
The Diary of Sarah Frost, 1783: The Sounds and Silences of a Woman's Exile¹

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"Starting a diary," notes Harriett Blodgett, "may be a response to external influences."³ Such seems to be the situation of Sarah Frost (1754-1817), who, for one brief moment in the history of eighteenth-century revolutionary North America, responded to the "external influences" of war, dislocation, and exile by keeping a diary of "the voyage from New York to St. John N.B. in one of the Loyalist Fleets of 1783."⁴ In doing so, she has left us with a personal insight into both the sounds and the silences of women's exile as approximately thirty thousand Tory refugees left their homes in America for the uncertainties of re-settlement in the Atlantic region of British North America. Involuntarily, Sarah Frost has also bequeathed to literary historians a set of challenging editorial problems still unresolved today in the absence of her original manuscript. Four versions of

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 - 3 Harriet Blodgett, *Centuries of Female Days. Englishwomen's Private Diaries* (Gloucester: U.K.: Alan Sutton, 1989), 63.
 - 4 [Sarah Frost], "Extracts from the Diary kept by Sarah Frost on the voyage from New York to St. John N.B. in one of the Loyalist Fleets of 1783," William Odber Raymond Collection, Notebook #1 (F 17-1), 120, New Brunswick Museum. Published as "The Diary of Sarah Frost" in Walter Bates' *Kingston and the Loyalists of the "Spring Fleet" of A.D. 1783: with Reminiscences of Early Days in Connecticut; a Narrative to which is Appended a Diary Written by Sarah Frost on Her Voyage to St. John, N.B., with the Loyalists of 1783*, edited with notes by W.O. Raymond (Saint John, N.B.: Barnes, 1889), 26-30; Rpt. Woodstock, N.B.: Non-Entity Press, 1980. The Frost diary was published again with minor revisions in W. O. Raymond, *The River St. John, Its Physical Features, Legends, and History from 1604 to 1784* (Saint John, N.B.: John A. Bowes, 1910).

her diary published in book form, as well as three different surviving handwritten copies purportedly made by her descendants, add to the dilemma of how, indeed, to read the "sounds and the silences" of Sarah Frost's text.⁵

In many respects, Sarah Frost was very typical of Loyalist women facing exile at the conclusion of the American Revolution in 1783. Raised in Stamford, Connecticut, as Sarah Schofield (Scofield), she grew up in a family firmly established in the community. This stability meant that she had close ties with many friends and relatives, a factor that hovers as a subtext behind her diary as she describes the preparations for her departure. On one hand, she was a Scofield, daughter of Sergeant Josiah Scofield of the Revolutionary army who was "called to the defense of New York in 1775" and sister of Sergeant Gershom Scofield who served the patriot cause from 1776 to 1782.⁶ On the other hand, she was Sarah Frost, wife of Tory Loyalist William Frost, a descendant of a long-established family in the Stamford community who had been proscribed by his townsmen because of his political allegiances and activities during the war.⁷ Although Sarah does not allude to these political divisions between her family and her husband as she begins her diary on 25 May 1783, they do inform her situation as she boards the *Two Sisters* as part of a fleet of fourteen ships carrying Tory refugees from New York to Nova Scotia. Focusing primarily on the domestic shipboard lives of her husband and her two children, she nonetheless makes it clear in her entries on 30 May, 6 June, and 7 June that her parents, brothers, and sisters are remaining behind in Stamford. "I am afraid I shall not hear from them again before I leave New York," she notes in her journal on 6 June, and she closes her entry that night with the observation, "It grows late so I conclude for the night hoping to see Daddy in the

5 Unless otherwise indicated, references will be to W.O. Raymond's manuscript copy "Extracts from the Diary kept by Sarah Frost" This hand-copied manuscript, which informs Raymond's 1889 and 1910 editions of the diary, is the basis of the best known public version of the diary published by Raymond in 1889. It is the text that he purportedly received from his wife, Sarah Frost's great granddaughter, and reveals the amendments that he made for his 1889 published edition.

