

CHAPTER 1

The Not Unfeared, Half-Welcome Guest: The Woman Traveler in John Greenleaf Whittier's Snow-Bound

A later episode in the Renaissance epic of exploration, invasion, and occupation, the story of the American colonies is consistently a story of travel. Fifteenth- and sixteenth-century accounts of discovery are followed by seventeenth-century histories of English settlement, sermons expounding the analogy between Puritan and Biblical migration, personal records of physical travel and spiritual quest, and the captivity narratives Richard Slotkin called “the dark analogue of exploration” (19). The eighteenth century further develops the travel narrative through popular genres of the story of the hunt and the pioneer adventure. By the nineteenth century, an age that witnessed the dominance of shipping and the beginning of railroads, Western emigration and Eastern immigration, the trope of male travel was readily available for the representation of masculine experience. It provides the central organizing structure for all of Melville; for Whitman’s “Song of Myself”; for Thoreau’s *Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* and “Travels in the Maine Woods”; for Poe’s only novel, *The Narrative of the Voyage of A. Gordon Pym of Nantucket*; for Richard Henry Dana, Jr.’s *Two Years Before the Mast*; for Francis Parkman’s *The Oregon Trail*; for John James Audubon’s *Ornithological Biography on the Dakota Prairies*; for Mark Twain’s *Life on the Mississippi* and *Huckleberry Finn*, to name only the most prominent examples. During the same period Hawthorne’s “damned mob of scribbling women” was primarily engaged in first producing domestic novels and later “local color” literature, forms dependent on female residence in a single location. Evidently, literature as formally gendered in terms of movement played an important role in the creation and maintenance of the ideology of sepa-

rate masculine and feminine spatial spheres. The appearance in 1866 of *Snow-Bound*, an important male work celebrating stasis, is, therefore, notable, and the anomalous appearance of a traveling woman in that poem clearly significant. John Greenleaf Whittier's treatment of the historical Harriet Livermore, whose travels to Palestine inform his ambivalent portrait of her, demonstrates the deconstruction of conventional values through the trope of the woman traveler.

The title of John Greenleaf Whittier's *Snow-Bound* foregrounds the issue of movement, but whereas Emerson's poem "The Snow-Storm," acknowledged as a source of inspiration in the epigraph to the poem, stresses unrestrained motion,¹ Whittier's work, as a comparison of titles illustrates, accentuates immobility. Where Emerson celebrates activity, Whittier memorializes constraint. And yet the most intriguing section of his poetic masterwork ambiguously introduces a moving woman as his "not unfeared, half-welcome guest" (l. 520). Whittier's treatment of the historic Harriet Livermore in *Snow-Bound* reveals the complexity of both masculine identity and of feminine representation in the male literature of the day. His trope of the woman traveler at once confutes his self-inscription within the terms of his own public and private experience and configures the woman in motion as problematic and contradictory. By virtue of her both frightening and appealing movement Harriet expresses thematically Whittier's unacknowledged contradictions of the psychological, political, and cultural ideologies he consciously endorses and formally elides the gendered polarities that organize his world.²

In the narrative plot of the poem—the recollection of a domestic gathering during a winter storm—there is no compelling reason for Harriet's presence. She is neither a member of the family like the mother, father, brother, sisters, uncle, and maiden aunt nor a boarder like the school teacher. Daughter of a wealthy judge who served a term in the U.S. Senate, Harriet shares neither the social class nor the homely interests of the others ("Rebuking with her cultured phrase / our homeliness of words and ways" l. 521). And it appears highly unlikely that she would have set off on a two-mile walk to visit the Whittier farm in the threatening weather portending a blizzard recounted in the first fourteen lines of the poem. The only possible reason for her inclusion is her difference from the household, and, I suspect, the poet's unacknowledged attraction to the implications of that difference.

