Femininity, the Picturesque, and the Canadian Landscape: The Drawings and Watercolours of Elizabeth Simcoe and Elizabeth Hale

Andrea Korda holds Bachelor and Master of Arts degrees in Art History and currently lives in Washington, D.C.

Abstract

Elizabeth Simcoe and Elizabeth Hale's drawings and watercolours are primarily esteemed as early descriptions of Canada. This paper extracts additional meaning from Simcoe and Hale's pictures by addressing their gendered experiences as British women at the turn of the eighteenth century. The author argues that shifts in their conceptions of femininity are reflected in their landscapes.

Résumé

Les dessins et les aquarelles d'Elizabeth Simcoe et d'Elizabeth Hale sont tout d'abord appréciées en tant que descriptions primitives du Canada.Cet article extrait une signification additionnelle des toiles de Simcoe et de Hale en adressant leurs expériences de femmes britanniques, qui tient compte du rôle des hommes et des femmes, au début du dix-neuvième siècle. L'auteure dénote que les changements dans leurs conceptions de la féminité sont reflétés dans leurs paysages.

Elizabeth Posthuma Gwillim Simcoe (1762-1850) and Elizabeth Frances Amherst Hale (1774-1826) were two British women who filled sketchbooks with views of the Canadian landscape. As objects held by archival institutions, their sketchbooks are esteemed for their documentary value as early descriptions of Canada. The Archives of Ontario reports that "Simcoe's primary purpose was to document the landscape as it appeared at the time" and that the "key significance of [her] sketches is that they are among the earliest available views of present-day Ontario" (Elizabeth Simcoe Descriptions, F-47-11). Similarly, J. Russell Harper, in his Early Painters and Engravers in Canada, characterized Hale as a topographical artist (1970, 139).

The purpose of this essay is to reassess the work of Elizabeth Simcoe and Elizabeth Hale with regard to their subjective experiences in Canada, and therefore outside of their current institutional frameworks. An understanding of cultural constructions of femininity at the turn of the eighteenth century in Britain is essential to such an analysis since gender played a determining role in the experiences that shaped these women's artistic choices. Revisiting the works of Simcoe and Hale with an awareness of their social and cultural surroundings demonstrates that the significance of their artwork lies not only in their documentation of the Canadian landscape, but also in their description of two feminine subject positions. Their choices in representing the landscape were influenced by the interaction of their

rugged experiences in Canada with their British femininity. The fashionable femininity promoted among young British women such as Simcoe and Hale included instruction in the polite art of drawing, particularly in the Picturesque style popular at the time. By examining their drawings and watercolours in relation to their training in the ideals of fashionable femininity, this analysis will show that the respective relationships of Elizabeth Simcoe and Elizabeth Hale to cultural expectations of the feminine are mirrored in their representations of Canada.

Femininity, Experience and the Picturesque

Admiral and Mrs. Graves took in their niece, baby Elizabeth Posthuma Gwillim, following her mother's death during childbirth and her father's death several months before. Elizabeth Hale, born Elizabeth Frances Amherst in 1774, was orphaned before the age of five and was also raised by an aunt and uncle. Despite their positions as orphans, both girls received privileged upbringings appropriate to their stations in life. Elizabeth Simcoe was the heiress of a large fortune and a descendent of noble blood, while Elizabeth Hale received the education and advantages appropriate to her place as part of an emerging minor aristocracy. Foremost, this environment included instruction in the ideals of femininity prescribed and valued in late eighteenth-century Britain. Proficiency in this polite and proper form of femininity could raise a woman's value in the market for marriage, which Ann Bermingham reminds us, "was a real market," with young women given the role of primary commodity. Outward appearances and fashionable dress were the principal ways in which a woman's value could be raised, thereby ensuring a favourable marriage and perhaps the opportunity to "marry up." The idea of fashion and of adding fashionable items, themselves commodities, to the base commodity of the feminine body thereby came to be associated with womanhood (1994, 97). It was through the conventions of this market that notions of femininity were crystallized. As items that could be continually added to and changed according to the most recent fashions, women came to be seen as aesthetic objects lacking a stable and authentic essence.

