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Making themselves at Home:
Strategies of Self-representation in Pioneer Women's Autobiographies

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Making Themselves at Home: Strategies of Self-Representation in Pioneer Women's Autobiographies

Christa Maria Zeller Thomas

Thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the PhD degree in English literature

Faculty of Arts
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Abstract

This dissertation explores narrative strategies of self-identity in autobiographies by six pioneering women writers, each of whom lost what has traditionally been woman's place: her home. The accounts of emigration, expatriation, and exile by Anna Brownwell Jameson, Catharine Parr Traill, Susanna Moodie, Ada Cambridge, Isak Dinesen, and Alyse Simpson illustrate the implications of this loss, as each woman struggled to recover a sense both of home and of grounded identity. The writings span more than a hundred years, from the 1830s to the 1950s, and tell of lives lived in locations as different as Canada, Australia, and British East Africa (now Kenya), places that variously proved to be confining and/or liberating. By narrating the ways in which identity adapts to and is transformed by a new environment, these texts provide access to the construction and alteration of the self in relation to place. This study probes this process by using the concept of place, rather than the more conventional one of time, as the dominant category of analysis.

My readings are both intertextual and interdisciplinary: they rely on theorizing by sociologists and psychologists concerned with the relationship between place and identity, studies on the same subject by literary scholars, and formulations by women's autobiography theorists. My investigation reveals, among other discoveries, that the gender-specific aspects of the process of adaptation persistently centre on the notion of homecoming and that they are articulated with reference to the figure of the mother.

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Preface

> To go into a country you didn't
> know about was hard, and to leave
> the home you had loved all your life
> was cruel.
>
> Dorothy Scarborough, *The Wind*

> Under the flag of my first motto I sailed
> into a *Vita Nuova*, into what became
> my real life.
>
> Isak Dinesen, "On Mottoes of My Life"

> Love is a yearning for a country [...] which renders the country
> for you a point of destiny. Which country? The one from which
> we came, "the place where everyone dwelt once upon a time
> and in the beginning." The country from which we come is always
> the one to which we are returning. You are on the return road
> which passes through the country of [...] the maternal body.
> You have already passed through here: you recognize the landscape.
> You have always been on the return road.
>
> Hélène Cixous, "Fiction and Its Phantoms: A Reading of Freud's
> *Das Unheimliche* (The 'uncanny')"

Emigrant women's narratives of self are situated on shifting ground in the sense that, traditionally, "woman's place" has been at home. "Home," however, is precisely what the women in this study have lost, as each of them travelled as a wife to a foreign location, there to begin a new life. The writings in this study arise out of this loss: emigration fractures the continuity of experience; it shatters the familiar, leaving an absence in the place of "home," and identity ungrounded. Not coincidentally, therefore, the stories of self-recovery and self-discovery these women tell are concerned with the notion of home "as a base, a source of identity" (Gurr 13). For some of them, their new homes were places

of acute dislocation and unwelcome changes of self, while for others they proved to be enabling spaces of previously unimagined possibility. I am drawn to these texts not only because they offer stories of great female spirit in the face of hardship and upheaval, but because by narrating the process of transformation in the new environment they provide access to the construction and alteration of the self in relation to place.

By presenting what I hope are well-theorized, intertextual readings of the geography of pioneer women's autobiography, I am focusing on place rather than on time as the dominant category of analysis, thereby aligning my work with a growing body of cultural theory and critical studies. Autobiography theorists Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson identified spatialization as a prospect for autobiography studies in their 1998 collection *Women, Autobiography, Theory*, and autobiography's "dramatic" spatialization of time does indeed make the genre well-suited to a place-centred approach: like drama, which unfolds through acts and scenes, autobiography "eschews temporal sequence and presents development in terms of clearly demarcated phases – frequently [...] using places of residence as a structuring principle" (Hinz 203). For the emigrant writers in my study, place is the ground (in both senses of the word) for remapping subjectivity.

In what follows, I refer to the writings I analyze interchangeably as "memoirs" and as "autobiographies," yet this is done strictly for purposes of stylistic variation. Generically, I follow the lead of women's autobiography theorists who treat all writing about the self as autobiography in order to prevent the notion that "what women write belongs to some 'homelier' or minor tradition" (Gilmore, *Autobiographics* 2).

My choice of reading for "strategies of self-representation" is rooted in my desire to investigate what Shari Benstock calls "fissures of female discontinuity" ("Authorizing"

152), or gaps in the articulation of self. In the case of expatriate women these gaps have much to do with the fragmenting experience of emigration itself. Stephen Shapiro has observed that it is the autobiography critic's task to discover in each autobiography the "dark core" of unawareness – the aspects of the text that escape the writer's conscious control – and it is my hope that by exploring "fissures" in self-construction I am able to shed some light on that "dark core" (436). It follows that I regard the protagonists in the texts I explore as constructed *personae*, although I refer to them, for purposes of readability, as "Dinesen," "Moodie," or "Traill." That being said, I agree with Carole Gerson that the "narrated figure may also be read as the reflection of the historic" ("Nobler Savages" 12). While I accept that autobiographies are mediated representations of experience, I try not to forget that real women lived that experience and I therefore see the texts as more than "mere" representations.

The six writers in my study, while separated by both place and time, have in common that they all left their homes and homelands as adult women, and that they did so in connection with marriage. Expatriation may have been particularly difficult for women because the decision to emigrate was "typically made by the male members of the family" (Bird, "Gender and Landscape" 23), and because women were tied to the home as a traditionally female space. All but one writer among the group (Alyse Simpson) were already published authors when they emigrated. All went to locations in what were British colonies at the time, and all were white, middle-class or upper-class European women, whose race and class inform their expectations of emigration and resettlement. Some became well-known authors – at least within the national context – while others did not; I provide brief biographical overviews for all. These women's writings remap female

subjectivity away from home in relation to a "strange" geography. They reveal a range of approaches toward self-location along with "a set of alternative myths or models for women's place in society," while also offering a spectrum of generic modes for narrated identity, from epistolary to "scientific" and instructive, from anecdotal to lyrical and confessional (Lawrence xi).

While I aim to shed light on the role the writers' gender plays in shaping their narrative strategies, I did not attempt to locate a unifying discourse or to discover similarity in the women's experience. Not for all women, for instance, does exile equal suffering, because the "familiarly and familially defined home can have profoundly disturbing effects" on women as a place of confinement and restraint. "Voluntary exile," therefore, can for some constitute "an escape" and can open possibilities of adventure and self-development not obtainable at home. While, however, the release from an entrapping home "of the silenced mother-under-patriarchy" may free some women from their "internalized exile/estrangement" (Broe and Ingram 5), the figure of the mother is nevertheless pervasive in the writings of the pioneer women here considered, for whom the maternal,[1] both through absence and presence, shapes their relationships to place and the new "home."

I sketch my theoretical framework in chapter I. This framework is interdisciplinary: it includes theorizing by sociologists and psychologists concerned with the relationship between place and identity, studies on the same subject by literary scholars, and formulations by women's autobiography theorists. I use a sample text –

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[1] I am following Marianne Hirsch in using the adjectival form of the term to signal "that there is no transparent meaning of the concept" (13).

Anna Brownwell Jameson's *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada* (1838) – to illustrate my theoretical lens. Jameson's narrative is not a settlement memoir, of course, yet it articulates the process of adaptation/transformation particularly clearly and is therefore helpful in illuminating the concepts and ideas I use in the rest of this study.

Chapter II is concerned with Canadian pioneer Catharine Parr Traill, whose two guides for prospective settler women, *The Backwoods of Canada* (1836) and *The Canadian Settler's Guide* (1855), form the core of my analysis, along with some of Traill's later essays and her novel for young adults, *Canadian Crusoes* (1852), written in autobiographical mode. Chapter III is dedicated to Traill's sister, Susanna Moodie, whose *Roughing It in the Bush* (1852) is one of the foundational texts in the Canadian literary tradition and has received a large amount of critical commentary. I read this text along with Moodie's second memoir, *Life in the Clearings* (1853), and her autobiographical novel *Flora Lyndsay* (1854). In chapter IV I turn from North American writing to two autobiographies by Ada Cambridge, a pioneering Australian writer. Cambridge's work has been recovered by feminist scholars during the course of the last few decades and her reputation is growing. Cambridge's recollections of *Thirty Years in Australia* (1902), in particular, reveal the challenging process of adaptation to a new environment (over a considerable period, in her case) that many emigrant women underwent.

Chapter V considers Isak Dinesen's famous autobiography, *Out of Africa* (1937), telling of her time spent in what was then British East Africa, alongside her later memoir, *Shadows on the Grass* (1960). In order to do justice to these much analyzed and criticized texts and to provide a fresh reading, I first consider the paradigm shift from the nineteenth to the twentieth century – the century of "displacement and misplacement" (Brodzki qtd.

in Broe and Ingram 2) – to prepare my reading of Dinesen's works specifically as modernist texts. My final chapter, chapter VI, is concerned with Alyse Simpson's two memoirs of pioneering, also in Africa, *The Land That Never Was* (1937) and *Red Dust of Kenya* (1952). Simpson is practically unknown, since only a handful of studies so far have concerned themselves with her work, despite its fascinating complexity. My study aims to redress this critical oversight in some measure. Finally, in a brief epilogue I draw some general conclusions and consider the lasting influence of the primary texts.

The very fact that these narratives have had a lasting influence is itself persuasive testament to the courage of their authors, who voyaged from home across the seas (in paraphrase of Euripides) to live in foreign lands.

Chapter I

Nothing Feels Like Home:
Place, Displacement, and Self in Emigrant Women's Autobiography

On December 20, 1836, shortly after her arrival in the colony of Upper Canada, Anna Brownwell Jameson records her first impressions of Toronto in her epistolary journal, published two years later (1838) as *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada*. In a paragraph that reads like the "worst attack of recoil from the new land in all Canadian literature" (Buss, "Garrison Mentality" 129), Jameson describes the appearance of Toronto as

> most strangely mean and melancholy. A little ill-built town on low land, at the bottom of a frozen bay, with one very ugly church, without tower or steeple; some government offices, built of staring red brick, in the most tasteless, vulgar style imaginable; three feet of snow all around; and the grey sullen, wintry lake, and the dark gloom of the pine forest bounding the prospect; such seems Toronto to me now. (15-16)

Anticipating psychoanalytic concepts such as "displacement" and "projection" by nearly a century, Jameson further observes that her portrait of the town is not a faithful record of the "impressions made by objects and characters on my mind"; rather, she says, it is "the impress they *receive* from my own mind" and therefore is subjective and influenced by expectations, assumptions, and past experiences: "If I look into my own heart, I find that it is regret for what I have left and lost – the absent, not the present – which throws over all around me a chill, colder than that of the wintry day – a gloom, deeper than that of the wintry night" (16; original italics). At the same time, Jameson concedes, the place itself

with its melancholy nature and gloomy prospect not only mirrors but also generates the inner change. As "a stranger among strangers" in Toronto, she feels the effects of her displacement deeply: whereas before, she reflects, she "could not [have] been accused of looking on the things of this world through a glass darkly, but rather of the contrary tendency," she now lacks the "cheerful faith which [had] sustained" her. Jameson's dramatic description of herself as "an uprooted tree, dying at the core" (16-17) sets the tone for what is in large measure a record of "profound alienation and despair" (Friewald 66).

Anna Jameson had travelled to Canada from England in the fall of 1836 at the request of her husband. The relocation meant that she had to leave behind an illustrious literary career and enviable social circle consisting of Britain's and Europe's cultural elite, which included the Brownings, Elizabeth Gaskell, Thomas Carlyle, the Goethe family, Prince Metternich, and Friedrich Schlegel. Born in Dublin in 1794, but reared in England from age four, Jameson (neé Anna Murphy) had begun her working life at sixteen as governess for the children of the Marquis of Winchester. For much of her career her family depended on her financial support, as several members of Anna's immediate family, her father among them, were unable to earn livings for themselves. In 1825, despite profound misgivings and a previously broken engagement, she married Robert Sympson Jameson, a barrister. Yet after only four years of marriage the Jamesons had become sufficiently estranged that when Robert accepted a legal post in the Caribbean, Anna chose to stay behind and instead concentrated on her writing. By 1833 she had published a fictionalized travel diary based on her own journey to Italy, *Diary of an Ennuyée* (1826), several biographies of historically significant women, including *The*

Loves of the Poets (1829) and *Memoirs of Celebrated Female Sovereigns* (1831), as well as a book of Shakespeare criticism, entitled *Characteristics of Women* (1832).[1] Shakespeare was held in high esteem in Germany, and Jameson's critical reading of the poet's female characters was immediately translated into German. When she herself travelled to Germany shortly thereafter, "[her] lengthy visit [...], had something of the quality of a triumphal tour," remarks her biographer Clara Thomas ("Introduction" ix). During her stay in Germany, Jameson formed a deep and lasting friendship with Ottilie von Goethe, the late poet's young, widowed daughter-in-law – and the beloved "other" to whom the journal entries in *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles* would be addressed. Robert Jameson, in the meantime, had been appointed Attorney General of Upper Canada. In 1835, after months of silence, he requested that Anna join him, partly to give his household the appearance of normalcy in order to assure his appointment as Vice-Chancellor, the colony's highest legal position. She complied, arriving in Toronto at the beginning of the Canadian winter – not the most fortuitous timing considering that the Jamesons' marriage, too, had gone cold. After her husband's professional goal had been reached, Anna succeeded in negotiating with him a separation agreement.[2] At the end of the summer of 1837 she returned to England, never to see Robert again. She died in 1860 after a lifetime of work as a professional writer. *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles* is

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[1] Judith Johnston points out that through these titles Jameson had established women as "her most dominant and constant subject" (9). Similarly, Bina Friewald observes a "significantly female and woman-oriented" perspective in all of Jameson's writing ("'Femininely Speaking'" 62), and Clara Thomas comments that, "[i]n all her work, Anna was a tireless advocate of improved education for women" ("Afterword" 544). Jameson's "woman-oriented" angle will eventually play an important role in her ability to engage with the Canadian environment.

[2] Helen M. Buss, in her reading of Jameson's text in *Mapping Our Selves*, suggests that Jameson was also interested in the opportunity to "write about the experience of a visit to a new land" (96). While Anna, given her role in supporting her family, always kept a shrewd eye open to turning all her endeavours to financial account (Johnston 101), her correspondence to Ottilie von Goethe reveals that she was not exactly looking forward to the venture of journeying to North America. On the eve of her departure from England she writes, "I hate the idea of Canada and all that belongs to it at this moment" (Needler 47).

her account of her ten-month stay in Canada, a sojourn which included not just a long winter spent in Toronto but also a summer of adventurous, unchaperoned, and extended (two-month) journeying north. The narrative illustrates the writer's initial dislocation as well as her efforts to conceive a connection to her new surroundings and her eventual joyous identification with Canada. It is a fascinating record of the profound effects of place on self-identity and writing.

My purpose in this introductory chapter is both to theorize the links between place, displacement, and identity – preparatory to the readings which follow – and to illustrate some of the implications of these connections for emigrant women's autobiographies by using Anna Jameson's text as a model. To do so means "cheating" somewhat, because Jameson herself, pioneering woman though she was in many respects, does not strictly qualify as an immigrant to Canada, since she likely never meant to stay in the colony. Yet in its treatment of place, *Studies and Rambles* is exemplary because it traces a woman's journey from alienation to identification with place in near-perfect symmetry. Anna undoubtedly projected other difficulties into her initial struggle with Canada, her "conjugal miseries" perhaps foremost among them (Needler 87). Nevertheless, her persistent contemplation of her surroundings, and finally her vigorous engagement with them, suggest the extent to which Jameson's self-concept was contingent on her relationship with place. Jameson's explicit querying of this relationship further recommends her text for my analysis: the extraordinary level of self-awareness she exhibits lays bare areas both of tension and of harmony in the interaction of place and identity, the very terrain I want to explore in my analysis of the narrative construction of self in relation to place.

Place matters, because "[w]ho one is and who one can be are [...] a function of *where* one is and how one experiences that place" (Chaudhuri xii; original italics). In ways too varied and numerous to elaborate we all form attachments to places – a current or past home, a particular room in a house, the neighbourhood, a city, region or country – and we depend on these places to enrich our lives with meaning, values, and goals. The places where we are born, live, and act can sustain and nurture or impede and disrupt our personal growth. The notion of place is therefore critical for self-definition, because "place serves as an important component of our sense of identity as subjects" (Entrikin 13). Being attached to a place is not only a fundamental human need, but more so "the foundation of our selves and our identities" (Eyles 109). For these reasons, place and identity cannot be separated, and it is only through a consideration of place that one can gain an understanding of someone's sense of self.

The centrality of place in human experience is captured in the Heideggerian concept of *Dasein* (Being-there), which distils relationships to place to a fundamental, irreducible essence by defining human existence as "Being-in-the-world." The "world," in this context, is understood as the web of relationships between self and "other," including the physical environment. "Dasein is never 'proximally' an entity," writes Heidegger, "which is, so to speak, free from Being-in, but which sometimes has the inclination to take up a 'relationship' toward the world. Taking up relationships towards the world is possible only *because* Dasein, as Being-in-the-world, is as it is" (84; original italics). The significance of place, therefore, according to social geographer Edward Relph, who takes Heidegger's concept as the phenomenological basis of his study on *Place and Placelessness* (1976), does not derive from "location." Instead, it comes from the

> largely unselfconscious intentionality that defines places as profound centres of human existence. There is for virtually everyone a deep association with and consciousness of the places where we were born and grew up, where we live now, or where we have had particular moving experiences. This association seems to constitute a vital source of both individual and cultural identity and security, a point of departure from which we orient ourselves in the world. (43)

Relph's observation emphasizes the role of place, and of our attachments to place, in the process of personal orientation. It suggests that identity is located in the relationships between the self and its surroundings, and that the self is defined (or defines itself) through its responses to the ground of its existence. J. Gerald Kennedy, in considering the implications of Relph's comments in his own study on place, self, and writing, *Imagining Paris: Exile, Writing, and American Identity* (1993), concludes,

> [t]his process of orientation, of situating ourselves in space and coming to know the surrounding environment, seems indispensable to the recognition of the self as a self. The elements of place to which we are most responsive (consciously or unconsciously) comprise the physical signs of our deepest intentions and desires. [...W]e find or know ourselves principally through the attachments we form to a place. (8)

Places, their material and immaterial features, provide the parameters through which we orient, locate, and define ourselves, just as places encourage or impede particular responses of the self through the opportunities they present or lack.

The understanding that our relationships with place inform our self-concept also provides insights into the disruptive consequences of relocation, expatriation, and exile –

all experiences which highlight the differences between familiar and alien surroundings and which both arise from and result in the perspective of displacement. Lloyd S. Kramer has commented that the situation of exile produces a heightened consciousness of the physical and social environment. Significantly, "the experience," he continues, "of living among alien people, languages, and institutions can alter the individual's sense of self [...causing] important changes in self-perception and consciousness" (9). Expatriation removes the conditions for self-definition that familiar surroundings provide and brings about a reassessment of the relation between self and place. For this reason, Kennedy argues for "the singular importance of expatriate writings for a study of place. [...A]mong all the forms of prose discourse, narratives of exile (including novels, short stories, autobiographies, and diaries) seem most likely to incorporate reflections on the problem of place and the relation of place to writing" (25). Such literature is often intensely preoccupied both with place and with the self that emerges as a result of its exposure to new surroundings. It reveals the "crisis of the displaced self":

> In the difference between the immediate scene of exile, the "unreal" site of expatriation [...], and those real, remembered scenes of homeland, one confronts the anxiety of the ungrounded self. No mere homesickness, this condition exposes a radical uncertainty about one's relation to "home" and to the self one has been. [...] The experience of exile reveals a different, foreign self while disclosing the stranger whom one no longer resembles. (J.G. Kennedy 27-28)

Following a winter visit from her residence in Toronto to Niagara Falls Anna Jameson records her feelings of precisely such a "radical uncertainty" regarding her own changed self-identity. The excursion, although greatly anticipated by her, proves disappointing:

"[T]hese Cataracts," she writes, "[...] have thundered in my mind's ear ever since I can remember – [...they] have been my 'childhood's thought, my youth's desire,' since first my imagination was awakened to wonder and to wish." Yet the actual sight of the falls is less than the sublime experience she had expected and instead leaves her feeling numb. "I have no words for my disappointment," she confesses, unable to accept that descriptions of the Falls may have been exaggerated: "No! it must be my own fault." Yet if it is her "own fault," her sensitivities, she herself, must be changed: "What," she muses anxiously, "has come over my soul and senses? – I am no longer Anna – I am metamorphosed – I am translated – I am an ass's head, a clod, a wooden spoon, a fat weed growing on Lethe's bank, a stock, a stone, a petrifaction" (57). To say that place here falls short of providing a source of identification is an understatement. Instead, the experience throws into sharp focus Jameson's inability to respond to her surroundings, leaving her with the unsettling feeling of no longer recognizing herself.

In effect, Jameson and the Falls are "in different modes of being," as Helen Buss observes ("Epistolary Dijournal" 50), and these modes exclude each other. Relph demonstrates how the identity of a place, and the extent of one's identification with it, derive from three basic and interwoven elements: physical appearance, activities and functions, and meanings and symbols (47-50). He further points out, however, that – because even such a seemingly neutral quality as "appearance" is filtered through individual perception and is therefore hardly objective – place ties are defined not by the elements he lists but rather by the experience of "insideness" or "outsideness": accordingly, the most fundamental form of insideness, "[e]xistential insideness characterises belonging to a place and the deep and complete identity [identification] with

a place that is the very foundation of the place concept" (55). Existential insideness implies an "authenticity" of experience which, in turn, "refers to a mode of being, *Dasein*" (64; original italics). Similarly, human geographer Yi-Fu Tuan terms the same concept "rootedness," which implies security, belonging, and a close fit with place (4). "Existential outsideness," by contrast, "involves a selfconscious and reflective uninvolvement, an alienation from people and places, [...] a sense of [...] not belonging" (Relph 51). Jameson's response to the actual sight of the Falls is evidence of just such a sense of exclusion: "All the associations which in imagination I had gathered around the scene, [...], were all diminished in effect, or wholly lost. / I was quite silent – my very soul sank within me" (59). Her position indicates an uncomfortable "awareness of meanings withheld" (Relph 51), which is equally an awareness of not belonging. Place – or more precisely, placement – thereby becomes problematic.

The "ground" of Jameson's isolation and outsideness – to pun on the conjunction between place and reason – is found in a rupture between the self and its environment, which defines "place *as problem*." Jameson's positioning vis-à-vis Canada in the *Winter Studies* part of her account is informed by a condition that Una Chaudhuri, in her study of the politics and poetics of place, calls "geopathology": a painful "disorder," it is "the suffering caused by one's location" (55, 58; original italics).[3] Jameson's dis-ease with Canada focuses on one primary complaint from which a variety of symptoms flow: the climate. The colony's extreme weather conditions seem to have affected both Anna's mood and her perception of her environment, and they frequently register as a blurring of

[3] Chaudhuri's *Staging Place: The Geography of Modern Drama* (1995) is concerned with the experience of place in accounts of identity in the theatre. Chaudhuri's premise extends readily from plays to a discussion of autobiographical practices because of autobiography's spatialization of time, as I suggested in my preface.

the two. Again and again she comments on the low temperatures, calling herself "miserable *inwardly and outwardly*, – [as] the thermometer is twelve degrees below zero!" (17; italics added). The climate is severe enough to interfere with her writing, and it makes everyday life uncomfortable, a circumstance that demonstrates the important role of place in the day-to-day construction of self. Jameson's journal entry for January 16 [1837], for instance, reads as follows: "The cold is at this time so intense, that the ink freezes while I write, and my fingers stiffen round the pen; a glass of water by my bed-side, within a few feet of the hearth, (heaped with logs of oak and maple kept burning all night long,) is a solid mass of ice in the morning" (29). Repeatedly she links the cold explicitly to her frame of mind – "my spirits are wearied, and my fingers are frozen" – illustrating the influence of meteorological conditions on the self-concept as a result of the experience of place (100). The climate of a place is understood as contributing to its identity by being "nested" in it and by "not only constitut[ing] objectively a place but also subjectively influenc[ing] the way we experience and remember a place" (Knez 209). The usability of a place, for instance, can vary (even dramatically) as a function of its climate, as it does in Jameson's case: Toronto's climate effectively prevents her from leaving the house and thus from engaging with the physical environment.

Anna's repeated references to the low temperatures highlight a relationship with Toronto in which the town's weather conditions control her will and sense of self. First and foremost, the climate is the root cause for what Jameson considers her greatest suffering in the colony: her utter and complete inactivity. The cold literally leads to her inability "to stir herself" (my term), inasmuch as the "relentless winter seems to stiffen and contract every nerve, and the frost is of such fierceness and intensity, that it penetrates

even to the marrow of one's bone" (102). Such slackening of interest and sensitivities relates to a reduced investment of the self in its environment: Jameson figures herself as on the "outside" of the ground of her being, even as she is physically shut up inside.

The psychological effects of her confinement become manifest in a conspicuous physical symptom: Anna suffers from the "ague," a feverish prostration of body and mind, which does not usually strike in the winter; this temporal dislocation in itself emphasizes Jameson's position of "outsideness":

> [A]t intervals I am burned up with a dry hot fever: this is what my maid, a good little Oxfordshire girl, calls the *hager*, (the ague,) more properly the lake fever, or cold fever. From the particular situation of Toronto, the disorder is very prevalent here in the spring: being a stranger, and not yet *acclimatée*, it has attacked me thus unseasonably. (29; original italics)

The disease reinforces, through its physical incapacitation of her, the suffering imposed by inactivity: "Another fit of illness and fever of four days duration happily over; but it has left me more good-for-nothing than ever – more dejected and weak." The somatic "good-for-nothing" condition, which harbours a general lack of occupation on Jameson's part, present in the painful circumstance of "idle days and useless days" (33), no more than disguises, however, the underlying psychic cause: Anna's schizophrenia ("I am an ass's head, a clod, a wooden spoon, a fat weed growing on Lethe's bank, a stock, a stone, a petrifaction") may be viewed as "an intensification of the alienation inherent in the condition of idleness" imposed upon her by ill-placement. As such, it is a form of the "madness" that is an "amplification" of the confinement and inactivity "enforced on the bourgeois female at this time," that is to say in the nineteenth century (Mills et al. 218).

For Jameson, who throughout her life was not just active and busy but also acutely interested in the position of women, enforced idleness is not just strange but a "torture." "What life is this!," she complains bitterly:

> To me it is something new, for I have never yet been *ennuyée to death* – except in fiction [a reference to Jameson's first novel, *Diary of an Ennuyée*, in which the heroine perishes]. It is like the old-fashioned torture patronised by that amiable person, Queen Elizabeth, when a certain weight was placed on the bosom of the criminal, and increased gradually till the life and the heart were crushed together. (33-34; original italics)

Prison tropes, such as Jameson's implicit construction of herself as a criminal being tortured to death, are characteristic, according to Chaudhuri, of the condition of geopathology. A "reified notion of place as fate," she postulates, exerts a "powerful and paralyzing" influence and transforms place into prison (56). In this metaphorized form, place is devoid of all dynamism, a quality which, not coincidentally, prison also "signally lacks" (274, n.4). The static nature of Jameson's "imprisonment" translates logically into further paralysis, accompanied by shame (a feeling motivated by concerns about how she will appear to her beloved addressee): "If it were not for this journalising, I should fall into a lethargy – as it is, I could envy a marmot or a dormouse; and if it were not for my promise to you, I should even abandon this noting of daily nothings, of which I begin to be thoroughly ashamed" (102). Jameson's modest activity of journalizing thus is supported not by an outside link with her immediate environment but with a far-away correspondent, underlining her separate state in Toronto. Occasionally even her epistolary record-keeping nearly fails Anna: "I lose all heart to write home," she confesses, "or to

register a reflection or a feeling; – thought stagnates in my head" (29). Jameson's mental numbness is the equivalent of the "stagnation" outside, a state in which all energy and vitality are suspended by the cold.

The climate is also linked to another source of her discontent with place, namely that "[t]here is no *society* in Toronto." Instead, she assesses Toronto as a

> fourth or fifth rate provincial town, with the pretensions of a capital city. We have here a petty colonial oligarchy, a self-constituted aristocracy, based upon nothing real, nor even upon anything imaginary; and we have all the mutual jealousy and fear, and petty gossip, and mutual meddling and mean rivalship, which are common in a small society [...]. (65; original italics)

Jameson's first encounter with the residents of the town is remarkably unsuccessful. "Some [callers]," she reports about people making their introductions to her, "on being ushered into the room, bowed, sat down, and after the lapse of two minutes, rose and bowed themselves out of the room again without uttering a syllable: all were too much in a hurry and apparently far too cold to converse" (24).

It furthermore appears that climatic conditions make not just the physical space but also the social terrain inaccessible, as Jameson is unable to break through her exclusion:

> [I cannot], while imprisoned by this relentless climate, seek the companionship and sympathy which stand aloof [...]. I wished to throw open my house in the evening, and break or thaw the social frost around me; but such a novel and unheard of idea would startle all the inhabitants from their propriety. (102-103)

Anna's rendering of the Toronto social scene in meteorological terms underlines not just the effect of the "frost," whether "social" or otherwise, on her, but also her blurring of

"outside" and "inside" and the extent to which the former (place) and the latter (here, self-identity) are mutually constitutive. Both material and immaterial features – the town's appearance and climate as well as its social context – determine Jameson's perceptions of herself as "imprisoned" and guide her corresponding inaction.

What is more, the passage cited above illustrates that the customs and habits associated with one place do not necessarily travel to another location. Jameson is only too acutely aware that Toronto's social scene cannot compare with the *milieu* she had to leave behind. In the colony, she comments, "we must necessarily hear, see, and passively endure much that annoys and disgusts any one accustomed to the independence of a large and liberal society, or the ease of continental life" (65). The problem is not a want of cultivation or polish, Jameson writes, but rather a lack of "honesty": "never did I hear so little truth, nor find so little mutual benevolence. [...] Is there no one who will bring a few grains of truth to Toronto?" (69-70). The observation points to a difference in social values and expectations, a discrepancy that inevitably registers as a form of dislocation: there is "no place" in Toronto society for Anna Jameson. Her sense of exclusion translates into a striking symbol: upon learning that, when land is cleared, individual trees "left standing, when deprived of the shelter and society to which they have been accustomed, uniformly perish," Jameson reflects that she finds this consequence "for mine own poor part, [...] very natural" (64). In her identification with the doomed and dying trees Anna exposes her own uncertainty and vulnerability about the place where such a fate can strike. By articulating her own sense of isolation and displacement through a recognizable sign of place, Jameson metaphorizes her alienation from Canada in solitary clusters of trees.

Yet if Anna's trope of a frozen social milieu represents the incompatibility of values between her own and those she finds in the colony, her expressions of interest in the colony's affairs – signalling a certain investment of self, as I suggested earlier – and her willingness to offer observations for improvement are far from welcome. When she proposes a scheme, for instance, to print cheaply and circulate with the newspapers a report to benefit the poorer classes, her ideas are rejected despite her hopes for a favourable reception:

> [C]old water was thrown upon me from every side – my interference in any way was so visibly distasteful, that I gave my project up with many a sigh, and I am afraid I shall always regret this. True, I am yet a stranger, helpless as to means, and *feeling* my way in a social system of which I know little or nothing; – perhaps I might have done more mischief than good – who knows? and Truth is sure to prevail at last; but Truth seems to find so much difficulty in crossing the Atlantic, that one would think she was "like the poor cat i' the adage," afraid of wetting her feet. (32; original italics)

Although Jameson here questions her right, as it were, to interfere in the "social system," she is also adamant that she abandons the project against her better judgment. In this withdrawal, she is forced to give up some of her beliefs and integrity ("I am afraid I shall always regret this"). What is more, the expatriate has an unusual vantage point that is produced through contrasting old and new surroundings. While this implicit comparison may foreground the "problem of place," in Chaudhuri's terminology (55), it also enables the immigrant to observe features of life in the foreign country which might escape the notice of longer-term residents (J.G. Kennedy 28). "Distance lends perspective," observes

Andrew Gurr (in *Writers in Exile* [1981]), "though not enchantment to the exile" (17). Jameson's perspective and observations, however, are dismissed. She does not easily cope with being "frozen out," socially (and climatically) speaking:

> [S]ome time or other [...] this long winter's imprisonment will be at an end. Yes; I have been spoiled during these last years – I have been existing only for, and by, the highest faculties of my being – have lived through admiration, hope, and love, "until aversion and contempt were things I only knew by name;" and now another time is come – how ill; how very ill I bear it! (150)

The symptoms of Jameson's dis-ease with Canada expose the gap between herself and her surroundings in the many instances in which the environment is at variance with her sense of herself. "[G]eopathology," observes Chaudhuri, "reveals life to be a matter of discrepancy between persons and places" (56).

This "discrepancy" is articulated in a telling passage in *Winter Studies*, in which the autobiographer's attempt to displace her own sense of unease with place to another creature barely disguises the raw sense of exclusion underlying the effort. Jameson writes that the cold and grey of winter blur the physical features of the landscape and diminish perception, making

> at present all objects wear one hue. Land is not distinguishable from water. I see nothing but snow heaped up against my windows, *not only without but within*; I hear no sound but the tinkling of sleigh-bells and the occasional lowing of a poor-half-starved cow, that, standing up to the knees in a snow-drift, presents herself at the door of a wretched little shanty opposite, and supplicates for her small modicum of hay. (21; italics added)

Jameson's insistent blurring of "without" and "within" as well as her unstated but implicit identification with the neglected cow are prime indicators of the profound psychological effect on her of the town's (seasonal) character. The coldness of the landscape and frozen sensation become one: "I find it more than ever difficult to keep myself warm. Nothing in myself or around me feels or looks like *home*" (147; original italics).

"Home" is of course the concept at the centre of notions of belonging (not just for Jameson but for all of us), and expatriate women's writing, as I will demonstrate in this study, is often as concerned with re-establishing a home as with reconstructing the self. The term connotes not just four walls of one's own but more so all the comfortable associations of security, stability, and protection, as well as of one's harmonious integration into one or more communities (from family to nation). Home, in a real sense, is an extension of self.[4] Traditionally conceived, the notion of "home" ties together paradigms of place and identity. Jameson's repeated construction of the outside cold encroaching upon the inside space of her residence, by contrast, suggests a lack of protective enclosure and precisely the instability she experiences in psychological terms: the house with snow drifts apparently "not only without but within" is no more clearly defined than Jameson's shifting sense of self. "Home," in *Winter Studies*, is a figure of displacement and uncertainty that imposes confinement without offering protection and a "base" for identity.

[4] Psychological theorists regard the home "as self." The basis for this merging of concepts lies in the observed appropriation of space, both physical and psychological, through which the "feeling of belonging is engendered by acting in a place." To illustrate the veracity of their theorizing, researchers cite as an example home burglary, which is perceived as a "violation of self" (Twigger-Ross et al. 221). A burglar's going through one's private things and touching one's personal objects are assessed as representing an assault on one's self-identity, as this act gives the burglar, a stranger, "intimate and unreciprocated knowledge" about individual (and family) identity, knowledge that is usually only provided to kin and close friends (Brown and Perkins 286).

For Jameson, the need to escape from such a place of "imprisonment" through a link to her former self and former home finally becomes "mandatory for survival" (Friewald 68). When she is at her lowest point, calling herself a "bird" that "flutter[s] itself to death, [...] in an exhausted receiver," she realizes that to end her idleness is the first step toward ending her suffering, and activity consequently provides the means to re-establish some sense of grounding: "I *must* rouse myself to occupation"; "I must look around for something to try my strength, – and force and fix my attention. To use Lord Byron's phrase, I must get 'a file for the serpent.'" In the very next entry Anna announces that she has found just such a "file": with a sense of both relief and triumph she declares, "I shall take to translating" (29, 103; original italics).

The means, therefore, by which Jameson is able to break free from the pattern of idleness and inactivity which place has imposed upon her, are ones not of discovery – such as one might perhaps expect – but of *recovery*. She does not yet venture forth to explore Canada. Instead, by translating Johann Eckermann's then still unpublished *Gespräche mit Goethe* (*Conservations with Goethe)*, and by studying other German texts including dramas by Goethe, Schiller, and Grillparzer, Anna succeeds in locating herself on "home ground," the ground of her past experience in Germany, and particularly the common terrain with the Goethe family. This activity, which becomes Jameson's "therapy" (Thomas, "Afterword" 546), enables her to recover certain aspects of her identity that are bound up with the familiar *terra firma* of Germany and with her personal history with Ottilie. The German material takes her out of the "unknown desolation" of the Canadian environment (Needler 51), in which she has been "translated," as she says, and made a stranger even to herself. It allows her instead to take "refuge in another and a

higher world," a world in which she is at home, and in which she still recognizes herself as the successful and respected writer, critic, and thinker in remembered conversation with like-minded friends (Jameson 76).[5]

The remarkable – and transgressive – step of including studies and translations of German texts in a memoir of life in Canada turns *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles* into an eloquent document of female self-definition under difficult circumstances: that the material is not immediately "relevant" has frequently been noted by critics.[6] As a narrative strategy of self-definition, however, it is brilliant, because it enables Jameson to surmount her limiting environment, to transcend time and space, and to create a radically self-reliant vision. It helps to erase the differences between her old and new environments and creates a form of continuity between the two which promotes the necessary process of accommodation (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell 207). Jameson's studies figuratively transport her to familiar places and provide a critical link with her past experience and former self: "A word, a name, has sent me from Toronto to Vienna; what a flight! what a contrast!," she exclaims when reading Müllner's *Die Schuld.* The work reminds her of a performance she saw on the Vienna stage, and she proceeds to indulge in a personal reminiscence of an acquaintance who portrayed a character in the play (39).[7]

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[5] Marian Fowler regards Jameson's mental excursions, in which she recounts conversations with European greats from Tieck and Schlegel to Felix Mendelssohn and Prince Metternich, as "constant name-dropping" to assure "herself of her own importance" (153).