The emphatic constraint of the poem is related to its central purpose: the nostalgic celebration of domesticity recalled from Whittier's youthful experience. In his review of *Snow-Bound* at its publication, James Russell Lowell praised it for glowing with the "light of the old homestead's hearth, whose flickering benediction touches tremulously those dear heads of long ago that are now transfigured with a holier light," noting

sadly that the pleasant "scenes and manners" of the poem were swiftly being displaced by "the rapid changes of our national habit": "Already, alas! even in farmhouses, backlog and forestick are obsolescent" (42).

Whittier himself subtitled the poem an "idyll" and was inspired to compose it only after the deaths of his mother in 1857, his older sister, Mary, in 1861, and his younger sister, Elizabeth, in 1864. *Snow-Bound*, which resurrects these figures, is dedicated to the stasis of the past, not the movement of the present; but the little space of domestic warmth recollected in the poem is tellingly framed by active forces, the twin "storms" of the exterior natural and social worlds. The wind blows, the snow falls and drifts, the sleet pelts, while the family, "Shut in from all the world without" (l. 155),³ enjoys its static harmony around a kitchen fire, temporarily out of the reach of the Doctor's call of "Duty," "the stir of hall and street," the "traffic calling loud for gain," even the "week-old news" (ll. 661-709), which marches into the Whittier home again as soon as the roadway is clear.

Not surprisingly, the family portraits eulogize as well as portray Whittier's lost relatives:

There, too, our elder sister plied
Her evening task the stand beside;
A full rich nature, free to trust,
Truthful and almost sternly just,
Impulsive, earnest, prompt to act,
And make her generous thought a fact,
Keeping with many a light disguise
The secret of self sacrifice.
O heart sore-tried! thou hast the best
That Heaven itself could give thee,—rest.
(ll. 378-87)

It is lines like these that most connect Whittier to a reading public which, according to Jayne K. Kribbs, required poetry to "sound a moral note, touch the common soul, comfort an aching heart, and spread the gospel of eternal love" (xxvi). William Sloane Kennedy's reverential description of the Whittier family in his 1892 biography of the poet, for example, like these exemplary lines, is the stuff of consoling legend: "The family life of the Whittiers on the old farm was made delightful, notwithstanding the hard work by the perpetual cheerfulness, humor and wit, and calm and trustful piety of all its members. The cheeriness of atmosphere is insisted upon by all acquaintances of the family" (19).

This portrait of Whittier's sister Mary, marked by prescribed sentimentality and immobility, contrasts, however, the specificity and equiv-

ocal movement of Harriet's description. Whittier recounts his elder sister's "full rich nature," but the truthfulness and stern justice attributed to her in the very next lines suggest the conscious curtailment of that nature. Harriet is also notable for the richness of her "nature passionate and bold" (l. 515), but where Mary's character is abstractly defined and deliberately restricted, Harriet's unrestrained luxuriance of spirit and body finds concrete expression:

Another guest that winter night
 Flashed back from lustrous eyes the light.
 Unmarked by time, and yet not young,
 The honeyed music of her tongue
 And words of meekness scarcely told
 A nature passionate and bold,
 Strong, self-concentred, spurning guide,
 Its milder features dwarfed beside
 Her unbent will's majestic pride.
 (ll. 509–18)

Harriet's "lustrous eyes" and sweet tongue are complemented by "lithe limbs" (l. 524), "white teeth" (l. 525), and "tapering hand and rounded wrist" (l. 537) in ensuing lines. Even her lips and feet merit the poet's attention in easily the most sensuous verse Whittier ever penned.

Unlike Mary, who though "impulsive" has corrected this defect with laudable "self-sacrifice," Harriet with her "unbent will," clearly proud and impetuous, remains self-centered beyond the control of any would-be guide. Finally, Mary is safely "at rest," but Harriet is threateningly lively. Compared to a jungle beast, she has "pard-like, treacherous grace" and dangerous flashing teeth (l. 523). Her volatile intensity of character and feature is further expressed in one of the best lines of the poem in which the poet observes the "sharp heat lightnings of her face" (l. 528).