When Elizabeth Gwillim married John Graves Simcoe, who later became Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada, she was certainly a valuable commodity within this market. Her inherited fortune and her noble blood ensured this, but her training in the idealized form of a femininity that prized surface appearances and aesthetics also contributed to her worth. Through comments written in letters and in her diary, which she kept faithfully throughout her time in Canada from 1791 to 1796, Elizabeth Simcoe presents herself as a fashion-conscious woman.[1] In April of 1792, she sent home a pair of moccasins for one of her younger daughters, but warned the children's governess that "if older ones wore them, their feet might be too large ever to wear the Duchess of Yorks Shoe [sic] or any tolerable sized one" (26 April 1792, 57-58). That is, they may not fit the shoes that were proper to the fashionable femininity of the time. Elizabeth Hale's letters to her brother, written throughout her time in Lower Canada where she lived with her husband John Hale from 1799 until her death in 1826, also reveal a woman raised according to the ideals of a fashionable femininity.[2] She remarked on those who lacked her sense of fashion and taste, and declared that in this country, "taste seems an entire stranger" (28 October 1799, p. 15-16). She also made direct mention of the status of women as commodities. In one instance, she wrote of her step-niece: "I am sure from all accounts that Lady Maria deserves the best of Men & I trust she may meet with one who will know how to value so fair a prize" (8 November 1811, 261).

The feminine education encouraged by the

marriage market also influenced the way that women such as Simcoe and Hale were expected to represent the landscape. Along with music, dance and other forms of art, the talent of drawing was another asset that could increase a young woman's appeal. The goal of such accomplishments was not to master a particular field, but to provide the young woman with an avenue through which to display herself and advertise her worth (Bermingham 2000). Accomplishments signified the availability of leisure time, and in addition to acting as a sign of her own social status before marriage, a woman's polite talents would later provide evidence of her husband's economic circumstance and class position (Parker 1989). As such talents were primarily intended to add to a young woman's superficial value, they too contributed to the notion that there was no possibility of a deeper and authentic feminine self.

The accomplishment of drawing increased in popularity among young women in the latter part of the eighteenth century as a result of the trend for Picturesque viewing. The Picturesque developed as an aesthetic category for describing landscape situated between the Beautiful and the Sublime during the eighteenth century in Britain. While the Beautiful was expected to evoke pleasure, the Sublime produced more intense emotions through representations of vastness, obscurity and irregularity, which could all evoke terror in the viewer. The Picturesque was established as a third category between the two; it combined the smooth and peaceful views of the Beautiful with the rough and irregular formations of the Sublime. The phenomenon of looking for views that could be described as Picturesque began as an elite activity requiring educated viewers, preferably well-travelled and with knowledge of painters such as Claude Lorrain and Salvator Rosa to help them pick out the subtleties of a picturesque landscape. This search for the Picturesque became more accessible and widespread around the turn of the eighteenth century, in large part due to tour books published by Reverend William Gilpin, beginning in 1782 with Observations on the River Wye. While Gilpin first introduced his theories on the Picturesque in relation to the Beautiful and the Sublime, these other aesthetic categories were irrelevant to later guidebooks and discussions of Picturesque drawing. Focusing solely on this latter category, Gilpin's writings and drawings outlined its essential characteristics and made the terms and ideas behind the Picturesque accessible to the general population as a formula that could be easily learned.

Picturesque viewing and drawing quickly became a common pastime among accomplished women. Newly published drawing manuals helped to circulate the trend by teaching Gilpin's style of drawing while also targeting the emerging female market (Bermingham 2000, 141). Gilpin's teachings soon came to be associated with notions of femininity promoted by the marriage market, and were seen as appropriate to a discourse that marked women as commodified and inauthentic.[3] Like fashionable dress, the talent of Picturesque drawing could be readily obtained by purchasing commodities such as drawing manuals or guidebooks, and could be traded in for a new talent as easily as the season's most fashionable item. In literature from the period, Picturesque viewing is often the subject of satire and female characters take centre stage.[4] In the first chapter of Northanger Abbey, for instance, Jane Austen introduces the heroine, Catherine Morland, and reveals that she is lacking in accomplishments. By chapter fourteen, Catherine finds herself in the resort town of Bath, among acquaintances more refined than herself. When she declares that "she would give any thing in the world to be able to draw," her companion responds with a lecture on the rules of the Picturesque - revealing that at such a time and place, drawing was synonymous with Gilpin's principles. Catherine grasps the concepts immediately, and by the

time they reach their destination, at the top of Beechen Cliff, "she voluntarily rejected the whole city of Bath, as unworthy to make part of a landscape" (1817, 110-11). In another example, Miss Beccabunga of James Plumptre's comic play, The Lakers, is touring through the popular Lake District in order to get a glimpse of Gilpin's Picturesque. When she does not find that perfect view, she attempts to create it: "Sir Charles, pray come and stand by me for the trunk of an old tree in the foreground [to] form a picturesque group. Your arm up, if you please, Sir Charles, for the branch of a tree" (1798, 55). By the end of the play, Miss Beccabunga is engaged to a man whom she has examined through the viewing glasses intended for studying the landscape. Picturesque viewing and the rituals of the marriage market thereby come together in the pursuits of one female character.