[6] Reviewers, editors, and critics alike have found Jameson's inclusion of her reflections and translated passages puzzling, and various editions of *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles* over the years have contained no German material whatsoever. The contemporary reviewer in the *Spectator*, for example, saw "no necessity [...] for [...] criticisms on German authors" in a travel book about Canada ("Mrs. Jameson's Winter Studies," 1166). A more recent analysis of Jameson's text by Wendy Roy in *Maps of Difference: Canada, Women, and Travel* (2005), equally focuses on the summer portion of the narrative, which engages more fully with Canada.

[7] Vienna may well have had particular significance for Jameson because of a difficult but intensely personal period spent in that city when Ottilie had discreetly withdrawn there while expecting the birth of an illegitimate child; Jameson had provided assistance and support.

Jameson's German studies and translations allow her, in particular, to transform her earlier, painful inactivity and passivity into agency. A few brief examples will illustrate how this regained agency is carried as a narrative strategy into the text: in Eckermann, Jameson discovers advice which he reports having received from Goethe, to "[h]old fast to the PRESENT. Every position, (zustand,) every moment of life, is of unspeakable value as the representative of a whole eternity" (112, original capitals). Jameson's translation of the German "Zustand"[8] as "position" is revealing: the German implies a certain passivity or stasis more properly rendered by the English "state (of being)," "condition," or "situation." Although the English term "position" does not exclude the meaning supplied by Jameson (as in "to find oneself in a certain position"), it nevertheless expresses a greater range of agency that the German word does not offer (for instance, "to assume or take a position"). While the difference is subtle, Jameson's choice arguably reveals her characteristic preference, throughout her life, for agency and her disinclination to continue in the passive mode the Canadian winter environment had previously imposed.

As well, Jameson deliberately appropriates translation for intensely self-authorizing purposes by embedding translated passages into her account. Her frequent insertions, as in the quotation above, of the original German words in her translated paragraphs represent a translation practice best described as whimsical: translators are usually expected to be invisible in their work,[9] while Jameson's approach draws attention both to the act of translating and paradoxically also to her assumption of authority. By using bits and pieces from different texts, all entirely according to her own choice, taste,

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[8] The German noun should be capitalized. Jameson is not careful about observing this rule.
[9] See, for example, Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (2005).

and needs, she makes the material hers. The textual authority is Jameson's, her persona made all the more authoritative by her discussion of some of the most profound thinkers of Europe. On occasion it is difficult to distinguish the purloined material from what appear to be Jameson's own editorial comments, as in the following passage, again from Eckermann's *Conversations*: "After some other things, Goethe goes on to say, that he thinks a knowledge of the universe must be *innate* with some poets. (It seems to have been so with Shakespeare.) He says he wrote 'Götz von Berlichingen' when he was a young and inexperienced man of two-and-twenty. 'Ten years later,' he adds, 'I stood astonished at the truth of my own delineation'" (115, original italics). It is not immediately clear whether the remark in parentheses is Jameson's opinion or a paraphrase from Eckermann. The overall effect of Jameson's writing in *Winter Studies*, through its deliberate fusion of text fragments that are meaningful to her with her own observations, is one of almost defiant self-authorization.

In addition, through her choice of form Jameson calls into being a virtual sisterhood that stands in for the disappointing actual community. The epistolary mode is ideally suited to "the desire for exchange" by suggesting values of reciprocity and alterity (Altman 89). What is more, the familiar "you" in letters creates a "special intimacy" by "opening itself to the reader as well as to the addressee" (Mills et al. 69). Beginning from Anna's address to a sympathetic "other," to her dedication of her book "more particularly [...] to my own sex," and including her many expressions of concern with and interest in the status of women in the colony, Jameson's epistolary journal establishes a deep connection with the "good women" she seeks as her readers (Jameson 10). As such, it "meets several psychic needs" that result from her position of separateness in Toronto

(Buss, "Epistolary Dijournal" 44), specifically the need for female companionship. Through her epistolary journal Jameson creates "a feminocentric discursive universe in which narrator, narratee and narrated are all significantly female and woman-oriented" (Friewald, "Femininely Speaking" 62). Immersion in this separate female world enables a form of "dialogue" with Ottilie and her larger audience of women readers (Buss, "Epistolary" 44). It engenders both a distinct type of narrativity and a way of articulating a continuous sense of self through the female ties that had always been of prime importance to Anna, as her friendships and the gist of her *oeuvre* indicate. Theories of women's autobiography frequently proceed from just such a concept of women's "relationality,"[10] which sees women representing themselves through significant relationships, often with "a woman or women who provide the other of identity" (Mason 43).

The notion of "relationality," as Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson comment in *Women, Autobiography, Theory: A Reader* (1998), has had "long-term implications for theorizing female subjectivity in autobiography" (17). It is based in the psychoanalytic theory of women's identity proposed by Nancy Chodorow in *The Reproduction of Mothering* (1978). Chodorow re-examines from a feminist perspective the differentiating process of ego development before the oedipal stage described by Sigmund Freud. She argues that mothers, as a result of their own sex, that is to say because they themselves are women, identify differently with their male and female children. Mothers, according to Chodorow's theorizing, "tend to experience their daughters as more like, and continuous with, themselves," thereby confounding for their daughters the process of individuation. Correspondingly, "growing girls come to define themselves as continuous with others;

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[10] See, for example, Mary Mason, Susan Stanford Friedman, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, and Canadian theorist Helen M. Buss.

their experience of self contains more flexible or permeable ego boundaries." From this observation Chodorow concludes that "feminine personality comes to include a fundamental definition of self in relationship" (166-69). As a result, women tend to create and maintain "important personal relations with other women," through which they resolve and recreate the important mother-daughter bond and which "are an expression of women's general relational capacities and definition of self in relationship" (200). In commenting on Chodorow's theoretical model, Susan Stanford Friedman observes that "women often explore their sense of shared identity with other women," in an effort to find their identity through feminine socialization rather than through the detachment and separation more commonly found in the autobiographies of men ("Women's Autobiographical Selves" 44).[11]

Jameson's journal suggests that expatriation may interfere with women's need to define themselves through female relationships. In the *Winter Studies* portion of her account, Anna turns to imaginative bonds with her own sex in order to fill the void created by her relocation to Toronto. Historically, pioneer women suffered perhaps all the more in this regard because the circumstances of emigration were imposed upon them, as I suggested earlier, but they nevertheless had to cope with the implications of the loss of family and friends and of confronting isolation in alien surroundings. Jameson, for one, travelled to Canada at her estranged husband's request, as she clarifies early in her account: "Heaven knows I did not *choose* it" (17; original italics). For women like her, who had "little choice" but to comply with their husbands' decisions (Thomas, "Afterword" 544), expatriation represented a form of "double displacement." Helen Buss

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[11] See, for example, Georges Gusdorf, "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography" (1956), for an influential individualistic model of the self.

also points out that because of women's role in patriarchal society, settler women writers found it necessary to deal with aspects of place that might have shed a negative light on their husbands (for instance women's workloads) in indirect ways (*Mapping* 51-52). Jameson gets around this difficulty by voicing her discomfort with place explicitly to a female readership: "By addressing herself to an intimate friend and to 'good women' she is able to speak openly about herself and her life" (Buss, "Epistolary" 53). This "woman-oriented" self-disclosure helps to ease the symptoms of her geopathic dis-ease ("If it were not for this journalising, I should fall into a lethargy"), and, again, it also creates a form of continuity between past and present. Jameson's imagined world of others – Ottilie and her readership – stands in for the female ties she had been able to enjoy in the past, before coming to Canada.

Neither Jameson's mental excursions nor her virtual sisterhood, however, are able to alter the tedium of the Canadian climate. Her inability to come to terms with the winter indicates a diminished sense of "self-efficacy" (in the language of psychological theorists), which is defined as someone's "belief in [her] capabilities to meet situational demands. It is used as a measure of personal agency" in relation to place, ensuring (or at least not impeding) daily functioning in one's environment (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell 208). Jameson, as I suggested earlier, is paralyzed into inactivity by the "imprisonment" of winter. Her ability to function in her surroundings is enormously diminished. In *Winter Studies* Canada's climate is an insuperable barrier that prevents Anna from acquainting herself with the country and that is in large measure responsible for her altered sense of self. She cannot foresee resuming any outdoor activity unless the seasons change: "Let but

the spring come again, and I will take to myself wings and fly off to the west! – But will spring *ever* come?" (102, original italics).

Only when the "relentless iron winter" ends does Anna begin to interact with her surroundings (180).[12] The "resurrection of Nature" she records in her journal paves the way for a now vigorous engagement with place (163): she plans and implements an ambitious and adventurous journey west and north to see the "great characteristic features" of the country (181), a project so unusual for an unaccompanied woman to pursue that it excites a fair bit of interest and not a little "kind solicitude" among Toronto society (193). Few "women travellers – and none who had travelled alone – had undertaken [such a] 'wild expedition,' and Anna was justifiably proud of it" (Thomas, "Afterword" 547). For Jameson, the warm weather engenders an altogether different attitude towards her surroundings, one which sees her identifying with and internalizing the character of the landscape: "This beautiful Lake Ontario! – my lake – for I begin to be in love with it, and look on it as mine!," she writes (163), and further, "the expanse of this lake has become to me like the face of a friend. I have all its various *expressions* by heart" (179; original italics). It is worth noting the extraordinary conceptual breakthrough this last passage illustrates. Not only is the formerly "grey" and "sullen" lake now "like the face of a friend," but Jameson has effectively brought place into her own discourse and made it a part of herself (in the final assertion, "I have [it] by heart").[13] During her

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[12] Jameson's biographer Clara Thomas notes that by this time Anna's husband had achieved his promotion and Anna felt that her restrained behaviour had helped in this regard. In addition, she continued to feel that she and Robert were not compatible and she was, therefore, considering leaving Canada again at summer's end (*Love and Work* 113-15). The prospect may also have given her a boost.

[13] Jameson's earlier insistence on defining herself as a prisoner of the climate, however, casts some doubts on the longer-term durability of this turnaround. Throughout the entire winter section her sense of herself is so substantially altered that, had she stayed in Canada, the pattern of perceived exclusion from place and self-imposed confinement would perhaps have been repeated. Discussing the text's dramatic separation between winter studies and summer rambles, Marian Fowler suggests in *The Embroidered Tent* that, "[i]n

summer journey, "[o]nce she [is] on the road she [is] a different person from the Anna, frost-bound in body and spirit, who was the centre-stage heroine of 'Winter Studies'" (Thomas, "Afterword" 547).

In addition to the now warm and pleasant weather, two further factors combine to transform Jameson's perceptions both of Canada and of her relations with it: first, she leaves behind Toronto – of which she says in parting, "I had not been happy enough in [it] to regret it as a place" (195) – propelled by the firm intention to get to know the Native population in whom she had long been interested. By taking to the road, Anna replaces confinement with movement, a step that, in view of women's traditional association with domestic environments, is liberating in itself.[14] And second, "seek[ing] more positive relationships that will connect her to the country" (Buss, "Garrison Mentality" 129), Jameson develops intimate bonds with two unusual women: Mrs. McMurray and Mrs. Schoolcraft are able, as a result of their mixed-blood heritage, to mediate Anna's entry into the native world she has been keen to discover, while introducing her "to a non-European way of female life" (Korte 122). The two women and their mother, Mrs. Johnston, a full-blooded Chippewa, whom she also meets, "share some of her feeling of the internalization of the landscape" and help complete Jameson's radically altered experience of place (Buss, "Epistolary" 49).

Anna's immersion in native life, under the guidance of her female friends, precipitates a new understanding of her surroundings and herself. For one, her careful

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using the seasons as a structural device, Anna aligns herself with all the Canadian novelists who have put Canada's extreme climatic contrasts to good literary use." Although my own conclusion is that this approach imposes itself on Jameson, rather than that she sets out to organize her text deliberately in this way, I agree with Fowler that "the device of season-as-structure not only suggests dramatic personal changes, but also the close correlation of life choices with the climate and natural environment" (158).

[14] See Karen Lawrence's study, *Penelope Voyages: Women and Travel in the British Literary Tradition* (1994).

observations of the culture and customs of those she calls "my Indians" (512) – a phrase I read as articulating identification rather than proprietorship – lead to "her most overt and confident feminist statement of the text" (Buss, "Epistolary" 57): analyzing the relationship between men and women in Indian society, Jameson finds that "however hard the lot of woman, she is in no *false* position. The two sexes are in their natural and true position relatively to the state of society, and the means of subsistence" (515; original italics). For someone as intensely and tirelessly concerned as Jameson with the role and lot of women, this must have been a gratifying insight indeed, and one bearing out her desire to come to know native culture. Most importantly, it leads her to a more explicit, political stance vis-à-vis women's position in society: "it was her Canadian experience which made Anna a feminist, publically, not just privately committed, from that point on, to bettering the status of women" (Fowler 171). In addition, Indian beliefs offer a way of seeing the environment that invests it with symbolism and meaning. "[T]he Indians," Anna observes, "spiritualise all nature. [...E]very tree has a spirit; every rock, every river, every star that glistens, every wind that breathes, has a spirit" (426). What is more, "everything animate is spirit, and destined to immortality. According to the Indians, [...] nothing dies, nothing is destroyed; what we look upon as death and destruction is only transition and change" (421).

Whether she was more affected by the Indians' spiritualization of the world than she herself perhaps realized, or whether, at age forty-three, and after a desolate winter in a comfortless marriage and far from her intimate female friends, Anna herself was ready for a different conceptualization of the world and of her own *Dasein*, her engagement with the natural environment takes on an increasingly spiritual character. Specifically, she

discovers a maternal quality in the features of the landscape that voids all differentiation between self and (m)other and instead brings about a merging of self and place, "a breaking down of the barriers between [herself] and the land" (Buss, "Epistolary" 54). Soothed in addition by the "soft voice and [...] benign eyes, and [...] maternal anxieties" of Mrs. MacMurray, and delighted by the charms of her "sister woman" Mrs. Schoolcraft (Jameson 221, 378), Anna encounters the Canadian back country as "Mother Earth," as the "Great Mother" to whom she herself is the infant child.

The climax of this experience of place occurs on the journey by canoe, in the company of Mrs. Schoolcraft and her children, from Fort Mackinaw to Sault Ste. Marie. Jameson recalls floating at night under the "divine canopy" of stars (441):

> I remember lying awake for some minutes, looking up at the quiet stars, and around upon the dark weltering waters, and at the faint waning moon, just suspended on the very edge of the horizon. I saw it sink, sink into the bosom of the lake as if to rest [...]. It is odd that I did not think of praying for protection, and that no sense of fear came over me; it is as if the eye of God himself looked down upon me; that I *was* protected. I do not say I *thought* this any more than the unweaned child in the cradle; but I had some such feeling of unconscious trust and love [...]. (443; original italics)

Although the passage acknowledges "the reality of life within patriarchy" in the form of a male god in heaven (Buss, "Epistolary" 55), the natural environment itself, and Anna's relation to it, are described in distinctly female terms evocative of the Primal Good Mother. Erich Neumann distinguishes, in *The Great Mother: An Analysis of the Archetype* (1963), between two characters of the archetypal Feminine, namely the elementary and the

transformative (24). The transformative aspect – which Jameson will encounter shortly at the remotest point of her journey – drives towards motion, change, and transformation. The elementary, by contrast, is the aspect that contains, protects, and surrounds that which springs from it (29). As such, it is the nurturing aspect of the archetypal maternal, and it is this quality which is most evident in the passage cited above: The moon, herself a symbol of the Feminine and tied to women's cycles and reproductive capabilities, is resting in the "bosom" of the lake as a tired child might rest at the breast of her mother. Anna herself is so intensely "contained" (in Neumann's terminology) in her surroundings as to have no further need for protection. She is "cradled" in the maternal aspect of the environment around her – she is a part of it – much as a child is in the womb. Indeed, the cradle, as a representation of the vessel, the "central symbol" associated with the Feminine (39-49), stands in for the mother's womb.[15] And just like a daughter in her mother's womb, Jameson needs no language. Having re-entered a world of contiguity, one without rupture between self and other, she has no need to speak: being exists not as narrative but as context. Anna here is the "unweaned" child still safely within the nurturing environment of the maternal vessel and with no more than "unconscious" feelings of trust and love – feelings that spring from the lack of differentiation between herself and the maternal surrounding landscape. The unconscious, as Neumann remarks, is always experienced as maternal / feminine (148). Anna's presymbolic state, which evokes Julia Kristeva's notion of the *chora,* is a return to, and a finding herself in, the Great Mother she discovers in the Canadian bush. It is a specifically female form of "existential insideness." At the same

[15] According to Neumann, similar representations include the box, basket, and chest (49).

time, the experience marks a transcendence of self that echoes the Indians' belief in the cyclicality of life and that captures the ultimate goal of the autobiographical project.[16]

Jameson's re-entry into the maternal womb of Canada is soon followed by a meeting with an actual mother figure, one who will facilitate the completion of Anna's transformation and her rebirth with a Canadian identity. This figure is Mrs. Johnston, the mother of Jameson's friends Mrs. MacMurray and Mrs. Schoolcraft, who have been the mediators of her "wilderness" experience so far. Anna meets Mrs. Johnston (whose native name is O,shah,gush,ko,da,na,qua) at Sault Ste. Marie, the very end of her journey by canoe and also the fulcrum of her expedition, for after this she will return first to Toronto and then to England. Mrs. Johnston, "a woman of pure Indian blood," who presides over her large family, receives her "most affectionately" and treats her like a daughter. Anna records, "she took me in her arms, laid me down on a couch, and began to rub my feet, soothing and caressing me. She called me Nindannis, daughter, and I called her Neengai, mother" (454-55).

Her Neengai witnesses the birth of the Canadian Anna when Jameson encounters the transformative aspect of the Great Mother and, without "even a moment of fear," shoots the St. Mary's rapids in a canoe, an act that transposes the child's entry into the world through the gushing water of the birth canal into the context of the natural environment. The now metamorphosed, "Chippewa born" Anna is "declared duly initiated, and adopted into the family by the name of Wah,sàh,ge,wah,nó,quà. [...] It signifies *the bright foam*, or more properly with the feminine adjunct *qua, the woman of*

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[16] Marian Fowler reads Jameson's treatment as an eroticization of the wilderness, a view I do not share, because Jameson's use of maternal rather than sexual imagery by far prevails, including in the examples Fowler uses to support her claim (169-70). Helen Buss's feminist reading of the text, by contrast, discovers maternal images of "female plenitude," but she sees these as provoked more by Mrs. Schoolcraft than by the landscape ("Epistolary" 55-56).

the bright foam" (461-62; original italics). Jameson "could hardly have made her sense of rebirth clearer," and her "euphoric description" of the experience suggests perhaps "a particular readiness" on her part to engage with the maternal aspect of Canada (Korte 123). The feat, not before accomplished by a European woman, provides a telling parallel and contrast to her experience at Niagara Falls and marks the completion of Anna's journey of metamorphosis through her acquisition of her new Canadian selfhood.

In discussing Jameson's text Helen Buss observes that "the experience that students of autobiography find to be archetypal for women in search of a language of selfhood [is that] of reunion with the mother" ("Epistolary" 56). Following Nancy Chodorow's influential revisioning of Freudian myth in *The Reproduction of Mothering*, critics and theorists of women's autobiography have indeed explored the various manifestations of this archetypal drive.[17] Bella Brodzki, in particular, connects the woman autobiographer's relationship to language to the operation of the mother-daughter bond. She argues that the autobiographical impulse itself "pivots" on the figure of the mother. The mother is the child's "primary source of speech and love"; she "*engenders* subjectivity through language." The mother, in a conflation of language and relationship, is the "pre-text for the daughter's autobiographical project" (245-46; original italics). Expanding from Brodzki's theorizing, I suggest that, out of a compelling need to experience a sense of wholeness of self in place, expatriate women autobiographers seek to discover a maternal quality in their new surroundings. The desire for such a "matrix" extends the maternal pre-text to women's relationship with the land by framing this

[17] See, for example, Stephanie A. Demetrakopoulos, Kristi Siegel, Lynn Z. Bloom, Eleanor Ty, Helen M. Buss in *Mapping Our Selves*, Susan Stanford Friedman in "Women's Autobiographical Selves," as well as a section consisting of four essays on matrilinearism in *Life/Lines*, edited by Bella Brodzki and Celeste Schenck.

relationship with reference to the figure of the mother. Separated from their motherland, pioneer women autobiographers strive to locate the self on the maternal ground of their new places of existence. They seek to rediscover and reclaim, "to locate and recontextualize" (Brodzki 246), their sense of grounding in the maternal of their "foster-mothers," perhaps in order to overcome the "discrepancy" between self and place.

For Jameson, at any rate, the gap which she had so acutely registered in the winter appears to close completely during her summer expedition: the climate is no longer a negative factor; she finds the Chippewa "fascinating cultural studies" and rewarding company (Thomas, "Afterword" 547); she delights in the female companionship of her three Indian friends; and she manages the bush environment admirably well, as a telling comment made after her return from the expedition illustrates: "nine nights passed in the open air, or on rocks, and on boards, had spoiled me for the comforts of civilisation, and to sleep *on a bed* was impossible; I was smothered, I was suffocated, and altogether wretched and fevered; – I sighed for my rock on Lake Huron" (534-35; original italics). Jameson's narrative thus records the completion of a trajectory from painful "outsideness" to enchanting "insideness" and belonging. In tracing how the rupture of displacement may be healed, *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada* also demonstrates that for women, specifically, the experience of expatriation raises questions about the "humanist project of refashioning the self and the world" (Chaudhuri 56). Instead, Jameson's account of identity and place offers a "corrective to the humanist view of the autobiographical enterprise that proposes the formulation of the self as unique, unitary, and independent" (Buss, "Epistolary" 58). Jameson's narrative highlights the role in self-location of relationships with other women. First and foremost, it proposes a model that sees the crisis

of identity eased (and perhaps resolved) through intimate daughter-mother bonding with the land itself, bonding that engenders identification and thereby a sense of belonging. It is a model that will be developed in various ways by the women pioneers who are the subjects of the following chapters.

Chapter II

Mothering Canada:
Catharine Parr Traill's Transformative Vision in Her Major Canadian Works

In the final sketch, "Something Gathers up the Fragments," of Catharine Parr Traill's collection *Pearls and Pebbles*, a late publication issued in 1894 when Traill was in her ninety-third year, she vigorously argues for the imperative to comprehend the transformative character of all life. The piece, a natural history essay of "autobiographical quality" (E. Thompson, "Editor's Introduction" xiii),[1] describes a fallen forest tree being remade, as it were, fragment by fragment, through decomposition and decay, until it is utterly transformed into a different substance: the soil that can nourish future life. Traill leads her readers step by step to an understanding of the natural processes at work in the transformation, her narrative voice a blending of benign motherly guidance, instructive knowledge transmission, and the deeply felt urgency of religious belief which informs both of these qualities. Traill employs the same voice in all four of her major Canadian literary works: *The Backwoods of Canada* (1836), *Canadian Crusoes* (1852), *The Canadian Settler's Guide* (1855), and *Pearls and Pebbles* (1894).[2] Speaking as a maternal educator with unshakeable faith in Providential governance enables a self-location in Canada that is enviably unproblematic: it allows Traill to perceive and communicate a wholeness in life and her own experience of it, which fluidly contains such apparently opposite concepts as past and present, comfort and hardship, and belonging and exile. It

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[1] Thompson makes this comment about the entire book, not just the last sketch. She also says, "[all of the sketches] are autobiographical to some extent, taken from Traill's journals, and might well be discussed solely in that light" (xiv).

[2] In my selection of Traill's works I follow Carl Ballstadt's analysis of Traill's writing, in his essay "Catharine Parr Traill," in *Canadian Writers and Their Work*, Fiction series, vol. 1 (184). Ballstadt regards Traill's botanical studies as a separate category.

allows her to turn a story of failed pioneering into an account of New World potential and to spread the word of that potential. First and foremost, it allows her to feel "at home" in Canada, because in her sympathetic transformative vision Canada appears not so much as a raw and rough colony but as the figure of "the child" whose promising future she is concerned to help secure.

Catharine Parr Traill, neé Strickland, was born in 1802 and grew up in Suffolk, England, one of eight children (the second-youngest daughter) in a highly literary family. She was, according to her grand-niece Mary Agnes Fitzgibbon, the "idolized pet of the household," who "never saw a sorrowful day," and was her father's particular favourite (156). Thomas Strickland had achieved respectable wealth and social status as an importer and manager of the Greenland Docks near London. He encouraged wide reading and learning not only in his two sons, but also in his six daughters, five of whom would become published writers. Catharine's sisters Agnes and Elizabeth Strickland, in particular, went on to make their living as professional writers, authoring the highly successful series on *The Lives of the Queens of England* and other historical biographies. The family's circumstances were substantially reduced in 1818 after Thomas Strickland's death and following his loss of much of his wealth in guarantee for a business partner's transaction. After her father's decease, Catharine was the first among the Strickland sisters to publish and receive payment for one of her manuscripts.[3] "The possibility of supporting themselves now gave the Strickland sisters an additional reason for writing" (Schieder xxvi), and throughout the 1820s Catharine was indeed "a very active writer," building a

[3] It had long been assumed by critics and biographers alike that Catharine was, in fact, the first of the Strickland sisters to break into print. In the course of her research for *Sisters in the Wilderness*, however, Charlotte Gray discovered a poem by Agnes Strickland about Queen Charlotte's death, which was published in 1817, the year before Catharine's first publication (22).

name for herself as a successful children's author by publishing more than nine books[4] between the ages of sixteen and thirty (the year she emigrated to Canada) (Ballstadt, "Catharine" 151). These titles included *The Young Emigrants; or, Pictures of Canada. Calculated to Amuse and Instruct the Minds of Youth* (1826), and *Sketches from Nature; or, Hints to Juvenile Naturalists* (1830), indicating "interests that would be central to Catharine's most important later writing," as well as her "natural bent towards didactic fiction" (Schieder xxvii).[5] In 1832, following an earlier broken engagement to another man, Catharine married Thomas Traill, a friend and fellow officer of John Dunbar Moodie, her sister Susanna's husband. In July of the same year the Traills sailed from Greenock, Scotland, to Canada,[6] where they initially settled near Peterborough (near her brother Samuel Strickland). Plagued by poverty and struck by a series of disasters, such as the deaths of two children and the loss through fire of their home and nearly all their possessions, Catharine and Thomas lived at various locations, including in accommodations provided to them rent-free by friends. Thomas died in 1859, having struggled for years against his depression, and "[having] been out of place in Canada during his twenty-seven years in the colony" (Ballstadt, Hopkins, Peterman 28). After his death Catharine built "Westove" in the village of Lakefield, named after her late husband's ancestral seat in Scotland, where she lived until her death in 1899. "Throughout

[4] In their introduction to *Forest and Other Gleanings* Peterman and Ballstadt give that number as thirteen (4). Even with the bibliographic record somewhat unclear, it is evident that Traill worked industriously on her writing.

[5] Carl Ballstadt observes that *The Young Emigrants* demonstrates Traill's "awareness both of the exigencies of emigration and the suitability of letters as a device for settlement narrative" ("Catharine" 163).

[6] Traill's grand-niece Mary Agnes Fitzgibbon comments in her biographical sketch that Catharine's family was not happy about her marriage and emigration (164-65). Years later, Agnes Strickland still "lamented Catharine's choice of [Thomas] Traill" in letters to Susanna Moodie, "arguing that [Catharine] would have been better to wait for an old, eligible suitor and to have stayed in England" (Peterman and Ballstadt 19).

her long literary career," writes Carl Ballstadt, "she sustained her positive attitude towards Canada and towards life generally" ("Catharine" 180).

Traill's "positive attitude" has been a point of much commentary,[7] as critics from Ann Boutelle to D.M.R. Bentley have remarked on her optimism and cheerfulness in face of the many difficulties which beset her over the years. Summing up her ability "to extract the sweet rather than the bitter in the cup of life" (*Backwoods* 250), Michael Peterman observes, "[b]y inclination and choice [Traill] refused to dwell upon the 'dark side of the picture'" ("'Splendid Anachronism'" 179).[8] Contrary to this critical admiration, however, in late twentieth-century assessments Traill came under attack for the cheerful persona she projects, beginning with Northrop Frye's dismissal of her as "reminiscent of Miss Muffet" in his influential "Conclusion" to the *Literary History of Canada* (845). Similarly, Marian Fowler saw her as a "*hausfrau*" who withdrew into the domestic realm out of her fear of Canadian nature (81), and Gaile McGregor found fault with Traill's close-up attention to details. She accused her of "wish[ing] to dominate [the landscape] by *cutting nature down to size*. This is surely domestication par excellence," McGregor concluded (40; original italics). At the same time, however, efforts were made "to arrest this diminishment" of Traill and her writing (Peterman and Ballstadt 1), and throughout the 1990s new collections and scholarly editions of Traill's work appeared, including a CEECT edition of *Canadian Crusoes* (edited by Rupert Schieder) as well as an edition of *Pearls and Pebbles* (edited by Elizabeth Thompson), along with a selection of Traill's correspondence (edited by Carl Ballstadt, Elizabeth Hopkins, and Michael Peterman), and new critical

[7] Suzanne James notes in her detailed study of *The Backwoods of Canada* that Traill's "optimistic persona became the dominant feature" of critiques of the work after the mid-nineteenth century (41).
[8] See Boutelle, "Sisters and Survivors" (14), and Bentley, "'Cake of Custom'" (98). Also see, for example, Michael A. Peterman, "'Splendid Anachronism'" (179); Elizabeth Thompson, *Pioneer Woman* (39); and T.D. MacLulich, "Crusoe in the Backwoods?" (118).

assessments of her work. A recent (2003) doctoral dissertation by Suzanne James is devoted entirely to an analysis of *The Backwoods of Canada.* My own essay on Traill is positioned within this latter group of critiques as a sympathetic re-evaluation of the autobiographical work of a woman writer for whom I have gained great respect and admiration.

Among Traill's Canadian books here under consideration, *The Backwoods of Canada* (1836) is her account of life in the bush north of Peterborough in the early 1830s, based on only three years of experience.[9] There is, sadly, no evidence that Anna Jameson had read Traill's story before undertaking her own venture north in the summer of 1837, yet it is amusing to speculate that she would have admired Catharine's indomitable spirit. 11,000 copies of *Backwoods* were initially printed; the first edition[10] was "reissued at least eight times over the next twenty years," and there were even a German and a French translation (Peterman, "Editor's Introduction" xl-xli). Some critics have argued that *Backwoods* is "a foundation work of Canadian literature" (lvii) and that it holds a "special niche in the cultural history of [Canada]" (Bentley, "Afterword" 293), but the book has suffered from critical neglect, particularly when set alongside Susanna Moodie's *Roughing It in the Bush* (1852), with which *Backwoods* is frequently compared.[11]

Traill's other major Canadian works have similarly not received the attention they deserve: *Canadian Crusoes: A Tale of the Rice Lake Plains* (1852), although available as a CEECT scholarly edition, is assessed mainly as a "minor classic among Canadian

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[9] Peterman and Ballstadt call *Backwoods* a "hasty and overly optimistic 'take' on the life and prospects [Traill] found" (6). The reasons for her rapid work on this material were mainly economic; Catharine's husband, Thomas Traill, had taken on substantial debts in order to emigrate.

[10] This edition was published in Britain. The first Canadian edition did not appear until 1928, almost thirty years after Traill's death.

[11] See, for example, Gairdner, MacLulich, Clara Thomas ("The Strickland Sisters"), Whitlock, Boutelle, and Keith.

children's books" (Thomas, "Strickland Sisters" 64). I consider it here along with Traill's more openly autobiographical writing for two reasons: the story's heroine, Catharine Maxwell, is Traill's *alter ego*, her "fictional self-projection who bears not only the author's own Christian name, but also her particular spelling" (Gerson, "Nobler Savages" 15), and the book treats what Ballstadt has identified as the "most significant theme" in Traill's writing ("Catharine" 172 ff.) – that of the lost child – a theme in her texts which has barely been theorized and explored. *The Canadian Settler's Guide* (1855), originally published as *The Female Emigrant's Guide* (1854), is "at once a companion piece to [Traill's] *The Backwoods of Canada*, and an extension of it" (Thomas, "Introduction" ix). Like the latter, it is directed mainly at a female audience. Finally, *Pearls and Pebbles* (1894), which was originally called "Notes for Young Naturalists," was a "great success both in Canada and abroad" when it first appeared (Ballstadt, Hopkins, Peterman 267). Consisting of a mixture of early and late samples of Traill's writing, including sketches taken from her 1830s backwoods journals, the collection is concerned with some of the recurring themes of her work, such as being lost in the woods; a piece entitled "The First Death in the Clearing" also manifests the duality that is a central component of much of her writing. All four of these books are evidence of Traill's long, forward-looking, and highly individual engagement with Canada.

If Traill's cheerful authorial "I" has been a focus of much critical commentary, so has her ability to accommodate and adapt to her environment. *The Backwoods of Canada*, in particular, has been read in this light as "a record of adaptation and emerging identity," as "a tale of the developing bond between an English 'lady' and her portion of the Canadian 'bush'" (Bentley, "Afterword" 291) – a statement that explicitly links notions of

"where" and "who," and that highlights the influence of place on identity.[12] Traill, argues Marian Fowler (in reference to an observation by Frye), asks "'Where is here?' [...] rather than the more obvious 'Who am I?'" in order to establish identity (*Embroidered Tent* 65).

Curiously, however, Traill's writing repeatedly seems to articulate the belief that the self somehow makes its "home" within itself, regardless of the actual location of its being, a construction that appears to circumvent the effects of place on identity. Early in *Backwoods*, for instance, Catharine relates a story about Harry the goldfinch, who belonged to the captain of the ship *Laurel* on which she sailed to Canada. Readers are told that "[t]his pretty creature," who "seems perfectly happy," has made "no fewer than twelve voyages in the *Laurel*," and according to the captain, "'[i]t is all one to him whether his cage is at sea or on land, he is still at home'" (17). In this instance, Traill's approval of placeless and (self-)contained happiness is merely suggested in her implied identification with the little bird.[13] Later in *The Backwoods of Canada*, however, she repeatedly makes it considerably more explicit. In letter XIII, for example, she tells her correspondent:

> Your expressions of regret for my exile, as you term my residence in this country, affected me greatly. Let the assurance that I am not less happy than when I left my native land, console you for my absence. If my situation be changed, my heart is not. My spirits are as light as ever, and at times I feel a gaiety that bids defiance to all care. (166)

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[12] See also John Moss, "Gender Notes" (168); Clara Thomas, *All My Sisters* (46, 86); T.D. MacLulich, "Crusoe in the Backwoods?" (117, 118-19).

[13] This self-identification is extended in Letter II through parallel reports of the small bird's demeanor and her own. Traill writes, for instance, "the goldfinch sung cheerily from dawn till sunset. As for me Hope was busy in my heart" (20). Also see D.M.R. Bentley, "'Cake of Custom'" (103), for an analysis of Traill's use of the bird and other symbols in her self-representation.

Letter XVIII expresses a similar sentiment: "Not to regret my absence from my native land, and one so fair and lovely withal, would argue a heart of insensibility; yet I must say, for all its roughness, I love Canada, and am as happy in my humble log house as if it were courtly hall or bower" (250). These feelings are epitomized in lines Traill quotes from her favourite poet, Goldsmith: "'Still to ourselves in every place consign'd, / Our own felicity we make or find.'" She herself, she reassures her narratee, is "always inclined to subscribe to that sentiment" (90).

Her words suggest her belief that place is somehow extrinsic to the self. Whatever meaning place holds, Traill implies, it does not exert enough influence to affect self-perception. Instead, she frequently "returns to the theme that it is not external conditions in themselves which determine human happiness, but one's own mental attitude" (MacLulich, "Crusoe" 118). The suggestion, however, that what is outside of oneself can be entirely separated from what is inside, is problematic because "consciousness itself entails a constant internalizing of circumstance" (J.G. Kennedy 41). Traill's poring over maps and learning names, as well as her "desire [...] to list all aspects of Canada's terrain" (E. Thompson, *Pioneer Woman* 34), indicate that she interiorized her environment in a highly systematic way and show her need to "place" herself in Canada. Place also provided her with an abundance of ideas for her writing (even before her emigration), as all her Canadian-themed books demonstrate. Furthermore, it is important to remember that "both space and time are constructive dimensions of self-representation and not only the neutral organization of life to which an autobiographer may simply refer" (Gilmore, *Autobiographics* 10). Accordingly, "place, person, time and act form an indivisable unity" (Relph 44). There is, however, an element in Traill's "denial of contingency," to borrow a

phrase from Kennedy (41), that translates into an aspect of her psychic make-up which experiences a pronounced affinity with *time* as a "constructive dimension" of the narrated self. Traill's transformative vision, as I will demonstrate, relies on her filtering place through the dynamic lens of time.