Whereas the section about the "elder sister" is built on the grammatical pattern of unspoken contravention—the unvoiced "buts" that eliminate or abridge her primary inclinations—the eighty-line section on "the not unfeared, half-welcome guest" is organized around the rhetorical strategy of combining contradictory qualities:

She blended in a like degree
 The vixen and the devotee
 Revealing with each freak or feint
 The temper of Petrucio's Kate,
 The rapture of Siena's saint.
 (ll. 533–37)

Among the polarities the full presentation of Harriet elides are young/old, meek/bold, asexual/sexual, weak/strong, self-sacrificing/self-concentred, dependent/independent, connected/isolated, humble/proud, disguised/obvious, dead/alive, safe/dangerous, subdued/intense, forgiving/angry, sweet/shrill. Evidently Harriet's character cannot be categorized within the classifications through which the poet is used to evaluating the world. Not only has Harriet moved in literal space, but by so doing she seems to have overrun the semantic landmarks of figurative space as well. This reading of Harriet conforms to Barbara Johnson's explanation of deconstructive practice in *A World of Difference* (1987): "Instead of a simple 'either/or' structure," which is well exemplified by the portrayal of Mary, "deconstruction attempts to elaborate a discourse that says *neither* 'either/or' *nor* 'both/and' *nor* even 'neither/nor'" (12–13). To question any of the organizing terms of binary certainty puts others into question as well. The deconstructive strategy of deliberate grammatical confusion at work in the presentation of Harriet demonstrates that her unacceptable feminine movement is a threat, as well, to all the gendered structures of meaning of the social world Whittier is ostensibly trying to reinvent.

It is a world in which both women have suffered, Whittier avers, but whereas the sister, apostrophized as "O heart sore-tried!" is clearly admired for the sanctioned and definitive exclusions of her life, Harriet, who pursues a "troubled path" (l. 563), is excoriated for the dangerous inclusions of hers. The poet implicitly blames Harriet for her sexual force while he explicitly chastises her for the unchecked expression of prohibited emotion. Her feminine hand, for example, "Had facile power to form a fist" (l. 539); her saintly facial features could also "scowl and pout" (l. 543); even her "sweet voice" (l. 544) could "shrill" a "social battle cry" (l. 545). The elder sister exhibits both the rewards and punishments of the woman's ideological place. Harriet's sexuality, anger, and power slights those rewards and punishments to abrogate sexual positioning.

WOMEN'S WORK

To understand that positioning we must consider briefly the other females of the household. Unlike the elder sister, whose "evening task" is somehow not concrete enough to merit naming, "Our mother" is presented in terms of her constant feminine work: "she turned the wheel / Or run the new-knit stocking heel" all the while she entertained the fire-side listeners with memories of her girlhood (ll. 256–57). Only at the conclusion of the evening "with care our mother laid her work aside,"

and then only to “express / Her grateful sense of happiness / For food and shelter, warmth and health” (ll. 604–607), domestic ends to which her own tasks have made material contribution. Even the more fanciful Aunt Mercy is marked by “years of toil and soil and care” (l. 372), but Whittier’s younger sister Elizabeth, whose loss he has most recently suffered, is thoroughly etherealized: “I cannot feel that thou art far, / Since near at need the angels are” (ll. 432–33). All the female members of the household are romanticized, but the younger generation significantly more so than the elder.

This difference is consistent with the changes in feminine role precipitated by industrialization. It is important to distinguish between women’s function in the home-based economy of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century America and the market economy that developed throughout the nineteenth century. In both periods the home was the woman’s province, but the meaning and function of that home varied significantly. According to historian Mary Ryan, in colonial America,

It was the wife’s duty, with the assistance of the daughter and women servants to plant the vegetable garden, breed the poultry, and care for the dairy cattle. She transformed milk into cream, butter and cheese, and butchered livestock as well as cooked the meals. Along with her daily chores the husbandwoman salted, pickled, preserved, and manufactured enough beer and cider to see the family safely through the winter.