6 E.B. Huntington, *Stamford Registration of Births, Marriages and Deaths* (Stamford, Connecticut: 1874), 224.

7 Josephine C. Frost, *The Frost Genealogy* (New York: Frederic H. Hitchcock, 1912), 395-96. See also: Samuel Frost to Belle Frost, Lower Norton, King's County, New Brunswick, 20 May 1907, CB DOC Frost Family, New Brunswick Museum.

morning.”⁸ In fact, Josiah Scofield does come on board on 7 June, staying not only for breakfast but, to the delight of his daughter, for dinner as well. There is no indication during the visit of political differences separating her husband and her father. Nonetheless, this was a world where fellow Loyalist, Fyler Dibble, son of the Anglican clergyman in Stamford, would later slit his throat in despair in Saint John, and where, after the outbreak of hostilities, “Violence against civilians, tarring-and-featherings, beatings and kidnappings were perpetuated by both parties.”⁹

As Estelle Feinstein has pointed out in *Stamford from Puritan to Patriot*, the town may have had peaceful beginnings, but, by the time of the Revolution, divisiveness between the Congregationalists and the Church of England had fuelled political discord. The situation of Sylvanus Whitney, who sailed as a Tory refugee with Sarah and her husband on the *Two Sisters*, was typical of the way in which small events had become lightning rods for politicization and violence in the highly-charged atmosphere of the war. More through acquisitiveness than through fidelity to Britain, Whitney in June 1775 tried to sell proscribed tea to the townspeople. The subsequent mock execution, described by E.B. Huntington in his pro-patriot *History of Stamford*, Connecticut, presaged the Loyalists’ fate in the Frosts’ community:

About 8 o’ clock, in the evening a gallows was erected in the middle of the street, opposite the Webb tavern; a large concourse of people collected, and were joined by a number of soldiers quartered in the town. A grand procession soon began to move. In the first place, a large guard under arms, headed by two captains, who lead the van, while the unfortunate tea hung across a pole, sustained by two unarmed soldiers. Secondly, followed the Committee of Observation. Thirdly, spectators came to see the great sight. And after parading through part of the principal street, with drums beating and fifes playing a most doleful sound, they came to the gallows where the common hangman soon performed his office to the general satisfaction of the spectators. As it was thought dangerous to let said tea hang all night, for fear of invasion from our tea lovers, a large bonfire was made under it, which soon reduced

8 [Sarah Frost], “Extracts from the Diary,” William Odber Raymond Collection, 123-25.

9 Estelle S. Feinstein, *Stamford from Puritan to Patriot: The Shaping of a Connecticut Community: 1641-1774* (Stamford, Conn.: Stamford Bicentennial Corporation: 1976), 186.

it to ashes; and after giving three loud huzzas, the people soon dispersed to their respective homes without any bad consequence attending. The owner of the aforesaid tea attended, during the execution, and behaved himself as well as could be expected on the occasion.¹⁰

It is into this intensely volatile environment that Sarah Frost was thrust by the political commitments of her husband, Captain William Frost. Described years later by his grandson as a figure who "had to keep out of sight" because of his counter-revolutionary activities,¹¹ Captain Frost had gained notoriety in the 1780s for two dashing escapades. Leaving Sarah and the children behind the lines in the safety of the Loyalist stronghold at Lloyd's Neck, Long Island, Frost on 22 July 1781 had led forty men in seven boats across Long Island Sound to capture the Reverend Moses Mather and forty-eight male parishioners from the Stamford Congregational meeting house. In Huntington's rather charged language,

The men and older youths of the congregation were drawn up two and two in marching order and tied arm to arm. The pastor was ordered to the front, alone, to lead the march. All was now ready for the start. The valuable articles of jewelry, found on both the men and women had been appropriated by the excellent captain. Every horse needed for the invading band had been taken, and the women and children consigned to the care of the rear-guard, until the captors with their prisoners and spoils should be well under way. The orders are given, and, driven by their former neighbours and the venial soldiery of the British power, some forty-eight of our townsmen were hurried away to the boats awaiting them at the shore. They were thence taken to Lloyd's Neck. Here they found, not congenial friends, but many of their life-long neighbours and kindred, whom the revolution had alienated and made their open and bitterest enemies.¹²