Temporality notwithstanding, the geographic reality of a transatlantic voyage and of new surroundings in Canada shapes and alters Catharine's consciousness from the moment of her departure. She elects to begin her emigration story, as recounted in *The Backwoods of Canada*, with "the time of [the Traills'] embarkation" at Greenock (15), a starting point which turns out to be well-chosen insofar as the narrator's new self emerges quickly once the home ground of Britain has been left behind. Two textual features of *Backwoods* are immediately remarkable and have received considerable critical attention as indicators of Traill's narrative stance and of the ways in which her emerging self assumes authority.[14] The first of these features is the absence of the author's proper name on the cover of the original edition of *The Backwoods of Canada*. Instead, Traill "identifies" herself vaguely and implicitly through the book's long title, *Being Letters from the Wife of an Emigrant Officer, Illustrative of the Domestic Economy of British America*. She thus "chooses to write as a wife – [...] authoriz[ing] herself as the competent, optimistic spouse of an emigrant officer" (Whitlock, *Intimate Empire* 52). Secondly, Traill's choice of the epistolary format shows her writing as an identity derived

[14] Sidonie Smith argues in *A Poetics of Women's Autobiography* (1987) that an androcentric tradition, which autobiography is considered to be, renders the act of self-authorization unavailable to most women. Smith asks, How does a woman authorize her claim to writing?, and asserts that women are compelled to tell their stories differently, often under a generic guise other than autobiography (50). Similarly, Margo Culley observes that the "appeal to the *utility* of [a woman's] life story is the most persistent of the conventions of autobiography" (14; original italics), one which also applies to Traill's writing.

from her role as a daughter.[15] The filial relationship she establishes in her first letter has been read as applying to both the "dearest mother" whose wish to be informed in "minute detail" of her child's venture is the apparent reason for the text (15), and the mother country to whose "loving gaze" the writer's "'I' [...] returns itself" (Thurston, "'Remember'" 191). "In the first 'letter' of *Backwoods,* Traill positions herself as a faithful and obedient daughter," concludes Suzanne James, "leaving home to begin a new life in Canada, yet maintaining a close emotional bond with her mother, and motherland, through her writing," thus "positioning her reader as a patient and loving mother" (81).

My own reading of the text is somewhat different, with regard to Traill's self-identification both as a wife and as a daughter. Despite her initial self-placement as her husband's "loyal helpmeet[...]" (S. Foster 73)[16] and as a companion in the hardships of pioneering – thus as the "active and cheerful partner" whose position she promotes in the introduction to *The Backwoods of Canada* (12) – Thomas Traill's role in Catharine's writing is minimal. His appearances in *Backwoods* are limited, and more often than not he is seen to be disabled by a "gloom upon his spirits" (242). He plays an even smaller role in her later work.[17] All of Traill's major Canadian books figure a certain devalorization of

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[15] In his detailed and insightful biographical essay on Traill in *Canadian Writers and Their Work,* Ballstadt suggests that the letter format of *Backwoods* is influenced by St. Jean de Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782) and Gilbert White's *Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne* (1789), a work Traill "acknowledges in *Studies of Plant Life in Canada* [with] a wish to produce a book which would have the status in Canadian literature that White's does in English literature: that of providing engaging reflections of a life close to nature, of its spiritual and aesthetic effects" (156). Clearly, however, Traill's handling of her generic choice also emphasizes feminine qualities of connectedness and alterity. It "throws into relief the gender-dimension of the long letter home to mother, a type of writing that affirms a female connectiveness of the blood and heart across enormous geographical barriers, and, for both daughter and mother, mitigates the feeling of separation [...] that follows the removal of the child from home and family" (Bentley, "'Cake'" 104). As well, further feminine models suggest themselves in connection with Traill's botanical pursuits, as I will shortly explain.

[16] Shirley Foster, who treats *Backwoods* as a travel narrative in her study *Across New Worlds: Nineteenth-Century Women Travellers and Their Writings,* makes this comment about both Moodie and Traill. Her references to the two sisters contain, however, a number of factual errors.

[17] In contrast, Susanna Moodie's husband, John Moodie, makes frequent appearances in Moodie's work. He also contributed several sketches to *Roughing It.* See my next chapter.

patriarchal authority and instead present the suggestion that female self-possession and deliberate self-location may be achieved through maternal or "matriarchal" interests and pursuits. Traill, in fact, offers much more than domestic advice and guidance for "ameliorating [the] privations" felt by settler women (13). Both *The Backwoods of Canada* and *The Canadian Settler's Guide* put forward the explicit argument that the male contribution to pioneering by itself is not enough. The efforts made by men need to be complemented in equal measure by the work of industrious and efficient women, who know the ins and outs of their specific environment and who are, therefore, able "'to haud the house in order'" – the house being not just the family home but collectively the title's "domestic economy of British America" (*Backwoods* 9). Without the skills and labour of women, Catharine's books explicitly say, individual families may not survive in the bush and the pioneering project may fail. Much rides on the shoulders of the colony's women and her books announce those women's worth. *Canadian Crusoes* makes the same argument indirectly, for not only are the boys responsible for causing the domestic tragedy for the small settlement by getting the children lost in the first place, but subsequently it is Catharine Maxwell who becomes the "moral centre" of the children's unit (E. Thompson, *Pioneer Woman* 24), and who holds the little family together. Moreover, it is Indiana's courage and self-sacrificing love which effect Catharine's release. Louis and Hector may chop wood and hunt rabbits, but these male efforts, in the author's view, are not enough to sustain the children. Instead, feminine and maternal values help to ensure their survival and success.

Similarly, while writing as a daughter did, no doubt, offer Traill the promise of a sense of connectedness and of carrying across place and time her matrilineal heritage,[18] Catharine's voice in *Backwoods* is never one of filial relation – despite her address to "dear mother." Instead, from the start of her story she "limits herself to descriptions and explanations, never specifically seeking maternal consolation or advice." Suzanne James's contention that this is "a logical omission given what would be the inevitable time lag between letters [and] the fact that Traill is moving (at least in a physical sense) beyond anything her mother could have personally experienced" does not necessarily follow, however, for one could easily imagine a number of circumstances in which motherly advice might still be sought, despite the slow form of communication and the encounter of novel scenes (109). The choice of subjects covered by itself is not a given, as even a fleeting glance at Catharine's sister Moodie's account reveals. Furthermore, since Traill's address to "dear mother" is, in fact, not sustained throughout the entire series of letters, the suspicion arises that it is simply one element of the construct that is the text.[19]

I suggest that it is not the intended audience (both private and public) of her letters that is "position[ed] [...] as a patient and loving mother," but rather Traill herself who assumes a maternal stance. When she begins to speak, the narrator has already begun to shed her former self, and her "transition from childhood to adulthood" is well underway

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[18] The "very form of *The Backwoods of Canada*," notes Bentley, "a series of letters home to mother and others[,] also carries the reassuring message that ties of blood and affection can be maintained across the enormous geographical rifts opened up by emigration" ("Afterword" 298).

[19] For a detailed examination of the constructed nature of *The Backwoods of Canada* see Michael Peterman's "Editor's Introduction" to the CEECT edition of the text. One need only compare Traill's narration of herself as the cheerful and forward-looking persona who boards the brig *Laurel,* with historic reports that indicate that upon departure from Scotland she was so unwell that she had "to be carried on board" (Fitzgibbon 167). Peterman also says, "[d]uring the first part of the [Atlantic] voyage Catharine was so sick that both the captain and the steward expressed grave doubts that she would survive the crossing" ("Editor's Introduction" xxiv-v). Various features of Traill's texts "suggest a writer particularly conscious of self-presentation and keenly aware of literature as an agency of social, moral, and spiritual education" (Peterman and Ballstadt 2)

(S. James 108). The anticipation of place, the notion of Canada (along with Catharine's change of marital status), has already begun to work a transformation, as it offers the immediate instructive opportunity to describe subjects unknown to those left behind. The narrator's voice, rather than being that of the "faithful and obedient daughter," is always (and sometimes not so gently) didactic, in the manner of a sympathetic teacher, or perhaps more aptly, of an inquisitive and communicative maternal figure. Brenda Daly and Maureen Reddy observe in *Narrating Mothers: Theorizing Maternal Subjectivities* (1991) that "[m]any nineteenth-century women writers imagined themselves as mother-authors" (9), and Traill similarly points out things of note and interest, as though "lead[ing] us through the learning process" (S. James 175). Much as female skills, values, and attitudes are handed down from grandmother to mother and daughter, so Traill assumes a similar matriarchal role by passing on a kind of matrilineal inheritance, in the form of a body of advice and experience, through her texts.

The matriarchal stance enables Catharine to speak of the self without having to discuss the "private," in the sense neither of the familial nor of the psychological. Her reserved demeanour in this respect aligns her with other nineteenth-century middle-class women, of whose autobiographies Mary Jean Corbett finds that they rarely enacted an "inner drama" (104).[20] Traill is determined to offer her readers nothing but a positive account, and not to tell, as her sister Moodie does, the unhappy "other story" of family misfortunes and of expectations not met.[21] To Catharine, this sort of public self-revelation

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[20] The distinction between familial and psychological privacy is also Corbett's (102). As well, Corbett uses the terms "euphoria" and "dysphoria" to label autobiographic stories of success and failure, respectively. Employing these terms, one might argue that Traill turns a potentially "dysphoric" account into one of "euphoria."

[21] Intertextual readings shed light on some of the gaps in Traill's accounts. Gillian Whitlock, for instance comments: "The recent publication of [Traill's] later correspondence suggests that the exemplary wife she created haunts Traill's perception of their failure as settlers; it is the ideal which could not be realized. [...]

would have been inappropriate; her approach is one of restraint and understatement. Moreover, the matriarchal role allows her reliably to bypass discussing private details in favour of the very subject on whose publicizing her own authority rests, namely the instructive promotion of a particular version of domestic life:

> The cultivation of a few flowers, of vegetable and fruit, [she advises in *The Canadian Settler's Guide*,] will be a source of continual interest to yourself and children, and you will soon learn to love your home, and cease to regret that dear one you left.
>
> I write from my own experience. I too have felt all the painful regrets incidental to a long separation from my native land and my beloved early home. I have experienced all that you who read this book can ever feel, and perhaps far more than you will ever have cause for feeling. (16)

Traill's self-authorization based on the maternal role of the "author as mother" thus rests on the selective publication of private experience. It is made possible, in *The Backwoods of Canada*, by the fact that, although Catharine herself is a novice to the colony, her readers are even more ignorant of its ways. In her subsequent books the maternal "I" is fleshed out as she speaks with the authority of the long-time settler and matron.

The same voice carries into her fiction, where in *Canadian Crusoes* the author as mother directly addresses her audience repeatedly in order to instruct, guide, and offer advice: "The Canadian partridge is a species of grouse," reads one footnote, "larger than the English or French partridge. We refer our young readers to the finely arranged

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'Failure' here is to be gauged in terms of those aspirations to independence, self-sufficiency and responsibility that were germane to emigration and crucial to their agency and competence as husband and wife, mother and father" (*Intimate Empire* 56). Whitlock is perfectly right in pointing out that Traill's story is not told completely in her writing for publication, yet I find that apart from the occasional anxious letter much of Traill's correspondence also strikes calm and positive notes. See *I Bless You in My Heart* (Ballstadt, Hopkins, Peterman, eds.).

specimens in the British Museum" (25). On another occasion, having described her heroes' efforts to convert Indiana to Christianity, she cautions, "but my young readers must not imagine these things were the work of a day – the process was slow, and so were the results, but they were good in the end" (127). On yet another, she admonishes her audience not to ridicule the children in the story for their simplicity: "Despise not then, you, my refined young readers, the rude expedients adopted by these simple children of the forest, who knew nothing of the luxuries to be met in the houses of the great and the rich" (63). Catharine's consistently maternal voice illustrates that "maternalism is a key element" in her self-presentation (Whitlock, "Exiles from Tradition" 20). She slips easily into the role of "mother-author" on the subject of things Canadian, smoothly extending and expanding on her earlier affinity for writing instructive books for children. Her ready self-location suggests that place, despite the physical hardships she suffers, shapes consciousness and enables self-definition in ways that feel "natural" to her.

Integral both to the experience of place for Catharine and to her role as communicator are her love for flowers and her study of botany. This observation is, of course, not a fresh insight. Ballstadt has noted that for Traill "the study of flowers is a civilizer and a medium for the development of love of country" ("Catharine" 180), and she herself remarked on the subject, "[b]ut for the Canadian forest flowers and trees and shrubs, and the lovely ferns and mosses, I think I should not have been as contented as I have been away from dear old England" (*Plant Life* xvi). Michael Peterman has summed up the significance of botany for Traill as follows:

> For [her], the study of flowers was a nurturing process, engendering not only peace of mind through all the stages of life but also a firm sense of identity and place, of

> rooted continuity. [...] In personal terms, the study of nature and particularly of flora helped sustain Traill through the prolonged difficulties, deprivations, "home-longings," and deculturation of her backwoods experiences. One cannot gainsay the psychological worth of flowers to her. ("'Splendid Anachronism'" 178)

In view of this critical consensus, Catharine's study of flowers merits particularly close examination, for it functions in her texts on several distinct levels that together produce "insideness," in Relph's terminology, or the "firm sense of identity and place" Peterman observes. Through her study of botany Traill articulates an existential relation to place that is indicative of her strong psychic involvement in and identification with her surroundings.

On a literal level, as a system of pursuits – and it is a complex system which involves a whole range of activities, such as collecting, classifying, and describing plants, observing growth patterns, seasonal behaviours, and beneficial and adversarial growing conditions, gathering specimens and seeds, taking cuttings, drying and pressing specimens, identifying and recording the medicinal, nutritional, and possible other uses of plants, and so on – the study of botany, undertaken in both England and Canada, creates a solid link for Traill between the mother country and the colony. It helps to diminish, therefore, the opposition between "home" and "exile" at the core of geopathic displacement. One great advantage of the pursuit of botany is that it is independent of location, its portable character promoting a contiguous and coherent self-concept. Traill derives from it "continuity between past and present, childhood and maturity, Suffolk and Upper Canada, and cultivation (civilization) and wilderness (the state of wildness)" (Peterman, "'Splendid Anachronism'" 179). Furthermore, the abundance and "newness" of plant life in Canada provide her with the impetus to intensify an already familiar

activity and to share her findings pedagogically in her correspondence. If anything, the study of flowers provides a greater opportunity for self-development in the colony than it had done in England: "I consider this country opens a wide and fruitful field to the inquiries of the botanist," she writes. "I now deeply regret I did not benefit by the frequent offers Eliza [her sister] made me of prosecuting a study which I once thought dry, but now regard as highly interesting" (*Backwoods* 80-81). On another occasion Catharine confesses her regret to her correspondent to have "so idly neglected your kind offers while at home of instructing me in flower-painting." Now, she says, "I daily lament that I cannot make faithful representations of the flowers of my adopted country, or understand as you would do their botanical arrangement" (190). Such self-deprecation is fleeting, however, for sketches, as she also informs us, can be written as well as painted. The voice that delivers the word-pictures of the "floral treasures of the place," despite protesting that "a blunder would be easily detected," is neither hesitant nor timid. On the contrary, she seems perfectly at ease with the opportunity to educate, and is, by her own account, "not afraid of wearying" her sympathetic audience with her lecture (190, 200).[22]

At the same time, Catharine's study of plant life and natural history in general "was an extension of her belief in a benevolent and omnipotent God" (Gray 14). It affirmed her faith in the design of the Maker, such as in the following passage from *The Canadian Settler's Guide* section on "Wild Flowers":

> I am particular in noticing these peculiarities of soil, and habits, in describing the wild fruits, that you may not look for them in situations foreign to their natures

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[22] Traill may have wrongly counted on the sustained interest of her readers: some of her later critics have turned out to be impatient with rather than sympathetic to her botanical writing. Marian Fowler, for instance, who also comments on Traill's "strong didacticism" (63), sees Traill as dwelling *ad nauseam* on her flower descriptions (75).

> [. . .]. Every spot has its peculiar vegetables, flowers, and fruits, and we must recollect in counting our blessings, what an old poet says: –
>
> "Who least has some, who most, has never all."
>
> It is our wisest part to receive with gratitude that which our Heavenly Father has prepared for us, and not weary him by discontented repinings, remembering in humbleness of heart, that we are unworthy even of the least of his mercies. (77)

Flowers, and the natural world on the whole, possess a deeply religious dimension for Traill. "The concept of an absolute order discernable in the natural world through observation and reflection underlies Traill's descriptions of plants and animals" (S. James 213). Similarly, Traill's correspondence testifies that "faith was the principal element in her strength of character" (Ballstadt, Hopkins, Peterman 272), and her texts supply ample evidence that in nature she found affirmation for that faith. Catharine less *sought* "beauty, order, and purpose in her natural environment" (S. James 200), than she *discovered* all these in nature. She found the study of botany and natural history, as she repeatedly emphasizes, to be "at once enlightening and elevating the mind" (*Backwoods* 12), a pursuit, therefore, that combines Traill's educational interest with her faith. Botany "[could] be made, by simple steps, a ladder to heaven," capable of instilling "love and admiration [for] that bountiful God who created and made flowers so fair to adorn and fructify this earth" (206). For Traill, that "ladder to heaven" is solidly built of knowledge, as for her "the study of the natural world goes hand in hand with the appreciation and worship of God" (S. James 213).

The late-written piece to which I referred at the beginning of my chapter, "Something Gathers up the Fragments," articulates this view. The essay "documents

Traill's certainty that in nature's economy, God, the supreme economist, wastes nothing" (E. Thompson, "Traill's 'Something'" 141). Quoting Alexander Pope's *Essay on Man* (1733) – "Disorder—order unperceived by thee; / All chance—direction which thou canst not see" – Traill argues enthusiastically and vigorously that while the "lonely leafy wilderness" of the forest with its fallen trees and tangled branches may *appear* chaotic, all things in it are, in fact, "working ou[t] the will of the Creator": "by the heavenly Father's order, 'Something gathers up the fragments, and nothing is lost'" (*Pearls and Pebbles* 145, 148). Going further than mere acceptance of this tenet, however, Traill argues that, in order to understand God's plan for His creation, we ourselves have the obligation to look carefully, to "examine the subject [of nature] more closely." Only then will we have true appreciation, and be truly in awe of His "wise economy" (146, 144). Herein lies the reason for the "close-up" view for which Traill has been criticized: it is not a "defence against the overwhelming size and mass, the raw, undigested quality of the Canadian landscape" (Fowler 75),[23] but rather a means to comprehend the order within. For Traill, the study of nature approximates a religious duty. Her nature writing is suffused with this belief.[24] The narrator's self-location vis-à-vis "this new country," a place which facilitates and fosters knowledge-gathering by the pioneer through the sheer diversity and the very novelty of its flora, is again and again as a transmitter and mediator of botanical data (*Backwoods* 11).

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[23] Gaile McGregor expresses a similar view when she says, "Traill concentrates almost exclusively not merely on what is *close* but on what is *safe*: those aspects of nature that can be controlled, manipulated, *used*" (41; original italics).

[24] Carl Berger suggests in *Science, God, and Nature in Victorian Canada* (1983) that this belief is rooted in natural theology, a form of theology that is based on reason and ordinary experience. It designates the knowledge of God drawn from nature as distinct from the knowledge of God contained in revelation. Berger interprets this form of theology as a branch of natural history, with the chief assertion being "that there existed an overall design in nature, a rank and order in the chain of life, and a regularity in the operation of laws, all of which were evidence of a transcendent guiding intelligence" (32). As well, Susan Glickman argues in *The Picturesque and the Sublime: A Poetics of the Canadian Landscape* (1998) that "Newtonian science, having demonstrated the conformity of natural laws with mathematics, liberated the earth from its previous status as fallen matter." Consequently, all parts of nature could be seen as part of the "exuberant variety of creation" (7).

Traill's writings, though defined by her not as scientific (nor, for that matter, as religious), but as written primarily for other women, nevertheless represent her both as an independent female naturalist, or perhaps more specifically as an "amateur" botanist (and I will shortly say more about the "amateur" label), and as a maternal and sympathetic teacher, inspired by the Christian quality of sharing. The same motherly attitude that informs Traill's wish to "encourage as much as possible" the "taste for flowers" she perceives in her small son, because it is a "ladder to heaven" (206), leads her to direct the attention of her adult female audience to the pursuit of botany and natural history, so they may be "capable of looking abroad into the beauties of nature, and adoring the Creator through his glorious works" (11-12).

The role of author as a motherly teacher, or as a teacherly mother, was, in fact, one promoted by the social context of the early nineteenth century, as middle- and upper-class women were encouraged to instruct their children in basic scientific knowledge: "Cultural discourse and social norms gave new prominence to their roles as mothers and educators. A new maternal ideology [...] lent authority to women in scientific education and popular science writing" (Shteir 4). As a result, women became more and more prominent as writers of such works. In particular, authors "using the 'familiar format' of letters and conversations featured women teaching children at home, thereby authorizing them by providing enabling models.[25] Botany as a popular subject for informal education also attracted women who wanted to earn money by writing for the juvenile market, women,

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[25] Traill's choice of the epistolary form may, therefore, not have been modelled strictly on male writers, as Ballstadt suggests, but may also have been influenced by the letter format used by women botanical writers, including Priscilla Wakefield, Sarah Fitton, and Sarah Atkins Wilson. Wakefield, in particuar, who was a devout Quaker, "made the letter a narrative vehicle for intellectual self-improvement." Her writing delights "in the wonders of the natural world" and "models pleasure in knowledge" (Shteir 88-89).

and general readers" (4-5).[26] Traill, whose family frequently depended on her writing income (Peterman and Ballstadt 8), and whose *Backwoods* was first published in the *Library of Useful Knowledge* series for general readers, was well suited to this type of writing: her motherly pedagogy was aligned with the "maternal and teacherly voice" of women writers who had shaped this voice "into a powerful tool in the mentorial tradition" from which botanical culture benefitted (Shteir 76-77). Traill adds to this educational role the perspective of the devout believer: to her, God's design is evident in the natural world, and an understanding of His design is part of the knowledge she seeks to communicate.

Botany as a discipline experienced an upswing in popularity in the nineteenth century, along with a corresponding increase in the scientific discourse related to it.[27] This increased interest was in large measure due to a system of taxonomy that had been introduced in the previous century. In 1735, a 28-year-old Swedish naturalist by the name of Carl Linné, or Linnaeus in Latin, published a work entitled *Systema Naturae*, in which he described a method for classifying the world's plants, mainly according to the characteristics of their reproductive parts, as well as by several visual parameters, such as number and relative size. *Systema Naturae* was followed, a few years later, by two further, definitive, works, *Philosophia Botanica* (1751) and *Species Plantarum* (1753). These books provide the system for the standard botanical nomenclature which identifies plants by their *genus* followed by their species, followed by any differentiating features. The Linnaean system "had a markedly democratic dimension, popularizing scientific inquiry

[26] Shteir further writes: "Encouraged by parents, teachers, and social commentators and pursuing their own interests, Flora's English daughters were botanically active. They read botany books, attended public lectures about plants, corresponded with naturalists, collected native ferns, mosses, and marine plants, drew plants, developed herbaria for further study, and used microscopes" (3-4).

[27] For an analysis of the discursive and narrative structural features in the sections of *Backwoods* concerned with botany, see Suzanne James's doctoral thesis, "Gathering up the Threads: Generic and Discursive Patterns in Catharine Parr Traill's *The Backwoods of Canada*" (2003).

as it had never been popularized before" (Pratt 27). Ann Shteir notes in her absorbing study *Cultivating Women, Cultivating Science: Flora's Daughters and Botany in England 1760 to 1860* (1996) that the "ease and simplicity of this system recommended botanical study to men, women, and children" (4).[28]

As the system quickly became established in the second half of the eighteenth century, the leisured class, who could avail themselves both of the necessary time and of their own private funds in the pursuit of the study of botany, were prominent in the field. This circumstance had two important consequences: first of all, in the nineteenth century, the "science of botany in England was in some important sense an amateur activity" (Morgan 110). This is a noteworthy fact to keep in mind when discussing Catharine Parr Traill, whose botanical work has often been dismissed as that of an "amateur." Michael Peterman, for instance, who sets out to revise her achievements as a botanist and natural historian, which, he says, have been downplayed, ultimately is equally dismissive by labelling her "an amateur with a passion for flowers, [...who] had, however, no desire to be a methodological scientist" ("'Splendid Anachronism'" 179).[29] The statement implies that, as a non-professional woman without relevant formal training, Traill could not have made a lasting and significant contribution to the field. Some of the nineteenth-century's great male discoverers in the physical sciences, however, such as Charles Darwin and

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[28] Traill employed the Linnaean system in her writing, except in *Canadian Wild Flowers* (1868) where she used the classification system of Laurent de Jussieu (Ainley, "Science" 89).

[29] Marianne Ainley, whose own science background makes her a better qualified commentator on this subject than literary critics, takes issue with Peterman's dismissal of Traill. She says: "Catharine Parr Traill most certainly was not a 'splendid anachronism,' nor was her work that of a struggling 'amateur.'" Ainley compares Traill to a number of American women science writers of that period ("Science" 93), and also points out that Traill had "private training in England and field experience on both sides of the Atlantic" yet lacked "museum training" (89).

Alfred Russel Wallace,[30] also were nominally "amateurs," but the label, if it is applied to them at all, does not carry the same meaning. Secondly, because of the field's association with the aristocracy, scientists "typically belong[ed] to the wealthy and leisured class" (Morgan 92).[31] This social acceptability, and in fact popularity of the natural sciences in general, and botany specifically, is one of the reasons why, in the nineteenth century, the study and practice of science became acceptable also as an activity for women. "[S]cience was presented as [...] a natural extension of women's role," comments Suzanne James, basing her conclusions on Shteir's study, "since as loving, nurturing beings, women would be naturally inclined to cherish the beauty of nature and tend their gardens with devotion" (191). The situation in the New World, as Susan Morgan explains for the United States, but with relevance also for Canada, was similar, in the sense that American botanists were also often amateurs and also included several women. At the same time, there was an emphasis on the study of indigenous plants, because the land itself still needed exploring, as Morgan suggests, and because settler women like Traill had neither the time nor the means to study plants further afield. As a result, the "pioneering women in American botany in the nineteenth century were for the most part backyard botanists, collecting, studying, and classifying the plants in their particular area" (112). Much "like many American women naturalists, [Traill] had the opportunity to explore new areas, observe geographical differences in plant and animal distribution, and 'discover' new plants" (Ainley, "Science" 93).

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[30] Alfred Russel Wallace wrote *The Malay Archipelago, the Land of the Orang-Utan and the Bird of Paradise* (1869), about his eight-year wandering around the Archipelago, earning "one of the most distinguished reputations in the history of European botanical discovery" (Morgan 65). Wallace and Darwin, who developed the theory of evolution through natural selection, published as *The Origin of Species* (1859), were friends.

[31] See Susan Morgan, *Place Matters: Gendered Geography in Victorian Women's Travel Books about Southeast Asia,* for an analysis of the question of funding scientific activity in Victorian England, and for the links between botany and the expansion of the British empire (91-99).

Set against this background context, Traill's own approach to the subject is characterized in specific ways: to begin, she repeatedly distances herself, somewhat coyly perhaps, from what she calls on one occasion, "our scientific botanists in Britain" (*Backwoods* 120), that is to say from the male hegemony of a field about which Mary Louise Pratt has remarked, "no world is more androcentric than that of natural history [...]. The paternal structure of discipleship is overwhelmingly evident" (56).[32] Traill says, for instance, that her flower "descriptions may not be exactly in the technical language of the correct botanist," but that she has "described them as they appear" (*Backwoods* 206). Moreover, although the plants she encounters on her forays "are quite nameless" and "unknown to the naturalist," the scientific establishment might still consider her "very impertinent in bestowing names on [them]" (102, 120). She proceeds, however, to do so. The attitude of not so subtle defiance of paternal authority is perhaps made possible by the liberating power of place.[33] In turning her peripheral location in the colony on its head, Catharine tacitly acknowledges her position as both a pioneer and a pioneering naturalist: her greater "freedom of action and thought enabled her to know her own position, to state her opinion, and challenge those of others" (Ainley, "Science" 84). Traill's botanical writings also offer her own modifications of the scientific discourse of the time, specifically as it applied to women. For one thing, the relation she expresses to the subject of botany and to the issue of gender is distinctly different from those of many British women "amateur" botanists in the nineteenth century. Writers such as Anna Forbes and

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[32] For a postcolonial analysis of this paternal structure, much of which was centered at the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew under the leadership of, first, Sir William Hooker, and later his son, Sir Joseph Hooker, see Susan Morgan, *Place Matters* (91 ff.).

[33] Also see Ainley's assessment along these lines ("Science" 86).

Jane Webb Loudon[34] defined themselves as female voluntary companions of a male naturalist (or horticulturalist). Traill, who in her first Canadian book identifies herself only as the wife of an emigrant officer, nevertheless plays no such gender games when it comes to botany. She does not place herself as a "helpmate" or "companion." The study of natural history is not Thomas Traill's undertaking but her own. She is a naturalist, a botanist, a collector in her own right. She is "Eve alone," to adapt a phrase coined by Susan Morgan (118). Furthermore, Catharine's placement in the colony makes possible another break with convention: while the "traditional ways for British women to enter botany were through drawing or writing about gardening" (Morgan 117), Traill writes about the undiscovered plants of the New World. Her subjects are not the cultivated species of an English garden, but the exotic ones of the Canadian forests. She may find them in her "backyard," but her backyard is not of the usual kind.

Traill's disregard for conventions of female dependency is made more explicit by the language she uses in her narrative. Descriptions by men of their encounters with nature often employ a language of sexual desire.[35] As well, the Linnaean system was a "sexual system," as it "assigned taxonomic centrality to the part the flower plays in plant reproduction" (Shteir 13). By contrast, Catharine's writing is animated by the gendered rhetoric of seized emancipation combined with a maternal idiom, which I see as part of Traill's larger movement toward a consciousness that is acutely attuned to "development

[34] Anna Forbes travelled the Eastern Archipelago with her husband, Henry Ogg Forbes, a biologist from Aberdeen, during a fourteen-month period in 1882 to 1883. She supplied her own account of this journey in *Insulinde: Experiences of a Naturalist's Wife in the Eastern Archipelago* (1887). Jane Webb Loudon wrote *The Ladies' Flower Garden* (1840) and *Botany for Ladies* (1842). Jane's husband, John Loudon, was a well-respected landscape gardener. Finding many of her husband's gardening books too technical, she wrote *Instructions in Gardening for Ladies* (1840).

[35] On this subject, see for instance, Annette Kolodny, *The Lay of the Land: Metaphor as Experience and History in American Life and Letters* (1975); Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992).

and growth and to the never-ending flux of life" (S. James 210).[36] Consequently, when she finds plants that are new to her, she "take[s] the liberty of bestowing names upon them according to inclination or fancy," "consider[ing] [her]self free to become their floral godmother, and giv[ing] them names of [her] own choosing" (*Backwoods* 102, 120). Traill's independent streak is not limited to the naming of plants. There is also a certain gleeful joy in her self-representation as liberated from "the trammels of Grundyism." "Now, we *bush-settlers*," she writes, "are more independent [than people living in Britain or in Canadian towns]: we do what we like; we dress as we find most suitable and most convenient; we are totally without the fear of any Mr. or Mrs. Grundy" (218; original italics). As well, other women in Traill's texts seize the opportunity, sometimes brought about by their husbands' (temporary) disability, to break out of the conventions of feminine behaviour. For instance, in a story told in *The Canadian Settler's Guide*, "the wife of an officer" looks after her sick husband and her small child, while also harvesting the family's first crop of Indian corn. "In after years," reports Catharine, "she has often with honest pride" related the story to her children, who may have derived "*manly* independence of spirit" from their mother's account (114-15; italics added). As an example of what Helen Buss calls "displaced experience" (*Mapping* 89), the anecdote illustrates Traill's maternal discourse of independence and emancipation, which is enabled by the exigencies of the Canadian bush.[37] Similarly, in *Canadian Crusoes*, "the

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[36] Traill's evasion of sexual language is evident in her sketch of two types of water-lilies: although she vaguely follows Linneus by gendering one type as the "queen of the lakes" and the other as the "water-king," the female version is depicted as a "virgin beauty" (possessing a "snowy bosom"), and further sexual imagery is entirely absent from the description (*Backwoods* 192-93).

[37] This does not mean, however, that she shed her regard for the ties of domesticity. For an analysis of the pressures felt by settlers to replicate the hierarchical structures of the home country and the role of the discourse of domesticity in this respect, see Whitlock (*Intimate Empire* 47 ff.), and Helen M. Buss (*Mapping* 46-47). At the same time, however, as a gardener Traill also understood that there is a great overlap from the wild to the tame, and from the tame to the domestic.

environmental knowledge is communicated by a young native woman rather than by boys and men" (Ainley, "Science" 93).

Traill's motherly consciousness informs her botanical writing, in which maternal imagery and a focus on development and metamorphosis prevail, such as in the following description of the blood-root, or *sanguinaria*, whose buds, we are told, are "partially enfolded in a handsome vine-shaped leaf":

> The flowers of the sanguinaria resemble the white crocus very closely: when it first comes up, the bud is supported by the leaf, and is folded together with it; the flower, however, soon elevates itself above its protector, while the leaf, having performed its duty of guardian to the tender bud, expands to its full size. (*Backwoods* 198)

Maternal language describes the plant's transformation: the bud is born from the leaf, as it were, then "supported" by it and "folded together" with it, suggesting an infant held and cradled in her mother's arms. Soon, however, the developing offspring grows and "elevates itself above its protector," the parent/guardian's duty "to the tender bud" having thus been completed.[38] Traill's eye for transformative change relates to her ability to understand the wholeness and cyclicality of life, to perceive life not as a state of being but as a process of continuous becoming. A plant birth, in particular, "is always the ultimate result of processes of development and transformation." It embodies changes through which individual "elements are synthesized and achieve a new unity and form." The ability to perceive and appreciate this synthesis "belong[s] to the 'matriarchal consciousness,'" which is "intimately bound up with the plant world"(Neumann 248).

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[38] Marianne Ainley, who repeatedly comments on Traill's maternal language, notes, "her writing was easy and informative: she used familiar and maternal metaphors and scientific terminology interchangeably" ("Science" 86; 91).

Traill's embodiment of this consciousness figures her, archetypally, as a "Lady of the Plants" who "mothers" plant life (240-67).[39]

The extent to which Traill's vision takes in processes of change and development is illustrated in her attention to what Ainley calls "ecological succession," or "plant succession" ("Science" 88, 93). The section dedicated to botanical notes in Traill's Letter XIV of *The Backwoods of Canada*, for instance, begins with the following observations:

> The same plants do not grow on cleared land that formerly occupied the same spot when it was covered with forest trees. A distinct class of vegetation makes its appearance as soon as the fire has passed over the ground.
>
> The same thing may be remarked with regard to the change that takes place among our forests. As one generation falls and decays, new ones of a different character spring up in their places. This is illustrated in the circumstance of the resinous substance called fat-pine being usually found in places where the living pine is least abundant, and where the ground is occupied by oak, ash, buck, maple, and bass-wood. (190-91)

Traill's "matriarchal consciousness" centres on processes of change and metamorphosis. In the passage above, both cleared land and forest continuously renew themselves and are subject to natural changes. Growth and transformation relate to a divine order, to the workings of destiny, "as an eternal becoming [...], a weaving and creating." The maternal, perhaps because of the future-oriented perspective mothers tend to have, is able "to foresee the course of events and give such advice as will bring human action into harmony

[39] Also under the governance of the archetype, according to Neumann, is the domestic use of vegetables, another of Traill's interests. Presiding over earthly fertility, the maternal in this representation "is everywhere the ruler over the food that springs from the earth, and all the usages connected with man's nourishment are subordinated to her. She is the goddess of agriculture, whether its product be rice, [...] or any other fruit of the soil" (261).

with destiny" (Neumann 250). Traill's role as a motherly teacher lends itself readily to spreading the "infinite [...] Wisdom" she has no problem seeing everywhere in "the natural world" (*Backwoods* 247).

Once again, Traill's essay "Something Gathers up the Fragments" exemplifies the perspective she is eager to communicate. In this piece, the narrator's transcendent vision (reminiscent of Emerson's "transparent eyeball)" is attuned to the divinely directed, regenerative processes and cycles of life. This vision – realized both "through the felt connection with the earth itself" (Buss, "Garrison Mentality" 132) and through the even more deeply felt awe for the Creator – is communicated in an urgent, energetic voice by the speaker. The main argument begins with a large view – "The depths of the forest present to the eye of the traveller a scene of tangled confusion" – which is then telescopically contracted to a smaller and smaller viewing field: "Here lies one of the old giants of the forest at our feet. [...] Now, let us look more closely at the surface of this fallen tree as it lies before us, a cumberer of the ground. It is covered with variegated mosses, soft as piled velvet, but far more lovely. [...] Let us raise the thick mat of velvety mosses [...to] look beneath and see what its work has been during the past years" (145-47).[40] Her aim is to take us through the process[41] by which – "atom by atom" – the once tall tree has been transformed into "layers of decaying wood, a loose network of fibrous matter. The cellular tissues have disappeared, and with the least pressure of hand or foot the whole fabric falls into a powdery mass" (147). During this process, the tree has been

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[40] It is difficult to understand how Gaile McGregor can accuse Traill, who looks so closely at her surroundings, of overcoming her "fear" "by being careful [...] not to 'see' too much" (43). By contrast, Elizabeth Thompson observes that Traill has a "dual focus" in all her non-fiction, that is the "ability to observe small details and [the] ability to rearrange these details within a larger framework" (*Pioneer Woman* 58).