Still, the woman’s work was hardly done. To clothe the colonial population, woman not only plied the needle but operated wood carders, spinning wheels—participated in the manufacture of thread, yarn and cloth as well as apparel. Her handwrought candles lit the house; medicines of her manufacture restored the family to health; her homemade soap cleansed her home and family. (qtd. by Ehrenreich and English 8)

But in the nineteenth century, when most of women’s previous production was being manufactured within a market economy segregated from the household, the middle-class home was the location of female duties not so much physical as ideological. John Ruskin defined its function:

This is the true nature of home—it is the place of peace; of shelter, not only from all injury, but from all terror, doubt and division. In so far as it is not this, it is not home; so far as the anxieties of the outer life penetrate into it, and the inconsistently minded, unknown, unloved, or hostile society of the outer world is allowed . . . to cross the threshold it ceases to be a home; it is then only a part of the outer world which you have roofed over and lighted fire in. (qtd. by Ehrenreich and English 23)

The portrayal of the older generation of women in *Snow-Bound* looks back to the earlier pattern of the family as the productive center of its own sustenance. The sketches of Whittier's spiritualized sisters, however, the failing members of his own generation, are shaped according to the nineteenth-century ideology of "the angel in the house." That neither pattern is adequate to present needs is evident in the idyllic placement of the poem between the onslaughts of both society and nature. Harriet Livermore, the frightening guest, corresponds to the threat from outer forces. Like the interfering storm and the intruding society, she is described in terms of movement in contrast to the static security of the family group. In fact, more than half the lines in the section describing Harriet are devoted to her travels.

She has wandered
Through Smyrna's plague-hushed thoroughfares,
Up sea-set Malta's rocky stairs,
Gray olive slopes of hills that hem
Thy tombs and shrines, Jerusalem,
Or startling on thy desert throne
The desert Queen of Lebanon. . . . (ll. 549-54)

That her activity is to be viewed with alarm is evident in the poet's attitude: she follows a "troubled path" through a "wayward life" that Whittier cannot approve or even understand:

Nor is it given us to discern
.....
The sorrow with the woman born
What forged her cruel chain of moods,
What set her feet in solitudes
And held the love within her mute
What mingled madness in the blood,
.....
. . . hid within the folded bud
Perversities of flower and fruit.
(ll. 567-78)

Despite his confessed confusion, however, the poet does manage to suggest that Harriet is sad, loveless, reckless, and insane. In the poem, religious concern masks Whittier's condemnation; he invokes a "Merciful and compassionate" (l.586) God to understand all human weakness. But in the introductory note he appended to *Snow-Bound* in later editions, the historical woman is not so cautiously depicted:

The "not unfeared, half-welcome guest" was Harriet Livermore, daughter of Judge Livermore, of New Hampshire, a young woman of fine natural ability, enthusiastic, eccentric, with slight control over her violent temper, which sometimes made her religious profession doubtful. She was equally ready to exhort in school-house prayer meetings and dance in a Washington ball-room, while her father was a member of congress. She early embraced the doctrine of the Second Advent, and felt it her duty to proclaim the Lord's speedy coming. With this message she crossed the Atlantic and spent the greater part of a long life in traveling over Europe and Asia.⁴ She lived some time with Lady Hester Stanhope,⁵ a woman as fantastic and mentally strained as herself, on the slope of Mt. Lebanon but finally quarrelled with her in regard to two white horses with red marks on their backs which suggested the idea of saddles, on which her titled hostess expected to ride into Jerusalem with the Lord.⁶ A friend of mine found her, when quite an old woman, wandering in Syria with a tribe of Arabs, who with the Oriental notion that madness is inspiration, accepted her as their prophetess and leader.⁷ At the time referred to in *Snow-Bound* she was boarding at the Rocks village two miles from us. (398-99)

Harriet dominates the poet's consciousness in the introduction just as she does in the penultimate section of the poem, but here he was even more concerned to negate her appeal. Almost every sentence but the last—which repositions her in her home environment—condemns her. Throughout, Whittier contradicts initial neutral ascription with eventual negative interpretation. In the first sentence, for example, Harriet's "natural" enthusiasm deteriorates into eccentricity. Her early exhortations to prayer culminate in unbridled fanaticism, and, finally, her uninhibited travel is presented as serving hysterical delusion.