The practice of accomplishments, and of Picturesque drawing, certainly did not escape the attention of the guardians of Simcoe or Hale. The young Simcoe was visited weekly by drawing and dancing masters, and much of her time was devoted to her accomplishments of painting, music, embroidery and deportment (Fowler 1982, 18-19; Innis 1965, 2). Hale's training would have been similar, as it is known that she was skilled in the arts of music and sketching by the time she married (Hall and Shelton 2002, xxii). As expected, we can determine from their drawings and watercolours that their training was in the fashionable style of the Picturesque, as most correspond to the formula put forth by Gilpin. Simcoe's Whirlpool Below the Falls (Figure 1) is made up of sketchy lines filled in with imprecise applications of watercolour, corresponding to the Picturesque's requirement of roughness and variety. Hale's View of a Small Stream (Figure 2) also employs a variety of types of mark-making ranging from the dark and scratchy lines that convey foliage, to a delicate and light use of wash in the background. Both pictures are organized into three distinct distances: a darkened foreground that frames the view and directs one's eye into the middle distance, and a hazy background. The waterways in each image also help to lead the eye into the middle of the picture and, in both, the path leads to an obscured space behind trees and mountains. This was an important feature of the Picturesque as it allowed the viewer to explore the scene while still leaving something to the imagination. Furthermore, both artists depict their views as uncultivated parts of nature, another important feature since the activity of Picturesque viewing dictated that one search out and discover a naturally picturesque scene. Even where Hale does include a fence, it trails off and does not serve the purpose of enclosure. It therefore functions in the same way as picturesque ruins, which stand as signs of decay and enforce the impression of uncultivated nature. The dead and withered tree that has fallen across the stream also fulfills this purpose. In addition, both pictures were painted in hazy tones that imitate the effects of aging on older works of art, as was required by Gilpin's style.

While Simcoe and Hale's writings and drawings reveal that they participated in the fashionable femininity and polite talents promoted through the marriage market, their writings also reveal that their Canadian environments were farther removed from this femininity. This is evident in Simcoe's warning about Canadian moccasins, and in her reported observation that: "The Canadian Women are better educated than the Men, who take care of their Horses & attend little to anything else, leaving the management of their Affairs to the women" (9 June 1792, 62), showing that she was aware of a difference between British and Canadian notions of womanhood. Hale's letters include frequent requests to be sent items that were not easily available in Canada, such as stockings or black velvet with which to make hats since "those they get here are frightful"

(12 November 1804, 178), suggesting that the fashionable commodities of English femininity were less present in Canadian life. In addition, she could not find the music recommended for her daughter Fanny's music lessons and had to ask that it be sent from England, where the accessories of femininity and its accomplishments were readily available (15 December 1819, 359). In June of 1819, she wrote to her aunt that "I am sure you will think it much better to spend some part of the Year out of a Garrison town, for the Girls particularly" (25 June 1819, 331), thus revealing her own impression of Quebec City as unsuitable for the cultivation of proper femininity. A written history of Canadian women confirms these impressions: the majority of British North American women were involved in the management and work of the household, and often took over all responsibility while husbands, brothers or fathers were away (Prentice et al. 1996, 69-79).

Within the context of Canada, the Picturesque style was often employed by European artists and visitors intent on applying their own conventions to descriptions of new surroundings.[5] As explained by I. S. MacLaren, the style of the Picturesque was the "aesthetic baggage" that Englishmen, as only men are featured in MacLaren's article, carried with them to the New World in order to organize, control and govern it according to their own conventions (1985, 100).[6] Yet for Simcoe and Hale, their knowledge of Picturesque principles was not only tied to Europe, but was also inextricable from their feminine education in polite accomplishments. Their drawings and watercolours therefore invoke both the aesthetic baggage of British colonists and the cultural baggage of their femininity. Their representations of the landscape evolved from experiences shaped by the interaction between these received notions of femininity and their new environments in Canada. Examined in this light, their pictures are revealed as portraits of these women's subjective experiences in Canada, and therefore act as visual descriptions of the respective positions of Simcoe and Hale as gendered subjects in the New World.

The Landscapes of Elizabeth Simcoe

Of her first visit to Niagara Falls in the summer of 1792, Elizabeth Simcoe wrote: "Men sometimes descend the Rocks below this projecting point, but it is attended with great danger & perhaps little picturesque advantage" (30 July 1792, 76-77). She stays at the top of the rocks and paints the picturesque scenery that is more suitable to her femininity, as can be seen in drawings such as Whirlpool Below the Falls (Figure 1). The majority of Simcoe's pictures abide by this method. In drawings such as Cootes Paradise, Queenstown and many others, she sought out picturesque views and painted them according to conventions established by Gilpin.