[41] Both Marian Fowler and Marianne Ainley note Traill's particular interest in the *process* of science. See *The Embroidered Tent* (67) and "Last in the Field?" (28), respectively.

receiving "materials from the dark earth" as well as "giving back to earth and air, in an altered state," matter it did not require for itself, purifying and changing these substances (146). Once the tree is fallen, its metamorphosis still does not cease, for the mosses and lichens which cover the tree ultimately reduce it to soil, "to the earthy condition which should enter into other forms." In the end, the "once mighty tree, with the mosses and lichens alike, will have returned their substance to Mother Earth. 'Ashes to ashes, dust to dust'" (147). Yet Traill does not allow her story of the way of all natural things to end on this note, for in its turn, and directed by God's "infinite wisdom," the "rich black vegetable mould" derived from the tree provides the ground upon which the settler sows the "grain for the life-sustaining bread for himself and his children" (147-48). In this sense, therefore, the tree undergoes yet another transformation, even as it has become dust.[42]

The same focus on transformation surfaces also in *The Canadian Settler's Guide*, which, although primarily a "'how-to' guide for prospective emigrant families," nevertheless "include[s] information about animal behaviour and ecological relationships in a month-by-month description of natural events" (Ainley, "Science" 85). As well, it is suffused with Traill's faith in His order. In the section entitled "Indian Summer," for instance, Catharine writes:

> Nature has now exhausted her rich store of buds and blossoms. – The rains and winds of October have scattered the last bright leaves upon the earth. The scarlet maple, the crimson oak and cherry, the dark purple of the black-ash, the lighter

[42] Elizabeth Thompson reads this resolution as a break of the cyclicality of nature ("Traill's 'Something'" 144-45).

> yellow of the birches and beech, lie withering at our feet – "the fading glories of the dying year."
>
> Is there nothing but sadness and decay, in those fallen leaves? In those grey, leafless branches, through which the wind is sighing a requiem over the faded flowers and foliage? In yon grey elder, those round knobs contain the embryo blossoms, closely packed like green seeds; yet each tiny flower-cup is as perfect as it will be in the month of May: – it is only abiding its time! Yes, truly, there is much of hope and promise, revealed to us at this season. There is a savour of death; – but it is a death unto LIFE! (233; original capitals)

The "law of dying and becoming [as] an essential part of the wisdom" of the Lady of the Plants (Neumann 252), and Traill's "close, almost mystical affiliation with the natural world" determine her future-oriented vision (S. James 161). Yet Traill's ability to comprehend nature's laws and to see, as it were, through the faded flower to the "embryo blossoms" is anchored in her profound love for the wisdom of God's creation, enabling a calm view of wholeness that informs her texts, her self-representation, and ultimately her outlook on life. Just as she is unwilling to end on a note of death, so she is unprepared to tell a story of failed pioneering, because in Traill's large, long view the story is never *just* failed. Death in nature is followed by life, and human toil and hardships may well turn into, or be accompanied by, rewards. Thus, in *Pearls and Pebbles*, at the end of a sketch entitled "Sunset and Sunrise over Lake Ontario: a Reminiscence," Catharine calmly assesses her own long life, as one "where lights and shadows form a mingled pattern of trials and blessings" (13).[43] Life is always in flux, and the self adjusts to these changes in a

[43] Elizabeth Thompson says about this sketch, which, in its original form, was apparently written as a journal entry in the 1830s, and edited some sixty years later for inclusion in *Pearls and Pebbles*: "It is interesting to

constant process of becoming. For Traill, "there is good at all seasons, and in everything" (*Settler's Guide* 222). Lights and shadows, blessings and trials, life and death – Traill's transformative vision is based on the ability to accommodate apparent opposites, and is capable of "the harmonious integration of disparate elements" (E. Thompson, "Traill's 'Something'" 140). Catharine's "rhetoric of balance," in Ballstadt's phrase, is a significant "structural and thematic principle" not just of *The Backwoods*," a book whose first half, "especially, is marked by antithesis," but throughout her work ("Catharine" 164-65). Traill's work illustrates Daly and Reddy's finding, in *Narrating Mothers*, that "maternal consciousness is 'dual'" (6).

A sketch found in *Pearls and Pebbles*, entitled "The First Death in the Clearing," which, as Traill explains in a footnote, is taken from her 1834 journal,[44] illustrates her balancing of opposites.[45] In this sketch she recounts being called to assist another settler woman, the wife of the nearby mill's overseer, with her dying infant. The piece is built on contrasts, beginning with the epigraph by Longfellow, "There is no flock, however watched and tended, / But one dead lamb is there! / There is no fireside, howsoe'er defended, / But has one vacant chair." The narrative commences on an early April morning, when the "warm sunshine had melted the ice." The sick child is, we are told, "a lovely babe," but "pale as death, wasted almost to a shadow," when "only a week before" it had been "a picture of infantile health and beauty" (82-83). As the women's vigil progresses through the night, the "infant slept [...] its last sleep on earth, to awaken to a

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note that, even with hindsight and with the personal experience of hardships and disaster in the backwoods, Traill does not edit out the optimism, hinting only at future difficulties" ("Editor's Introduction" xiv).

[44] This piece was first published as "The Bereavement" in *The Literary Garland* in 1866 and later edited and rewritten for inclusion in *Pearls and Pebbles*.

[45] It also illustrates the existence of a "sisterhood" in the bush, of a community of women helping and supporting each other. The psychological significance of female relationships to women's self-definition has already been discussed in chapter I.

new life in heaven." The following morning, when Traill steps outside, her "eyes [...] weary and [her] heart [...] sad," a "lovely sight" presents itself to her, as the "frosted ground was gemmed with countless mimic stars, glittering [...] brightly" (84-85). She also notices, "the pines that clothed the opposite shores, grand and beautiful, untouched by the hand of man. What a contrast to the confusion spread around the recently erected mill [...]!" After the quiet of the night, life around her now begins to stir. "Nature herself had as it were been enjoying perfect rest, and with the sun had awakened to a newness of life." This renewal only increases the contrast with the human suffering she has witnessed during the night: "Without all was joy and life; within was sorrow and death" (85). Later, on the day of the funeral, she "crosse[s] the threshold from the bright noonday sunshine into the hushed gloom of the house of mourning," where the dead child's father sits dressed in black beside the white-draped table with the little coffin. Not able to attend the funeral, she watches "till the white pall was lost among the dark pines" of the forest road. In later years, the narrator tells us, she has often recalled the "sweet sounds" of nature on that day as "a soothing influence to [her] spirit," refreshing "the mind wearied with the toil and moil of life" (86-87). The story, which presents rich evidence of having been "carefully crafted," manages to unify the various contrasting elements into a "unified and cohesive" whole through the author's vision, anchored by her trust in a knowledge greater than that of mere humans that life unfolds as it should (E. Thompson, *Pioneer Woman* 53).[46]

Traill's ability to contain such contrasts – evidence of her psychic ease with duality – translates into a form of self-placement that finds little opposition between England and

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[46] Thompson provides a close reading of the original version of this sketch, although with different textual evidence from my own and somewhat different conclusions.

Canada, between her old and new home. It minimizes the difference between exile and belonging. Instead, the narrated "I" is able to identify with both old and new and to make herself "at home" in both locations. Her dual identification is particularly evident in *The Backwoods of Canada*, where it repeatedly results in sentences and paragraphs that are ambiguous as far as the self-location of the speaking voice is concerned. In letter XII, for instance, she writes: "The only thing to be done if you desire trees, is to plant them while young in favourable situations, when they take deep root and spread forth branches the same as the trees in *our* parks and hedge-rows. Another plan which we mean to adopt in *our* land is, to leave several acres of forest in a convenient situation [...]" (163; italics added). The pronoun "our" in the first sentence refers to England, while the one in the second sentence pertains to Canada. Similarly, in letter XIV she reports: "Our woods and clearings are now full of beautiful flowers. You will be able to form some idea of them from the dried specimens that I send you. You will recognize among them many of the cherished pets of our gardens and greenhouses, which are here flung carelessly from Nature's lavish hand among our woods and wilds" (189). Again, Traill identifies indiscriminately – and somewhat confusingly – with both England and Canada: the first "our" refers to Canada; the second one to England; the third one again to Canada.[47] In the same vein, she can pair a sentiment such as that of her "miss[ing] that fantastic bowery shade that is so delightful in *our* parks and woodlands *at home*" (96), with the lament

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[47] Clara Thomas has remarked about Traill, "[s]he identified herself as a Canadian while retaining a loyalty to the British crown" ("Introduction" to *Canadian Settler's Guide* xiv), an observation borne out by Traill's own correspondence (see, in particular, letters 122 and 126 in *I Bless You in My Heart*, edited by Carl Ballstadt, Elizabeth Hopkins, and Michael Peterman). More than loyalty, Traill's sense of herself as (originally) British went deep; she clearly drew strength from her Suffolk roots during difficult times, as the following quotation from *Pearls and Pebbles* suggests: "Often [...] have [childhood memories] come back to my wearied soul to cheer and soothe the exile in her far distant forest home" (8). Hallvard Dahlie sees Traill as one of only two characters he studies, the other being Topaz in Ethel Wilson's *The Innocent Traveller*, "who rapidly cease to be exiles" (16).

regarding Canada's "unpoetical" character, "*our* very forests disdain to shelter dryad or hamadryad" (128), and the reassurance, "[w]e do not, however, lack comfort in *our humble home*" in the backwoods (120; all italics added). In short, "all those holy ties of kindred" may make Britain "home," but "much domestic happiness" and the joys of motherhood are equally "delightful ties that bind [her] to Canada," making it, too, "home" (my term) (216). Traill's dual identification in the passage, "I am very desirous of having the seeds of our [English] wild primrose and sweet violet preserved for me; I long to introduce them in our [Canadian] meadows and gardens" (125), is particularly illustrative: it highlights both her ability to balance past and present as well as her motherly, nurturing, gardener's mind and the future-oriented vision that informs it. Seeds, in this case,not only provide a link between old home and new, but also represent a contract with the future. Planting seeds from England in Canada engenders what Traill calls "home affections"; it allows a sense of belonging to grow (*Settler's Guide* 56).

The dual perspective which defines Traill's self-placement is part of the transformative vision of a maternal consciousness which sees self and life in constant flux, never static and always harbouring the potential for growth. Her own narrative, as told in all four of the books here analyzed, is one of unceasing activity, of self-education (in addition to the instruction of others), "industry," and a large dose of "self-denial" (*Backwoods* 147). Her mantra, as she says in *The Canadian Settler's Guide*, is that "it is better to be up and doing" (204). Accordingly, when she looks around herself, she does not see passive picturesque beauty, but "active, sentient life – nothing is idle, nothing stands still" ("Something" 145). The same vision directed at Canada sees the colony as a

place of becoming, as a place with all the potential for metamorphosis, as a place where "all is new [...and] full of promise for future greatness and strength" (*Settler's Guide* 18).

This vision is at work almost from the moment Traill steps ashore. The phrases "at a distance of many years" and "some century hence" quickly become a common refrain. Assessing the thriving cottages she sees on her journey, for instance, she grants in her letter that she "perhaps overlooked at the time the labour" involved for the early settlers. Instead, she says, "I saw [the settlement] only at a distance of many years, under a high state of cultivation, perhaps in the hands of [the settlers'] children or their children's children" (*Backwoods* 48). If on this occasion her judgment is, by her own acknowledgment, somewhat skewed, she does not shrink, however, from using the same long view at other times. Thus, coming upon no more than "a good deal of cleared land and a tavern" in an area called "Cold Springs," she muses, "[w]ho knows but some century or two hence this spot may be a fashionable place of resort to drink the waters. A Canadian Bath or Cheltenham may spring up where now Nature revels in her wilderness of forest trees" (57). In her concluding letter in *Backwoods*, she enthuses glowingly about her bush location, "[s]ome century hence how different will this spot appear! I can picture it to my imagination with fertile fields and groves of trees planted by the hand of taste; – all will be different; our present rude dwellings will have given place to others of a more elegant style of architecture" (250-51). Similarly, in her "Sunset and Sunrise" sketch in *Pearls and Pebbles* she records about her journey across Lake Ontario, "[v]isions of pleasant rustic homes to be made by forest, lake and river rose to my mental vision as our vessel threaded her way among those fairy islands" (10). As though to prove that this future-oriented view is justified, in *Canadian Crusoes*, which tells a historic tale that

supposedly took place decades earlier, the narrator draws attention, "[b]oth in the text and in the footnotes and appendices," to the changes and improvements made to place during the intervening time. Thus, "the reader is constantly kept aware of [...] the 'then' and 'now' of the region" (Schieder xxi). The story's location, for instance, "this now highly cultivated spot[,] was an unbroken wilderness [...]. [...] I speak of the time when the town of Cobourg, now an important port on the Ontario, was but a village embryo" (1-2). Numerous further references to the passage of time follow: "On that spot where [the tale's] Indian camp then stood, are now pleasant open meadows, with an avenue of fine pines and balsams" (184); a once "hollow bay" is "now a rising village – Gore's Landing" (224). Finally, she exclaims, "[w]hat changes a few years make in places!" (209), a statement followed by another long passage listing the many alterations – from clearing land to building bridges and municipal buildings – that have been undertaken and that parallel Traill's own nurturing approach. The psychic processes of the matriarchal consciousness "are specifically related to time," while also being rooted in place, just as the tree, a symbol of the maternal (one unusually appropriate for Traill), is rooted in the depth but grows in time (Neumann 248).

Traill's vision of transformation, which "reaches forward in time and outwards in space" (Bentley, "Afterword" 297),[48] encompasses distinct elements. It includes private delights – "[a]nother spring, I hope to have a fence and a portion of the ground devoted to flowers" (*Backwoods* 141) – and more public concerns – "[t]he wild vine planted at the foot of some dead and unsightly tree, will cover it with its luxuriant growth, and convert that which would otherwise have been an unseemly object into one of great ornament"

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[48] Bentley calls this vision "prototypically Canadian," without offering specific evidence of other writers to whom it applies. I myself find this perspective rather more pronounced in Traill than in other authors.

(*Settler's Guide* 15). Traill has repeatedly been accused of her desire to "cover up" the unattractive aspects of her environment in an effort to disguise her sense of exile by making it resemble the picturesque beauty of Britain.[49] Catharine's actions, particularly when they pertain to gardening, may, however, just as easily be seen as based in her transformative vision, and in the continuous flux she observes in the natural world. There, what is unsightly and apparently useless – a fallen forest tree – is turned into sustenance for other forms of life. She advises us to copy this behaviour: "I knew a gentleman who caused a small dead tree to be cut down and planted near a big oak stump in his garden, round which a young grape was twining: the vine soon ascended the dead tree, covering every branch and twig, and forming a bower above the stump, and affording an abundant crop of fruit" (15).[50]

Traill's future-oriented vision ultimately includes the entire colony: "Canada is the land of hope; here every thing is new; every thing going forward; it is scarcely possible for arts, sciences, agriculture, manufactures to retrograde; they must keep advancing" (*Backwoods* 210). Her texts suggest a maternal identification of the narrated self with the young country, evocative of a mother's bond with her promising child: "We are but in our infancy," she declares, "but it is a vigorous and healthy one" (*Settler's Guide* 18). This anthropomorphic metaphor conjures associations of human vitality and of a future awaited. Indeed, Traill's references to Canada as her "adopted country" suggest a maternal stance on her part, as though she wished to extend a nurturing hand to what she saw as a

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[49] See, for instance, Marian Fowler, *The Embroidered Tent* (75; 96).

[50] Traill's long view also enables her to foresee negative changes to the environment: "Some years hence the timbers that are now burned up will be regretted," she comments, for example (*Backwoods* 235). For this reason, Marianne Ainley sees her as an "early ecologist" ("Science" 88). Ballstadt uses the same label ("Catharine" 178). There is however, as both Ainley and Ballstadt, as well as Elizabeth Thompson have also observed ("Editor's Introduction" xii), a tension in Traill's writing that relates to her position as both a settler and a naturalist. This is, perhaps, the one duality she is incapable of resolving.

place of becoming. She also assumes this role in her introduction to *Plant Life,* in which she ambiguously exhorts other "Mothers of Canada" to teach their children botanical knowledge (ii), and in a letter to her friend, Sir Sanford Fleming, dated January 1882, in which she writes: "I believe that I have not been altogether a useless member of the community though I have reaped little pecuniary benefit from my literary labours, [...], but I would like to do something more for Canada my adopted country before I am called to rest" (qtd. in Morris x). This self-representation figures a subtle form of mothering with regard to Canada.[51] Veronica Thompson notes that "in the settler colony women are not only literal mothers or future mothers, they are also mothers to the settlement itself." The "maternal imagery that permeates nineteenth-century records of settler women's lives [...] symbolizes the female settler as a mothering influence on a colony" (8). Traill's authorial "I" assumes the same maternal role vis-à-vis place as she does in addressing her readers and in her view of the natural world. Her focus on maternal skills and a matrilineal inheritance – found at the core of women's autobiographical writing in general – involves not a search for mother but the representation of herself as a figure who mothers the young country and the growing nation (her female audience). The work of Traill's texts is in part to establish a new maternal heritage – in a country without "legendary tales of those that came before us" (*Backwoods* 128) – with herself in the role of the matriarch.

Precisely because the motherly eye Traill casts at Canada is characterized by its glance towards the future, it is also subject to the maternal anxieties associated with a child's development and prospects. These anxieties take shape in an entire series of "lost-child [journal] entries and sketches" (Ballstadt, "Catharine" 172) that deal with the

[51] For an analysis of Traill's motherly interest in Native parenting as well as her representation of Natives in general, see Carole Gerson, "Nobler Savages."

"pioneer family's abiding fear of losing a child in the backwoods or bush" (Peterman and Ballstadt 72). This is a subject that "claim[ed] [Traill's] attention for years" (59), and that eventually found its most developed and extensive expression in her novel *Canadian Crusoes*. Furthermore, a sketch with the title "Alone in the Bush," included in *Pearls and Pebbles*, treats a variation of this concern by featuring a young settler wife and mother as the lost person.

The evolution of this important theme in Traill's writing is carefully traced by Rupert Schieder in his "Editor's Introduction" to *Canadian Crusoes*. Beginning with the copy, in her 1837 journal, of a *Cobourg Star* advertisement setting up a reward for information about a small child lost in the Rice Lake Plains, and other accounts of similar losses in her journals, to publications of treatments of the subject in *Chamber's Edinburgh Journal*, to the publication in 1852 of *Canadian Crusoes*, Traill worked and reworked the subject from different angles (focusing both on the lost children and on the bereft parents) and with different levels of detail and authenticity.

Ballstadt suggests that on the psychological level "Traill's fascination with the lost child [...] may be motivated by her own success in meeting the challenge of pioneer life, so different from what she had known in England" ("Catharine" 173), but the symbolic significance of Traill's use of the "lost child" trope has so far not been theorized in any way. This strikes me as an oversight, particularly in light of Traill's inclination to contain representations of the future – including the future of Canada – in the image of "the child," as well as in light of the remarkable extent of her future-oriented vision of the colony. If the child figure is emblematic of Canada's future potential, the significance of a child lost in the forest is not just a personal tragedy, but a statement concerning "young Canada."

The "lost child" is "a symbol of the national future in jeopardy," writes Peter Pierce, a professor of Australian literature at James Cook University, in his 1999 study *The Country of Lost Children: An Australian Anxiety,*[52] in which he traces the history of the lost child in Australian literature, painting, and film. In a "place where the innocent young are most especially in jeopardy," Pierce argues with reference to Australia, but with equal relevance for Canada, "[s]ymbolically, the lost child represents the anxieties of European settlers" (xi-xii). A similar symbolic significance can be extended to the young mother lost in Traill's story "Alone in the Bush," whose childbearing and childrearing role is equally important to the future well-being of the colony.[53]

Traill's sustained preoccupation with this theme reveals that even for someone with her intuitively positive, transformative vision, it could not always have been easy – despite her regime of "self-denial" – to maintain such an optimistic outlook, because linear future is, after all, uncertain, even if cyclical time is not. Her intense treatment of

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[52] Pierce regards this theme as uniquely Australian. Another Australian study by Kim Torney, entitled *Babes in the Bush: The Making of an Australian Image* (2005), also argues that the bush-lost child was uniquely Australian, and that in comparable British colonies – she makes specific reference to Canada here – the equally anxiety-ridden image of the captive child was dominant. The image of the bush-lost child is epitomized in Australian culture in a painting by Frederick McCubbin, called *Lost* (1886). Given the appearance of the lost child in both Traill's and Susanna Moodie's writings, the Australian scholars' claims to cultural exclusivity of the image are clearly incorrect. Traill's Catharine Maxwell, the heroine of *Canadian Crusoes,* is both a lost and a captive child, as she not only loses her way in the forest but is also abducted by Natives. By contrast, Carl Ballstadt says in his reading of *Crusoes* that it has "specifically Canadian associations" ("Catharine" 173), suggesting a cultural blindspot on part of both Australian and Canadian scholars.

[53] For a discussion of the role of women in "reproducing" Britain in colonial settings, see Gillian Whitlock, *Intimate Empire.* Also see Veronica Thompson, "The Return to 'Mother' in Australian and Canadian Settler-Invader Women's Writing." Traill herself was acutely conscious of the settler's role in expanding the empire, as her "Introduction" to *Backwoods* makes clear: The "half-pay officer" who takes up a land grant and brings along his young family, she says, "is serving his country as much by founding peaceful villages and pleasant homesteads in the trackless wilds, as ever he did by personal courage, or military stratagem, in times of war" (11).
Traill's sketch "Alone in the Bush" also provides another fascinating example of the narrating of "displaced experience" (in Buss's terminology), although my impression is that the character is a hybrid of Traill's own and her sister Moodie's (as well as perhaps other settler women's) experiences. For example, when she has the young woman say, "You know what a cowardly dread I have of wolves and bears" (93), she sounds like Susanna. On the other hand, the remark, "The very novelty of the situation almost amused me" (96), sounds as though it came from Traill herself. Elizabeth Thompson reads this sketch as "covertly autobiographical" ("Editor's Introduction" xvi).

the lost-child theme suggests a certain undercurrent of anxiety, "a persistent insecurity," as Noel Gough comments, also in the context of Australia, about "people's understandings of their location in place/space and time" (63).

Traill's handling of her material, however, both in *Canadian Crusoes* and in "Alone in the Bush," is affirmative. The protagonists in both texts find within themselves the strength and resources to "push[...] on" (*Pearls* 95). In *Canadian Crusoes*, Nature generously bestows her abundance to aid the children's efforts, although in Traill's typical dual perspective, the forest is constructed as both sheltering/nurturing and dangerous (53). In addition to relying on themselves and their trust in God, the characters in both texts are ultimately either found or helped by other pioneers, an outcome which, again in the context of Australia, "rapidly came to be regarded as an affirmation of community" (Gough 63). In *Canadian Crusoes*, the "children are not brutalized by the experience," and the author even takes her audience beyond her young heroes' restoration to their parents to yet another "vision of the future: of Gore's Landing, the village church, the plank road, the tasteful garden, and the pretty farms. The Crusoes are the forerunners of this transformation, seeing in [the area] a good place to settle" (Ballstadt, "Catharine" 173-74). Traill's emphasis in her treatment of the "child lost" material is thus always also on the "child found" aspect of it, suggesting, within the context of the trope, her confidence in the future of young Canada.[54]

The forward-looking vision Traill first presents to us in Letter I of *The Backwoods of Canada* rarely fails her. It informs her subsequent writing and sustains a view of self,

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[54] Traill's grand-niece Mary Agnes Fitzgibbon writes in her introductory biographical sketch of her great-aunt to the first edition of *Pearls and Pebbles*: "[the backwoods years] were described with a cheerful and optimistic pen, as of one who had a far-seeing eye into the future capabilities of the country and a present knowledge of its boundless resources and value" (173).

life, and place that contains notions of change and transformation. Traill's calm acceptance of both gives her writing a spiritual quality that is far from the guise of utility she herself chooses. The autobiographical self which emerges from her texts, although represented by its author as a mediator of and instructor in place-based and place-specific knowledge, consistently transcends both place and time with its profound understanding of (in gardening language) the "growing life." The seed of the faded plant, and the embryo blossom within it, are always more than literal images but symbolize future potential and the endless possibilities for metamorphosis. Nor is Traill's firm advice to the "emigrant wife," "let her plant a garden" (*Settler's Guide* 56), to be taken purely literally, for gardeners are always also caretakers of future generations and guardians of future development and growth. Traill's guardianship – her mothering – extends considerably beyond her own biological offspring to her passing on of maternal wisdom to her female readership, and to her motherly care for the young country that was Canada.

Chapter III

"I had never seen such a shed called a house before": The Discourse of Home in Susanna Moodie's Canadian Trilogy

As one of the foundational texts in Canadian literature, Susanna Moodie's *Roughing It in the Bush* (1852) has received extensive scholarly attention, much of it concerned with Moodie's sense of placement, or ill-placement, in Canada. Critics from Northrop Frye to Bina Friewald have commented on the character of Moodie's relationship to her surroundings and on her success or failure in making herself "at home." My own reading of Moodie's texts focuses on the very concept of "home," which is indeed, as Sneja Gunew notes in a recent editorial essay on women's diasporic writing, "at the heart of debates" on expatriation and migration (8). In *Roughing It in the Bush*, Moodie constructs a complex narrative of home, cast as a failure of homecoming from its beginning. At the same time, she turns to a narrativity which centres on her husband and children in order to reproduce a kind of "home matrix" otherwise lost. As such, this familial discourse[1] serves as the basis for an intrinsically female system of self-location, envisioned in Moodie's Canadian works (*Flora Lyndsay*, *Roughing It in the Bush*, and *Life in the Clearings*) and aimed at making herself feel "at home." "[I]sn't 'home' [...] where the children are, and isn't Moodie indeed 'at home' with them?" asks Bina Friewald in her reading of Moodie ("'Tongue of Woman'" 170). My analysis, however, finds that Moodie's maternal and spousal narrativity fails her in that it is insufficient to close the gap between her self and Canada. "Home," therefore, remains out of reach.

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[1] Bella Brodzki observes that "[o]f all literary genres, autobiography is the most precariously poised between narrative and discourse or history and rhetoric" ("Mothers" 244). For lack of a single, more definitive term, I also use both "narrative" and "discourse" in my analyses.

For Susanna Moodie, neé Strickland, her childhood home of Reydon Hall, and the surrounding Suffolk countryside were as formative as they were for her sister Catharine Parr Traill, the subject of my previous chapter: Moodie's memory of her place of origin lingers in her writing even into her late correspondence. Born in 1803, Susanna was one year younger than Catharine, and the sisters, close from childhood and throughout their lives, share certain biographical features. Following their father's death in 1818, Susanna, like her sister, attempted to establish herself as a writer. Throughout the 1820s, she succeeded in placing contributions with literary magazines such as *La Belle Assemblée* and *The Athenaeum*, gaining access to literary circles in London and earning a reputation as a bluestocking. Although she suffered from doubts about her capabilities as a writer, Susanna "remained vigilant in placing her material in the annuals right up to the year of her emigration" (Ballstadt, Hopkins, Peterman, *Letters of a Lifetime* 14). She also published a collection of poetry, *Enthusiasm, and Other Poems* (1831), as well as, through her involvement with the Anti-Slavery League, an abolitionist pamphlet on the life of the escaped slave Mary Prince. Also like her sister, Susanna married a half-pay officer originally from Orkney, John Wedderburn Dunbar Moodie, and in July of 1832, the couple and their infant daughter Katie set sail for Canada where they initially settled in Hamilton Township near Cobourg.[2] Not able to make a success of the cleared farm near Lake Ontario they had purchased within weeks of arriving in the colony, the Moodies relocated to the backwoods of Douro Township, where they took up holdings in close proximity to Catharine and her husband Thomas Traill. Samuel Strickland, Susanna and Catharine's brother, who had emigrated some years earlier and made a great success of his settlement, also lived in the vicinity. The Moodies, however, fared less well, living in

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[2] Emigration, as John Thurston comments, is an "acknowledgment of the family's loss of caste" (18).

poverty much of the time. During the Rebellion of 1837 John Moodie served with the militia, leaving Susanna to run the farm on her own. In the fall of 1839, John was given the post of Sheriff of Belleville, a town on Lake Ontario, where Susanna and the children joined him in January of 1840, and where they continued to live until John's death in 1869. Susanna died in Toronto in 1885, having spent her late years without a permanent home, and residing instead with some of her children and with her sister Catharine.

Moodie's representation of her early and perhaps most difficult years in the colony,[3] *Roughing It in the Bush; or, Life in Canada* (1852), takes up questions of place from its full title onward: what life in Canada is, what forms of placement and displacement it engenders, what it means to attempt to make a home in Canada, for one woman as well as for a whole cast of characters. Susanna's answers are given in a variety of rhetorical modes, from didactic to argumentative and from descriptive to ironic and to critical, and are often contradictory: "Susanna cannot make up her mind," notes Susan Glickman ("Afterword" 535). It is the ambivalence of Moodie's position which is in large measure responsible for the extensive scholarly attention *Roughing It* has been accorded.[4] The work has been described as, "in many ways, the central text of women's literature in Canada" (Buss, "Feminist Revision" 230, n.3), and Michael Peterman notes that no other Canadian author "can match the quantity of critical commentary that [Moodie] and her famous book have received" (*Susanna Moodie* 10). By contrast, Moodie's *Flora Lyndsay; or, Passages in an Eventful Life* (1854) has received much less attention and has not been

[3] The editors of Moodie's correspondence note that there are very few surviving letters from her first twenty years in Canada; however, "we know that she wrote home complaining of her loneliness and discomfort – so much so that her sister Sarah [...] was convinced the Moodies would not remain in Canada for long" (Ballstadt, Hopkins, Peterman, *Letters of a Lifetime* 73).

[4] Critics have been fascinated with Moodie's apparent "clash of voices" (Glickman, "Afterword" 535), one of the most influential opinions being that of Margaret Atwood, who called Moodie "divided down the middle" ("Afterword" 62). For a survey of Moodie criticism see Bina Friewald, "'The Tongue of Woman'" (160-62), John Thurston, *The Work of Words* (5 ff.), and Michael A. Peterman, *This Great Epoch* (20-33).

reprinted since its original publication. A fictionalized record, it is thinly disguised autobiography, which describes the Moodies' preparations for their emigration as well as the Atlantic crossing itself as a form of "preface" to *Roughing It* (Peterman, "Susanna Moodie" 93).[5] The third work in Moodie's Canadian trilogy, *Life in the Clearings versus the Bush* (1853), while mainly concerned with her impressions of the colony in the early 1850s, also contains three engaging sketches about Susanna's early period in Canada.[6] While admittedly lacking the drama of *Roughing It*, *Life in the Clearings*, too, is marked by a profound "ambivalence" (Thurston 116),[7] and in its protagonist's "contradictions" offers glimpses of a Susanna Moodie who continues to be ill-adjusted to her environment (Shields, "Afterword" 339).

All three of Moodie's Canadian-themed books rely on a narrative of home that constructs two figures – those of belonging and exile – as opposites.[8] This narrative is manifest in two different and competing specifications: home as house – and in the broader sense, as homeland – and home as family. The former both articulates and literalizes the experiences that constitute the figure of exile: dislocation, dispossession, homelessness, and the impossibility of coming home. Literalization, a linguistic practice Moodie shares with other nineteenth-century women writers, "occurs when some piece of

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[5] Michael Peterman also says that *Flora Lyndsay* "should [...] be read as an autobiography rather than fiction" ("Susanna Moodie" 92), and Moodie herself explains in a letter to her London publisher, Richard Bentley, that she "took a freak to cutting [the narrative for *Flora Lyndsay*] out of the ms. [for *Roughing It*] and beginning the [latter] work at Grosse Isle" (Ballstadt, Hopkins, Peterman, *Lifetime* 130).

[6] These sketches were intended for *Roughing It* but were in fact published in *Life in the Clearings*, because they arrived too late in London to be included in the first book. The three chapters in question are "Michael Macbride," "Jeanie Burns," and "Lost Children." Also see John Thurston, *The Work of Words*, for a discussion of the production of Moodie's texts.

[7] Peterman assesses *Life in the Clearings* differently; he sees it as generally "an amiable portrait of society" ("Susanna Moodie" 90).

[8] See Una Chaudhuri's remarks, made in the context of the theatre (12). Much of my argument in this chapter relies on terminology and theorizing formulated by Chaudhuri in *Staging Place: The Geography of Modern Drama* (1995), including the notion of a failed homecoming and the dual definition of the narrative of home.

overtly figurative language, a simile or an extended or conspicuous metaphor, is translated into an actual event or circumstance" (30). Margaret Homans, who theorized this form of writing in her study *Bearing the Word: Language and Female Experience in Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing* (1986), argues that instances of literalization "bring together the thematics of female experience and some aspect of women's special relation to language" (29). Specifically, according to Homans, literalization is a woman writer's way of re-articulating a myth of language and her own position in and to language as well as to the paternal order that language symbolizes. Literalization thus "restores a female presence to life" (16). Building on Nancy Chodorow's work,[9] Homans further postulates that "literalization reproduces the literal language of daughterhood, of the mother's continued presence" (56), insofar as "in the symbolic order language is constituted as desire for a chain of substitutes for the mother, a translation of her literal body into figures" (160). Literalization, therefore, is a way of dealing with a loss, and in particular with the separation from a lost or vanished mother figure. For Moodie, the lost mother is the mother country: her writing articulates a yearning for a place of origin, for a nurturing home matrix. The source of this yearning is England, which "haunts [Moodie's] writing as the lost ideal, the desired object" (Thurston 83).

The second specification of the discourse of home – home as family – centres on Moodie's attempts to cover up the insufficiencies of home as house (and homeland) by shifting her emphasis from the material to the familial, to the very relationality – marriage and motherhood – that a narrative of home as family implicitly offers. Moodie extends her narrative voice to both her children and her husband, John Dunbar Moodie. *Roughing It in the Bush*, in particular, not only rarely shows Susanna "unaccompanied by one or more of

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[9] See chapter I.

her children," as Friewald argues ("'Tongue'"159), but it also draws John Moodie into Susanna's terrain of self-inscription. She also gives him his due as contributor to the text, granting him not merely implied but direct speech, and several sketches and poems are credited directly to him (including the chapters "The Village Hotel," "The Land-Jobber," and "Canadian Sketches"). "Discursively," therefore, "the narrating 'I' is rarely a discrete, separate entity" (159).[10] Instead, Susanna "speaks as a mother and wife," for whom marriage and motherhood are "constitutive, the most fundamental element in [her] articulation of self" (Whitlock, *Intimate Empire* 40).[11] Moodie's family not only provides parameters for self-definition, however, but also supplies the ground (in both senses of the word) for placement in Canada. The emigration scheme rests, presumably, on Susanna's consent, of which she says, "I had bowed to a superior mandate, the command of duty; for my husband's sake, for the sake of the infant whose little bosom heaved against my swelling heart, I had consented to bid adieu to my native shores" (*Roughing It* 194). Placement on these terms, however, inscribes a relation of obligation and "duty," experienced by Moodie repeatedly as a form of imprisonment. To put it quite bluntly, marriage and motherhood doom Susanna Moodie to a lifetime of feeling out of place.[12]

In her self-representation, Moodie the professional writer uses certain conventions and strategies – including a strategy of "feminine self-effacement," which, as Misao Dean observes, highlights Susanna's conformity to gendered norms of behaviour (25) – in order

[10] Friewald's reading of *Roughing It* treats John Dunbar Moodie as an absence, so that Susanna comes across somewhat as a 'single mother,' and an empowered one at that. See "'The tongue of woman': The Language of the Self in Susanna Moodie's *Roughing It in the Bush*" for Friewald's exploration of specific occurrences of the maternal idiom.

[11] In contrast to Friewald, Gillian Whitlock, in her postcolonial reading of *Roughing It*, includes John Dunbar Moodie in her consideration of the couple's contributions to the text, and she extends to him her argument about marriage and parenthood as at the centre of the Moodies' self-definition (*Intimate Empire* 40).

[12] Susanna is careful to emphasize that the sacrifice involved in immigration to Canada was her husband's as much as her own (*Roughing It* 208).

to appeal to her readership. Yet no narrative, *Roughing It* included, is entirely conscious and deliberate.[13] "Whatever Moodie's conscious intention," *Roughing It* became not just "a deeply felt personal record," nor just "a many-sided attempt to justify the failure [...] in the backwoods," as Michael Peterman comments, but is also evidence of Moodie's lasting discomfort with the notion of home in Canada: even as she was "comfortably settled in Belleville" when the book came together (*Epoch* 18, 16), her sense of the insufficiency of her earlier homes was undiminished. Furthermore, even in the 1840s and into the 1850s "a sense of bitterness lingered on in Susanna's writing about her town" (Ballstadt, Hopkins, Peterman, *Lifetime* 89). I suggest that the juxtaposition of competing discourses of home in *Roughing It* constitutes a feature in which the constructed nature of the narrative comes apart, giving access to some of the textual unconscious.