At least one of her relatives was moved to protest what he perceived as an attack on an unprotected woman's precious reputation. In 1884, the Rev. S. T. Livermore of Bridgewater, Massachusetts, published a vindication. According to William Sloane Kennedy's account, which quotes him, the outraged cleric calls the "'epithets heaped upon her' in that poem 'an assault upon a pious female's character,' and the portrait of her 'a cruel caricature,' and hints that he would like to use the 'flexors and extensors of his right arm in her protection'" (29).

Another chapter is added to the disputed characterization by an 1879 letter from Whittier in which he confided to a friend that in 1829 Harriet had stayed at a Philadelphia boarding house frequented by the poet where she was alternately "an agreeable and interesting guest" and "a violent-tempered woman of indomitable will." "I do not think I have exaggerated her character in 'Snow-Bound,'" he asserts, also noting, "Even then she was a noble-looking woman" (31).

THE VOLCANO AND THE ICEBERG

All of Whittier's statements about Harriet Livermore, finally, say a great deal more about his contradictions than her history. Unlike his nineteenth-century following, the most astute of John Greenleaf Whittier's modern critics have concentrated less on the consoling simplicities of his sentiment and more on the intriguing complexities of his character. The "only fresh light I can throw upon him," said Perry Miller in 1964, "is simply that Whittier is a more complicated figure, both as a man and as a writer, than he appears as one of the five monumental 'household poets' of nineteenth century America" (207). Edward Wagenknecht's 1967 biography found in Whittier "A Portrait in Paradox," and in 1971 Robert Penn Warren cited *Snow-Bound* as a summary poem that recapitulates the focal issues of Whittier's life: "In love, politics, and poetry, he was constantly being involved in a deep inner struggle. . . . He was, to no avail, trying to break out of the 'past' of his childhood into the 'future' of manhood—to achieve, in other words, a self" (54–55). Harriet Livermore is the ambivalent symbol of that central struggle. In a word, she is physically and morally *unbounded* in opposition to the *bounds* Whittier may have tried to evade, but evidently needed to maintain.

Coming at the end of the Civil War and the great campaign for abolition to which Whittier had devoted thirty years, *Snow-Bound* significantly does not attempt to establish any new order, but instead extols former virtues. *Snow-Bound* beats a strategic retreat on several fronts: from the present to the past, from the social to the sentimental, from the public to the personal, from poetry as call to abolitionist action to poetry as a sign of domestic refuge. Only Harriet, "A woman tropical, intense" (l. 531) in contrast to the frozen world that occasions Whittier's pastoral withdrawal, hints at the ambiguity of this course.

The obvious political capitulation is more than matched by the psychological resignation and literary abdication the poem also implies. All his life Whittier had been accounting for his failure to turn any of his numerous flirtations into marriages by citing the burden of an aging mother and invalid sister. But in 1866 when his only obligation was to his own needs, he reimagines the comfort of just those confining relationships. Yet we know he was clearly attracted to women. He confessed to many school-boy crushes, and his young manhood included several near engagements. He wrote from Boston in 1829 that he enjoyed looking at young women to "catch the dark brilliancy of their fine eyes and observe the delicate blush stealing over their cheeks." "There are a good many pretty girls here at the Athenaeum—and I like to sit there and remark on the different figures that go floating by me," but even in this

youthful passage he is quick to transmute flesh into something else by imagining those "figures" as "aerial creatures just stooping down to our dull earth" (qtd. by Wagenknecht 82).

