Pollock’s professional mediating role and mediation in the on-going drama.
Marchessault also uses different strategies to signify her own presence in her biographical plays which can all be classified as autobiographical plays. Whereas the introductions to Pollock history dramas generally provide ‘objective’ background historical information, the prefaces of Marchessault’s plays are written by peers in a subjective tone in which they laud the dramatist, highlight the similitude between the playwright’s and her heroines’ quests and their own pursuits, as if they were all one and the same, and formed a continuum. This procedure gives even a greater sense of cohesion to the ensemble of Marchessault’s plays where each creative woman is portrayed as forming part of a whole.

All of Marchessault’s history plays are about cultural mediation and mediators who use their medium, mainly writing, to familiarize mainstream society with other cultures, principally matriarchy which comprises subcultures such as lesbian society and other cultures such as the First-Nations and East-Asian civilizations. The dramatist allows audiences to perceive her mediating heroines’ inspirational sources and creative process and expects them to accept mediation as good, as a value in itself. In contrast to Pollock, she wants audiences to accept her heroines’ (and her) brand of mediation on faith, uncritically and intuitively. The underlying argument, which is particularly obvious in Mme Blavatsky, spirite, is that if one remains open to all possibilities, one will feel better. Whereas Pollock exposes and criticizes different types of mediation and suggests alternative forms of mediation, Marchessault presents her heroines as unique figures endowed with a superior or divine mediating mission and does not intimate any alternatives. Whereas Pollock implies that mediation is a process in which all partake in some form or another, Marchessault suggests that cultural mediation is a domain reserved to a select few on the behalf of the great majority; her exclusive outlook and theory can alienate audiences and immolate her heroines as unattainable idols.
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