In my reading, the "dark core" of unawareness (to borrow Shapiro's phrase), in Moodie's memoir centres on the house/home, a figure that represents the stronghold of colonial presence in a settler society. While the concept of "home" is necessarily a complex one in expatriate writing, because it always also involves loss, emigrants nevertheless leave behind their old homes with the intention, hope, and desire of finding a new one. Within these parameters, the sketches and anecdotes in *Flora Lyndsay, Roughing It in the Bush,* and *Life in the Clearings,* however, play out as a failed-homecoming plot.[14] This thrust applies both to the arc of the narrative of all three works collectively –

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[13] In addition, its publication history marks *Roughing It in the Bush* as a collaborative effort. See John Thurston and Michael Peterman (*Epoch*), among others. Susanna nevertheless stood by the final version, as her correspondence and 1871 introduction demonstrate.

[14] With regard to the complexity of the definition of home in expatriate writing, D.M.R. Bentley notes in a related point that "at the archetypal or mythic level" emigration is inconsistent with most voyage patterns and therefore difficult to classify. "It is not a journey of excursion and return, but [...] a process of frequently reluctant removal from a cherished home and usually arduous relocation in an unfamiliar place" ("'Cake of Custom'" 94-5). Nevertheless, the ultimate purpose of emigration generally is resettlement and Moodie herself refers to it as "seek[ing] a new home amid the western wilds" (*Roughing It* 194).

beginning chronologically with *Flora Lyndsay* and ending with *Life in the Clearings* – and to the trajectory within each individual book. *Flora Lyndsay*, which begins the emigration story – a subject "hateful" to Flora/Susanna from its inception (7) – withholds the protagonists' actual landing on Canadian soil. Instead, Moodie decides to close just short of that event with the "bustle, confusion, and excitement of *preparing* to go on shore," for the curious reason, as she tells us, to avoid "becoming tedious" to her readers (342; italics added). Furthermore, the narrative in the final pages of *Flora Lyndsay*, much as in the beginning chapters of *Roughing It*, privileges the distant viewpoint over actual contact, as the protagonist regards the landscape from the safe enclosure of the ship (341), which functions as "an extension of the mother country, a floating microcosm of British society, with all its familiar comforts, hierarchies, customs, and associations" (Bentley, "'Cake of Custom'" 99). The resulting effect is one of anticipation rather than fulfillment or realization, of holding back rather than of coming in to land. Moodie's brief and incongruous "postscript" about the Lyndsays' subsequent residence in the colony does little to alter this impression. Similarly, *Life in the Clearings* which, like *Flora Lyndsay*, opens with the protagonist's departure – this time from Belleville, Susanna's town of residence in Upper Canada at the time – and which also takes the form of a ship's journey, does not take advantage either of the opportunity to close with Moodie arriving back at home. Instead, the last chapter is given over to miscellaneous reflections and observations about life in Canada, as well as to a defence of *Roughing It*. What is more, Moodie undermines what might otherwise be an affirmative closure – again, both to the events described in *Life in the Clearings* itself and to the trilogy on the whole – by ending not with her patriotic praise of the colony as the place that has offered her "the warmth and

hospitality of a Canadian Home" (*Life in the Clearings* 333), but instead with the verse "For London, A National Song," a "twenty-year-old paean to the mother country that had orphaned her" (Thurston 130).[15] The choice not only highlights Moodie's "lukewarm" feelings about Canada (130), but it explicitly stops the entire three-work cycle short of an arrival at home, frustrating the notion of a homecoming in the trilogy. Instead, the story that emerges from the complete cycle is one that complicates Susanna's claims that she "no longer regard[s] herself as an alien on [Canada's] shores, but her daughter by adoption" (*Life in the Clearings* 333): Moodie's use of what must surely be one of the master tropes of Western literature – the journey as a symbol of transformation – coupled with her simultaneous and repeated withholding of the journey's actual completion suggests a certain degree of resistance to Canadianization. "Throughout her life," notes Peterman, "Susanna Moodie thought of herself not as a Canadian, but as an Englishwoman," who held on to her English identity with "tenacity and pride" ("Susanna Moodie" 67). The incomplete narrative arc in the three works raises questions about the protagonist's metamorphosis and arguably negates the notion of a "Canadian" Susanna.

Considered individually, Moodie's main work, *Roughing It in the Bush*, enacts a series of failed homecomings. The story begins with the end of a literal journey, but any thought of a quest successfully performed to gain security or freedom is immediately subverted with the first sentence, which "set[s] a Poe-like mood of impending doom" (Peterman, *Susanna* 70): "The dreadful cholera was depopulating Quebec and Montreal, when our ship cast anchor off Grosse Isle" (*Roughing It* 21). Arrival in a time of cholera and death throws doubts on the venture from its start, and the uncertain nature of the

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[15] Thurston also argues, "there was a psychological and social rationale for this recycling: reprinting publications of the young woman in England, she sealed an identity between that woman and the married, middle-aged immigrant she somehow turned out to be" (90).

undertaking is further emphasized by the gloomy imagery of the first chapters. For instance, one of the two doctors who board the ship is an emblem "of hopeless decay" and "would have made no bad representative of him who sat upon the pale horse" (21). Furthermore, as a result of the cholera, tolling bells "proclaim a mournful tale of woe and death." Landing itself is jeopardized as the Moodies are "advised [...] not to go on shore" if they value their lives (39). Finally, in the dark the *Horsley Hill* crashes into the *Anne*, the ship carrying Moodie, causing "thoughts of death" and fears of going to "the unknown eternity" (44). "[D]eath was everywhere," Susanna remarks, "perhaps lurking in our very path" (55). The literal deaths and the morbidity of the opening sketches of *Roughing It* cast the Moodies' emigration in terms of a doomed scheme. The landing sequence as the first unsuccessful arrival anticipates their later failures, most especially further failures of homecoming.[16] What is more, through her description of the laughable encounter with the two health officers, Susanna constructs the undertaking as anti-heroic. One of these, "a little shrivelled-up Frenchman" (21), offends Moodie as he butchers the language by dropping articles and, of all things, "words and phrases such as 'I' and 'we are'" that are indicative of individual and collective identity, suggesting Moodie's "fearful sense of a social and personal disintegration" (Bentley, "'Cake of Custom'" 116). Both officers are taken in by the ship's captain's practical joke about births during the voyage, and the oath they require of the captain is finally sworn on a copy of Voltaire's *History of Charles XII* rather than on the Bible (*Roughing It* 23). Inasmuch as the two officers represent Canada,

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[16] Janet Giltrow, who reads *Roughing It* as a travel narrative, is one of a number of critics who finds the morbidity in the text systemic. Giltrow sees the distance between the work's two poles, that of the "travel esthetic and the settler's destiny," as sometimes bridged by morbidity and "the idea of death" ("Painful Experience" 133). Also see David Stouck's reading in *Major Canadian Authors*.

the arrival scene suggests a place of disorder. The book's opening thus immediately stages a struggle with place and prefigures the narrative's probing of the crisis of exile.

This thematic is continued when Moodie first steps ashore at Grosse Isle. This (much-analyzed) scene represents her as a geopathic figure, as one who is out of place. The island, though it "looks a perfect paradise at [a] distance," proves disappointing upon contact. Its physical features are literally repellent – the rocks, Susanna reports, are "so hot that I could scarcely put my foot upon them" – and there are swarms of mosquitoes everywhere (28-31). Her reaction distinguishes her clearly from the lower-class figures she observes, who appropriate the space and take possession of its unique, physical characteristics precisely according to their own needs and regardless of their effect upon others:

> Never shall I forget the extraordinary spectacle that met our sight the moment we passed the low range of bushes which formed a screen in front of the river. A crowd of many hundred Irish emigrants had been landed during the present and former day; and all this motley crew – men, women, and children, who were not confined by sickness to the sheds (which greatly resembled cattle-pens) – were employed in washing clothes, or spreading them out on the rocks and bushes to dry.
>
> The men and boys were *in* the water, while the women, with their scanty garments tucked above their knees, were trampling their bedding in tubs, or in holes in the rocks, which the retiring tide had left half full of water. Those who did not possess washing-tubs, pails or iron pots, or could not obtain access to a hole in the rocks, were running to and fro, screaming in no unmeasured terms. The confusion of

> Babel was among them. All talkers and no hearers – each shouting and yelling in his or her uncouth dialect, and all accompanying their vociferations with violent and extraordinary gestures, quite incomprehensible to the uninitiated. (29; original italics)

In Moodie's failed-homecoming narrative the Irish labourers' appropriation of space – the use of its rocks, bushes, and tide pools for washing and drying clothes – "becomes a disease" that infectiously spreads to other passengers and that in Moodie herself generates a disorientating dis-ease with place (MacDonald 22): "We were *literally stunned* by the strife of tongues," she tells us about her sense of incapacitation (20; italics added).

The geopathic nature of the Grosse Isle landing manifests itself in social terms as part of a system of contrasts between Canada and England.[17] There is an enormous gap between place and self, between Moodie's expectations regarding class distinctions, her own place in society, and the reality she finds in the colony.[18] Susanna, who in England had enjoyed the congenial company of her literary friends (Ballstadt, Hopkins, Peterman, *Letters of a Lifetime* 61), is deeply disturbed by the social levelling that confronts her in Canada and that she encounters during her first excursion onto Canadian soil.[19] She is offended not only by the Irish and Scotch labourers' behaviour at Grosse Isle but later in the narrative by the disrespectful attitude of her American neighbours, who see her as "no

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[17] In *Life in the Clearings*, this system of literal contrasts between the two countries is yet more pronounced and more often than not assessed in England's favour: "How differently in my own country are these things ordered," exclaims Moodie, late in the second memoir, articulating her continuing sense of displacement (325).

[18] The Moodies, as historian Charlotte Gray notes, had persuaded themselves before their journey that with their education, brains, and manners, "they would form the land-owning cream of Upper Canada" (ix).

[19] Some critics have taken offense at her reaction. Hallvard Dahlie, for instance, finds that her "ingrained snobbery" made her process of adjustment "more difficult than it need have been" (18); Alec Lucas reads her "prideful" conduct as something she has to overcome (149); and Susan Greenfield argues that the backwoods is "the location where [Moodie] faces her faulty nature and, to a large extent, overcomes it" (92). Dahlie further comments, unsympathetically, "to the end of her long residence in Upper Canada [Susanna Moodie] clung to all the pretensions and vestigial remnants of gentility that she could muster" (19).

better" than themselves (*Roughing It* 136). She complains about the "utter want" of "common courtesy" in settler conduct, which results in the titles of "sir" and "madam" being "rarely applied by inferiors," and about having to share close quarters with servants (197). "[I]it is the very literalness of dispossession," notes Chaudhuri, "that interferes with the construction of 'new world identities'" (173).[20] By contrast, the one type of experience that stands out as providing Susanna with a sense of her own worth is her interaction with the aboriginal Canadians. From the beginning of her dealings with them, she regards them as her "Indian friends," whom she can meet "with confidence" (*Roughing It* 273). What is more, the Indians come to her for help with their sick children, and even to be painted by her after they have admired her skilful renderings of flowers and birds. She is pleased when they regard her as capable of "do[ing] everything" (287-91). When finally the Moodies leave the woods, "a group of silent Indians" comes to bid them farewell (481). While Susanna idealizes the loyalty of the Natives, they nevertheless "allow the Moodies to display a gentility appropriate to their class and origins" (Whitlock, *Intimate Empire* 66).

The landing at Grosse Isle, however, offers no such opportunities. Instead, while waiting for return transportation to the ship, Susanna, together with her husband and infant daughter, literally retreats from the alienating environment to an area where they are "out of sight" of the "filthy" Irish who have taken over the place (30-31). Yet the noise made by the crowd still intrudes, persistently disturbing the family's first encounter with Canadian space. The scene provides a prime example of the confusion and disorder

[20] Moodie remained convinced that Canada was no country for gentlefolk: she reiterates the same sentiment in her introduction to *Life in the Clearings* and again in her 1871 introduction to the Canadian edition of *Roughing It*, where she complains about the "saucy familiarity of servants, who, republicans at heart, think themselves as good as their employers" (526).

produced by displacement. Susanna's "first day's experience of the land of all our hopes," as she calls it, far from engendering any sense of homecoming (33), is no more than an abortive arrival followed by immediate and panicked withdrawal. In response, she undertakes an effort to code the unfamiliar through the *familial* by including her husband and child in the narrating "I." It is John Moodie who finds a shelter for his family away from the disturbance, by "discover[ing] a woodland path that led to the back of the island." The "poor baby," meanwhile, tormented by mosquitoes, adds her voice, and, "not at all pleased with her first visit to the new world, fill[s] the air with cries" (30-31). Susanna's family, while here unable to mediate entry into the new environment, at least makes the experience of place somewhat easier to bear by sharing, in a manner of speaking, her perspective: John recognizes the need for distance from the crowd and finds for his wife and child a separate space, and the baby, like her mother, complains about the environment's features. The scene continues the thematic thrust of the family's arrival at their new home being complicated by errors of ill-placement.

The idea of home itself, in *Roughing It in the Bush,* is set uneasily against the figure of the house – highlighting that literal dwelling and the feeling of being at home are by no means identical – for Moodie's homes in Canada stand in opposition to the real home, the left-behind home she craves: "My whole soul yielded itself up to a strong and overpowering grief," she reports. "One simple word dwelt for ever in my heart, and swelled it to bursting – 'Home!' I repeated it waking a thousand times a day, and my last prayer before I sank to sleep at night was still 'Home!'" (89). When the real home is "but a memory, [...] the expression of the desire for home becomes a substitute for home [and] embodies the emotion attendant upon the image" (Seidel 11). Moodie's first homecoming

(to a house), by contrast, epitomizes the disappointing reality of the colony, literalizing in particular Susanna's perception that "home" is unrecognizable as such in Canada: while the farm the Moodies have purchased is still occupied (and their 'proper' homecoming thus effectively prevented), their interim residence turns out to be no more than "a miserable hut, at the bottom of a steep descent," which the Yankee driver who takes Susanna there ironically recommends for its "smart location." "I gazed upon the place in perfect dismay," she tells us, "for I had never seen such a shed called a house before. 'You must be mistaken,' [she says to the driver]; this is not a house, but a cattle-shed, or pig-sty." The scene is, again, one of disorder inasmuch as the building at first appears to be at the point of collapse; its front door is missing, and consequently "[t]hree young steers and two heifers [...] were quietly reposing upon the floor." To make matters worse, "[t]he rain poured in at the open door, beat in at the shattered window, and dropped upon our heads from the holes in the roof. The wind blew keenly through a thousand apertures in the log walls; and nothing could exceed the uncomfortableness of our situation" (90-92). The figure of home in Canada as defective, as no more than a diminished version of human dwelling, is thus literalized in the Moodies' hut. What is more, "this untenable tenement" is made worse because Susanna cannot immediately fall back onto her discourse of home as family. Her husband, as we learn, "was not yet in sight with the teams" and Susanna is "terrified at being left alone in this wild, strange-looking place" (91). (Throughout *Roughing It*, John Moodie will frequently let his wife down by not being "at home" when she most needs him, during those critical junctures when crises occur –and there are many.)

In this instance, John does finally arrive and immediately turns his hand to fitting the door in place, thus enclosing the family unit. It is, however, Susanna who has found the door lying at the back of the house, and it is therefore she who allows the family's all-important privacy to be restored. In the end, with "all busily employed – even the poor baby, who was lying upon a pillow in the old cradle, trying the strength of her lungs" (92-93), family transforms the hut into a home:

> Our united efforts had effected a complete transformation in our uncouth dwelling. Sleeping-berths had been partitioned off for the men; shelves had been put up for the accommodation of books and crockery, a carpet covered the floor, and the chairs and tables we had brought from — gave an air of comfort to the place, which, on the first view of it, I deemed impossible. My husband [...] had walked over to inspect the farm, and I was sitting at the table at work, the baby creeping upon the floor, and Hannah [the maid] preparing dinner. The sun shone warm and bright, and the open door admitted a current of fresh air, which tempered the heat of the fire. (95)

In this idyllic family scene, order is restored and all members are now placed precisely where expected: John Moodie, the husband and provider, is looking after the business of the farm, while Susanna is engaged in domestic work, with the baby close by, and the family's servant is occupied with the more menial task of preparing dinner.[21]

I am quoting these examples at some length to illustrate both how Moodie literalizes the figure of home and how her discourse of home as family helps to disguise

[21] Helen M. Buss suggests (in reference to an observation by Julie Jeffrey about the American frontier) that, as the women who settled Ontario were "often consciously genteel and middle class," they were particularly interested in "replicat[ing] as quickly as possible what they had left behind" (*Mapping Our Selves*, 46-47). Similarly, Gillian Whitlock points to the importance of domestic order and household management as "critical to the formation of white, middle-class European subjects" (*Intimate Empire* 50).

the deficiency of home as house. Here it even allows for a limited engagement with the immediate surroundings, which are "admitted" through the open door. As the thrust of the narrative bears out, however, this discourse falls short of making a connection with place in the broader sense. The disjuncture between the two specifications of the discourse reveals a fracture in the narrative, a site "where 'things fall apart,' and the struggle to assemble a speaking subject remains palpable in the final text" (Whitlock, *Intimate Empire* 39). The gap between home as house and home as family presents itself as perhaps the main "fissure[...] of female discontinuity" in *Roughing It*, in which the work's attempt "to seal up and cover over [...] dislocations in time and space, insecurities, hesitations, and blind spots" is unsuccessful (Benstock, "Authorizing" 152), laying bare the instability of the constructed text and consequently the implications of displacement for the authorial "I."

From this deficient first home, the Moodies nearly go to the experience that literalizes, for the already unhomed immigrants, the dispossession and loss associated with exile: actual homelessness. They are forced to vacate the "wretched cabin" in which they have made do for six weeks, but are prevented by Uncle Joe and his "odious" family from taking "possession of the home which for some time has been [the Moodies'] own" (116, 129). Thus dislodged, they have no choice but to pay Uncle Joe's mother (a *de facto* squatter in a small outbuilding) a disproportionate sum for the use of the small dwelling she inhabits. This "log hut" is an even more diminutive "home" than the one the Moodies are obliged to leave. It "was of the smallest dimensions," Susanna writes, "only containing one room, which served the old dame for kitchen, and bed-room, and all. The open door and a few glazed panes supplied it with light and air; while a huge hearth [...] took up

nearly half the domicile" (129). The fact that the Moodies should even have to consider making their home in such an inferior residence – despite having purchased a cleared farm that includes a farmhouse – reflects poorly on John Moodie's ability to keep his family safe. The transaction he had made earlier shows him as lacking the kind of shrewdness to deal effectively with the peculiar requirements of place, as pointedly stated by Uncle Joe's mother (130). So disturbing is his ineffectiveness, and understandably so frightening the prospect of being without a roof over her head, that Susanna, "anxious about the result of the negotiation" (128), steps out of her domestic role to accompany her husband to the old woman's hut – thus giving herself the option to intervene, should the need arise. (In future moments of crisis she will do more than that by assuming the lead rather than waiting for John to take action.) The literal homelessness that here threatens the Moodies – and which is only prevented by paying "literally [...] twice over" for the dilapidated place, as Susanna points out – is the actualization of the displacement they have undergone. It articulates the enormous problem of (self-)location they confront in the colony (135).

The pattern of failed homecomings disguised by a narrative of home as family continues with the Moodies' subsequent moves. Their taking possession of the farmhouse they purchased months earlier is first callously prevented and then sabotaged by Uncle Joe – literally denying the Moodies their rightful place and literally undermining their relocation. "I don't care a curse about any of you. It is my house as long as I choose to remain in it," he tells Susanna, and then leaves the house "'more filthy than a pig-sty.'" "But that was not the worst of it," Moodie explains: "Uncle Joe, before he went, had undermined the brick chimney, and let all the water into the house" (164). He also leaves behind, stowed away in a cupboard, a skunk, whose smell renders the house temporarily

unusable, thereby further incapacitating the near-houseless (but tenacious) settler: it "turned me so sick and faint that I had to cling to the door-post for support," Moodie reports (165). That this dispute revolves around the question of property highlights the economic reasons that had led to the Moodies' emigration in the first place. Similarly, the house in the Douro woods, although "[s]uch as it was, it was a palace when compared [to their first two dwellings]," is still unfinished and thus not ready for their occupation when they arrive, and it is then accidentally set on fire and nearly destroyed before they even have the opportunity to move in (277-78). In both cases, however, Moodie's familial narrativity again carries her through. About the farmhouse she tells us, "no one was better pleased with the change than little Katie, [...who] crept from room to room, feeling and admiring everything, and talking to it in her baby language." Her husband, meanwhile, is able to handle the bane of disorder associated with emigration: he deals with a literal "demon of unrest [...] in the shape of a countless swarm of mice" by effectively deploying a mouse trap (165-66).[22] The environment in Douro is similarly mediated by Susanna's sister, Catharine Parr Traill, a resident of the area for almost a year:

> When we reached the top of the ridge that overlooked our cot, my sister stopped, and pointed out a log-house among the trees. There S—," she said, "is your home. When that black cedar swamp is cleared away that now hides the lake from us, you will have a very pretty view." My conversation with her had quite altered the aspect of the country, and predisposed me to view things in the most favourable light. (277)

[22] Whitlock notes that, because of the absence of the older generation in the emigration scheme, and "with them a sense of continuity, precedent, and tradition," Moodie "sees disorder" from the moment she first steps ashore at Grosse Isle, including "closest to the bone, middle-class genteel men and women who are reduced to abject poverty and destitution" (*Intimate Empire* 47). The same image of disorder is also associated with each of the Moodies' homes.

While the *meaning* of home is "altered" when articulated by a member of the family, the *reality* of home is another matter altogether, for it is characterized by the hardships, poverty, and near-disasters with which readers of *Roughing It* are familiar. "[I]mmigration insists on the reality of one's relation to place," making ill-placement a matter both literal and specific (Chaudhuri 204).

The Moodies' move to Douro – "the major tactical error" in their settlement plans (Peterman, *Susanna* 78) – is hastened by the failure of their Hamilton Township farm. This failure, in turn, is signalled by a halting of the discourse of home as family that is caused by an external threat in the form of "trials of intrusion" (Peterman, *Epoch* 59): having entered into a share-cropping agreement with another couple, the Moodies' freedom of speech within the family unit is jeopardized by the closeness of these nosy neighbours. Susanna comments:

> [E]ven their roguery was more tolerable than the *irksome restraint* which their near vicinity, and constantly having to come in contact with them, imposed. We had no longer any privacy, our servants were cross-questioned, and our family affairs canvassed by these gossiping people, who spread about a thousand falsehoods regarding us. (*Roughing It* 169; italics added)

So troublesome is this threat from without – and so critical the continuation of the familial discourse – that Moodie "would gladly have given [to the other couple] all the proceeds of the farm to get rid of them." Remarkably, John Moodie fails again in his role as provider, for the Moodies are also being cheated out of their fair share of the harvest. "All the money we expended upon the farm was entirely for these people's benefit," Susanna tells us, "for by their joint contrivances very little of the crops fell to our share; and when any

division was made it was always when [John] Moodie was absent from home; and there was no person present to see fair play" (169). This is as close to open criticism of her husband as Susanna comes, and in fact Gillian Whitlock points out about John Dunbar Moodie that in both "his African and Canadian emigrations he remained vulnerable, unable to provide as domestic man should" (*Intimate Empire* 61). John's vulnerability is in no small measure due to his being "absent from home" during certain critical junctures, absences that highlight the challenge of honouring the centrality of "home" for the settler.

The Moodies' disorderly and restless moves from one deficient home to the next are symptomatic of the larger geopathic narrative thrust that is manifest in *Roughing It in the Bush* and that links psychological ills to an error of location. Not just the protagonist but many of the characters – from Tom Wilson to Brian the still-hunter and to the N— family – are defined by a problem with place. The most conspicuous geopathic symptom is alcoholism, which is rampant in the colony. It appears as a reaction (or even resistance) to the features and requirements of place, including the need for continuous hard labour, the difficult climate, and the lack of civilized society – all of which diminish the quality of "home." About Captain N—, for example, Susanna reports:

> [He] had been induced to [...] build[...] a log house, and clear[...] a large extent of barren and stony land. To this uninviting home he conveyed a beautiful young wife, and a small and increasing family. The result may be easily anticipated. The want of society – a dreadful want to a man of his previous habits – the total absence of all the comforts and decencies of life, produced inaction, apathy, and at last, despondency, which was only alleviated by a constant and immoderate use of ardent spirits. (*Roughing It* 443)

Alcoholism fails, unsurprisingly, to ease the symptoms of geopathic disorders in the longer term, and Captain N— eventually escapes his "victimage of location" (in Chaudhuri's terminology [xii]) in the only effective way: by departing. He leaves behind his wife and children, abandoning them to their own entrapment in place. When Susanna and Emilia perform their mercy visit to the N— household, in "A Walk to Dummer," they find Mrs. N— and her offspring virtual prisoners in the cold and crudely furnished house. While alcohol is not Susanna's weakness, for her the most prominent symptom of the suffering caused by ill-placement, as she tells us, is her homesickness, "that worst of all maladies" (*Life in the Clearings* 212). Described as "fits of melancholy," it is related to the melancholy suffered by Brian the still-hunter and as such is a form of madness (*Roughing It* 48, 73, 89). This madness, or "strangeness," may be regarded as an affliction that conveys the alienation and confusion wrought by feeling out of place in a strange, unhomelike (in the Freudian sense of "*unheimlich*" or "uncanny") home.

Set against this alienation, in the Douro backwoods Susanna's narrative of home extends to a solidly literal system of managing the environment, aimed at increasing the functional usability of place. Initially, control over her surroundings appears to be out of Moodie's reach and this lack is a major source of the gap between her and place. Her first attempt at bread-making, for example, is a humiliating failure, leading her to conclude that she could have borne criticisms of her writing with "more fortitude" than the cutting of her first loaf (*Roughing It* 121). She rubs the skin off her wrists when she first tries her "unskilled hand" at washing "some small baby-articles" without succeeding to get them clean (136). She is afraid of cows and, at first, does not know how to milk, and she experiences "distaste" at having to perform manual labour on the farm (183, 353). Over

time, however, she develops a range of useful skills. For instance, she devises a way to catch wild ducks, and also "practice[s] a method of painting birds and butterflies upon the white, velvety surface of the large fungi [growing on maple trees]," to earn some much-needed money. She makes excellent maple sugar – "drained [...] until it was almost as white as loaf sugar" – and uses some to enhance her now superior baking skills (420). She works on her garden, commenting that it was "as usual [...] very productive," and she is a deft hand with the canoe and paddle (470-71). In her husband's absence she even runs the farm on her own (421). These activities suggest a process of adaptation, as Moodie becomes "more able and reconciled" to her new surroundings (Peterman, *Epoch* 50). As a measure of personal agency and effective control of the environment, however, Susanna's efforts are both never enough and ultimately unsuccessful: the bush farm eventually fails disastrously, only to be abandoned by the family.

The Moodies' ultimate flight from the backwoods speaks to their precarious existence in the Canadian bush, to the constant effort not just to live contentedly, but simply to live. The rawness of life for an impoverished settler family like the Moodies, in a time of general economic depression and widespread illness, is palpable in *Roughing It*, as Susanna struggles even to keep shoes on her children's feet. The Moodies' battle culminates in a series of crises in which the unmanageable environment encroaches upon their house, resulting in the house itself being characterized as a threat, as a potential grave for Susanna and the children. They are in danger both of freezing to death and, on two occasions, of being burned alive inside the log dwelling.[23] By the very logic of the

[23] In addition, Moodie struggled with a series of illnesses, both her own and her children's, during the later period of her residence in the backwoods while John Moodie was away on account of the rebellion (see in particular Ballstadt, Hopkins, and Peterman, *Letters of Love* 114, 152, 158-59). Carl Ballstadt's reading of these letters vis-à-vis *Roughing It* demonstrates that Susanna's depiction of her trials in the bush, far from

discourse of home as family, these near-tragedies anticipate the family's ultimate departure from the bush, for the children are the emblem of family. The Moodies' attempts "to restrain, put in order, cultivate the bush" are first and foremost efforts to make room for a growing family and are driven by the force of generation (Tinkler 11). While in the bush, Susanna gives birth to four children, and the arrival of each is duly recorded in *Roughing It*.[24] By the same token, for John Moodie (as for Susanna), the expectation of an increasing family was precisely the driving force behind his decision to emigrate (*Roughing It* 195; *Flora Lyndsay* 7).[25] In one of his sketches, a summary of the settlement scheme, John is explicit about the position of the colonist: "Nature looks sternly on him, and in order to preserve his own existence, he must *conquer Nature*, as it were, by his perseverance and ingenuity" (*Roughing It* 495; italics added). If this is the settler's mandate, the construction of home in the bush is, nevertheless, "predicated on the destruction of the woods. [...] The genealogical tree that replaces the real tree must be rooted in the space they had once occupied" (Chaudhuri 75). In Susanna Moodie's discourse of home as family, her children are precisely what conceptually replaces nature: they are "human flowers," raised in a "hut in that far-off wilderness" (*Flora Lyndsay* 85).[26] As for John Moodie, his unhappy role in these near-disasters is that of the provider who fails those who depend upon him. While Susanna "is the active force" and single-handedly saves the children and herself (Peterman, *Epoch* 88), he is absent from the log

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being exaggerated to gain her readers' sympathy, is "restrained" compared to the account she gives in her private correspondence ("'Embryo Blossom'" 144).

[24] The Moodies have five children when they leave the bush, and Susanna is pregnant with their sixth (born in July of 1840).

[25] Thurston notes about John Moodie's rationale for leaving England: "In both fiction and autobiography the husband argues his heirs' case against his wife" (Thurston 65).

[26] Similarly, in *Life in the Clearings*, she refers to flowers as "lovely children of light" (297), again underlining the conceptual link between her offspring and nature.

dwelling during both fires, leaving his family unprotected in an unsafe "home" when the demise of the children would make nonsense of the entire emigration venture.[27]

The failure of homecoming is tied to the multireferentiality of the term "home" itself. "Home" can have many meanings, and its associations reach far beyond the individual place of residence. Instead, the word "can refer with equal ease to house, land, village, city, district, country, [...] transmit[ting] the sentimental associations of one scale to all the others" (Sopher 130). Susanna Moodie's "home" is complicated by its contradictory character: on the one hand, on the level of home as house, it is made precious by the hardships the family endures together and therefore "consecrated by the memory of a thousand sorrows" (*Roughing It* 482); Susanna's "dear forest home" is also the "birthplace of [her] three boys," and a place pervaded by a "spirit of peace and harmony," marked by "the most affectionate attachment [...] among its members" (480, 425). It is the place shared with close friends, particularly female ones – that virtual sisterhood so important to women's self-definition[28] – to whom the familial discourse extends and who are able, through their presence, to alter Susanna's ability to relate to place. About a specific period during a cold snap in early 1839, for instance, while John is away soldiering, she writes:

> We felt very lonely in our solitary dwelling, crouching around the blazing fire, that scarcely chased the cold from our *miserable log-tenement*, until this dreary period

[27] I am by no means suggesting that John Moodie was ever neglectful of his family in his behaviour. My reading does, however, take into consideration the fact that Susanna persistently draws attention to his absences. Whitlock goes further: she finds the "trajectory of emigration in *Roughing It* [...] 'unintelligible' because it contradicts all those expectations of settlement, and for this the husband and father is called to account" (61). In a related point Carol Shields remarks about Moodie's portrayal of men in general: "The men in [Moodie's] Canadian books, at least those men of sensibility, are doomed to failure" (*Voice and Vision* 72).

[28] See chapter I.

> was suddenly cheered by the unexpected presence of my beloved friend, Emilia, who came to spend a week with me in *my forest home*. (448; italics added)

Home as house is always transformed by the discourse of home as family, which is at the centre of Susanna Moodie's narrativity of place.

On the other hand, home as new homeland is figured in terms of a betrayal by place, one largely unmitigated – with regard to the reality of pioneer experience – by any familial discourse. In *Roughing It in the Bush* this betrayal is illustrated by Moodie's consistent narrative pattern of anticipation followed by disillusionment,[29] while in *Life in the Clearings* in a similar pattern affirmative observations about place are immediately followed by critical ones (177, 179, 181, 295, 308-309). Furthermore, Moodie "displaces" her occasional identification with the colony by focusing on the future, not the present. Accordingly, it is as the "land of our sons" that Canada has a "bright future" ahead and that she "possesses within her territory all the elements of future prosperity" (*Life in the Clearings* 17, 21). Arguably, however, for Susanna this future-oriented vision, in which she identifies herself as a "mother[...] of British sons" in Canada, establishes the gap between herself and the colony that it purports to bridge.[30] What is more, in *Life in the Clearings* the hopes for "wealth and independence" first expressed prior to the Moodies' departure from England are still not fulfilled and "virtuous toil" has still not brought its

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[29] Critics from R.D. MacDonald to Gillian Whitlock have commented on this pattern. See "Design and Purpose" and *Intimate Empire*, respectively. In a similar vein, T.D. MacLulich argues in "Crusoe in the Backwoods: A Canadian Fable?" that Susanna Moodie felt "rebuffed" by Canada (124).

[30] In the same context, Veronica Thompson's reading focuses on the distance created between colony and mother country (87).

rewards (*Roughing It* 195). Canada's desirability continues to be deferred to "a future only her children would see" (Thurston 159).[31]

In the context of home as homeland, then, home is represented as a "tragic impasse," to borrow from Chaudhuri's description of geopathology (15), and signifies nothing less than entrapment. Susanna does indeed return again and again to one specific and startling image to articulate her experience: prison. Describing her feeling for Canada as "very nearly allied to that which the condemned criminal entertains for his cell," she also composes poetry in which she complains, "how my spirit tires, / In the dark prison of thy boundless woods" (135, 163). In *Life in the Clearings* she refers to her experience in the bush as "the green prison of the woods" (12), and *Roughing It* ends, famously, with her wish that by "revealing the secrets of the prison-house" she may be able to deter others "from sinking their property, and shipwrecking all their hopes" in the backwoods of Canada (489). The slippage between home as homeland, exile, and prison constructs place as "one-dimensional and fully determining" by completely altering the dynamics of place: while exile always holds out the hope of change, of improvement, of a better future, prison lacks all these qualities (Chaudhuri xii; 274, n.4). Yet while Susanna represents her experience as a form of imprisonment, her family obligations prevent self-determination and keep her tied to an oppressive place. For the wife and mother there is no escape. Thus, when it is suggested to her that "a new country always improves upon acquaintance," she

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[31] Moodie's correspondence, sadly, tells a story of the family's continued difficulties and poverty, of children falling ill and dying, and of persistent estrangement (see Ballstadt, Hopkins, Peterman, *Letters of a Lifetime* and *Letters of Love and Duty*).

replies, "Ah, never! Did I only consult my own feelings, I would be off by the next steam-boat for England" (*Life in the Clearings* 213).[32]

For Susanna, the attempt to find a conjuncture between place and personal identity is made difficult because the *desired* ground of her homecoming is always located in the past and elsewhere. It is England that is Moodie's source of security and fulfillment. For Susanna "home never belongs to the present [...] 'home' is always and only the place that is left behind" (Thurston 156), a contrast she herself draws:

> [M]y heart yearned intensely for my absent home. Home! The word had ceased to belong to my *present* – it was doomed to live forever in the *past*; for what emigrant ever regarded the country of his exile as his *home*? To the land he has left, that name belongs for ever, and in no instance does he bestow it upon another. "I have got a letter from home!" "I have seen a friend from home!" "I dreamt last night that I was at home!" are expressions of everyday occurrence, to prove that the heart acknowledges no other home than the land of its birth. (*Roughing It* 47-48; original italics)

In the definition of home as the land of one's birth, *Flora Lyndsay* and *Roughing It in the Bush* counterpose Moodie's yearning for England as the place best capable of nurturing and supporting her selfhood to the needs of her family and her spousal and maternal responsibility.

Furthermore, the specific qualities Susanna associates with home as homeland shed light on her failure of homecoming in Canada. In order to understand this failure, one

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[32] The described scene occurs in the sketch "Michael Macbride," originally intended for publication in *Roughing It*, as already mentioned. Similarly, at the end of the sketch "Jeanie Burns," also meant for *Roughing It*, Moodie includes the poem "My Native Land," which contains this image of escape: "[I] wish in vain for wings to flee / Back to thy much-loved shore" (*Life in the Clearings* 239).

must remember that "[h]omecoming is an archetypally regressive act" (Chaudhuri 92). If "leaving home is a repetition of the first journey in the 'travail' of childbirth, an active and painful displacement from the safety and unfreedom of the 'maternal' home" (Curtis and Pajaczowska 200), then homecoming is a return to a native matrix. This involves a conceptualization of one's place of being as a nurturing "container" in which the self can flourish and grow. *Flora Lyndsay* and *Roughing It in the Bush* link England as the home of the heart to two other concepts that are archetypal for women seeking authenticity of self and (self-)location: Mother and Nature, often figured as one and the same. Accordingly, Susanna's original home of Reydon Hall is described (in *Flora Lyndsay*) as a place whose natural features mimic the protective and nurturing qualities of the maternal womb:

> The Hall was an old-fashioned house, [...] surrounded by fine gardens and lawn-like meadows, and stood sheltered within a grove of noble old trees. [...] Silent bosom friends were those dear old trees! Every noble sentiment of [one's] soul, [...] – had been fostered, or grown upon [one], in those pastoral solitudes. (84)

The sheltered house (a proper Heideggerian dwelling-place) is a cultural representation of the sheltering cave which, in turn, relates to the protecting function of the vessel as the central symbol of the Feminine (Neumann 45-46).[33] Trees, equally, are at the heart of the generative symbolism associated with the Great Mother as the mother of all vegetation, because they also shelter (birds, nests) and contain (leaves, branches, twigs, and by extension the tree's spirit) (49). The nurturing and protective qualities of Susanna's

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[33] Freud similarly argues, in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, that the home operates as an alternative mother, as "a substitute for the mother's womb" (38). From a Freudian perspective, Susanna Moodie's deficient homes may suggest a link with the macabre and threatening homes of Gothic fiction.

ancestral home constitute a maternal realm in which the self has been "fostered" or "grown"; it is the originating container for self-identity.