Although a woman friend commented that she had "always been impressed by the mingled iceberg and volcano" in his character (Miller 216), Whittier chose to live according to the dictates of the colder option. Wagenknecht insists that he "never experienced sexual intercourse" (81). Just before writing *Snow-Bound*, when Whittier was nearly sixty, he had finally managed to extricate himself from a long-standing relationship with Elizabeth Lloyd with whom he shared a physical union of sorts: "Both suffered from severe headaches, but they found if they massaged each other's brows the headaches would go away . . . and he proposed to her" (Warren 45).

But the most important quasi-marriage of his life was of the angelic sort with his other Elizabeth, the "youngest and dearest" sister of *Snow-Bound* (l. 396). In an 1884 memorial, Mrs. Harriet Prescott Spoffard wrote in *Harper's Magazine* that "Mr. Whittier's sister Elizabeth, sympathizing with him completely, of a rare and fastidious taste, and of delicate dark-eyed beauty, was long a companion and must have made the want of any other less keenly felt than by lonely men in general. The bond between the sister and brother was more perfect than of any we have ever known" (qtd. by Kennedy 28). Harriet Livermore can be seen as the subconscious "volcano" to Elizabeth Whittier's actual "iceberg."

Just as the nineteenth-century ideology of the "angel in the house" was founded on the physical and moral exclusions of women by the market economy, its maintenance demanded a related series of personal exclusions. The increasing isolation of the nuclear family in this period made intense family relationships the basis of personality, and in Mark Poster's view, this kind of experience produced "a systematic exchange on the child's part of bodily gratification for parental love" (177), a repression of physical pleasure that "led to sexual incapacities for both men and women. . . . Among the bourgeoisie, women were viewed as asexual beings, as angelic creatures beyond animal lust. When internalized, this image of women led to profound emotional conflicts" (168).⁸

But the explanations for Whittier's repressive choices must go beyond the psychological to the ideological. One explanation for Whittier's ideological choices may lie in Ann Douglas's theory of *The Feminization of the American Culture*. In her view the split between the market and the home separated women from whatever economic power they had formerly possessed and also disempowered two groups of men, the clergy and the writers, who increasingly allied themselves with the feminine sphere of "influence." If women's function was, according to Douglas, to become the agents of virtue expressed as emotionalism,

innocence, and religious conformity, they were good at their work. Their views dominated the explosion of periodicals and books espousing their ideology. Since Whittier always longed for literary fame, his enthusiasm for domestic virtues in *Snow-Bound* may reflect his alliance with popular feminine influence. Douglas argues that a gentle Christianity of maternal values replaced the patriarchal Calvinism of an earlier age. Whittier's heritage of inner light, women's equality, and pacifism was suddenly closer to feminized mainstream doctrine. Unfortunately, this comfortable shift inevitably substituted the conformity of what Douglas defines as sentimental culture for the intellectual independence of Quaker history. The isolation of John Greenleaf Whittier the Quaker abolitionist was, upon the publication of *Snow-Bound*, replaced by the celebrity of Whittier the high priest of familial piety.

Harriet, however, expresses Whittier's equivocal and unacknowledged resistance to domestic virtue. Ruskin argued that if any guest "inconsistently minded, hostile, unloved" is merely "allowed" to "cross the threshold," then the sacred family space "ceases to be a home," becoming "only a part of the outer world you have roofed over and built a fire in." It is more than curious, then, that Harriet Livermore, whom Whittier carefully constructed to exhibit just these home-wrecking traits, should be enjoying the family's hospitality. The very pattern of Harriet's structuration in *Snow-Bound* as a unit combining opposite terms marks her as "inconsistently minded." I have sketched her figuration of power and anger, and Warren provides conclusive evidence of hostility. As a young woman, Harriet had converted to Whittier's Quaker religion, but in a dispute over the Friends' doctrine, Harriet slammed a Sister with a piece of stovewood, thus ending her membership in that pacifistic sect. Finally, despite his own evident fascination, Whittier tried to set Harriet "unloved" safely outside the limits of affection by predicting "ill to him whom Fate / Condemned to share her love or hate" (ll. 559-30). Nevertheless, he not only let her "cross the threshold," he placed her at the family hearth just as it is pressed into service as the type of perfect domesticity. Can he have been subverting his own ideology, turning the family farm into just another "part of the outside world" he has futilely "built a fire in"?