The divisiveness that such a raid fostered did little to endear Captain Frost to the patriot forces, and he was therefore pursued with vigour when he subsequently dared to visit his relatives in Stamford. Frost managed to get back to the British lines by hiding under bales of hay in a schooner leaving the port,¹³ but his highly visible

10 E.B. Huntington, *History of Stamford, Connecticut* (Stamford, Conn.: Published By The Author, 1868), 252.

11 Samuel Frost to Belle Frost, 20 May 1907.

12 E. B. Huntington, *History of Stamford*, 211-12.

13 Josephine Frost, 396.

exploits drew sufficient attention to him, according to his grandson, to force him to join the fleet late when it sailed from New York.¹⁴ Whether oral history possibly embellished this story over the years is in the realm of conjecture, but two of the manuscript versions of the diary begun on 25 May 1783 suggest that her husband is on board the *Two Sisters* with her. He is, in her words on 28 May, “my affectionate Husband in whom I take delight,”¹⁵ and the warmth of their relationship as they visit their friends on shore in New York, play cards on the ship with the children, or drink tea together with Major Hubble, the former Loyalist commander at Lloyd’s Neck, is palpable. When Sarah is overwhelmed by the heat, overcrowding, and constant delays of the fleet as it lingers in the New York area from 23 May until 16 June, it is her husband who cooks breakfast, brings breakfast to her bedside, alters her berth in the cabin, and collects a mugful of hailstones from a squall to make her a glass of punch. He brings her peas for her palate in New York and salmon for her table when they land in Saint John. Throughout the diary, their relationship is that of an affectionate couple who clearly share an enjoyment of both their children and their friends.

However, if Sarah Frost is vocal about her love for her family and her perceptions of her journey in her diary, she is silent about the fact that she is eight months pregnant by the time that she lands in Saint John on 29 June 1783. History records that on 30 July, one month after declaring Saint John to be “the roughest land I ever saw,”¹⁶ Sarah Frost gave birth in a tent to Hannah, the second female child to be born in Saint John. This information explains the allusions to unwellness that punctuate a number of entries in the diary, but the failure of Sarah to make any overt reference to her condition may go far to reveal the cultural and gender constraints placed upon women’s texts in the eighteenth century. As Cynthia Huff has noted in “Delivery: The Cultural Re-presentation of Childbirth,” absent texts suggest “that omissions are fully as important as inclusions in self-writing by women.”¹⁷ Sarah Frost’s unspoken text lies subsumed in another

14 Samuel Frost to Belle Frost, 20 May 1907.

15 [Sarah Frost], “Extracts from the Diary,” William Odber Raymond Collection, 120. It opens on 25 May 1783: “I left Lloyd’s Neck with my family.” Sarah Frost’s comments about her affectionate husband appear on Wednesday, 28 May, page 122.

16 *Ibid.*, 135.

17 Cynthia Huff, “Delivery: The Cultural Re-presentation of Childbirth,” in *Autobiography and Questions of Gender*, ed. Shirley Neuman (London: Frank Cass: 1991), 113.

text, that of her highly visible journey to Saint John. While the diary of that voyage resonates with important cultural, geographical, and family insights as public and private events intersect in 1783, it is, at its best, an *aide memoire*, the kind of diary which critic Brian Dobbs has described as enabling writers and their families to “re-live” events later in time. Not only does such a diary “tell us what we did,” adds Dobbs, but it also “tells us how we felt about the action.”¹⁸ Sarah Frost never informs us, however, of her possible fears as she sails to a strange, undeveloped country in order to re-establish her family and to give birth. Whether she refrained from mentioning her pregnancy in her diary because of the gender-inflected codes of her society or because of an anticipated future family readership is difficult to second-guess. In discussing the Victorian diaries of Ophelia Powell and Frances Elizabeth Blathwayt, Cynthia Huff notes that “particularly interesting for the student of autobiography is the two women’s approaches to the question of audience, for their diary practices indicate that Victorian women thought of their volumes as family not personal property.”¹⁹ Although Sarah Frost is an eighteenth-century woman, the same principle may hold. In at least several places in her entries, the phrasing suggests that she is anticipating a public reader for her journal. For example, after referring to a family card game on 28 May that includes her husband, she closes: “As I have not mentioned him before, I may say that he is my affectionate Husband in whom I take delight.”²⁰ This self consciousness is reinforced by her thoroughness on 23 May in explaining the background of Major Hubble. By 20 June, the diary itself has almost become a character as she concludes her entry with: “I am tired so I think to go to rest. Good Night!”