In the picture Twenty Mile Creek, Ontario (Figure 3), Simcoe fulfilled all of the requirements of the Picturesque. The picture appears rough and sketchy, a dark foreground and mountains frame the middle distance of the picture, and a river guides the eye to the centre of the image where the view disappears behind the horizon line. The moonlight suggests a dangerous landscape, but also adds substantially to the image's picturesque appearance by infusing the view with a hazy atmosphere. The drawing therefore reveals both Simcoe's engagement with a threatening landscape and her commitment to the aesthetic formula of the Picturesque. Her description of the view in her diary alternates between admiring the beauty of the moonlight and expressing fear at the danger that it presents:

> It was 8 o'clock & we had 5 miles of that terrible kind of Road where the Horse's feet are entangled among logs amid water & wamps, to ride by Moon Light or rather in

> the dark, for in the Woods the glimmering of the Moon is of little use but rather throws shadows which deceive the traveller tho to a picturesque Eye they are full of indistinct & solemn beauty, but little serviceable to Horses, who plunge to their knees in mud pools half full of loose logs. By day light I much fear these roads & had particularly dreaded this but not being able to see or try to avoid danger, & my nerves braced by this cold & dry night I went thro' it not only well, but with a degree of pleasure, admiring the unusual brightness of the stars, & the immense apparent height given to the Trees by the depth of Shade. (10 June 1796, 181)

In both her written description and her drawing, Simcoe looked through the aestheticizing lens of the Picturesque in order to secure a more pleasing position from which to describe the landscape. The Picturesque therefore acted as a barrier, providing Simcoe with a means to express and protect her feminine attributes within her representation of a threatening environment.

Yet over the course of Simcoe's stay in Canada, un-feminine elements slowly began to seep through this barrier and alter the Picturesque view. The composition of Chippiwa, Spray From the Falls of Niagara (Figure 4), painted on a return visit to Niagara Falls in the summer of 1795, is structurally similar to the picturesque image of Twenty Mile Creek. Two mountains frame the midpoint of the picture, at which point the view disappears behind the horizon line, and the sketchy and rough qualities of the brushstrokes combine with the coarseness of the fragmented tree stump in the bottom left-hand corner to produce a picturesque view. Yet while the picture is clearly divided into three distances, the foreground deviates considerably from the formula of the Picturesque. The characteristic frame that leads the eye towards the middle distance of the picture is here replaced by a barricade that runs across the picture plane and stops the eye at the foreground. Instead of concentrating on a distant and obscured space at the midpoint of the picture, Simcoe devoted her attention to a tree branch that occupied the space directly in front of her. The hazy atmosphere of the Picturesque is also replaced by a bright and sunny day. The result is a light and clear picture that strays from the formula of her picturesque landscapes. In fact, her proximity to the view and her direct engagement with both the vast space of the Falls and the jagged tree branch of the foreground evoke the characteristics of the Sublime.

W. J. T. Mitchell has argued that immigrants and visitors to colonial lands absorbed the alien and threatening elements of their new environments into European conventions of the Picturesque, creating sublime portrayals of the landscape (1994). While this is certainly true for Simcoe, her willingness to engage in more dangerous activities, and then to allow threatening elements to infiltrate her drawings, must be considered alongside remarks made in her diary. Not only was she diverging from a strict adherence to the principles of the Picturesque, she also began to waver when it came to British ideals of femininity. On this later visit to the Falls, Simcoe wrote that "we set out today determined to make our way to the bottom of the Rocks below the Falls" (24 August 1795, 162). This willingness to climb down the rocks demonstrates a change in Simcoe's experience of her femininity, which forbade her from engaging with the danger associated with Niagara Falls. Here, as she veers away from the dictates of her British femininity, she no longer sees the Falls purely as a danger. As a result, she does not require the complete protection of the Picturesque lens and she is able to absorb some of the more threatening elements of her surroundings into her drawings.