In "Home as Region," Theano S. Terklani, provides a geosocial explanation that applies to Whittier's metaphoric structure. More than a location, home, he explains, is a "culturally constructed" and "historically contingent" (324) means to identification. Spatializing a self in relation to an excluded Other is a strategy for asserting control of a changing situation: "More often than not, home does not become an issue until it is being lost or changed. . . . Whatever term is used to identify the antithesis of home, an indisputable tension exists between the

two poles of the dialectic. This tension often takes the form of a struggle between staying home or moving on" (326). The disturbing figure of Harriet's travels is Whittier's attempt to cope with his own changing personal and historical circumstances.

Harriet, it must be understood, is no isolated example. Whittier repeatedly returned to the related issues of movement, stasis, and woman in his most accomplished writing. In *Margaret Smith's Journal*, his only novelistic work, he imagined the response of a female English diarist on a tour through colonial America.⁹ The woman's physical movement was matched by her mental agility regarding an allegation of witchcraft, the plight of the Indians, and the disrepute of the Quakers, which placed her outside the moral immobility of Puritan cant, as Whittier portrays it. However, because she travels in the company of relatives and finally returns to the safety of her home and family, Margaret Smith escapes the painful ambiguities of Harriet Livermore.

But despite Margaret's positive placement, two of Whittier's most famous poems about movement and women seem to offer negative asides on his own life. "Maud Muller"—the source of what are perhaps Whittier's best known lines, "For of all sad words of tongue or pen, / The saddest are these: 'It might have been'" (49)—is a rueful story of roads not taken. In this poem it is "the judge" who is moving and a beautiful farm girl who remains stationary. Their brief meeting on a country lane generates in her an "unrest" related to the lively life of the town she sees below her, while he is deeply attracted to her rustic grace.

But he thought of his sisters, proud and cold,
And his mother, vain of her rank and gold.
So, closing his heart, the judge rode on,
And Maud was left in the field alone.
(47)

The poem may signal Whittier's regret for his own lost chances.

His well-known ballad "Skipper Ireson's Ride" (55) can be understood as a dialect version of Whittier's predicament. In the poem Skipper Ireson is tarred and feathered for sailing past the suppliant crew of a foundering vessel. Unlike the poet, who maintained loyal connection with his own family, the Skipper abandoned the shipwrecked sons, brothers, husbands, and lovers of the mothers, sisters, wives, and maids—those women of Marblehead who have punished him "fur his hord heart." The gross indignity of Ireson ("Body of turkey, head of owl, / Wings a-droop like a rained on fowl"), in addition to his inner anguish, may be a guilty projection in response to Whittier's need to escape his home, significantly rendered as travel, an ignominious Skim-

mington “ride” perpetrated by women. In both poems, masculine movement is intolerable and connected to deep and conflicted issues of loyalty to family members. Mobility is imaginable only, it seems, when it is projected farther away from the ambivalence of male allegiance onto a female Other, and even then it is presented as a dubious enterprise.