Yet, on the whole, the diary sustains an air of artlessness. On 5 June, Sarah Frost worries about losing contact with her husband in the movement of the fleet (“I was afraid that he would never find me again – but he did”) and on 7 June she describes a quarrel with him over some green peas she has requested from shore (“He was so angry with me. He has come on board and has brought the peas!”). The diary also develops a sense of the personal, physical discomfort of living on board ship with 250 other people moored off New York for 23 days before finally sailing for Nova Scotia on 17 June. Throughout

18 Quoted in Blodgett, 65.

19 Huff, 110.

20 [Sarah Frost], “Extracts from the Diary,” William Odber Raymond Collection, 122.

that hot, uncomfortable, and uncertain time, she records her physical weariness as the days crawl by. On 30 May, she notes: "I grow tired." On 1 June, she is "fatigued with yesterday's walk and not feeling well." Twelve days later, "I am so unwell I lie in my berth all day." And, on 16 June, "I feel unwell and retire."

As the "wind ... blows very high" on 10 June, the children begin to grow quite sick, exacerbating her frayed nerves from 9 June when "Our women all came on board with their children, and there is great confusion in the Cabin. We bear with it pretty well through the day but at night one child cries in one place, and one in another whilst we are getting them to bed. I think sometimes I will go crazy. There are so many of them, if they were as still as common, there would be a great noise amongst them."²¹ Once they finally set sail, a near run-in with a "rebel brig" flying the thirteen stripes, the dispersion and loss of the fleet in the Bay of Fundy fog, and the sighting of a possible wreck are only a few of the things that Sarah Frost vividly records with a series of sharp, visual images. Only at the end of the voyage when they reach their destination, the future city of Saint John, New Brunswick, does Sarah Frost's essentially descriptive diary take on an evaluative note. Returning in the longboat from her first on-shore visit, she concludes her entries with the words: "It is now afternoon and I have been on shore. It is I think the roughest land I ever saw ... but this is to be *the City* they say! We are to have our land sixty miles farther up the river. We are all ordered to land tomorrow, and not a shelter to go under."²² As Cynthia Huff has observed, the female autobiography often differs from the male by focusing on relationships and context. It often "delineates a significant life event rather than the form of a life lived."²³ Both observations capture the overall tenor of Sarah Frost's description of her 1783 voyage from New York to Saint John. Both reinforce the cataclysmic nature of the significant life event that dominates the conclusion of her diary: "the roughest land I every saw ... and not a shelter to go under."

Sarah Frost's diary became a public rather than a private document when, in 1889, more than one hundred years after the Frosts landed in New Brunswick, the Reverend W. O. Raymond, rector of St. Mary's Church, Saint John, appended it to his edition of Walter Bates's *Kingston and the Loyalists of the "Spring Fleet of A.D. 1783*. Bates, a

21 *Ibid.*, 125-26.

22 *Ibid.*, 135.

23 Huff, 108.

Stamford, Connecticut, a fellow Tory refugee and a relative of Sarah Frost's, had sailed from New York in the same fleet and had settled in Kingston, New Brunswick, not far from the Frost farm at Lower Norton. The High Sheriff for the County of King's, the author of a sensationalistic narrative about one of his prisoners (*The Mysterious Stranger. or Memoirs of the Noted Henry More Smith*), and a church vestryman who by 1826 was signing himself "Esquire,"²⁴ Bates was valorized in Raymond's introduction as "ever a loyal British subject, and a faithful and devoted member of the church of his fathers."²⁵ Sarah Frost's diary was included by Raymond as a revelation of the personal trials and discomforts experienced by the Loyalists, and he made it clear in his introduction to the appendix that his was a personal as well as a professional interest because his wife was a great granddaughter of Sarah Frost. Based on this revelation, and on Raymond's reputation as a recorder of New Brunswick history, one would expect Raymond's edition of the diary to have some authority. However, an excursion into the question of copy-text for the Sarah Frost diary opens up a Pandora's box of problems in determining the accuracy, provenance, and length of the text that we call Sarah's.