In August of 1795, four years after arriving in Canada, Simcoe drove a carriage by herself and wrote that she was forced to do so "having no Gentleman with me" (30 August 1795, 165), thus revealing her awareness of a discourse that dictated that a man must drive the carriage, even as she trespassed on its restrictions. She also began to blur the boundaries of prescribed femininity with a new assessment of the possibilities of moccasins, writing that: "We passed some Creeks & unhewn Trees thrown across, a matter of some difficulty to those unaccustomed to them. I should think it might be done with less danger of falling with Moccasins on the feet" (5 August 1793, 102-03). While moccasins had previously been relegated to the space outside of fashionable femininity, they were now reclaimed as a useful tool for avoiding danger. Yet even as she began to discard elements of the polite femininity taught in England, she was constantly held back by the pervasiveness of the discourse. In the end, she did not quite make it to the bottom of the Falls, and later reported that: "The Gov. walked with a guide nearly underneath it, but as the path over the Rocks was bad & not one picturesque scene to be gained by it I did not attempt going but sat endeavouring to sketch the scene till my paper was quite wet by the spray from the Ft. Schlosser fall" (24 August 1795, 162).

When Simcoe arrived at Playter's Bridge over the River Don near York on July 6th 1796, in her last month before departing from Canada, the tension between her femininity and the un-feminine elements of the Canadian landscape was still present: "I passed Playter's picturesque bridge over the Donn; it is a butternut Tree fallen across the river the branches still growing into a full leaf. Mrs. Playter being timorous, a pole was fastened thro the branches to hold by. Having attempted to pass it, I was determined to proceed but was frightened before I got half way" (6 July 1796, 187). There is a transition here from the Simcoe who would not even approach the danger of the rocks at Niagara, but she still hesitates at the limits of femininity. Similarly, her picture of Playter's Bridge Near York (Figure 5) evokes the Picturesque style, but also departs from its conventional format. The atmosphere is hazy, the brushwork rough and sketchy, and the gnarled wood of the bridge suggests an uncultivated landscape. But like the picture of Chippiwa, the foreground, here in the form of the bridge, acts as a barricade across the surface of the picture plane rather than as a frame, and the trees of the middle ground block the view into the distance. Yet these barricades not only block the view, but also reject a basic tenet of the Picturesque by focusing on the foreground rather than on an obscured space in the distance. The elements of the landscape closest to Simcoe's experience were thereby admitted into the picture as its principal subject.

Two other pictures that illustrate her departure from the Picturesque, 9th June Near the 40 Mile Creek Rocks and Near the 40 Mile Creek, were both drawn in the summer of 1794, while Simcoe was as far away from civilization as she would venture during her lifetime. In both of these pictures, she abandons the Picturesque's method of framing in order to emphasize the picture plane and the wilderness that was directly in front of her. These pictures therefore reveal the position of a woman attempting to abandon the formulaic approach of the Picturesque and the discourse that prescribed such a view. Instead, she responded to the physical space and objects that were directly in front of her. This change can be understood as a result of her new environment in Canada: an alien and hostile land that offered a new conception of femininity which included practicality, independence, and even the possibility of engaging with its threatening surroundings.

The Landscapes of Elizabeth Hale

Elizabeth Hale expected to stay in Quebec City

for only a short while when she arrived in 1799, yet she was still residing in Lower Canada twenty-five years later when she began filling a sketchbook with drawings of her surroundings. These drawings correspond to a change that occurred in Hale's experience once she and her husband purchased their own land in Canada in 1819. Before this, and particularly during her first few years in Canada, Hale's letters to her brother suggest that she had been entirely positioned by the polite femininity prescribed by Britain's marriage market. In one instance, she wrote: "You will remember, if you think I write Nonsense, that Women have license to do so" (30 March 1800, 36), revealing that her understanding of femininity included nonsense, not rationality. She continually left the discussion of affairs that demanded judgement and reasoning to her husband's letters, while moving on to the feminine and less practical matter of gossip. In September of 1799, she explained that "I never say much to you abt. the lands as [Mr. Hale] writes upon that subject & can do it much clearer than me & I might only make some mistake & puzzle you. Pray, write me all news, public & private, & any little little tattle anecdotes of our friends are interesting at this distance" (5 September 1799, 13). Yet when the Hales purchased the seigneurie of Sainte-Anne-de-la-Pérade in Quebec, Hale took on the task of describing all of the details of their purchase and their work on the land. She eagerly recounted particulars of the location and price, and provided details about their farming activities and the exact figures of their profit (27 January 1818, 308; 3 June 1819, 327; 4 November 1819, 351; 27 December 1819, 361; 20 August 1820, 381; 19 October 1820, 383-84).