The same maternal and sustaining qualities also extend to home as homeland, for England's natural world, Susanna tells us, "arrayed in her green loveliness, had ever smiled upon me like an indulgent mother, holding out her loving arms to enfold to her bosom her erring but devoted child," and it is from England's "sacred bosom" that she is "torn" by emigration (*Roughing It* 73). Nature and England "form an identity" (S. Johnston 36), which Moodie mythologizes in poetry included in *Roughing It,* such as in "The Lament of the Canadian Emigrant": "In dreams, lovely England! my spirit still hails / Thy soft waving woodlands, thy green, daisied vales. / [...] / When my soul, dearest Nature! shall cease to adore thee, / [...] / Then the love I have cherish'd, my country, for thee, / In the breast of thy daughter extinguish'd shall be" (*Roughing It* 86). For Susanna, the "real content of the term 'Nature'" is associated with the "nurturing and maternal aspects [...] found only in England" (S. Johnston 37). What is more, Moodie employs a "language of daughterhood" to connect to her home matrix – a reminder that, in the chain of signifier and signified whose source is the figure of the mother, "the original of all referents [is] Mother Earth" (Homans 56, 66). In May in England, Moodie writes, for instance,

> The woods were bursting into leaf, the meadows and hedge-rows were flushed with flowers, and every grove and copsewood echoed to the warblings of birds and the hummings of bees. [...] Here [at the "old Hall, the beloved home of my childhood and youth"] annually, from year to year, I had renewed my friendship with the first primroses and violets, and listened with the untiring ear of love to the

> spring roundelay of the blackbird, whistled from among his bower of May blossoms. Here, I had discoursed sweet words to the tinkling brook, and learned from the melody of waters the music of natural sounds. (*Roughing It* 72-73)[34]

In England, Susanna partakes of Nature's abundance through a childlike, unmediated relationship that enacts a form of merging, an immersion in the natural sensations, and particularly in "natural sounds." This intimate participation is made possible by the nonsymbolic language she uses in her communication with Nature: the "discourse[of] sweet words" and the "melody" and "music" produced by the nurturing environment, which the narrator "listened [to] with the untiring ear of love." This is a form of communication that parallels the presymbolic language shared by infant and mother, and which, like the latter, does not so much "signify" as "present contact between mother and daughter" (Homans 18).

In Canada, the same childlike connection with Nature is difficult, if not impossible, to sustain, signalling Moodie's "painful passage" out of childhood (Friewald, "'Tongue'" 166). In Canada, just as in England, Susanna is still drawn to the natural world, particularly to water, whose "voice" speaks to her in a familiar language, but the psychological effect on her of this relationship is altered:

> I know not how it was, but the sound of that tinkling brook [near the Moodies' log hut], for ever rolling by, filled my heart with a strange melancholy, which for many nights deprived me of rest. I loved it, too. The voice of waters, in the stillness of night, always had an extraordinary effect upon my mind. Their

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[34] The idea that "regular" language – the symbolic and figurative, governed by the Law of the Father – is inadequate to convey the meaning of Nature, as well as one's feelings for Nature, surfaces repeatedly in Moodie's texts. See *Roughing It* (266) and *Life in the Clearings* (299).

> ceaseless motion and perpetual sound convey to me the idea of life – eternal life. (*Roughing It* 134)

Although Susanna still understands the language of the "tinkering brook" – inasmuch as she perceives the element of water as associated with the maternal, with the mystery of creation, death and rebirth, the flow of time into eternity, and, ultimately with the source of all life[35] – the meaning she extracts now fills her only with "melancholy" and "deprive[s her] of rest." These sentiments foreshadow the tragic revelation made in *Life in the Clearings*, in reference to the Moira river in Belleville: "Oh agony unspeakable! The writer of this lost a fine talented boy of six years – one to whom her soul clave – in those cruel waters" (46).

Furthermore, what connection Susanna does make with Nature is not centred on her new home in Canada but instead reaches back to the lost home in England:

> A portion of my own spirit seemed to pass into that little stream [near her house]. In its deep wailings and fretful sighs, I fancied myself lamenting for the land I had left for ever; and its restless and impetuous rushings against the stones which choked its passage, were mournful types of my own mental struggles against the strange destiny which hemmed me in. [...W]henever my winged thoughts flew homeward, then the voice of the brook spoke deeply and sadly to my heart, and my tears flowed unchecked to its plaintive and harmonious music. (*Roughing It* 134)

The same nostalgia is later prompted by the cutting down of the cedar swamp in front of the Moodies' house in the backwoods. When a view of the nearby lake is revealed, Susanna muses,

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[35] Lucas notes in his assessment of Moodie's relationship to nature in Canada, "Moodie is trying [...] to reach some kind of conclusion about the wilderness [...], about God, [...] and about the great cyclical relationship of life to death" ("Function of the Sketches" 150).

> From a child, [water] always had the most powerful effect upon my mind [...]. Half the solitude of my forest home vanished when the lake unveiled its bright face to the blue heavens, and I saw sun, and moon, and stars, and waving trees reflected there. I would sit for hours at the window as the shades of evening deepened round me, watching the massy foliage of the forests pictured in the waters, till fancy transported me back to England, and the songs of birds and the lowing of cattle were sounding in my ears. (306)

The intimate participation in Nature Moodie had enjoyed in England cannot be reproduced in Canada. The remembered scenes and sounds – "the songs of birds and the lowing of cattle" – are more specific to Moodie than her immediate environment, which is merely "reflected" or "pictured" in the lake. The gap between the "unreal" of exile and the real, remembered scenes of homeland again lays bare the ungrounded "I," "expos[ing] a radical uncertainty about one's relation to 'home' and to the self one has been" (J.G. Kennedy 27).

Even in the very chapter of *Roughing It* which is read by critics as showing Moodie's experience in a more positive light, "A Trip to Stony Lake," the narrator's articulation of her relationship with the Canadian environment is not without ambiguity.[36] Moodie's closer identification with place on this occasion is triggered at least in part by her discovery of the "harebell," which, as she says, "had always from a child been with me, a favourite flower; and the first sight of it in Canada [...] so flooded my soul with

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[36] This point may be extended to Moodie's introduction to the 1871 edition of *Roughing It*, in which she both upholds the "truth" of her story and restates her perception of Canada's unsuitability for immigrants of her own class (527), as well as praises the "new" (my term) Canada extensively (528-34). Furthermore, Moodie's statement that she cannot imagine leaving "the colony, where, as a wife and mother, some of the happiest years of my life have been spent," corroborates my argument inasmuch as she resorts to familial narrativity, even nearly twenty years after the first publication of *Roughing It*, to render her experience in Canada acceptable (528).

remembrances of the past, that, in spite of myself, the tears poured freely from my eyes." Moodie's gathering and keeping of those flowers "in [her] bosom" is not for love of Canada but, on the contrary, is "connected with sacred home recollections, and the never-dying affections of the heart" for the old home (337). Even as the features of backwoods Canada – the "aromatic, resinous smell" of the pine forest; the "wild and lonely" scenery – here ensure Moodie's "sense of enjoyment," her engagement with that scenery is far from unqualified: "In moments like these, I ceased to regret my separation from my native land; and, filled with the love of Nature, my heart forgot for the time the love of home" (340). The extent, therefore, to which Moodie is able "to locate beauty and interest in [...] the rugged landscape" (Peterman, "Susanna" 85) is strictly limited ("in moments like these," "for the time"), and "home" is still located elsewhere. The narration quickly returns to crop failures and "Disappointed Hopes." "The pathos of exile," notes Said, "is in the loss of contact with the solidity and the satisfaction of earth: homecoming is out of the question" (179).

Yet just as Moodie's discourse of home as family has sustained her all along, so it is now deployed in the task of replicating the presence of the Mother in Canada. Nancy Chodorow argues that "women seek to reproduce their preoedipal relation to their mothers [...by] bearing children" (23), and Homans, in considering the implications of Chodorow's formulation for women's self-representation, posits, "when the daughter attempts to recreate her symbiotic closeness with her mother, she is also attempting to recreate that presymbolic language. The reproduction of mothering will also be the reproduction of a presymbolic communicativeness" (25). The "mother" in Moodie's narrative being her mother country, or Nature/England, the reproduction of a "pre-emigration relationship of

connection," according to Chodorow's theorizing, relies on Moodie's children as "the source of this connection" (V. Thompson 91). Susanna's daughter Katie, in particular, and the nonsymbolic language they share, help to replicate a closeness to Nature/Canada. One such instance occurs when Katie is just beginning "to prattle," and

> feeling and admiring everything, and talking to it in her baby language. So fond was the dear child of flowers, that her father used to hold her up to the apple-trees, then rich in their full spring-beauty, that she might kiss the blossoms. She would pat them with her soft white hands, murmuring like a bee among the branches. To keep her quiet whilst I was busy, I had only to give her a bunch of wild flowers. She would sit as still as a lamb, looking first at one and then at another, pressing them to her little breast in a sort of ecstasy [...].
>
> She was a sweet, lovely flower herself, and her charming infant graces reconciled me, more than aught else, to a weary lot. (*Roughing It* 166)

Moodie here derives both pleasure and comfort from Katie's literal contact with the blossoms and flowers. The baby's relation to these objects is unmediated, as she desires, strokes, and kisses them. This intimacy is engendered in no small measure by her presymbolic language – "murmuring like a bee" she partakes of the natural environment, becoming both "as a lamb" and "a sweet, lovely flower herself." Thematically, the scene reproduces the closeness with Nature Moodie has lost in Canada and articulates her desired (re-)union with the Mother.

A similar event takes places on the "Journey to the Woods," undertaken during the winter, enroute to the Moodies' bush allotment in Douro Township: "Little Katie was enchanted with the jingling of the sleigh-bells, and nestled among the packages kept

singing or talking to the horses in her baby lingo. Trifling as these little incidents were, before we had proceeded ten miles [...] I began to feel a lively interest in the scenes through which we were passing" (259). Somewhat later on the same journey, however, the situation changes drastically:

> The children had fallen asleep. A deep silence pervaded the party. Night was above us with her mysterious stars. The ancient forest stretched around us on every side, and a foreboding sadness sank upon my heart. Memory was busy with the events of many years. I retraced step by step the pilgrimage of my past life, until arriving at that passage in its sombre history, I gazed through tears upon the singularly savage scene around me, and secretly marvelled, "What brought me here?" (*Roughing It* 266)

The children's presence, and particularly Katie's "'language,'" appear to "impact[...] heavily on Moodie's affections for and connectedness with Canada" (V. Thompson 93). A closer scrutiny of Moodie's familial narrativity, however, reveals that it does *not* engender a sense of feeling at home. Katie's "baby lingo" and "charming infant graces" recall, first and foremost, the mother country: "Was [Katie] not purely British? Did not her soft blue eyes, and sunny curls, and bright rosy cheeks for ever remind me of her Saxon origin, and bring before me dear forms and faces I could never hope to behold again?" (*Roughing It* 166). Rather than establishing sustained contact with the new home, therefore, the association between mother, child, and "mother tongue" supports the specificity of the original home to which Susanna is drawn.[37] The nonsymbolic language of contact shared between mother and daughter is what binds Susanna to her true "mother" (country) in that

[37] Moodie also reports about her son Donald: "Emilia had called him Cedric the Saxon, and he well suited the name, with his frank, honest disposition, and large, loving blue eyes" (*Roughing It* 422).

mother's absence, without, however, replicating the same kind of relationship with her new "adopted" mother.[38] Prior to the language of self-representation is the image of herself that Susanna recognizes in her daughter – that "wild Suffolk girl so full of romance," who was nurtured at the bosom of the natural mother (Ballstadt, Hopkins, Peterman, *Letters of a Lifetime* 254). For Susanna, identity is always a question of origins, of "where she is from," of the home matrix. Motherhood represents "the fantasy," in Kristeva's words, "of a lost territory" ("Stabat Mater" 161). Moodie's matrocentric and nostalgic narrative, in which the maternal subtext or pre-text is consistently interwoven with the thematics of relocation and failed homecoming, perpetually strains toward that lost home terrain.

In Canada, the figure of the "Divine Mother" is replaced more and more by God, the Father (135). "Father and Mother" not so much "merge in the all-encompassing, ever-expansive force of Nature," as Friewald argues ("'Tongue'" 168), as that Nature is cast increasingly in male terms. In *Roughing It*, the last prose reference to Nature as maternal occurs approximately half-way through the book on page 260, during the journey into the backwoods. Here, Nature is (appropriately) seen to have "suspended her operation" and to be "sleeping in her winding sheet, upon the bier of death." From this point on, Nature is associated more frequently with the "Great Father" or with "God" (a link that may well have gained in strength through Moodie's retrospective treatment of her material and as a result of her trust in providence as having guided her into the bush) (166, 294, 340). "Nature the Divine Mother," comments Margaret Atwood about *Roughing It*, "hardly

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[38] For a full analysis of Moodie's ambivalent positioning vis-à-vis Canada as both adopting parent and adopted child see Veronica Thompson, "The Return to 'Mother' in Australian and Canadian Settler-Invader Women's Writing" (2001).

functions at all" (*Survival* 51).[39] This shift is yet more pronounced in *Life in the Clearings*, which contains few references (in either prose or verse) to Nature as feminine (for instance 15, 163), but multiple ones to a male "Creator" (20, 138, 177, 298, 299, 300).

Contrary, therefore, to the conclusion Friewald reaches, Mother Nature does ultimately fail Moodie, a failure that both confirms and contributes to the failure of homecoming and that is nowhere more apparent than in the final sequence of *Roughing It in the Bush*. The chapter "A Change in Our Prospects" starts off a closing narrative that, on the surface, revolves around the themes of renewal, rebirth, and restoration, but which, upon closer examination, reveals the continuation of feelings of loss, displacement, and even existential privation. The chapter's poetic epigraph does "introduce[...] at its very structural and thematic centre 'the embryo blossom,'" as Friewald notes, but it suggests the "maternal idiom" – an idiom of protective containment – only if the poem's last three lines are ignored ("'Tongue'" 167-68):

> The future flower lies enfolded in the bud, –
> Its beauty, colour, fragrance, graceful form,
> Carefully shrouded in that tiny cell;
> Till time and circumstance, and sun and shower,
> Expand the embryo blossom – and it bursts
> Its narrow cerements, lifts its blushing head,
> Rejoicing in the light and dew of heaven.
> But if the canker worm lies coil'd around

[39] Margaret Atwood's extended engagement with Susanna Moodie also includes a rewriting, of sorts, of *Roughing It*: Atwood's 1972 novel *Surfacing* might be read as revisioning the bush as a healing and restorative space for woman. Atwood herself sees an *alter ego* in Moodie, based on her comment, "in some ways, we were each other's obverse," in the introduction to the Virago edition of *Roughing It* (ix).

The heart o' the bud, the summer sun and dew

Visit in vain the sear'd and blighted flower. (*Roughing It* 466)

The poem in its entirety captures the dual character of the archetypal maternal as both the giver and taker of life (Neumann 12).[40] The ending lines negate the initial nurturing image by introducing dark notes of destruction and death.

In the chapter itself we learn that due to Susanna's illness, her daughter Agnes (Addie) has been cared for by a "kind neighbour." "During that winter, and through the ensuing summer," Moodie recalls with painful intensity, "I only received occasional visits from my little girl, who, fairly established with her new friends, looked upon their house as her home." The grief Susanna experiences at the separation from her daughter (which is due to a subversion, however well intended, of the discourse of home) and at the "growing coldness of [Addie's] manner towards [her]" (*Roughing It* 466-67), obliquely references the abduction of Persephone, the Kore or "maiden," from Demeter, and the resulting aridity and lack of life on earth. In the myth, the grieving Demeter will reanimate the barren earth only if Persephone is restored to her. The mother's search for her daughter is always also a search for "a part of herself in her daughter." Thematically, the refinding of the daughter by the mother articulates the healing of a "duality" or "scission" (Kerényi 145, 147). In *Roughing It*, Addie is indeed returned to her mother when Susanna and the children depart from the bush. Yet the theme of restoration (of self/daughter), along with the notion of a renewal of hope for happier prospects, is considerably undermined by Susanna's unexpected, and apparently incongruous, reluctance "to be dragged" from the bush (*Roughing It* 476):

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[40] Carl Ballstadt, who uses the poem as a starting point for his discussion of Moodie's letters to her husband, observes that it "embraces notions of such opposites as growth and blight, hope and uncertainty" ("'The Embryo Blossom'" 137).

> Every object had become endeared to me during my long exile from civilised life. I loved the lonely lake, with its magnificent belt of dark pines sighing in the breeze; the cedar-swamp, the summer home of my dark Indian friends; my own dear little garden, with its rugged snake-fence which I had helped [the maid] to place with my own hands [...]. Even the cows, that had given a breakfast for the last time to my children, were now regarded with mournful affection. (482-83)

Just as on the earlier occasion of the Moodies' departure from Hamilton Township, which was also, as she told us, "much against my wish" (259), Susanna's departure from the woods fails to bring closure and remedy her sense of ill-placement.

Instead, Susanna's reluctance to leave demonstrates her blurring of the concepts of containment and confinement, which retrospectively alters her earlier perception of having been trapped in the bush during the preceding years. By mistaking confinement for containment Moodie expresses, through what is otherwise critically unexplained behaviour, a primal fear of separation: whenever an "old situation of containment ends or is ended, the ego experiences this revolution [...] as rejection by the mother." Any "crucial transition to a new sphere of existence" brings a new sense of rejection, a "birth trauma" (Neumann 67). For Moodie, her departure from the woods recalls the earlier separation from her mother country and makes her cling, against better reason, to an environment which has not nurtured and contained but imprisoned her. The departure, furthermore, lacks closure, because any sense of self-actualization is stalled by Susanna's lengthy "secrets of the prison-house" passage, which ends the prose text on a note of bitterness and regret. If the gesture of departure symbolizes fulfilled personal identity (Chaudhuri 175), then fulfillment is just what is signally lacking from the final departure

enacted in *Roughing It in the Bush.* Despite the muted Demeter/Kore plot that forms an important element of the story's conclusion, and that is appropriated in the thematics of displacement and homecoming, the book ultimately signals the failure of maternal narrativity. In a sense, place itself is the dominant "other" for Moodie; its difference from her fails to be overcome with the help of other relationships.

While the image of departure is present also in other characters (for instance in Tom Wilson and John E—), most of their stories represent equal failures. The characters with whom Moodie most strongly identifies – Phoebe for her fragility and sensitivity, and Brian the still-hunter for the terror of being "bushed" (Buss, *Mapping* 91) – are ones who escape through death, and death is also Susanna's preferred trope. Looking back on her early years in the colony, for instance, she recalls that she "longed to die, that death might effectively separate [Canada and her] forever" (39). Yearning for her home country, she wished she were "permitted to return and die upon [England's] wave-encircled shores" (73), her "only hope of escape [from Canada] being through the portals of the grave" (135).[41] "[D]eath as liberation," comments Chaudhuri, is the "favourite conclusion" to scenarios of ill-placement (250). In the conflation of "tomb" and "womb" death also promises a form of reunion with the Mother. The "[a]rchetypal Feminine not only bears and directs life as a whole, and the ego in particular, but it also takes everything that is born of it back into its womb of origination and death" (Neumann 30).

The painful split in Susanna Moodie's discourse of home, and particularly the insufficiency of her familial narrativity, highlight that "exile is a decidedly individualistic figure" (Chaudhuri 12). The suffering it inflicts is not easily abated even by those with

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[41] Dahlie sees Moodie's use of these tropes as "conventional." He dismisses her sense of displacement: Moodie "exploits the obligatory grave imagery to underscore her desperate plight, a point she shortly reinforces by equating herself with a condemned prisoner in a cell" (18).

whom the experience is shared. In the contradiction between her own desire for a stable and specific home matrix and the need to displace the self for her family's sake, Susanna Moodie prefigures much later accounts of psychological fragmentation and alienation.[42] If exile is the loss of the ability to relate to place with any degree of "insideness," the figure of home-as-house as deficient, for Moodie, becomes the sign of this loss. Through this figure Moodie articulates key aspects of her sense of dislocation: the transience, instability, insufficiency, and often precarious nature of Moodie's "homes" in Canada also describe her experience of exile as a state of rarely, if ever, "being satisfied, placid, or secure" (Said 186). Perhaps one reason why we cannot get Susanna out of our collective imagination is that her experience anticipates that of modern times, in which "exile is certainly the most fully theorized and poeticized concept, having become nothing short of a symbol for modern culture itself" (Chaudhuri 14). Susanna Moodie's narrative locates the figure of home at the core of this concept, much as contemporary observers of women's expatriate writing (such as Sneja Gunew, with whose words I began) do a hundred and sixty years later.

[42] Whitlock reaches a somewhat similar conclusion. She writes: "The fragmentation of self, the tensions of language produced by the failure of expectations before the intractability of the present, the estrangement and self-consciousness of gender, class, and place, the disappearance of absolute frames of reference, which were the legacy of emigration for Moodie were, for very different reasons, preoccupations of the feminist movement in the 1960s and 1970s" (*Intimate Empire* 72).

Chapter IV

"Exile from the Place of Love": Homesickness and Other Illnesses in Ada Cambridge's *Thirty Years in Australia* and *The Retrospect*

There are a few tenuous links between the Strickland sisters and Ada Cambridge, who emigrated to the other side of the world from them when she settled in Australia in 1870: while growing up, Ada's favourite history books had been those in the popular series *The Lives of the Queens of England*, authored by Susanna Moodie and Catharine Parr Traill's sister Agnes Strickland (with help from yet another Strickland sister, Elizabeth). As well, Susanna Moodie's London publisher, Richard Bentley, some thirty years after *Roughing It in the Bush* had first appeared, also published several of Ada's works[1] – an indication that, just like Moodie and Traill, Cambridge wrote primarily for an English readership.[2] These connections, although slight, between the Strickland sisters in the backwoods of Canada and Ada Cambridge in the Australian bush of Victoria, speak to the existence of commonalities shared by colonial women as a result of their class position and despite other differences between them. As genteel, middle-class nineteenth-century women, their subjectivities had been shaped, as Delys Bird notes for the Australian context, by their education, by the church, and by their emotional and social ties, "that is within a domestic private sphere" (124). When they emigrated with their husbands, as all three women did, they carried their assumptions and beliefs with them to vastly different locations in the far-flung reaches of the British Empire, often only to find circumstances, however, which

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[1] Bentley's first publication of one of Cambridge's pieces was *In Two Years' Time* (1879), which was published as a novel in two volumes after it had been serialized in the *Australasian* the year before. One of Cambridge's biographers, Audrey Tate, suggests that the publisher – whose firm by then was called Richard Bentley and Son – was "attracted [to the work] by the heroine's distinctive Australian flavour" (95).

[2] This observation applies to much of Cambridge's writing career, although she also gained an American audience for her fiction as well as placing some non-fiction pieces, including her autobiographical essay, "The Lonely Seas," with American journals.

affected them in similar ways. If, for instance, the Australian bush was "specifically undomesticated, lacking any of the [...] structures that had formerly constituted [settler women] as individuals" (Bird 124), the same could be said about the Canadian backwoods. Cambridge, like Catharine Parr Traill, took comfort in her own efforts at domestication, relating with evident pride that she "[came] from a long line of good needlewomen," and remarking somewhat disingenuously, "housework has all along been the business of life; novels have been squeezed into the odd times" (*Thirty Years* 38). Her memoirs tell a somewhat different story.[3]

Ada might, however, have countered Catharine's "view that, [...] no matter how bad things were in the backwoods of Canada they must be worse in Botany Bay" (Whitlock, *Intimate Empire* 61), with her own observations to the opposite effect: while Moodie and Traill were often disappointed with the features of Upper Canada, Cambridge more often enthuses about the appearance and characteristics of Australia in *Thirty Years*. About one of Melbourne's main streets, for instance, she writes, "I can answer for it that in 1870 it was excellently paved and macadamised, thronged with its wagonette-cabs, omnibuses, and private carriages" (16). She also lauds both Melbourne's Town Hall as an edifice and "the splendid Public Library, [...] and the Melbourne Hospital, as it stands today; and the University, housed as it is now." Similarly, she praises and fondly remembers "the Botanical Gardens, already furnished with their lakes and swans, and rustic bridges, and all the rest of it. And how beautiful we thought it all!" (17). As well, Cambridge is pleased to discover the "shops [to be] surprisingly well furnished and

[3] The same observation has been made about Cambridge's correspondence (Morrison xxiv-xxv). Likewise, Bradstock and Wakeling consider Cambridge's remarks in this context a "pose" ("Introduction" xv). At the same time, however, the demands on Ada's time were only too real, as she also assisted in her husband's parish duties (also see Debra Adelaide ["Introduction" 9]).

tempting," and the restaurants "excellent," all confirming her "impression that we had indeed come to a land of milk and honey" (18). Australia's climate, in particular, she finds, unsurprisingly, "really matchless [...], clear as crystal, full of sunshine and freshness" (14-15). Throughout, *Thirty Years* abounds with glowing comments about "the loveliness of the weather" and "the fine atmosphere of this climate" (17, 61). These first impressions of place suggest none of the much more rustic circumstances encountered by the Stricklands in the Canadian backwoods.[4]

Yet if by writing down such favourable observations, Cambridge engages in the process of "situating [herself] in relation to [her] new world" (Bird, "Self" 125), as Moodie and Traill had also done, her memoirs nevertheless also reveal that self-location in exile is an "ambiguous activity" for women (Buss, *Mapping* 47). Cambridge may represent the Australia of 1870 as vastly superior to the pictures drawn of 1830s Upper Canada by the Strickland sisters, but her struggle to overcome the "crisis of identity" involved in expatriation is no less difficult (Bird, "Self" 123), centreing once again on the home, as it had also done for Susanna Moodie. Yet where Susanna employs a familial narrativity in her efforts to regulate the environment and thereby to facilitate self-placement, Ada turns to a discourse which comes somewhat as a surprise to the reader, and which appears to be an altogether awkward fit for a busy pioneer woman, writer, wife, and mother of five: that of the invalid. The trope of invalidism not only captures key aspects of Cambridge's exilic colonial experience – isolation, separation, marginality, and

[4] On the subject of first impressions, Allejandro A. Vallega, who contemplates questions of displacement in *Heidegger and the Issue of Space: Thinking on Exilic Grounds* (2003), cautions that, while the exile may experience "a certain acceleration and excitement, stemming from discovering a place, people, sounds," these sensations are "inseparable" from the "memory of loss." Vallega concludes, "the exile is no one and belongs nowhere" (ix-x).

transformation of self – but the role of invalid also allows her to "reproduce," as it were, bonds of the kind usually severed by emigration, namely ones of filial dependence.

Born in 1844, at Wiggenhall, St. Germans, in Norfolk, England, Ada Cambridge (who wrote under her maiden name)[5] was the eldest girl and the second of ten children, only three of whom, however, survived into adulthood. She was the adored pet of both her parents, Henry, a gentleman farmer, and Thomasina, a doctor's daughter. Ada would later remember her mother as an extraordinarily gifted housekeeper and as "perennially convalescing from confinements," but also as a storyteller – of "grown-up stories, [...] not the faked stuff that children are so commonly befooled with" – and as encouraging Ada to tell her own tales (*The Retrospect* 133, 128, 184-85). Both Ada's paternal and maternal families were comfortably off, with "lovely homes and gardens, plenty of servants, fine clothing, abundant money, and a superior social position" (Tate 5-6). During the later 1850s, however, Ada's father, who was "constitutionally incapable of managing money" (*The Retrospect* 124), seems to have experienced a change in fortunes that makes it "more than likely that the Cambridge sisters struggl[ed] to maintain personal dignity as gentlewomen without the necessary support of money" (Tate 28), a scenario which again echoes the Strickland sisters' situation some thirty years earlier in neighbouring Suffolk. And again just like Susanna and Catharine Parr, Ada, who had mostly been home-schooled by governesses, – a process about which she wrote, "I can truthfully affirm that I never learned anything which would now be considered worth learning until I had done with them [governesses] and started foraging for myself" (*The Retrospect* 69) – also realized that there was an income to be had from writing: her first book, *Hymns on the*

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[5] Bradstock and Wakeling note that Cambridge "wrote most often under her maiden name, a fact which symbolises the gulf between her public self and the private one" (*A Life* xi). Cambridge also used the initials "A.C." to sign some of her writing.

Litany, appeared in 1865, followed a year later by *Hymns on the Holy Communion*. Her first few stories were also published between 1865 and 1869, years during which she became a regular contributor to several periodicals, the *Westminster Gazette* and the *Sunday Magazine* among them. At this time in her life, Ada "appears to have been wholeheartedly committed to institutional religion," and these early writings are "church-centered and overtly moralistic" (Tate 34). Cambridge even considered entering a convent.

Such plans, however, were set aside when she married George Frederick Cross, an Australia-bound Anglican clergyman, in April of 1870, and only a few weeks later the young couple set sail for Victoria from Plymouth Sound, with Ada looking her "last on England through a grey sheet of rain" (*Thirty Years* 9). In Australia, the Crosses took up a series of bush parishes, some in extremely remote locations and spread out over vast areas.[6] Though "not pioneers in the strict sense of opening up the land, the hardships [the Crosses] endured in the exercise of George's ministry [...] made them pioneers in another sense" and meant a loss of companionship and comfort for themselves (Tate 61). (Bush life did not end for the Crosses until 1893, when George accepted the parish of Williamstown, near Melbourne.) Beginning in 1873 with her first Australian publication, the short story "Up the Murray," which ran in several instalments in the *Australasian*, Cambridge wrote regularly and prolifically, not least to "help support her family" (Barton 133). After more than forty years in Australia, and with their children remaining there, George moved himself and Ada back to England in 1912 – against her wish (qtd. in Bradstock and Wakeling, "Introduction" xi) – where he died in 1917. Following George's death, Ada almost immediately returned to Australia (the ship that carried her had to be

[6] Ada reports that on a typical Sunday, George would ride up to sixty-five miles to conduct mass, baptisms, marriage ceremonies, and so on. Fortunately, he was an accomplished horseman (*Thirty Years* 93-94).

escorted for protection because of U-boat attacks during World War I). She died in Melbourne in 1926 after several years of declining health.

Cambridge is the subject of scholarship not just for her autobiographies, but also for her substantial number of novels – *A Marked Man* (1890), *The Three Miss Kings* (1891), *Fidelis* (1895), and *Materfamilias* (1898) notable among them – as well as for her collections of poetry, in particular for one entitled *Unspoken Thoughts*, which was published anonymously in 1887 and later withdrawn (causing some critical speculation as to the reasons for this move in view of the poems' treatment of controversial themes, such as women's rights and desire for freedom). Cambridge was esteemed in her own lifetime but was later dismissed as trivial and romantic, and consequently fell into disregard,[7] a process that has been in reversal since the early 1970s. More recent critics value Cambridge's work for its courageous engagement with issues of personal, sexual, and religious rights and liberties.[8] Her significance results in no small measure from "the spirit with which she lived her life": Ada was always engaged in a "restless search for truths of her own to live by, rather than those prescribed by convention" (Bradstock and Wakeling, *A Life* ix). Her memoirs too, particularly *Thirty Years in Australia*, have undergone a reappraisal. *Thirty Years* has been reprinted, part of a more general move to retrieve early

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[7] At least part of this critical neglect, as more recent scholars have pointed out, results from the fact that the dominant myths which have shaped Australian culture are ones of "mateship, and man's relation to the land" (Schaffer xi), myths which privilege masculinism and male endeavours over women's concerns. Elizabeth Morrison also observes that in the late 1800s, the "nationalist literary tradition in the making postulated the Australian locked in an uneven struggle for survival with an unyielding environment, the harshness of which disallowed or eliminated nice distinctions of class (egalitarianism), was alleviated by sharing of the condition (mateship), and was glamourised by stories of endurance and achievement against odds. The legend so created was predominantly [...] masculine," a "mould" from which Cambridge's writing was excluded (xxiii). Similarly, Miriam Dixson, in *The Real Matilda*, asserts, "Australian women, women in the land of mateship, [...] come pretty close to top rating as the 'Doormats of the Western World'" (11). As well, in commenting on Cambridge's dismissal as "romantic" by male critics, Susan Sheridan has observed that male authors likewise write heroic plots for men (165). As recently as 1989, Gillian Whitlock observed with regard to the situation of female authors, "[w]omen writers are still engaged in the task of wresting Australian mythologies from the maws of [the dominant figure of male brutality and fearful paternity]" (*Eight Voices* xxxiv).

[8] See Patricia Barton, Margaret Bradstock, Susan Sheridan, Audrey Tate, and Louise Wakeling.

Australian women's writing, and is now viewed as an important settlement narrative in the Australian literary tradition.[9] Originally published in 1902, it is based on Cambridge's journals, now sadly lost.[10] Although Ada, at the time of her emigration in 1870, may have intended to return to England within a few years for a visit, that opportunity never materialized (*Thirty Years* 4-5). As a result, *Thirty Years in Australia*, which has mainly been read as an account of "colonial self-reliance and a willingness to 'make do'" by an "essentially Victorian" woman who increasingly identified with Australia (Bradstock and Wakeling, "Introduction" xxiii), narrates the experience of exile from the perspective of a long, often painful, and continuous separation from the native country. *The Retrospect* (1912), by contrast, resulted from the Crosses' first return visit to England in 1908. "[S]uffused with a sense of joy as Ada follows the trail of her early life" (Tate 17-18), this second memoir tells of the exile's homecoming. These two sets of reminiscences provide opposing poles in Cambridge's story of relocation and settlement, one book supplying a foil for the other in near-symmetrical ways.

Thirty Years in Australia literalizes Una Chaudhuri's concept of geopathology as "the suffering caused by one's location" (58),[11] insofar as it is the narrative in which Cambridge becomes physically unwell – an account which competes with her emigration story. As a form of "pathography, the writing of illness narratives as both [attempted] 'cure' and consolation," *Thirty Years* bears testimony to the "therapeutics of writing autobiography" as a vehicle in the "on-going search to find and recognize one's story"

[9] See Margaret Bradstock and Louise Wakeling's "Introduction" to the New South Wales University Press edition of *Thirty Years in Australia* (1989).
[10] Audrey Tate suggests Cambridge herself destroyed them before her move to England in 1912 (4).
[11] See my chapter I for more theoretical background to Chaudhuri's concepts. Also see my chapter III for an analysis of the effects of geopathology on Susanna Moodie.

(Smith and Watson 40).[12] Throughout the telling of *Thirty Years*, invalidism is Cambridge's rhetorical device of choice for her self-representation, with references to and descriptions of her health forming a narrative of its own that runs parallel to, as well as crosses and interrupts – and frequently replaces – the story of emigration to Australia. Such "interruptions and eruptions, [...] resistance and contradictions as strategies of self-representation" are the concern of what Leigh Gilmore terms "autobiographics." Both a theory of and a reading practice for women's autobiographical writing, autobiographics attends to the "discursive contradictions in the representation of identity," and furthermore recognizes that "the *I* is multiply coded" ("Autobiographics" 184; original italics). As an approach to reading *Thirty Years*, it draws attention to Cambridge's story of invalidism, which unsettles the story of settlement.[13]

The stage for the illness narrative is set in the book's first chapter, which dramatizes the rupture involved in severing ties with home and homeland. As Cambridge relates it, her decisions to marry and to emigrate become blurred into one "wild idea," the Australian life before her just a "shapeless" notion, set in the "vast shrubbery" of the bush, "with occasional spears hurtling through it" (1-2). Leaving England provokes feelings of "everlasting regret" and later "a severe form of nostalgia," as well as the sense that she has "been homesick practically all the time." Given the chance, Ada tells us, she and George "would have made for our native land like homing pigeons" (2). These comments illustrate Chaudhuri's contention that in a geopathic relationship with place "simple

[12] In a more general sense, the notion of the "talking cure has been used by some critics as a metaphor for the autobiographical process of forming the chaotic elements of life into a narrative that replaces and transcends those experiences in a healing and restorative way" (Gilmore, *Autobiographics* 55).

[13] Although they do not analyze Cambridge's discursive strategies in *Thirty Years*, Bradstock and Wakeling also point out that the memoir's structure is "much more discontinuous than first appears. Cambridge constantly disrupts the narrative flow with digressions and comments that draw attention to the status of 'life-writing' about the self as an imaginative construct" ("Introduction" xviii).

departure becomes [the protagonists'] overriding mission and desire" (56; original italics). Looking back from the isolation of her colonial exile a long way from "home," Ada mourns the loss of proximity to family and friends that England offered, just the kind of loss so acutely felt by many settler women:[14] "We were but four miles from our homes, and could see our people, who were to lose us in a month," she writes of her last days at home. Family relations were easily maintained: "A sister [...] used to walk out [to see Ada] before breakfast. We would have a quiet sewing morning, [...] then we would perhaps drive her home in the afternoon." Similarly, female friendships were able to flourish: "Intimate girl companions walked over to lunch or to play a game of croquet." "The friends," she recalls, "could dine with us at the usual hour, and still get home before the slow twilight passed into night – a thing impossible in [Australia]" (*Thirty Years* 3-4). A particularly prominent figure at the centre of Cambridge's painful farewells was, as she emphasizes, "my mother, who surpassed all the mothers I ever knew in her unselfish passion for her children, and for whom my heart bleeds to this day when I think of what my going cost her" (3). In *The Retrospect*, she will later compare her mother "to the fabled pelican that fed its young with its own blood" (184).