Although Raymond's published version of the diary is entitled "The Diary of Sarah Frost," his handwritten working manuscript of the text in the New Brunswick Museum is entitled "Extracts from the Diary kept by Sarah Frost on the Voyage from New York to St. John N.B. in one of the Loyalist Fleets of 1783." A search for the original eighteenth-century diary has so far proven unsuccessful, so it is impossible to know from what text Raymond "excerpted" his "extracts," how comprehensive the diary was, or even if it were Raymond, not Sarah Frost, who omitted the references to her pregnancy. Certainly, Raymond's visible interventions in the text in his working manuscript are not heavy, but they are sufficient to provide insight into perceived standards of cultural taste. For example, on page 122 of the Raymond manuscript, he has crossed out the words "Mr. Frost" whenever Sarah refers to her husband and has added the word "Billy." He has also included a signed footnote: "The reference is to her husband William Frost whom she calls 'Billy' here and elsewhere throughout her Diary. W.O.R." Sarah Frost's apparent

24 Vestry Records, Trinity Church, 1826, microfilm F9472, John Fisher Museum, Kingston, N.B.

25 W.O. Raymond, "Introductory" to Walter Bates, *Kingston and the Loyalists of the "Spring Fleet"* (1889), 3.

use of the term “Billy” in the original diary to identify her husband confirms for the modern reader the sense of domestic intimacy and informality emerging from the text. However, the propensity of both the copier of Raymond’s manuscript version of the diary, and of Raymond himself in his 1889 published version, to change Sarah’s familiar “Billy” to the more formal “Mr. Frost” suggests the gentrifying of Sarah Frost’s work to meet standards of expectation and taste in their Victorian readership and raises troubling questions for modern readers about other interventions and omissions in the creation of the 1889 text. This sense of proprietorship over Frost’s text is further reinforced by Raymond’s reverting to the original wording of the diary in his 1910 republication of it in his book, *The River St. John*, where he recaptures the more candid and informal nature of Sarah’s relationships with the men in her life by changing “Father” on 6 June back to “Daddy” and by employing “Billy” for her husband throughout the text.

If Raymond’s interventions in what has become the accepted text of Frost’s diary are enough to raise questions about the validity of the diary, so also are the other versions of the diary that have surfaced during pursuit of the Frost original. All of these follow a time-line similar to Raymond’s extracts, thereby suggesting a common source handed down through the generations. Here, however, the one-on-one similarities end. In the case of two of the versions – the semi-complete typescript of the MacGowan diary deposited in the New Brunswick Museum in 1954 and the hand-written (in two hands) “Westmount, P.Q.” diary given to the New Brunswick Museum in 1950 – there are marked differences in the wording and detail of the entries.²⁶ The typescript MacGowan diary, a copy of a privately-held handwritten version, begins part-way through the 17 June entry. It ends, as do all the versions of the diary, with the sentence: “All are ordered on land tomorrow and not a shelter to go under.” Along with privately-held copies of land grants and family letters, it has

26 Mrs. A.M. McGowan, typescript of “Sarah Frost’s Diary,” 17-29 June 1783, CB DOC Frost Family, New Brunswick Museum. Mrs. McGowan was a direct descendant of Sarah Frost. I wish to thank Mr. Don McGowan for furthering my research by sharing with me his copy of the Sarah Frost diary. The second version of the diary, “Copy of Diary kept by Mrs. Wm. Frost on her passage to St. John, N.B. with other loyalists in the year 1783,” was deposited in the New Brunswick Museum in 1950 by Mr. Duncan Anderson of Westmount, P.Q. The diary begins on 25 May and ends on 29 June. It is found in CB DOC Frost Family, New Brunswick Museum. The provenance is not known.

presumably been handed down in re-copied form from Sarah Frost to her descendants. However, no sign of the original eighteenth-century diary seems to have survived in this branch of the family. The Westmount version, the provenance of which is currently unknown other than its being gifted by a Westmount resident to the New Brunswick Museum in 1950, is also copied and is entitled "Copy of Diary Kept by Mrs. Wm. Frost on her passage to St. John, N.B. with other loyalists in the year 1783." It begins on 25 May and concludes, as do all the other versions, on 29 June 1783.