If the trope of the woman traveler challenges the “feminization” of Whittier’s psyche, it also undercuts what we might term the “masculinization” of his literary expression. Through the description of the tales of the residents in the Whittier home, *Snow-Bound* presents an index of the narrative formulas that had been available to the poet and his culture. In his introduction Whittier defines “storytelling” as a necessity in the world of his “boyhood” and itemizes the available resources:

My father when a young man had traversed the wilderness to Canada, and could tell us of his adventures with Indians and wild beasts and of his sojourn in the French villages. My uncle was ready with his record of hunting and fishing and, it must be confessed, with stories he half-believed, of witchcraft and apparitions. My mother, who was born in the Indian-haunted region of Somerworth, New Hampshire, between Dover and Portsmouth, told us of the inroads of the savages, and the narrow escape of her ancestors. (398)

These are the inherited genres of the mobile male—the hunt, the fight, the flight to the wilderness—which culminate for Nina Baym in a privileged masculine myth: the adversarial confrontation between the unencumbered American man and a restrictive feminine social world (131–32). David Leverenz argues in *Manhood and the American Renaissance* that the aggressive masculinity of American story alienated American authors of the mid-nineteenth century because their literary labors were judged as less manly than the imaginary exploits of traditional heroes, and that the canonical male writers of the period responded by representing the conundrums of American manhood through “destabilizing their narrations” (18).

Whittier’s trope of the woman traveler may be similarly understood as a device that destabilizes the male narratives that precede it. In the sequence of the poem, the stories related to traditional masculine genres tendered by family members culminate in an evocation of Whittier’s own heroic employment of literature in the service of the ideals of abolition as a model for the future:

A careless boy that night he seemed;
But at his desk he had the look
And air of one who wisely schemed,
And hostage from the future took
In trained thought and lore of book

Large-brained, clear-eyed—of such as he
 Shall Freedom's young apostles be,
 Who following in War's bloody trail
 Shall every lingering wrong assail.
 (ll. 480–88)

As described in the militant diction of the next passage, the anticipated warrior of peace, modeled on Whittier himself, would do nothing less than equalize injustice, dispel ignorance, and reunite the North and South. Paradoxically, however, the masculine potency of this heroic paragon is immediately followed, and thereby possibly rescinded, by the contradictive section devoted to Harriet Livermore. Just as her troubling evasion of gender restriction questions Whittier's accession to codes of domesticity, it may also suggest his lack of comfortable alignment with the gendered narratives of masculine action he has invoked in preceding passages.

Whittier's example indicates that in the male text of the mid-nineteenth century the traveling woman may be employed as a complex sign contradicting the family, literary, and social systems of the period.¹⁰ Her potential for such disturbance may also be discerned, I suspect, in Madeline Usher's brief but unsettling return in Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" and in the duplicitous freedom of Hawthorne's Hester in *The Scarlet Letter* and Zenobia in *The Blithedale Romance*. If Douglas is right, the male writer, strongly identified with the family-centered sexual and economic restrictions of the static middle-class female sphere, devised the moving woman as an expression of his own conflicted insertion into that gendered territory. And if Leverenz is correct, the moving woman may be included as one of a number of structural strategies male writers employed to destabilize the literary hegemony of a mythic American manhood.

The trope of the woman traveler, so understood, is the signal of desire, and its renunciation. Although she is alienated from the domestic community, the writer saves her a special place by the fire. Thus, the moving woman functions as the occluded Other of the male text, and her masculine/feminine instability deconstructs literary, social, and psychological strictures defined by gender and elides the oppositional categories from which those strictures are created. To discover "the not unfear'd, half-welcome guest" is to understand female movement in American literature written by men in the nineteenth century as an occasion of confrontation with and a mark of contradiction to the gendered relations and restrictions of American culture.

In literature written by women, however, the woman traveler becomes the hero rather than the Other to the text. Her deconstruction

of gendered categories of masculine movement and feminine stasis is complemented by her construction of alternative patterns of feminine agency as revealed in studies of the women travelers examined in the following chapters. In the next section, to focus on the travel text in works usually considered from the perspective of traditional genres or period—the captivity narrative, the modernist text, and the slave narrative—is to discover options and attitudes of Mary Rowlandson, Willa Cather, Edith Wharton, and Harriet Jacobs not otherwise apparent.