Her mother, Cambridge also writes, "would be working her dear fingers to the bone over something to add to [Ada's trousseau]" (*Thirty Years* 3), and it is in this reminiscence of painful maternal labour that *Thirty Years* anticipates, early in Chapter One, the narrative's sustained subsequent focus on the body – often the maternal body – and its pain: "I know more of mothers' suffering in that way," Cambridge confesses from her viewpoint of many years of exile, "than I did then" (3). As the story gets underway,

[14] See my chapter I for details about the notion of "relationality" and women's self-defintion through relationships.

following the image of the labouring mother, the body – specifically depictions of the body in some form of distress or unwhole(some)ness – is central to narrativity. The voyage to Australia, for instance, finds Ada suffering from "incurable sea-sickness," "the most sea-sick lady [the ship and crew] had ever carried": "in rough weather – and it was nearly all rough weather," writes Ada, almost with glee, "the swing of the sea-saw was killing. It used to fling me out of bed over a high bunk board until I was black and blue with my falls, and it kept me sea-sick the whole voyage" (11, 8). Representations of the corporeal, notes Gilmore, "move[...] the body, so frequently absent from autobiography, to the thematic and epistemological fore" (*Autobiographics* 14). Encoded in body language, *Thirty Years* resists the traditional mind/body dichotomy which has been at the core of male autobiography since St. Augustine, and it disrupts expectations for readings of emigration narratives (just as Susanna Moodie's account had done in a different way). In Cambridge's case, this disruption is appropriate inasmuch as it parallels the character of illness, which is itself a kind of rupture or disturbance in the body.

If Cambridge's illness narrative interrupts the narrative of emigration, the reverse, on occasion, can also be said. Mainly, her arrival in Australia temporarily suspends (and even transforms) the discourse of invalidism, which will soon resume and build again. At first, however, Ada takes her cue from the early explorers of Australia, who had imagined the land "as an Arcadian paradise, [and] wrote evocatively of the allure of the luxuriant, verdant landscape of Victoria," by giving her arrival chapter the title "Australia Felix," a phrase coined by Thomas Mitchell in *Journal of an Expedition into the Interior of Tropical Australia* (1848). Later writers used the label "to express the possibilities for the

whole continent" (Schaffer 60). Following this model, Cambridge initially engages in a rhetoric of promise:

> It was the morning of the day, of the season, of the Australian year, of our two lives; and I could never lose the memory of my sensations in that vernal hour. I can sniff now the delicious air, rain-washed to more than even its accustomed purity, the scents of gum and wattle and fresh-springing grass, the atmosphere of untainted Nature and the free wilds. I can see the vast flocks of screaming cockatoos and parrots of all colours that darted about our paths – how wonderful and romantic I thought them! (*Thirty Years* 24)

The description evokes Eden before the Fall, in its freshness, and "purity," and freedom, and still entirely "untainted" in its wildness. Appropriately, the "beautiful weather enhanced the charm of all" (16). On a personal level, too, everything seems to be just right at the beginning for Ada: "Our lodgings were very comfortable," she reports contentedly. "Sitting-room and bedroom, with a door between, our other door opening upon a big plot of virgin bush, alive with magpies, whose exquisite carolling in the early hours of the day is the thing I remember best. There is no bird-song in the world so fresh and cheery" (30). Their first posting, the town of Wangaratta, also meets with her approval, being "a typical town of the better class, and at that period very lively and prosperous" (33). Furthermore, "[l]iving, *i.e.*, feeding, in Australia is proverbially good, [... and] all was so plentiful that it generally cost us nothing. [...E]ven a poor parson could live like a prince" (63). Summing up her impressions of the colony, Ada concludes, "[n]ever was such a land of plenty" (30).

The sense of rightness that pervades Cambridge's description of her early time in Australia extends to matters of her health. For a brief period, her narrative of illness is transformed into one of wellness: "although at first I staggered with the weakness left by [my] long seasickness," she accordingly tells about her arrival, "I not only recovered as soon as my foot touched land, but enjoyed the best health of my life for a full year afterwards" (16). The notion of place itself as healing ("as soon as my foot touched land") and as providing an environment that fosters whole(some)ness ("the best health of my life") is integral to the discourse of invalidism: it imbues Australia with the kind of restorative power that drove thousands of invalids throughout the nineteenth century to search for health in exotic locations (Frawley, *Invalidism* 117 ff.). In Ada's case, the Crosses' move to the bush only enhances her feeling of promise and of concomitant well-being. Keeping her focus on the physical, Ada recalls "the sweetness of the lovely September mornings which were the morning of my life. Never had I known such air and sunshine, or such health to enjoy them" (30).

Yet within a short time, the notion of unwellness begins to creep in again, brought on by "circumstance." Circumstance, as Chaudhuri argues, is code for "place" and links a character's psychological or physical problems to ill-placement (19). Beginning with a reference to herself as "one not over-robust woman," Cambridge's illness narrative gathers momentum (*Thirty Years* 72). About her and George's preparations for "the Murray Journey," for instance, (the fictionalized version of which would become Ada's first publication in Australia,) she says simply, "I was ill just then" (78-79). During the journey itself, her health remains lamentable, the entire undertaking apparently a trip from sickbed to sickbed. "I was deadly sick and tired, and had to lie down somewhere," she

complains on one occasion (83), and on another that she was "too ill to talk to anyone" (85). Yet another time, she writes, "of course, I went at once to bed" after she and George arrive at their destination (89). (George, in the meantime, holds his third service of the day.) "Ill health," observes Elizabeth Morrison, somewhat understating the point, "is referred to several times in *Thirty Years*" (li, n.77). The narrative which, on page two, had announced itself as extolling how "good [...] Australia has been to us," now reveals a large incongruity as Ada goes from a sense of extraordinary wellness to being "that miserable creature, the confirmed invalid" in the span of just a few years (135).

The figure of the invalid was pervasive in nineteenth-century literature, as Maria Frawley has found in two studies, "A Prisoner to the Couch," and the definitive *Invalidism and Identity in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (2004). "Accounts of illness and recovery proliferated in Victorian England," she writes, "an era fascinated like no other with the figure of the invalid and the spectacle of sickness" ("Prisoner" 174). Consequently, "books, tracts, and essays" with invalid themes and titles "appeared throughout the nineteenth century" (*Invalidism* 11-12). In particular, a "cult of female invalidism" developed in England (and America), as Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English have shown in *Complaints and Disorders: The Sexual Politics of Sickness* (1973). Ehrenreich and English demonstrate that the "lady" was expected to be "frail and sickly," and that throughout the century women in the different strata of society were defined either as "sick," denoting fragility and illness (middle- to upper-class women), or as "sickening," implying infectiousness and disease (working-class women) (19). Furthermore, Frawley explains that invalidism was "[c]onstructed as a condition characterized not so much by a specific disease or disorder but rather by one's loss of capacity for certain kinds of

exertion" ("Prisoner" 175). In its embodiment of stasis, this incapacity is at the very heart of the discourse of invalidism. Cambridge regards as parallel and mutually constitutive her "inactive life" and her "broken health" (*Thirty Years* 136). Formulated from a position of withdrawal to within the stationary space of a secluded sickroom, her use of this discourse in a settlement narrative expresses "doubts [...] about progress and mobility" (*Invalidism* 5), and thus arguably about the viability and "rightness" of emigration – for herself, at least. In particular, Ada's identity as a "*confirmed* invalid" (my italics) marks her as incurable, as a sufferer who has moved beyond the notion (and any discourse) of promise and out of reach of hope – a position inherently opposed to the concept of emigration.

In apparent contradiction to its embodiment of inertia, however, a prominent and defining feature of the discourse of invalidism, according to Frawley, is its simultaneous emphasis on productivity. In much nineteenth-century invalidism, one detects "no conflict between [the] posture of incapacity, [one's] understanding of [oneself] as 'incurable,' and [...] intense commitment to and engagement with work" (*Invalidism* 1). Using Florence Nightingale and Harriet Martineau as well-known examples, Frawley investigates the assumptions underlying such an apparently contradictory self-definition. She quotes Nightingale as writing, "I am an incurable invalid, entirely a prisoner of my bed [...] and overwhelmed with business" (qtd. in *Invalidism* 1). Nightingale's statement echoes Cambridge's own, who, just as capable of embodying both fatigue and steady productivity, remarks that while confined to her sickroom, she "still got through a large amount of sewing and novel-writing" (*Thirty Years* 136). The appropriation of the term "invalid" to designate a seemingly random range of ability and capacity raises questions of authenticity and of invalidism as a "deliberately adopted posture" (*Invalidism* 20). In

Cambridge's case, this is not at all to suggest either hypochondria or hysteria. Some of Ada's unwellness was evidently due to a serious carriage accident, which, she writes in *Thirty Years*, "[took place] upon one of the hills between Ballan and Ballarat [and] impaired my health for many years" (116). Suffered while she was pregnant, according to her account in the autobiographical essay, "The Lonely Seas," the accident "brought [her] suddenly to the brink of the grave" (98).[15] In addition, she appears to have tended towards "brooding solitude" and "melancholy" (*Thirty Years* 136), resulting in a sense of physical incapacity and fatigue, "the relationship between depression and repressed resentments and deep-seated angers [being] now well established" (Tate 118). What emerges is the image of a woman who "was profoundly unhappy much of the time, [and] emotionally exhausted" (Matthews 44). While Ada's illness, therefore, was far from imaginary, invalidism, nevertheless, became both "lived experience" and "enabling fiction, a trope of self-presence and authenticity" (Fiamengo 180-81).[16] Yet if this "enabling fiction" results in a heightened sense of self, one still wonders what factors combined to render Ada "invalid" and to provide her with the reasons or desire to adopt this identity?

One critic offers the opinion that "in her early years as an invalid, Ada Cambridge was [...] restless for more challenging circumstances than life in a parsonage offered" (Bradstock, "Reassessment" 60). The circumstances – and I am using the term deliberately in the same sense as Chaudhuri – at the root of Cambridge's invalidism all position her as Mrs. Cross, minister's wife and mother, in the bush of Victoria. The first of these is what Cambridge explicitly identifies as "the killing strain upon [the clergy's] wives – literally

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[15] In the nineteenth century, the condition of hysteria, which takes its name from *hyster*, the Greek word for womb, was constructed as a "female disease," because the uterus was the organ supposed to "cause" this emotional imbalance (Gilbert and Gubar 53).

[16] Janice Fiamengo makes this observation about a different writer, L.M. Montgomery, who was also given to bouts of depression and feelings of unwellness, but its validity is not restricted to Montgomery.

killing, for [the bishop] quoted figures to show the disproportionately high rate of sickness and untimely death amongst them" (*Thirty Years* 73). To prove the point, Ada enumerates in a long list all the tasks required of her: in addition to "the multifarious work at home – making and mending, cooking and nursing, and, as it appears, building sideboards and dining-tables [a reference to her earlier description of this work]," she finds herself compelled to educate the baby's nurse, so as not to lose her services, as well as to play the Sunday school organ. Furthermore, she reports, "I trained the choir, visited every parishioner in reach, did all that hard work unfairly demanded of the parson's wife" (72). Illustrating the seriousness of her complaint, she also relates the story of one of her "colleagues of those days[,…] a lady of exceptional culture and refinement," who, in addition to her meticulous housekeeping, "did 'the parish work.'" One day, asked to perform yet another task, the woman "flung out her arms wildly, and, exclaiming 'I can do no more!' went mad upon the spot. She had to be put into an asylum" (73-74). Even the higher-ranking clergy wives do not appear to be exempt from the threat to their health: Ada recalls the wife of "the bishop's representative" in Melbourne as "the beautiful and adored invalid hostess [of a dinner function], who died not long afterwards" (15-16).

While the idea of an ill woman hosting a dinner party – so unwell, in fact, that she dies shortly thereafter – seems incongruous from our current perspective, Sheila Rothman, in a study concerned with the representation of tuberculosis in American history, observes, "[t]he term [invalid] was as much a social as a medical category, defining the responsibilities of the sick even as it freed them from fault" (4). Herein lies one of the liberating aspects of invalidism: it allows the sufferer to shed those tasks she does not wish to perform. Cambridge, reflecting on the clergy's killing of their wives, as she says,

"by inches," reports: "I, however, have not been a victim. Before I was willing myself to lighten the double strain [of homemaking and parish work], I was compelled to do so, and the parish – as well as all succeeding parishes – had to put up with it" (73-74). Among the "constituents of the invalid identity specific to the era," writes Frawley, was the "exemption from normal social responsibilities" (*Invalidism* 24). Invalidism, while experienced as somatic reality, is enabling for Ada at the same time as it incapacitates, supplying the discourse which frees her from the burdensome expectations placed upon Mrs. Cross. Instead, it allows her to pursue an identity of her own choosing: "After I could plead the claims of a profession of my own, my position in the scheme of things [of parish duties] was finally and comfortably defined," she says of her writing (*Thirty Years* 74). Invalidism, whether posture or not, created a space for self-definition and self-development. If part of Cambridge's problem was her "homesickness for family and friends in England, exacerbated by loneliness," ultimately Ada's "poor health, though masking unresolved conflicts and angers as it did for many Victorian women, gave her one excuse to claim her personal freedom" (Tate 73, 68).

The liberating effects of invalidism for Ada are illustrated in an episode worth quoting extensively:

> In my state of health, especially in the hot weather [...] dressing and calling were too much for me; I waited until after dark, and then went out in about three garments, the most delightful costume I ever wore in my life. [...] It was the heavenly fashion then to wear a long, light, loose paletot of China silk [...]. It buttoned at the throat and all down the front of the hem, which cleared the ground by about three inches. It had roomy pockets outside; the sleeves were roomy also;

> there was no need to wear a dress under it, nor anything whatever round the waist. I did not, and so walked with the sensations (as I should imagine them) of a disembodied spirit. (*Thirty Years* 143-44)

Although Cambridge here explicitly (and unusually, for her) attempts to turn her narrative away from the body and the bodily by evoking the image of a "disembodied spirit," the rest of this passage belies her attempt, for it oozes with sensuality, as she revels in the nakedness of her woman's body inside the flimsy garment. The sensuality only increases as her narrative continues, for these late-night outings, we learn, are shared with the children's new governess. "Night after night," confides Ada, "in this delicious liberty, we roamed that city everywhere. [...] She, calm, strong, protective, was the man of the pair; I, with my hand on her arm, could wish no better" (144). One can only speculate about the extent of repressed desire, subjection to convention, and feelings of entrapment which found some release in these nocturnal rambles, facilitated and even sanctioned by her invalidism. Ada, comment Bradstock and Wakeling, "longed for 'space and freedom and largeness of life'" (*A Life* 81).

Furthermore, Cambridge's discourse of invalidism is characterized by its link to motherhood, in the sense that her narrative foregrounds the maternal body, specifically, in illness or distress. In spite of the existing critical consensus that Ada wrote favourably of motherhood, *Thirty Years in Australia* tells a somewhat different story of maternity as sickening and painful. "The ambiguous representations of motherhood" in Cambridge's writing, as Veronica Thompson notes, "are not definitively resolved in favour of maternal fulfilment" (20).[17] Beginning with Ada's reference, already mentioned, to her illness

[17] Thompson continues: "Rather, [Cambridge] articulates a maternal experience which contradicts the stereotypical endlessly nurturing, endlessly caring and endlessly patient mother, and interrogates

during the Murray journey, in whose description she only hints at the connection by mentioning "leaving behind us our little son and his nurse" (*Thirty Years* 80), invalidism and motherhood are rarely separated. This link is all the more noticeable as mothering as such is not a strongly developed activity in Cambridge's memoirs. In *The Retrospect*, her children are adults while Ada revisits the scenes of her own childhood, and in *Thirty Years*, remarkably, she "does [not] deal very fully with her relationship with her children" (Bradstock and Wakeling, "Introduction" xxv). On the contrary, the latter text is characterized by "its apparent lack of detail about Cambridge's role as a mother. Her children are never called by their names. References to them are always ancillary, incorporated into anecdotes of other colonial experiences. [...H]er own children are, for the most part, literally absent from her text" (V. Thompson 33).

And yet, Cambridge's narrative of invalidism centres on and even emerges from maternity. In its treatment of motherhood, her autobiographical writing paradoxically both erases the body – through the absence of scenes between her and the children – and foregrounds it – through a sustained focus on the maternal body's distress or unwellness. The carriage accident cited above, for instance, is of the kind, Ada confesses, "to which expectant mothers are liable" ("Lonely Seas" 98). Then, while recalling what she terms the "fire year," during which the Crosses' house is regularly surrounded by bush fires, she writes: "Helpless with a new-born baby, I used to lie and smell the smoke and [...] nearly died from want of rest." Then again she finds that "those old scenes come back, and the old terror of the nerves, which were strained so long that the effect upon me was something like what in pre-scientific days was called going into decline. My strength

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conventional nineteenth-century ideologies of motherhood in significant conjunction with her vacillation between an Australian and English identification," an assessment with which I largely agree. My purpose here is to shed further light on the dynamics of this "vacillation."

refused to return after the birth of the child that arrived in the middle of the ordeal" (*Thirty Years* 132-33).

An early climax in *Thirty Years* is Ada's description of the sicknesses and deaths of her two first-born children, tragedies which, while distinguished, particularly in her daughter's case, by a great level of detail concerning the child's physical distress, ultimately become merged with and incorporated into Cambridge's own illness narrative. As she recounts the course of events with understandable passion and urgency, her narration has a confessional quality of immediacy otherwise often absent from the story.[18] Her daughter's whooping-cough, we learn, contracted during the Crosses' residence in remote Yackandandah, eventually manifests itself in peculiar symptoms, seizures and "strange fainting-fits," which Ada describes in relentless minutiae: "there lay my little one, wherever she happened to have been sitting or crawling, exactly like one dead – grey, limp, eyes sunk, lips drawn back, neither breath nor heart-beat discoverable." Following ministrations by the doctor, "[the baby] struggled back and, getting breath, began that quick, agonising shriek, [...] last[ing] the better part of the night" (107-108). When the child suddenly dies, Cambridge understandably experiences a sense of bereavement that is "almost insupportable," while her narrative focus quickly returns to the discourse of her *own* incapacitation when she writes that "the effect on [her] health," not surprisingly, was "severe" (110). Her son's death, from "scarlet fever in its worst form," at the age of five, leaves Cambridge "childless for a fortnight" and in such diminished condition that the daughter to whom she then gives birth "came, as it seemed, to save my life" (119). These

[18] One early reviewer of the book described it as "an autobiography so unrevealing as to suggest that there was nothing to reveal;" (qtd. in Tate 194). Similarly, Bradstock and Wakeling, borrowing a term coined by Patricia Meyer Spacks, call Cambridge "one of those [...] 'selves in hiding'" ("Introduction" xxiii).

incidences highlight, among other things, the difficulty of mothering in remote Australia and Ada's concomitant unwellness.

Maternal labour done – literally – in vain, renders Cambridge invalid, yet invalidism also provides the space, otherwise taken up by motherly duties, to write. Ada and the children are kept apart, we read, by the nurse, "lest their exuberance should fatigue me, [...] and the theory of the household that I was not strong enough to stand anything had some foundation in fact." Motherly labour, in this context, is devalued, as Cambridge consoles herself with the thought "that no mother could tend them better than [the nurse] did." The "inactive life" gained from this separation is precisely the one also marked by the productivity of "novel-writing" (135-36). In this way, invalidism actually engenders authorial creativity, making for a romantic link between art and suffering which echoes any number of writers, from Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Keats to Harriet Martineau and Elizabeth Barret Browning. At the same time, as Margaret Homans reminds us, in the nineteenth century, "women who wrote did so within a framework of dominant cultural myths in which writing contradicts mothering" (22). Similarly, Marianne Hirsch, noting this very pattern in much nineteenth-century fiction, observes, "[i]nvalidism invariably follows marriage and childbirth" (47). Although Cambridge successfully established herself as a writer, one needs to remember that "the story a woman struggles to tell about herself is inscribed within the texts she receives from her culture" (Gilmore, *Autobiographics* 157). Among these "texts" is the incompatibility of motherhood and creativity, a pairing made perhaps even less feasible for the settler woman, who has to make do without the support and help of kin. Cambridge creates space to tell her story by resorting to the discourse of invalidism, freeing herself from mandated responsibilities.

When Ada's health finally collapses completely, after "years of stop-gap doctoring" (*Thirty Years* 146), that collapse too is linked to her identity as a mother. In "The Lonely Seas," she connects the injury done to her in the carriage accident (98) directly to the need for "radical measures," that is, her being "deposited in a private hospital in Melbourne, fully aware of the fact that my case was considered serious enough to make it as likely as not that I should die there" (*Thirty Years* 147). In the event, her physical unwellness was exacerbated by the "grief of her children's deaths [and] the painful sense of loss associated with her feelings of exile" (Tate 105). Cambridge's rendition of her hospital stay – though prefaced with the remark, "I am not going to disgust the patient reader with sickroom talk" (*Thirty Years* 148) – is another detailed *account*, both in the literal sense and figuratively: "I had to pay £6, 6s. per week while an inmate of the house," she reports in language which perfectly captures the "prisoner of the couch" imagery typical of the discourse of invalidism. "This sum did not cover medicines or washing, but board and nursing only. The doctor who gave me chloroform three times charged me £5, 5s. [...while the] surgeon's fee of £105 was comparatively moderate." She emphasizes her "loneliness," but incongruously also relates that sharing her sickroom for a while with another patient "had such a bad effect upon me that [the staff] were soon obliged to remove her." The poor state of her health is illustrated by the fact that she can hardly get any food down: "most of the time I was on broth and gruel – when not sucking milk and soda from a spout" (148-49). Like Cambridge's earlier description of her daughter's sickness, this entire section is again characterized by a confessional quality, in its level of private detail, which much of the rest of the narrative lacks.

The status of confession as an established and popular autobiographical mode stems from its initial association with spiritual texts, beginning with St. Augustine's fifth-century *Confessions*. Subsequently, the use of confessional writing suggests an "appeal to the form's associations with the purifying potential of spiritual autobiography" (Frawley, *Invalidism* 68). Equally remarkable is confession's "capacity to posture as an authentic representation of its author's self-scrutiny," while especially involving the reader as a sympathetic listener (69). Ada's resorting to this mode in the context of her illness narrative centres the issue of authenticity of self entirely in her condition of unwellness and therefore in her self-definition as an invalid. Furthermore, the itemizing and measuring quality of the hospital episode's details suggests an attempt at order and orderliness, an effort to manage the disorder of illness (and thus, in a sense, to manage the environment); counting and accounting help her in holding herself together. The passage also makes clear, however, that Cambridge is a particular type of invalid, *not* one whose dominant posture is one of submission, because the description of her hospitalization also involves a notable challenge to the dominant discourse, in this case medical: "Towards the end of May 1886," Ada writes, "against professional advice, to which we opposed our private opinion that the best way to get well was to get rid of the homesick cravings that were beyond doctor's reach – I was transferred from my hospital bed to one in the house of a dear Melbourne friend, where I lay in all the luxury that love and money could provide" (*Thirty Years* 158). Although she had been told by the nurse and doctor that she "should probably 'die of it' shortly," Cambridge reports with considerable (and understandable) satisfaction, "I persisted in getting well and in enjoying myself accordingly" (147, 158).[19]

[19] In the general context of patients agreeing or disagreeing with their doctors, Maria Frawley notes the role

The notion of the "house," whether her own or a friend's, as somehow linked either to a state of whole(some)ness – in the quotation above a "dear" friend's house, implicitly, restores Ada's health – or to its opposite, is a prominent feature in both of Cambridge's memoirs. Ada's discourse of invalidism articulates, as I have suggested, a discrepancy between herself and place, and that discrepancy (as in Moodie's case) centres on the idea of "house" or "home." Since the "figure of home" is the "core concept" of geopathology (Chaudhuri 174), it is unsurprising that it should also play a key role in Cambridge's emigration narrative. "Ada's emotional security and well-being were always dependent upon her home life and this is reflected in the fact that *Thirty Years in Australia* is structured around the various homes the Crosses occupied in Australia" (Tate 56). The rough chronology underlying *Thirty Years* indeed sees Ada retracing, in her chapter titles, the family's moves from "The First Home" to "The Second Home" and so on, all the way to "The Eighth," signalling first and foremost the centrality of both the concept and reality of home to self-location. Nor is it surprising, in view of the prominence which Ada gives to her illness, that this narrative, too, is linked to the story of home.

Her introduction to homes in Australia, coinciding with the period of good health, is promising. When they first venture into the bush, Ada and George are received by the parson's wife "on the doorstep of [her] cheerful house, and at once we were as perfectly at home in it as in our own. That was the way with all Australian houses, we found," she recalls (*Thirty Years* 21). When, shortly afterwards, Cambridge is lost in the bush, she is found by a squatter and taken to his home, where the man's wife pampers her like a "sister." "Ah, those dear Bush-houses – so homely, so cosy, so hospitable, so picturesque," Ada exclaims, recalling the episode (26-28). In Wangaratta, the "absorbing

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of "patient testimonials [...] in legitimizing medical science" (*Invalidism* 145).

joy, to start with, was the making of the first home," which, although "humble [...], was a sweet little place when we had it fixed up." Being complimented even by the bishop on "this bright, simple, tidy [...] little toy dwelling," a proper "oasis" among the "struggling homes" of other ministers, Ada concludes, "you can make a nice home out of anything, if you choose to try" (37-40). While Cambridge's mother, Thomasina, whose impeccable housewifely skills she repeatedly describes in *The Retrospect* (91, 93, 133), may have been the model for her own home-making,[20] Ada's sense of homecoming in Australia is initially mediated by women who were "like a mother to me" (*Thirty Years* 16, 36). In this way, the figure of the mother is tied both to the story of home and to the narrative of wellness/illness.

Ada's own maternity again brings about a downturn in these interconnected stories. Her "pleasant home at Yackandandah" is broken up after her little daughter's death (106). Following that tragic loss, Cambridge's health declines so "that a complete change of surroundings was considered necessary – to get me away from the house whose every nook and corner was haunted by such agonising visions of what had been" (110). Similarly, after their son's death, the Crosses dismantle the house in Ballan (120), setting a pattern of moves and removals, in Ada's rendering of events, in which their own homes – that central stronghold of settler experience – are suspected of being somehow unsound. The next house, for instance, is turned down for fear that it is damp, although in retrospect Ada thinks, "it was a perfectly healthy house" (121). As well, when their next home, the "old parsonage" in Coleraine, is surrounded by bush fires, which "menaced the mass of old sun-dried woodwork in which we lived," and Ada has just had another baby, her health again declines. "[A]t last I had to be sent away," she reports, "out of sight, sound,

[20] See, for instance, Tate, Bradstock and Wakeling, V. Thompson.

and smell of the place to give me a chance to recover" (132-33). In addition to the fire hazard, the "silence and loneliness of the winters," Cambridge writes, "had their own bad effect upon my broken health: There came a day when I declared, with tears, that if I had to spend another winter in that place I should go melancholy mad" (135-36).[21] In Ada's intertwined narratives of emigration and illness, the house itself comes to represent a menace (much as her own bush dwelling did for Susanna Moodie), and is in large measure responsible for her ill health.[22] Discursively, this representation destabilizes the concept of "home," thereby capturing the very challenge of self-location following the upheaval of emigration and expatriation. It also illustrates, as Veronica Thompson observes, that "[h]ome as maternal space is clearly a conflicted space for Cambridge, " resulting perhaps, as Thompson also argues, from Cambridge's "double vision of herself as both a mother and a child" (267, 41). The identity of the invalid indeed positions Ada "somewhere between passive child and independent adult" (Bradstock and Wakeling, *A Life* 161), a position she appears to have experienced as restorative, and one exemplified in her recurrent role as a frail visitor in other people's homes.

In other people's houses, Cambridge is able to adopt the identity of pampered guest, which brings with it a form of dependency that seems to suit her. At Ballan, for instance, following her daughter's death, Ada's writing provides her with a "passport" to a "small, inter-related, highly exclusive circle of about half a dozen families" in whose "dignified homes," she tells us, "I have spent so many happy hours" (111-12). In particular, her reception into the "one socially 'great house' [...] where brains and good

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[21] Coleraine was also remote, "236 miles from Melbourne and 22 miles by coach from Hamilton" (Morrison xxvii), and Ada disliked that isolation; consequently, "the sickbed became an excellent refuge for her" (Bradstock and Wakeling, *A Life* 56).

[22] The pattern behind the Crosses' moves in the bush, note Cambridge's biographers Bradstock and Wakeling, repeatedly sees "initial enthusiasm and involvement, followed by illness, disillusionment and restlessness on Ada's part" (*A Life* 81).

breeding alone counted," manages to soothe her outlook and sense of self: "From the hour I set foot in that house the situation, as it concerned me personally, was completely changed. I found, if not my level, the level which suited me" (112-13). Here is again the notion of place itself as restorative ("from the hour I set foot in that house"), as a "healing balm for both her grief and her homesickness" (Tate 83). As a treasured guest Ada always finds "comfort" and "pleasure," even when she is ill. In fact, precisely her incapacity prompts the special care and treatment which enable the passivity and dependence she craves. For instance, on the Murray journey the Crosses stop at "a place where we were very much at home," and where "luncheon basket and invalid comforts" are provided for them when they are seen off (*Thirty Years* 79-80). At another station, writes Ada, "I was soon in kind hands of some sort, which helped me to tumble straightway into bed" (85). At yet another, "the housekeeper bore me off to bed, and coddled me with arrowroot or beef-tea or something" (86).

It is this desire to be "in kind hands" which suggests the child-like, as well as an identity perhaps overwhelmed by the demands, challenges, and responsibilities of emigration and the need to establish a home in a brand-new place. In addition to actual health problems, Ada's malady appears to have harboured her maladjustment to the physical and social environment. She may explicitly highlight the joys of home-making, yet the text itself tells instead a story of the "pleasures of invalidism," a concept not as contradictory as it might first appear: Frawley finds evidence of "[i]nvalid authors' repeated recourse to a language of pleasure and pain" (5). This idea is captured persuasively in an essay titled "The Pleasures of Sickness," by Alexander Shand, which extols "'the hours of delight and days of relief of which the invariably vigorous have no

sort of conception'" (qtd. in *Invalidism* 12). Other invalids, too, wrote about the various delights of being ill, such as Maria Edgeworth, who said, "'my illness was a source of more pleasure than pain to me'" (qtd. 28). That sickness could be associated at all with pleasure hints at the advantages which the reality, or posture, of illness might bring for the sufferer. In Cambridge's case, her discourse of invalidism is suffused with a rhetoric of pleasure from the moment of her seasickness enroute to Australia: "my sufferings brought me many pleasures that otherwise I should have been deprived of," she writes about her voyage. "The captain wanted to [...] give me his own swinging cot. The head steward used to smuggle in mysterious parcels, which, when unwrapped, disclosed little dainties, specially prepared and hot from the cooking stove, to tempt [me]." As well, she reports delightedly that the other ladies on board were "kindness itself" to her. Ada's illness also gives her special access to "a couch on the skylight," to which she withdraws at night in order to "enjoy [her]self" (*Thirty Years* 11). All these special treatments and benefits bear out Frawley's observation that the figure of the invalid is "at once debilitated and yet also undeniably privileged" (*Invalidism* 9).

In Australia, the "language of pleasure and pain" Cambridge uses to describe her state of health is joined to the story of house and home. "I was so placed," she writes about a visit to Melbourne, "that the best of everything came my way." The house which serves as her "town head-quarters for many years" always supplies "good company and plenty of it," so that she is able to conclude, apparently unperturbed by the contradiction, "[t]his was perhaps the gayest period in my life, in spite of increasing invalidism" (*Thirty Years* 137).[23] As well, motherhood and the responsibilities associated with it play an

[23] Ada's self-representation here prompts Tate to conclude, "[i]t is obvious that some of Ada's illness was partly psychological" (117).

important role in the unfolding story of house/home and health. After their son's death at Ballan, for instance, and with their new daughter still an infant, the Crosses are welcomed "to one of the 'mansions' in its neighbourhood." Here she is pampered and spoilt, and even relieved of her mothering duties:

> Never did I live in such utter ease and luxury. Men and maid-servants to wait on one at every turn, and to pet the year-old baby so that even her nurse found her place a sinecure; a dear old housekeeper continually pursuing me with "nourishment"; daily drives with my hostess, alone or with a cavalcade of more ephemeral guests – so numerous that we seemed to have a dinner party every night; no domestic cares; no parish work – the conditions were not only pleasant, but most beneficial to my health. (122)

The privilege of "being taken care of" appears to have reproduced a filial type of relationship for the exilic Cambridge, which she had lost upon departure from England. The emigration scheme usually involves the absence of the parent generation (Whitlock, *Intimate Empire* 47), as it also did in Cambridge's case. In particular, Ada's memory of her own mother's painful maternal labour supplies the seed for her narrative focus on her own maternal body and its pain. As a suffering mother herself, Ada brings her own lost mother closer and perhaps also enacts a form of atonement for the grief she has caused by leaving. She replicates her mother's role and also stimulates kind treatment by others of herself, accorded to the invalid, that resembles maternal care. For the exile, the role of the suffering isolated invalid both captures the painful separation from her lost family and restores, in some measure, her lost identity as a daughter.

In addition, part of Cambridge's enjoyment as a guest is due to the satisfaction she derives from pleasant and intellectually stimulating social interaction: *Thirty Years* engages in a solid system of self-location by means of social markers that play an important role in the intertwined narratives of emigration and illness. Unlike Susanna Moodie and Catharine Parr Traill, who had found life in Upper Canada disappointing because of its lack of class distinction and social intercourse of their desired level, Ada finds "a highly civilised society" in Victoria (33), which helps her to re-orient herself in her new surroundings. Not only does she regularly attend "bazaars and church teas and such things," but also many a "refined little dinner" that leave her "exhilarated with all the mental champagne we had imbibed" (36, 16, 206). Nor is she above name-dropping when it comes to her social encounters, mentioning that she met Lord and Lady Roseberry and Archibald Forbes "at the houses of some of my friends" (138). This is a far cry from the near-starvation poverty and the society of Yankee rustics Moodie had to deal with in the Canadian backwoods. The social climate of Victoria, by contrast, supports Ada's concept of her own position and thus her sense of personal "distinctiveness," a crucial marker of locatedness in the dynamics of displacement and relocation (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell 207). In addition, the "feather-bed life," in the passage cited above, in yet another of Victoria's great houses has a curative effect on her well-being. The episode highlights persuasively the significance of placement in Cambridge's narrative: when Ada's health is undermined in her own home and she can retreat to the more passive and dependent identity of guest elsewhere – an identity in which she delivers herself into the welcome and kindness of others – her health inevitably improves.

If being in other people's homes is restorative to Ada's health, so also is being itinerant. For instance, "much of her nine-year sojourn in Beechworth was spent as an invalid – and [...] much time was consumed in frequent absences from it" (Bradstock and Wakeling, *A Life* 81). Cambridge's search for wellness in places other than her own Australian home links her to the thousands of invalids who, throughout the century, were "visible features of the landscapes described by many nineteenth-century travel writers" (Frawley, *Invalidism* 117).[24] The phenomenon of tourism involving people who are unwell "provides a fascinating counterpoint to the association of invalidism and stasis" (114), clearly identifying the sufferer's point of origin or residence as part of the health problem in the first place. In Ada's case, the figure of home is, again, tied into the "pursuit" of health, inasmuch as she both leaves her home for temporary visits elsewhere and moves house in the search to get better. "'The nuisance of moving!,'" she exclaims on one occasion, "is a lamentation one often hears from those who have to do it; nobody ever heard it from me. [...] I have thoroughly enjoyed it eight times, and should like nothing better than to move again to-morrow" (*Thirty Years* 224). Not only is she here conveniently overlooking the fact that some of these moves were brought about by domestic tragedies in which the effect on her of her surroundings took her to the brink of madness (136), but the restless activity of searching for a cure to her complaints, both in a new home and on journeys for pleasure, also disguises that, at heart, she is looking for "the right place – the place that I am so long getting to that I almost despair of seeing it again" (224). On another occasion she mentions "the settled plan [of] my life, which is to get 'Home' somehow before the final event" (198). Arguably, Ada's zest for "breaking

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[24] An essay published mid-century and entitled "A Voyage to Australia for Health" calls Australia, however, "an unfit place" for invalids (qtd. in *Invalidism* 130).

camp" is linked to her "perpetual search for health." Despite its restlessness, this search "evokes a sense of emotional stasis and captures well the sick role adopted by all who lived in [...] 'this air of exile'" (Frawley, *Invalidism* 155). In Ada's case, her writing, both fictional and other, regularly reflects a preoccupation with "the position of the exile" (Tate 79).

Cambridge's quest for improved health takes her, for instance, to Melbourne and Sydney. In the former, she manages to have "great times [...], varying [her] social revels with a visit to the doctor twice or thrice a week" (*Thirty Years* 138). A three-week "sojourn" in Sydney is even more enchanting (201), as Ada goes from one "charming" party to the next, delighting in entertainment in which "kindred spirits were intermingling and intercommuning." Again, the effect of the distance from home, combined with the social intercourse and freedom from her usual responsibilities, is beneficial to her health: "And so every day was a full holiday," she explains, "and I was always well, and the sky was always blue and the sun shining" (206-208). Cambridge's discourse here accords medicinal value to the energy and activity borne out of the very break from routine which travel represents. Travel gives a stimulating charge to the languorous invalid that enables her to shed the discomforts of both body and mind.