The Raymond, MacGowan, and Westmount handwritten diaries have parallel events and time-lines but vary in wording and detail. A comparison of Frost's last entries, 28-29 June, may make the point. In the handwritten Raymond version, Sarah Frost describes in fairly brisk language the arrival of the Saint John harbour pilot to guide them to their anchorage, her husband's excursion ashore in his whale boat, his return with "a fine salmon," and his plans to take her ashore: "He told me to get ready and go on shore and he would carry me but afterwards found he could not take me."²⁷ There is no explanation as to why "he could not take me."

The Westmount version of the diary differs from the Raymond version not only in its change of language but also in the detail added. Here, Sarah records the objections of a certain Mr. Whitney to having her go ashore in the boat and she emerges as a woman of character as she vexedly observes: "Mr. Frost has gone ashore in his whale-boat to see how it looks and promised to return soon for me I am impatient to get my feet on land again he did soon return and brought a fine salmon he told me to get ready to land and I was soon ready but Mr. Whitney set up a great fuss about being an officer I suppose he thought he could not go with dignity if any woman went in the boat with him then he acted as if he was Lord Protector of the whole country but I can go ashore without his liberty or thanks and I will go to."²⁸ Also appended to this spirited section of the Westmount diary is a descendant's footnote about the Frosts' supposed Saint John city building-lot: "This lot is now know[n] as Barlow's Corner. Grandpapa put up the first building then sold it." This note suggests that the Westmount diary is a copy made by Sarah's grandchild.

27 [Sarah Frost], "Extracts from the Diary," William Obder Raymond Collection, 135.

28 [Sarah Frost], "Copy of Diary kept by Mrs. Wm. Frost," CB DOC, Frost Family, 17.

Certainly, Sarah's comments in the Westmount diary about Mr. Whitney, and her observations on 29 June that the site of Saint John looks as if "it is the home of bears and wolves," carry with them a ring of authenticity. However, the Raymond version, also made available through a descendant (W.O. Raymond's wife was Sarah Frost's great-granddaughter), has none of this detail. Instead, it merely says in the identical passage on 29 June: "It is I think the roughest land I ever saw, it beats 'Shortroks.'" There is no mention of Mr. Whitney, bears, or wolves. But the MacGowan excerpt, also attributed "to a direct descendant," includes information on 28 June found nowhere else. As Sarah describes the pique of Mr. Whitney in the MacGowan text, she notes: "Mr. Frost told me to get ready to go a shore and he would carry me. Mr. Whitney got up very high about it because he was an officer I suppose he thought that he could not go in so much splendour if any woman went in the boat; I think he could not have shown more grandeur if he had the whole of the land and had been Lord Protector of the whole. He has come on board again he looks as sulky as a bear with a sore head, but I don't care for him for I can go on shore without his liberty and no thanks to him." There is also one intervention in the MacGowan diary (on 29 June, sixty miles is crossed out and changed to twenty five) that suggests that it, like the Raymond diary, was sometimes changed while being reread or re-copied.

Finally, to complicate further the question of changing versions of the Frost text, there exists an expurgated copy of the diary in J.C. Turnbull's 1898 book, *Ripples on the St. John River in Loyalist Days*. Although some of Frost's entries are much abbreviated in this version of the diary, there are enough new sentiments expressed in this text to make it of interest. To the Mr. Whitney episode described variously in the Westmount and MacGowan texts can now be added Turnbull's version: "Mr. W. set up a high time about it, and showed his authority as officer of the ship. One might expect no more from him if he had been Lord Protector of the whole territory. But I shall go on shore without his liberty. I am sorry he is so disagreeable."²⁹ This version of the diary is also the only one, other than the Westmount diary, to contain the "bears and wolves" reference.