Elizabeth Hale's sketchbook is limited in subject, portraying views of the manor house and surrounding lands, yet it consists of two different techniques that each gave rise to a distinct type of drawing. The first type was executed with a brush and wash and the resulting pictures fit firmly into the formula of the Picturesque, as can be seen in images such as View of a Small Stream, View of Mountains, River and Buildings, and others. The sketchbook begins with a picture that portrays the manor house of the Hale seigneury in this style (Figure 6), and like View of a Small Stream (Figure 2), it retains all of the distinguishing features of the Picturesque. The foliage of the trees is rendered in an imprecise and romantic manner, evoking a rough and sketchy quality, and the darkened tones of an aging painting are called to mind by her use of brown wash. Though she already deviates from a typically picturesque composition by her inclusion of the large tree in the centre, the classic formula of the Picturesque is retained on the left-hand side of the image where the three distances and framing device are maintained and clusters of trees outline a path that leads into a distant space.

On the facing page is the same view of the manor house executed in pen and ink, illustrating the second and less picturesque type of drawing style found in the sketchbook (Figure 7). Her chosen medium contributes to the more exact portrayal of the scene found in this picture, but it also strays from the Picturesque in three principal ways. First, the picturesque frame of the foreground and the distant background are both absent from the pen and ink drawing. Instead, the house and trees run across the middle of the image and act as a barricade, like the elements in the foreground of Simcoe's less picturesque images. Secondly, a fence is included in the pen and ink drawing of the manor house, signifying property and the cultivation of one's natural surroundings - elements that are contradictory to the principles of the Picturesque. The precision with which the fence is rendered suggests economic activity and ownership, and the scene can therefore no longer be read as a picturesque view. Fences that appear in Hale's wash drawings on other

pages of the sketchbook, such as the fences of View of a Small Stream and River Scenery with Rapids and a Man Fishing, are rendered with less precision and take on the appearance of decoration rather than suggesting the purpose of enclosure.

Thirdly, the trees of Hale's pen and ink manor house and those trees rendered with a pen throughout her sketchbook correspond to pine trees, which are common in the southeast of Canada and would have surely been present on the grounds of Ste-Anne. These naturalistic pen and ink trees differ from the trees expected of a picturesque view. In contrast, the trees of her wash drawings, and particularly the large and dramatic tree in the centre of the wash drawing of the manor house, are clearly romanticized creations more suitable to the Picturesque. These romanticized trees resemble oak trees that Hale would have held in her memory from England, but they also call to mind typically picturesque trees. William Gilpin insisted on the suitability of English oak trees to the Picturesque, claiming that "no tree in the forest is adapted to all the purposes of the landscape, like English oak" (1798, 9). The tree that Hale drew in front of the manor house also bears a striking resemblance to Claude Lorrain's large tree in the centre of Landscape with Cephalus and Procris Reunited by Diana (1645).

Hale's descriptions of Ste-Anne-de-la-Pérade found in her letters correspond to the pen and ink drawings of her sketchbook. In these letters, Hale insisted that her goal was not the cultivation of a picturesque landscape, nor did she feminize her experience at Ste-Anne: "I am just now fully occupied at St. Anne's. Mr. Hale left us last week for Utica, hoping to return in a Month. In the meantime the improvements devolve on me & I am very busy planting & neatifying, which is more descriptive of my occupations than beautifying would be" (2 June 1822, 410). Not only did she proclaim that she had taken on her husband's role in his absence, she deliberately distanced her activities from the Picturesque and its associations with aesthetic femininity. She also asked her brother to send her a spade like the one that she remembered using during her "Spinstership" in England (20 August 1820, 381-82). This suggests that she sensed a contradiction between the activity that she would take up with the spade and her position as a married woman.

Regarding matters outside of the land, Hale's letters reveal both a recognition and challenge of the English femininity of her childhood. We have seen that she fully acknowledged her step-niece Maria's status as a commodity and prize to be valued on the marriage market, yet she also challenged this idea and resisted the notion of women as inauthentic aesthetic objects in her statement that Maria "has too much good sense & has received too good an Education to be caught by outward appearance in a Ball or assembly room" (5 September 1808, 230). In another letter, she critiqued feminine education:

> I read a dissertation the other day on the mode of bringing up young people & it is there asserted that the numerous cases of consumption which now occur is in a great measure owing to the fashionable education, & I most firmly believe it. He recommends letting Girls be perfect Tom boys till 12 Years old & using all Boys games such as Skipping ropes, twirling hoops, Cricket in moderation &c., &c. as they tended to exercise the Joints & limbs & open the Chest which is certainly a most material point. The present fashion which obliges the poor Babes to be perfect slaves to their accomplishments, & to walk perfectly erect two & two & never run for the universe, must undoubtedly be very

> prejudicial, as all things are that are so entirely contrary to nature.
>
> (14 June 1806, 206)

Here she actively identified the discourse of femininity and also stated her opposition to it. Nevertheless, Hale did not cease to be positioned by this discourse and she later reported on her daughter's accomplishment, writing that "we have just engaged a Singing Man for Fanny who has really a very pretty voice & a remarkable correct ear" (6 February 1821, 391).