Where does this leave us with the Sarah Frost diary? Clearly, what we now have is a series of composites, copies, edited versions, and

29 J.C. Turnbull, *Ripples On the St. John River in Loyalist Days*, Saint John: 9. Ontario: Mika Publishing Company, 1980

speculations about what Sarah Frost wrote. Yet, running through the MacGowan diary are moments that sound genuine. At the conclusion of 19 June, for example, Sarah Frost notes that she has put the children to bed and "I have nothing material to write so I bid you good night." This adieu to the diary is in neither the Raymond nor the Westmount version, although the Westmount version adds a detail on 19 June about the family's sleeping arrangements that sounds both convincingly realistic and pertinent to an eight-month pregnant diarist. Because the wind is blowing high, Sarah records in both diaries that she is afraid of rolling out of bed. But, in the Westmount text is added the comment: "I remain with my husband between decks where he has slept all along but I put my children to bed in the cabin."³⁰ This kind of detail, sometimes found in the MacGowan version of the diary and sometimes in the Westmount copy, give both of these texts the closest thing to the ring of authenticity yet found in the conundrum of Sarah Frost's diary. In the final analysis, however, all four versions (Raymond, Westmount, MacGowan, and Turnbull) agree that, to Sarah Frost, Saint John was "the roughest land I ever saw."

The final corruption of the Frost text comes in Charlotte Gourlay Robinson's *Pioneer Profiles* where Robinson extrapolates imaginative readings of the Frosts' frame of mind from their circumstances and, in the process, turns Sarah Frost and her husband, William, into fictional characters straight out of romance:

Sara and William Frost left the stuffy cabin and stood together on deck leaning against the rail. All around the ship's lanterns bobbed and twinkled across the harbour waters and the dark hills loomed beyond. William's toil-hardened hands gripped Sara's and held them close. He spoke quietly, but with conviction. For himself he cared not; but life would not be easy beyond those hills. They would have to make do; a tent in the woods until he could build a house; his wife Sara, who had been used to so comfortable a way of life! After what they had been through it was a lot to ask of any woman; but they would, at least, be on British soil. Sara looked up at her husband with tears in her eyes, but there was no wavering in her voice as she answered as Ruth had done, "Whither thou goest I will go," as William's strong arms encircled her.³¹

30 [Sarah Frost], "Copy of Diary kept by Mrs. Wm. Frost," CB DOC, Frost Family, 12.

31 Charlotte Gourlay Robinson, *Pioneer Profiles of New Brunswick Settlers* (Belleville, Ont.: Mika, 1980), 118.

Thus remains the dilemma of the Sarah Frost text until, with luck, the eighteenth-century manuscript copy turns up in an attic to truly retrieve Sarah Frost's voice from the vagaries of editorial selectivity, generational fashion, and Harlequinization. In the meantime, readers of the Sarah Frost diary are left with the challenge of retrieving from the existing versions of the diary the encoding of a woman's silences and voice in eighteenth-century Loyalist society.

RÉSUMÉ

Sarah Frost (1754-1817), membre d'une famille loyaliste typique de Stamford, au Connecticut, réagit aux « influences extérieures » telles que la guerre, le bouleversement et l'exil, en écrivant un journal dans lequel elle relate son voyage de New York à Saint-Jean, au Nouveau-Brunswick, à bord de l'un des navires loyalistes de 1783. Par ce fait même, elle nous a laissé son point de vue personnel sur les bruits et les silences accompagnant l'exil des femmes alors que près de 30 000 réfugiés conservateurs quittaient leurs demeures en Amérique pour affronter les incertitudes d'une implantation dans la région de l'Atlantique de l'Amérique du Nord britannique. Involontairement, Sarah Frost a légué aux historiens de la littérature un ensemble de problèmes de rédaction, que l'absence aujourd'hui de son manuscrit original n'a pas permis de résoudre. Quatre versions de son journal publié sous forme de livre, ainsi que trois copies manuscrites différentes faites par ses survivants, ne simplifient pas le dilemme, à savoir comment en effet lire les « bruits et les silences » émanant du texte de Sarah Frost.