Just as these comments show that Hale knew the limits of femininity even as she crossed over them, her sketchbook also reveals both a familiarity with the codes of the Picturesque in her brushstrokes and an overthrow of those codes with her pen. Her preference for a more topographical approach with pen and ink, observed by J. Russell Harper in his characterization of Hale as a topographical artist, clearly deviates from the drawing style encouraged through Hale's feminine accomplishments. Her attention to detail with pen and ink refutes the generalizing tendencies of Picturesque drawing and also rejects its sketchy and rough qualities, which are more easily communicated through watercolour. The inclusion of the well-defined and continuous fence in her pen and ink drawings suggests the private and cultivated property that runs counter to the Picturesque view of her wash drawings. The focus on the manor house, a familiar place rather than a distant and imagined space, is also opposed to the aims of the Picturesque. Yet her preference for a more exact description of the land also corresponds to Hale's disruptions of the discourse of femininity in that they reveal her vested interest in the land as an owner and manager, rather than portraying her according to the idealized and feeble femininity that was expected of her. Along with her writings, these drawings act as evidence that while Elizabeth Hale was very much aware of and affected by her culture's understanding of femininity, her experience as owner and manager of the lands of Ste-Anne resulted in a challenge to this feminine position.

Like other Europeans in a strange new land, Elizabeth Simcoe and Elizabeth Hale were required to adapt to new surroundings in their everyday experiences and in their drawings. Yet as British women, Simcoe and Hale also faced the challenge of an environment that was hostile to the dictates of their gendered upbringings. For Simcoe and Hale, adapting to life in Canada not only involved an adjustment to new surroundings and experiences, as it had for their male counterparts, but also required a modification to conceptions of their gender. When it came to representing this new land, Simcoe and Hale adapted their artistic approaches to their renewed understandings of the feminine. Simcoe's pictures veer towards the Sublime as she begins to include the hostile elements of her surroundings as more than just a distant element framed by the formula of the Picturesque. Some of Hale's drawings abandon the Picturesque in order to render a more accurate description of the land.

We know from the textual evidence found in their letters and in Simcoe's diary that these were not just aesthetic adjustments, but represent a deeper shift within each women's conception of the feminine. As they moved away from the notions of femininity established by Britain's marriage market, they abandoned elements of the fashionable Picturesque style and began to explore other options. Simcoe's modified subject position is revealed through her willingness to depict the un-feminine elements of her new environment, which could not be expressed through the language of the Picturesque style. Hale's consciousness of both her femininity and her divergence from the feminine is present in her arrangement of Picturesque and more topographical pictures side by side. The topographical

style reveals her position of ownership; a position that could not be communicated through the Picturesque style that excluded the possibility of representing private property. These works of art are therefore not simply documents that provide a view of early Canada. They also provide a view into the experience of femininity at a particular time and place in history.

Endnotes

1. All references to Elizabeth Simcoe's writings are from Mary Quayle Innis' edition of Mrs. Simcoe's Diary (1965).

2. All references to Elizabeth Hale's writings are from Roger Hall and S. W. Shelton's edition of The Rising Country: The Hale-Amherst Correspondence, 1799-1825 (2002).

3. In addition to the work of Ann Bermingham, the Picturesque's popularity as an activity for women and the middle classes is discussed by Malcolm Andrews (1989) and Michael Clarke (1981). Carl Paul Barbier (1963) also gives details about William Gilpin's predominately female following.

4. Ann Bermingham mentions the examples of Jane Austen's Northanger Abbey and James Plumptre's The Lakers (1994, 85).

5. See, for example, Canadian landscapes by British men such as Hervey Smyth (1734-1811), Thomas Davies (c.1737-1812), George Heriot (1759-1839), William Eagar (1796-1839), James Duncan (1806-81) and James Peachey (active 1774-1797).

6. While historians have addressed the use of the Picturesque style in Canadian landscapes by both men and women, the distinct role of feminine education has not been examined in relation to work by women. See, as examples, Colin Coates (2000) and Didier Prioul (1992). Both authors discuss the work of Elizabeth Hale but do not examine the effect of gender on her representations of the landscape.

References

Andrews, Malcolm. The Search for the Picturesque: Landscape, Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain 1760-1800. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989.

Archives of Ontario, "Elizabeth Simcoe Descriptions, F-47-11."

Austen, Jane. Northanger Abbey (1817). New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992.

Barbier, Carl Paul. William Gilpin: His Drawings, Teaching and Theory of the Picturesque. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963.

Bermingham, Ann. "The Picturesque and Ready-to-Wear Femininity,"The Politics of the Picturesque: Literature, Landscape and Aesthetics since 1770, Stephen Copley and Peter Garside, eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, pp. 81-119.

_____. Learning to Draw: Studies in the Cultural History of a Polite and Useful Art. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000.

Clarke, Michael. The Tempting Prospect: A Social History of English Watercolours. London: British Museum Publications, 1981.

Coates, Colin. The Metamorphoses of Landscape and Community in Early Quebec. Montreal: McGill-Queen's

University Press, 2000.

Fowler, Marian. The Embroidered Tent: Five Gentlewomen in Early Canada. Toronto: Anansi Press, 1982.

Gilpin, William. Observations on the Western Parts of England (1798). Richmond, Surrey: Richmond Publishing Co. Ltd., 1973.

_____. Observations on the River Wye (1782). Oxford, New York: Woodstock Books, 1991.

Hall, Roger and S.W. Shelton, eds. The Rising Country: The Hale-Amherst Correspondence, 1799-1825. Toronto: Champlain Society, 2002.

Harper, J. Russell. Early Painters and Engravers in Canada. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970.

Innis, Mary Quayle, ed. Mrs. Simcoe's Diary. Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1965.

MacLaren, I.S. "The Limits of the Picturesque in British North America," Journal of Garden History. 5.1 (January-March 1985): 97-111.

Mitchell, W.J.T. "Imperial Landscape," Landscape and Power, W.J.T. Mitchell, ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994, pp. 5-34 .

Parker, Rozsika. The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine. New York: Routledge, 1989.

Plumptre, James. The Lakers: A Comic Opera in Three Acts. London: Printed for W. Clarke, 1798.

Prentice, Alison, Paula Bourne, Gail Cuthbert Brandt, Beth Light, Wendy Mitchinson and Naomi Black. Canadian Women: A History. (2nd ed.) Toronto: Harcourt Brace, 1996.

Prioul, Didier. "British Landscape Artists in Quebec: From Documentary Views to a Poetic Vision," Painting in Quebec 1820-1850: New Views New Perspectives, Mario Béland, ed. Quebec: Musée du Québec, 2000, pp. 50-59.

Figure 1. Elizabeth Simcoe, Whirlpool Below the Falls, 23 or 24 April 1793, watercolour. Archives of Ontario, F 47-11-1-0-81; I0006933.

Figure 2. Elizabeth Hale, View of a Small Stream and Two Men with a Boat (Quebec), c. 1824-1825, watercolour, folio 4 verso of Elizabeth Frances Hale Sketchbook. Library and Archives Canada, 1939-252-4V; C-013077.

Figure 3. Elizabeth Simcoe, Twenty Mile Creek, Ontario, 10 May 1794, watercolour. Archives of Ontario, F 47-11-1-0-130; I006982.

Figure 4. Elizabeth Simcoe, Chippiwa, Spray from the Falls of Niagara, 24 August 1796, watercolour. Archives of Ontario, F 47-11-1-0-165; I0006350.

Figure 5. Elizabeth Simcoe, Playter's Bridge Near York, 6 July 1796, watercolour. Archives of Ontario, F 47-11-1-0-233; I0007085.

Figure 6. Elizabeth Hale, St. Anne below Montreal, Hale Seigneurie (Quebec), c. 1824-1825, watercolour, folio 1 verso of Elizabeth Frances Hale Sketchbook. Library and Archives Canada, 1939-252-1V; C-013071.

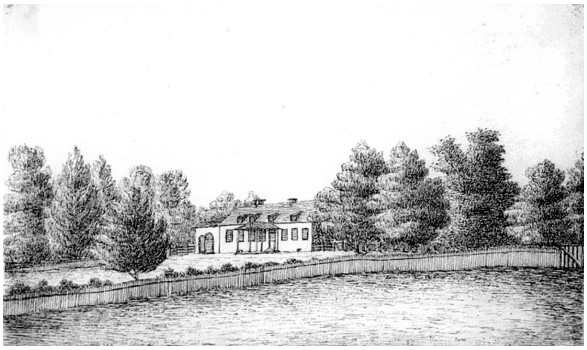

Figure 7. Elizabeth Hale, Hale Seigneury, Ste-Anne, below Montreal (Quebec), c. 1824-1825, pen and ink over pencil drawing, folio 2 recto of Elizabeth Frances Hale Sketchbook. Library and Archives Canada, 1939-252-2R; C-013072.