Also linked to invalid travel is the "emergence of climatotherapy" (Frawley, *Invalidism* 125), the notion that particular climates are therapeutic to the ill. *Thirty Years* endorses this notion. The end of the Crosses' bush life (in 1893), for instance, results from a switch of parishes between George and another minister, whose "wife was convalescing from severe illness, and the doctor had advised that she be taken from the sea to a bracing inland climate. The climate we had to offer seemed the very thing – and I may say here

tradition that when, as a mere infant on its mother's lap, I saw the sea for the first time – at Hunstanton [in Norfolk] it was – I was so overcome with sentimental emotion that I burst into tears" (*Thirty Years* 226). This confession is made only in connection with the move to the last home of her narrative, in Williamstown, near both Melbourne and the sea. In the text, it results in a new focus, for the sea suddenly becomes the target of all Cambridge's desires: her entire life, she writes, "however happy I may have been, there was always that one thing wanting – the near neighbourhood, the salt breath of the sea" (227). Conceptually and in terms of travel routes, the sea provides a link to both homeland and mother. This is an important consideration, as for Ada the acts of leaving England and leaving her mother arguably had been the "two separations that echo through her memoirs" (V. Thompson 9).

As a link to her lost home, the sea comes to play a significant role in the concluding episodes of the emigration narrative, as Ada constructs herself as "satisfied," "living by the sea at last" (*Thirty Years* 228, 226). It is also forcefully employed, towards the end of *Thirty Years*, in the story of her illness, as she recalls:

> Twice when ill in bed, I found the craving [for the sea] overmastering. "I know that, if I could get to the sea, I should get well," I cried at a time when I was unable to take myself thither and [George] said he was too busy to take me. [...] I begged and bribed him to give me my wish. We left Beechworth one afternoon, reaching Melbourne late at night; next morning took boat for Sorrento and the open Pacific; saturated ourselves with sea-essences until night again, and returned home next day. The result was so miraculous that [...] we repeated the experiment three months later. (227)

that it proved so, even beyond expectations" (212). At the time, the Crosses reside at Beechworth, which, according to Ada, "[c]ertainly deserves [...] to be one of the sanatoriums of the world, and it is the fact that English doctors, who knew its virtues, sent several hopeless invalids to us, either to make miraculous recoveries or to prolong for years in tolerable comfort some life not worth a month's purchase at home" (213). She proceeds at length, over several pages, to provide specific examples of the benefits of the "rare and vigorous climate of our hills" (214). "Vigour" is indeed a keyword, as the torpidity of invalidism and the energy and activity of tourism appear to be "mutually constitutive," their co-existence based on "the need for revivification in order to recover a sense of life nearly extinguished by routine existence at home" (Frawley, *Invalidism* 137). In Cambridge's case, Frawley's insight goes some way towards explaining why the apparently restorative climate of Ada's specific Australian location is counterposed to her own invalidism, in which Beechworth's "virtues" clearly fail. "Yes," she writes, "I was ill there, and felt that nothing but the sea would cure me" (217).

The notion of the sea as the only curative abruptly surfaces and then gains strength in the final section of *Thirty Years*. Critics have commented on Ada's "almost mystical rapport" with the sea (Tate 14), a relationship which may well have existed. Upon revisiting the scene of her early childhood holidays by the "seaside," for instance, she comments in *The Retrospect*, "[i]f ever I was happy in this mortal life, I was happy here" (216). The sea as a trope, or the idea of the sea as possessing particular restorative powers, however, does not appear until fairly late in Cambridge's first memoir. When it does, it is immediately put in the service of the thematics of exile and home, illness and health. The sea, Ada confesses, has been "the desire of my heart from childhood. There is a family

This episode is far from an isolated occurrence. On another occasion she reports, "[b]eing out of health, I had taken one of those sudden longings for the sea which come over me at such times, an instinctive animal craving after the natural remedy for my complaint" (197). As well, the move to Williamstown brings a "solid advantage," since the proximity of the sea, "its air and influence improved my health" (233). The sudden emphasis on the sea as a panacea is somewhat surprising to the reader who still remembers Cambridge's sufferings from sea-sickness on the way to Australia. Frawley notes that sea voyages and the "purportedly restorative power of sea breezes" were linked to cures for consumption (*Invalidism* 127), but Ada's medical problems were of a different kind. The imagery that characterizes her discourse with regard to the sea (as well as to ships) is one of vitalizing power, as key words and phrases such as "turmoil" (199), "fortitude and vitality" (200), "exhilarating freshness" (201), "more alive [than anything]" recur in the text (228). The immediately curative "sea-essences" in the passage cited above speak to the revivifying force that the sea represented for Ada. The sea, in short, comes to stand for "the exhilaration, the invigoration" of life itself (224).

If the sea, through this very quality, seems a natural target for an invalid whose own vitality is low, the sea as the original source of all life – as the primal mother – is also a potent archetype, "the ocean of life with its life- and death-bringing seasons, and life [as] her child, a fish eternally swimming inside her" (Neumann 222). This interpretation is only reinforced when Ada depicts herself as held in her mother's lap upon first spotting the sea as an infant (in her fond childhood memory cited above) and as protected like an infant when aboard a ship at sea. In *Thirty Years*, for instance, she writes that during an excursion to Tasmania (for health reasons), she was in bed during a storm, and "[the

captain's] servant wedged me in with pillows [...]. [...] I was quite well and happy, swinging to the heavy roll and pitch of the ship in the soft but tight clasp of my wedging pillows" (199-200). Several near-identical scenes are enacted in Cambridge's novel *Materfamilias* (1898), unusually for her told from the first-person perspective, as the heroine lies "swathed in fur and blankets, like a chrysalis in its cocoon, more absolutely comfortable than I had ever been in my life" (12). Later she says, "[f]or hours I would lie like a cradled baby" (14). Such an experience of Oneness with the sea, or, more specifically, with its maternal character, replicates the pre-symbolic, primal female space, argued for in feminist writing, in which otherness is unthinkable and in which the self is joined to what Hélène Cixous calls the "voice of the mother" (qtd. in Andermatt Conley 83). This is the pre-text and source of all feminine writing. Cambridge supplies the very image of the maternal sea voice, not in her memoirs (in which her prose style is often not particularly lyrical), but again through the protagonist of *Materfamilias*, who, contemplating a sea-voyage, exclaims, "it was as if some long-silent mother-voice called to us across the bay, 'Come home, come home!'" (265). The sea is both mother and home, both life-giving force and "the Place of Love" (*Thirty Years* 147); in this trope the maternal pre-text becomes part of, and erupts through, Ada's narratives of illness and emigration.

Eventually the sea does take Cambridge home, a tale which literally reverses the emigration story in notable respects, and which is told in Ada's second memoir, *The Retrospect*. The Crosses' actual return journey to England, which ostensibly supplied the material for the book, came about in connection with legal business in a matter of inheritance involving George, who initially was to go alone. Ada tells us that, following

her grown son's death just a few years earlier (an event narrated at the very end of *Thirty Years*), she no longer cared where she lived (*The Retrospect* 12).[25] In her telling, her accompaniment of her husband was an afterthought, borne again out of her ill health and her generally "'run-down condition'": "a long sea voyage had been doctors' prescription for me for years," she writes. "Mysteriously and, as it were, automatically, I brisked up from the moment the [journey to England was suggested]" (13). As far as her health is concerned, this journey has the opposite effect from her outward-bound voyage to Australia: where the latter had made her ill, the return trip apparently immediately restores her health. "Well! I never was so well since I was born," she writes of her time aboard ship. Returning to England, "[t]he long sea-voyage did all that was asked of it" (14). Notable elements of Cambridge's discourse of invalidism here are the same as they had been in *Thirty Years*, such as the twinning of pleasure and pain – "I pass over the special favours vouchsafed to me," she remarks confidentially and coyly – and the link to the maternal – "the mothering of a devoted stewardess" apparently alleviating her suffering (15). Otherwise, however, within the framework of the discourse of invalidism, the story told in this second book of reminiscences is the *healing* narrative, as Ada reports the end of her complaints: "I was in the pink of health, when nothing could hurt me" (172). While, therefore, undoubtedly other factors combined to produce this result – freedom from mothering, for instance, allowing her to "forg[e]t whether I was ill or well, or had nerves or not" (16) – *The Retrospect*, nevertheless, in what amounts to a dramatic reversal, is the account which enables Cambridge to exchange the narrative in which she is ill for the narrative in which she is, or becomes, well.

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[25] Hugh had tragically died in early 1901, at the age of twenty-two, of Yellow Fever, contracted while working in Queensland.

In the event, however, this is not the fulfilling conclusion it may have been, for other aspects of *The Retrospect* render the discourse of invalidism marginal. Foremost among these, in a book whose first chapter is titled "Coming Home," is Ada's continued focus on the figure of home, as she revisits the houses of her childhood. While in *Thirty Years* the Crosses' various homes had often represented a negative environment, as a result either of painful memories or a threat from without, the refrain in *The Retrospect* is entirely different: "Sweet old house – altogether sweet," exclaims Cambridge (118), while seeking out one old home after another. Throwing herself energetically and methodically into returning to each and all, Ada also writes that the "associations" provoked by these revisits are "keenly dear" to her and indulges in memories of her parents, grandparents and siblings, with whom she had shared these residences (66). The encounters with place are frequently characterized by language that anthropomorphizes the home. About one such house, for instance, she tells us that it "cried to [her] with a thousand tongues of memory every time [she passed it]" (61). About another she says, "driving slowly past the very face of [the manor]," it appeared that "it had not visibly changed in the least degree" (105), much as one might comment about a friend or relative not seen in years. Yet another "dear old home, [...] to all appearances had not changed a bit" (187). Using similar language to express the opposite event, she records "quite a shock" upon finding that one house "was no more," although in "my gallery of Memory the picture of it hangs, no line or tint bedimmed by the passage of the years" (117). Notwithstanding this last discovery, Ada's representation of "home" in England restores a stability to the figure which it had sorely lacked in *Thirty Years*, where she tended to feel better and more "at home" in other people's houses than in her own. On her return visits, Cambridge finds a

sense of continuity of self, traceable through her former homes, which speaks to a definition of identity through relationship and rooted in place. More importantly, perhaps, these revisits also allow the passive and dependent definition of self, with which Ada is so familiar and comfortable: not only does she have to rely on others to take her where she needs to go and to receive her warmly into these former homes, paralleling her reception as an invalid, but by employing a dependent persona she recreates herself in every encounter as a child. Invalidism had similarly enabled a child-like identity, as had being a guest in "great" homes.

Ultimately, however, too much time has passed, and with none of Ada's family left in England (48), "*The Retrospect* becomes an interesting record of how someone re-visiting and re-creating childhood experiences in one land finally comes to re-define 'home' in another" (Tate 222). Although England is both "beautiful" and "dear" (*The Retrospect* 29, 177), Cambridge's divided loyalties and exilic perspective are evident almost from the narrative's start. Much like Catharine Parr Traill, Ada uses the personal pronoun "our" indiscriminately and confusingly (34, 48), suggesting her identification with both Australia and England. Similarly, while revisiting her "old homes" (61), she is more likely to apply the terms "at home" or "home" to Australia (33, 34, 85), suggesting an altogether "changed attitude to 'home' and thus the locus of her emotional security and happiness" (Tate 231). While England had been the target of Ada's "ever-unappeased desire" during her life in exile (*The Retrospect* 11), she now finds some of England "little, quaint, cramped" and more intellectually isolated and isolating than "a bush hut in the Back Blocks" (49, 294). Her altered outlook, she writes, "was typical of the sea-change my whole being had undergone" (51). With the discourse of invalidism laid aside, and

emotional revisits to former homes similarly concluded, the final page of *The Retrospect* records the completion of a long and painful transition, both from old home to new, and from the passive and dependent identity of guest (or, implicitly, of invalid or child) to the identity of mother. While still staying with a friend in a grand home on the Kentish coast, Ada's thoughts turn once more to the sea, now a link not to mother or mother country, but to her left-behind children in Australia:

> Towards the sea and the south my face was set, and [...] [a]ll the charms of Kent in the golden weather could not now deflect my gaze. England is Home indeed to the English-born. [...] But there is one wee spot, one house amongst the countless millions of human dwellings [...] that is the only place on earth, or in the universe for that matter, where your heart, if it be a mother's heart, can rest. (304).

Here, finally, is that steady "gaze" towards Australia as the home of her children, and through them as her own home, which had been missing in much of *Thirty Years*. Ada acknowledges the roots she has sunk in Australia, and the attachment she has developed to it, "for better or worse," as even the domestic tragedies she experienced there have moved her "life's journey forward" and thereby altered who she is (Manzo 77).

The emigration story that had started more than four decades earlier and that Cambridge had begun to tell in *Thirty Years* traces a woman's difficult path through those years, as the experience of exile brings about radical displacement and a "sea-change" in her sense of self. The discourse of invalidism proves to be a suitable way of articulating this change, perhaps because illness has an equally powerful "transformative potential" and the capacity of altering "one's 'selfhood' [...] somehow forever" (Frawley, "Prisoner" 175). Poor health may have been a fact of Ada's life, but invalidism, to borrow once more

from a different context, "also became an important discourse through which she created her life narrative" (Fiamengo 171). It allowed her, to some extent, to recover her lost identity as a daughter. My purpose in focusing on this discourse in Cambridge's autobiographies is not to diminish the author's private suffering, but rather to highlight the difficulty of "composing" the self and of creating a narratable identity following expatriation, an event which then meant considerable hardships and the fact of never seeing one's mother, one's family and friends again. If a large part of Ada's depression and invalidism sprang from the pain of this loss and from a sense of being trapped and unable to take action, these conditions were the reality for many settler women. Her autobiographical "I" struggles with this reality. By drawing attention to the struggle and to the bodily pain it causes, Cambridge's writing challenges convention and resists precisely the confinement and stasis that threatened her sense of self.

Chapter V

Losing the Heart's Home: Modernism and the Geography of Yearning in Isak Dinesen's *Out of Africa* and *Shadows on the Grass*

Despite evident differences, topographical and otherwise, between their respective destinations, the emigrations of Susanna Moodie and Catharine Parr Traill, on the one hand, and Ada Cambridge on the other, unfolded, as I suggested in my previous chapter, largely within a shared conceptual model of the world. The same cannot be said of Isak Dinesen (nor of the last writer in my study, Alyse Simpson): when *Out of Africa* appeared in 1937, a dramatic paradigm shift had taken place in the early decades of the twentieth century from Victorian and Edwardian perceptions to radically altered modes. Sweeping changes in technology – from the telephone to the automobile, from the wireless telegraph to x-ray machines, the cinema, and machine guns – resulted in the emergence of new forms of consciousness. The introduction of World Standard Time, for instance, at the end of the nineteenth century – pioneered by none other than Catharine Parr Traill's great admirer and supporter, Canadian engineer Sanford Fleming – constituted an "assault[...] on the authority of uniform public time" and exacerbated its distinctiveness from private or subjective time, as Stephen Kern explains in his insightful and informative study, *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918* (11, 16). Many of the literary works of the period, including Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*, Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, and Joyce's *Ulysses*, contain deliberate and personal explorations of time as a frame of experiential reference (16-18).

Similarly, innovations in transportation forced a re-conceptualization of space and place. The automobile, airplane, and steamship transformed travel, while altering

perceptions of distance and geographical difference, and even raising questions about the "fixity" of boundaries and national borders, as airplanes flew over these (J.G. Kennedy 187). The homogeneity of space, a given since Newton's formulation of "absolute space" as "always similar and immutable" and as governed by Euclidean geometry, had to be reconsidered following a plethora of new theories and discoveries in fields as diverse as biology (space perceptions of animals) and sociology (cultural variations in spatial organization) (qtd. in Kern 131-32). Parallel cultural developments in art, psychology, science, and philosophy, such as Cubism, psychoanalysis, the stream-of-consciousness novel, and Einstein's theories of relativity further redefined and problematized dimensions of thought and experience (1-2). An awareness of fundamental transformations and new modes of consciousness is expressed, sometimes in conflicting forms, in many of the era's works of literature, and part of my argument here will be that reading *Out of Africa* and *Shadows on the Grass* as modernist texts clarifies both their content and reading process. Dinesen has been associated with literary modernism "because of her use of symbols and her search for aesthetic order against the background of modernist chaos" (Brantly 4), but her memoirs have not been sufficiently explored from this perspective.

The enormous changes in perception ushered in by the twentieth century – a circumstance captured in Virginia Woolf's mock-scientific quip that "on or about December, 1910, human nature changed" ("Mr. Bennett" 95) – also affected the narrative construction of identity. In particular, psychoanalysis and the "influence of Freud's discovery of the unconscious cannot be discounted in the unsettling of the 'I' that had heretofore stood at the center of narrative discourse." This "instability of [the] subject" (Benstock, "Authorizing" 152) – a pervasive characteristic of Isak Dinesen's writing (as

Shari Benstock, and others, also observe) – combined with the problematizing of categories of thought across many fields, also complicated women's efforts in auto-biography to define the self, and perhaps particularly to recover and redefine it following emigration. My own project of analyzing settler women's memoirs encounters a new complexity in Dinesen, which partly results from the described shift in conceiving the self and the world, partly stems from her position as a colonial writer on the highly contested terrain of Africa,[1] and partly arises from Dinesen's own relentless and lifelong preoccupation with the "relation between 'self' and 'consciousness'" (Benstock 152). She formulated this preoccupation as the central question "present in all of her writings" (Brundbjerg 44): "who am I?" For this reason, a student of women's autobiography would be hard-pressed to find a more fascinating subject than Isak Dinesen.

In a lecture given at Lund University, Sweden, in the 1950s, and worth quoting at some length, she reflects on the problematic in detail:

> It may happen [...] that you will travel to distant lands, unknown to you. I can tell you that this will be a strange experience for you. You will find that not only will your surroundings change and be strange and unknown wherever you turn, but that you yourselves will change in your own eyes so that you will eventually ask the question, 'Who am I? What do I look like?'
>
> As long as you are a child at home, this question does not arise, all your surroundings can answer it; they are in agreement and their common judgment usually affords the basis of the evaluation we make ourselves. And as long as you

[1] In his study of settler writing in Kenya, Abdulrazak Gurnah argues that European settlers in Kenya both employed and challenged "established European discourse"; their writing therefore "reflects the way that theirs was a subjectivity and culture of the modernist period" (276).

> remain in your native country, you are in a sense at home, all the people you meet there have approximately the same background. [...]
>
> But one day you come to a people who see us with different eyes. Even if you learn their language, they won't have the same kind of ear you are used to addressing. If you tell them that you come from Lund, it will mean nothing to them. [...]
>
> And while you are divesting yourselves, in a way, of your social and intellectual attitudes one by one, it will slowly dawn upon you that, after all, these may not have constituted your true being, and that something remains behind when they disappear. Who am I then, since I am no longer the same person I have previously been taken for? Then the truest answer must be: a human being. [...]
>
> This experience was for me a kind of revelation, not only of the world, but also of myself. And I can say that it was a great and unexpected happiness, a liberation [...] one more step in this direction, I thought, and then I will be face to face with God. (qtd. in Hannah 50)

This querying of identity reverberates through Dinesen's body of work and also surfaces again and again in her private writing, including in her collected *Letters from Africa, 1914-1931* (1981).[2] Her answer, in the passage quoted above, establishes precisely the

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[2] Repeatedly, as in the story "The Dreamers," published in her first collection, *Seven Gothic Tales* (1934), the answer involves a deliberate evasion of stable identity: Pellegrina Leoni, the story's protagonist, vows after suffering a momentous loss, "I will not be one person again, [...], I will be always many persons from now" (430). Pellegrina's ability to be "many persons" derives from her itinerant state, as is made explicit in "Echoes," a story published in *Last Tales* (1957), which revisits the characters from "The Dreamers." In it, the narrator tells us that Pellegrina "had fled from Rome and from her lover, [...] whose great passion for her *threatened to place her*, and to hold her fast, within a definite, continued existence" (153; italics added). Dinesen herself stated, in conversation with her protegé, Thorkild Bjørnvig, that Pellegrina is an autobiographical character. Critics have read the story accordingly, as a fictional representation of the assumption of a *persona* or "mask." Donald Hannah asserts, "Isak Dinesen assumed a mask in order to fill the emptiness she found in her environment in Denmark, and created an artistic conception of herself to replace the identity of which circumstances had robbed her" (52). In Dinesen's story "The Deluge at

connection between place and identity which I have been exploring in my study: it suggests that one's surroundings determine the search for self-realization, that the response, in short, to the question "who am I?" is anchored in and contingent upon the answer to a different question: "*where* am I?" Place thereby emerges as crucial in formulating and understanding identity.

Out of Africa – a work "deservedly lauded as one of the great modern examples of autobiographic writing" (Whitlock, *Intimate Empire* 115) – contemplates, both directly and indirectly, just this link between self and place. The very title of the book, published six years after Dinesen had left Kenya, suggests in its ambiguousness the opposing implications both of identity born, that is generated, "out of Africa," and of identity away from it. "The narrative is the product," as Sarah Gilead remarks, "of both perspectives" (50). Dinesen's treatment of this and other dualisms will, for several reasons, be a focus of my discussion of her memoirs: not only has a binary – that of "home" and "exile" – been the underlying structuring principle of my analysis, and not only has Dinesen's habit of breaking down dichotomies received much critical attention as a general feature of her work,[3] but I will argue that her fusion of dualisms is a central element of a much broader pattern, one which sheds light on the dynamics both of the construction and of the reading of her autobiographies. This pattern is also found in the most canonical, high modernist authors such as T.S. Eliot, James Joyce, W.B. Yeats, and Thomas Mann, and is identified

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Norderney," also in *Seven Gothic Tales*, the presumed Cardinal, who turns out to be that man's servant and murderer, Kasparson, declares, "Not by the face shall the man be known, but by the mask" (264). Both Dinesen's fiction and life rely on "'ever-shifting selves and voices' [...] in a kind of engendering of the self" (Pelensky, "Introduction" xv). Also see Frantz Leander Hansen's observation that in Dinesen's work "multiple roles [...] make up one's substance" (*Destiny and the Denial of Fate* 17). In the context of multiple identities also note the following comment by Shari Benstock: "Modernism [...] ruthlessly questions [...] the cultural assumptions of [...] coherent subjectivity, of the singular 'I'" ("Expatriate 23).

[3] See Susan Brantly's conclusion from her overview of Dinesen criticism: "The dynamic interaction of opposites is central to Dinesen's texts" (6-7).

as 'return and transcendence' by Jewel Spears Brooker in her reading of "T.S. Eliot and the Dialectic of Modernism."[4] In this pattern, opposing entities are absorbed into a complementary unity through a movement that drives "forward by spiraling back (a return) and up (a transcendence)" (55-56).[5] *Out of Africa* and *Shadows on the Grass* enact such a return loop, not simply through their look back on a life lived, as all autobiography does, but also in terms of their themes, structure, and style. If *Out of Africa* describes "a relentless trajectory of loss and death" (Aiken, *Engendering* 218), it nevertheless, as a text, bears testimony to both the transcendence of this trajectory and the story's end. Reading *Shadows on the Grass* in conjunction with the more famous memoir – something rarely done by scholars – reinforces the transcendent thrust. The "dialectical spiral" (Brooker 70) in Dinesen's writing invariably hinges on the question of geography, much as the writer "Isak Dinesen" emerged following a drastic geographical transposition; it turns on language as enabling a kind of spatiality, and a kind of self-location, not seen in any of my earlier texts, almost independent of actual, circumscribed place.[6] What makes Dinesen's story, finally, more than one woman's "dream of identity, of making whole that which is severed and divided" (Benstock, "Expatriate" 26), more than the tale of one person's loss, and more than a refiguration of a distant utopia, is its quest for transcendence. The story's haunting power lies both in representing a desire for a state and place of "wholeness," and in the effort to transcend the condition of lack this desire implies.

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[4] Brooker's perceptive analysis is helpful not only in its own right, but also because Eliot is a paradigmatic figure for literary modernism and much that applies to him applies to modernism in general.
[5] Brooker explains that while this pattern is "a metamorphosis of Hegelian and Marxist dialectic," it differs from Hegel in its evasion of synthesis (55-56).
[6] In this context it is also worth remembering that language itself, in Julia Kristeva's theorizing, constitutes a continuous dynamic interplay – the principle at the core of the modernist dialectic – between the symbolic (associated with the name and law of the father) and the "semiotic" (associated with the pre-verbal and the experience of oneness with the maternal) (*Reader* 93-98).

"Isak Dinesen" was born Karen Christenze Dinesen[7] at Rungstedlund, Denmark, in 1885; she had two sisters and two brothers. Her family called her "Tanne," a name later turned into "Tania" by her East African social circle. Both her father's and mother's families were wealthy and influential. Dinesen's father, Wilhelm, a romantic figure descended from landed gentry, served as an officer in various European wars and later lived for two years as a hunter among the Natives in Wisconsin. He wrote a book about the experience, *Jagtbreve* (*Letters from the Hunt*) (1889-92), as well as several other books, some published under the pseudonym "Boganis." Dinesen's mother, Ingeborg Westenholz, came from a family of wealthy merchants who had also gained considerable political influence, her father serving as finance minister and her grandfather as state councillor. Tanne "saw the two families as antitheses," admiring her father's aristocratic genealogy while protesting that her mother's bourgeois family disliked her (Thurman 6). In 1895, Wilhelm committed suicide, apparently because he was unable to cope with the prospect of disablement from syphilis, contracted years earlier. The absence of his paternal influence would be a heavy burden for many years to come for Tanne, then barely ten years old, and she would claim, "throughout her life [...] that she took after him" (Hannah 13). Like many nineteenth-century girls of their class, the Dinesen sisters were educated privately, which meant that they "were not prepared to earn a living" and were "not even taught about housekeeping" (Thurman 39). Nevertheless, Dinesen received some art training and also published several short stories (between 1907 and 1909), failing, however, to "attract[...] any particular attention" with them (Lasson, "Rain" xxx). In 1913 she became engaged to her Swedish cousin, Baron Bror Blixen-Finecke, and

[7] I will follow the standard North American convention of using the name "Isak Dinesen" when referring to her writing as opposed to aspects of her biography.

following positive reports about the potential of the colony, the couple emigrated to British East Africa, where they were married and settled on a coffee farm near Nairobi in January 1914, moving to a larger plantation at Ngong in 1916.

Dinesen's story of her life on this farm has entered the popular imagination, in large measure as a result of the 1985 Hollywood film *Out of Africa*, based (among others) on Dinesen's memoirs. Many facts of her life in Kenya are therefore well known, such as her infection with syphilis by her husband, mere months after their marriage; her eventual divorce; her love for the British aristocrat, pilot and safari guide Denys Finch-Hatton, a man apparently "revered" by all who knew him, according to his biographer Errol Trzebinski (xv); Finch-Hatton's death in a plane crash; the bankruptcy and sale of the farm shortly thereafter, and Dinesen's return to Denmark in 1931.[8] Having lost her African life, Dinesen concentrated on pursuing a writing career. Her output, though limited by a lifetime of ill-health as the result of her struggle with her disease,[9] consists of several collections of tales, including the already mentioned *Seven Gothic Tales* (1934), *Winter's Tales* (1942), and *Last Tales* (1957); her two memoirs, *Out of Africa* (1937) and *Shadows on the Grass* (1960), the latter "embroidering the austere canvas of the [former]" (Thurman 223); essays collected in *Essays* (1965) and *Daguerrotypes and Other Essays*

[8] Dinesen's former house is now a museum in the Nairobi suburb of Karen (named after her) and the site of "pilgrimages" by her admirers (qtd. in Whitlock, *Intimate Empire* 112).

[9] Tertiary syphilis affects the spinal cord and the nerves emanating from it; Dinesen reportedly experienced considerable pain in her digestive tract, particularly in her later years, and underwent several surgeries to sever the nerves which caused her symptoms. A relatively recent biography, *Out of Isak Dinesen in Africa* (1995), by Linda Donelson (who is a medical doctor), interprets Dinesen's medical history differently: Donelson says that Dinesen's syphilis "was halted in its second stage [and thus never progressed to the spinal cord deterioration], yet Dinesen continued to dose herself with an elixir of arsenic," whenever needed, perhaps because she misunderstood her diagnosis (349). Donelson concludes that arsenic poisoning was the cause of Dinesen's health problems, exacerbated by panic attacks (354-55). Donelson's theory is supported by other experts' accounts, including those of Dinesen's personal physician, Professor Mogens Fog, and by Professor Kaare Weismann, who also suspects "chronic heavy metal poisoning" from arsenic and mercury (quoted in Brundbjerg 265; 267). Judith Thurman, author of Dinesen's authoritative biography, however, treats the symptoms Dinesen experienced as syphilis-related, but also implies that she may have been anorexic.

(1979), as well as two substantial collections of letters. Dinesen wrote in English and then translated her own work into Danish.[10] During the 1950s, she was repeatedly considered for a Nobel Prize in literature. She died from malnutrition in September of 1962, at Rungstedlund, after several years of declining health, weighing barely thirty-five kilograms.[11]

Due to the complex and symbolic nature of Dinesen's work, critical interpretations of it vary widely, and no single reading can claim ultimate authority, completeness, or "correctness." Her tales have variously been explored from modernist, postmodernist, post-structuralist, and feminist perspectives, to name some prevailing approaches,[12] beginning (in North America) with Robert Langbaum's insightful analysis, *The Gayety of Vision: Isak Dinesen's Art* (1965), which is still valuable, particularly for its understanding of Dinesen's use of myth. With regard to her two memoirs – by far her most controversial works as a result of Dinesen's position as a colonial author – changing social and political views in recent decades have altered what was a favourable early reception to one critical of the "'romantic' view of Africa" represented in *Out of Africa* [and *Shadows on the Grass*] (Brantly 74). Consequently, the books are regarded as

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[10] Her curious double textual system has, unsurprisingly, also been a target of critical attention. See, for instance, Susan Hardy Aiken, "Writing (in) Exile." For two studies which concern themselves specifically with the implications of Dinesen's bilingual production see Lise Kure-Jensen, "Isak Dinesen in English, Danish, and Translation: Are We Reading the Same Text?," and Ute Klünder, *"Ich werde ein großes Kunstwerk schaffen...": Eine Untersuchung zum literarischen Grenzgängertum der zweisprachigen Dichterin Isak Dinesen / Karen Blixen* (2000) *("I will create a great work of art...": An investigation of the literary transgressiveness of the bilingual writer Isak Dinesen/Karen Blixen*; [all translations from German are my own])

[11] Judith Thurman's biography of Dinesen implies a connection between Dinesen's anorexia and her artistic ideal. Kirsten Wechsel explores this observation in an essay that argues for Dinesen's self-construction along the lines of Michel Foucault's "technologies of the self;" Wechsel concludes that Dinesen's existential aesthetics did not overcome but rather preserved the traditional body-mind dualism ("Wa(h)re Identität" ["True Identity / Identity as Commodity"] 422). For a contrasting view, see Susan Hardy Aiken's essay, "Consuming Isak Dinesen," in *Isak Dinesen and Narrativity: Reassessments for the 1990s* (1994), edited by Gurli A. Woods.

[12] These studies of her tales often lack agreement with regard to Dinesen's stance vis-à-vis certain issues. See, for instance, Sara Stambaugh, Susan Hardy Aiken, and Marilyn Johns Blackwell for opposing views on Dinesen's feminism.

immoral by some scholars. This postcolonial perspective has been a primary focus of study – the other being women's autobiography studies – since the mid-1980s (75).[13] Some postcolonial critics, who have accused Dinesen of racism and complicity in colonial discourse, have been particularly hostile to her, foremost among them Kenyan author Ngugi wa Thiong'o (now resident in California), who considers *Out of Africa* "one of the most dangerous books ever written about Africa" (while revealing his own bias by assuming that the Natives living on Dinesen's farm resented her) (133).[14] Similarly, two recent book-length studies, one by Simon Lewis entitled *White Women Writers and Their African Inventions* (2003), and the other, *Difficult Women, Artful Lives* (1995), by Susan Horton, are highly critical, particularly of Dinesen's representation of the native population. Horton asserts, for instance, that Dinesen "relies on an allegorizing tendency that bestializes and hypersexualizes Africans" (167).[15] A 2002 essay by Diane Simmons, "A Passion for Africans," even goes as far as comparing Dinesen, implicitly, to Adolf Hitler (31), while ignoring that Dinesen's dedication to the Kikuyu "was reciprocated," a fact which "challenges charges of racism and complicates the colonial discourse of master

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[13] The study of Dinesen's work received a big impetus from the feminist movement and the 1985 centennial international symposium, held at the University of Minnesota. The cross-over to popular interest is quite extraordinary in Dinesen's case, through film and a one-woman play by William Luce, called "Lucifer's Child."

[14] Part of wa Thiong'o's reasoning in this respect is that for many readers, it is their only source of information. This argument in itself is somewhat flawed, as Gillian Whitlock demonstrates persuasively that a trio of books – *Out of Africa*, Beryl Markham's *West with the Night* (1943), and Elspeth Huxley's *The Flame Trees of Thika* (1962) – collectively "captured [British East Africa] with such force that they continue to provide the popular image of Kenya (and Africa) for Western readers" (*Intimate Empire* 115). All three books offer a similar, colonial, view of Kenya, however, as does another, more recent, memoir by a white European woman, Kuki Gallman's *I Dreamed of Africa* (1991). The fact that all these books, except for *West with the Night*, were turned into movie or television productions may have something to do with their ability to construct a powerful popular image of Kenya.

[15] By contrast, Abdul R. JanMohamed finds in his extensive study, *Manichean Aesthetics: The Politics of Literature in Colonial Africa* (1983), that unlike some other writers, "Dinesen treats the Africans as subjects and [...] mediates their transition from an oral to a literate culture and in turn allows them to mediate her movement into mythic consciousness" (269).

and subject" (Hall 12).[16] More to the point, feminist scholar Susan Hardy Aiken, in her richly textured reading *Isak Dinesen and the Engendering of Narrative* (1990), makes the case that Dinesen both participated in and frequently strove to subvert a colonial project which she detested but from which she also profited (213).

Before proceeding to my own analysis of the two memoirs, I would like to consider Kenya's history of settlement and the people whose land was expropriated in the course of it. Emigration to East Africa did not really begin until early in the twentieth century – much later than the colonizations of Canada and Australia, for instance. It was finally made possible – at the price of millions of pounds and untold deaths among the Indian coolies charged with laying the tracks – by the completion, in 1901, of the Uganda Railroad. The only white people to venture into the interior before then were individual explorers, traders, missionaries, and a handful of colonial officers. In order to recover its outlay, the East African Syndicate, between 1902 and 1915, sold four and a half million acres of prime highland real estate – deemed "vacant" – to no more than about one thousand white farmers (Thurman 119). Kenya's settlement history is thus untypical, not just because of its late start, but also because the settlement was intended as an elite colony from the outset, administered to attract large landholders, whose "risks and uncertainties in developing [the territory] were enormous. This fact determined the class, and in a sense the temperament, of the early pioneers. They were well capitalized and influential, drawn from the upper strata of society" (119). Grave financial risks notwithstanding, vast tracts of land could be acquired at moderate cost – land that had

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[16] For a critical overview see Susan Brantly's chapter on *Out of Africa* in her study *Understanding Isak Dinesen* (2002), in which she presents a balanced and extensive survey of criticisms of Dinesen's memoir – subdivided into what she calls "sins of omission" and "sins of commission" – followed by a series of counterarguments. Diane Simmons's study, frustratingly, also contains a series of factual errors and incorrect references.

simply been taken over from the nomadic African tribes, including Kikuyu (more recently spelled "Gikuyu"), Kamba, and Masai, who farmed the central highlands. The "squatter system" developed as a consequence of this land expropriation by the British and led to the Africans being placed in overcrowded reservations. These were characterized by inadequate housing, sanitation, and nutrition, resulting in a shocking population decline, for instance among the Kikuyu, between 1902 and 1921, from four to two and a half million. Squatting – Karen Blixen's farm was home to two thousand squatters – relieved pressure on the reserves (Brantly 76). It also brought Natives and white settlers into close contact with each other: Africans were prohibited from growing cash crops and thus had no choice but to "buy" their squatting rights through a fixed number of days of labour per year. Unlike the majority of the British ruling class, whose racial prejudice she found offensive (*Letters* 4-5), Tania Blixen was exceptional for her appreciation of the Africans. Consequently, she found herself called "pro-native" (283), although this is not to deny that her perspective was both romantic and feudal (Thurman 121).

The land itself, which was so strongly to capture Dinesen's imagination (and that of untold readers and viewers of the Hollywood film), was breathtakingly beautiful, a vast plateau blessed with a temperate equatorial climate (unlike that of the scorchingly hot low-lying inland and coastal areas). Labelled "the white highlands" and offering excellent farm and grazing country, the landscape ascended to altitudes between five and eight thousand feet, dominated by Mount Kenya and Mount Kilimanjaro to the south, both peaked in snow. Rain forests covered the high slopes of the undulating hills, and great coffee plantations stretched across them in giant patchwork patterns of dark green. In contrast, the dry, coppery plains "were dark as far as the horizon with herds of zebra, wildebeest,

gazelle, who in turn fed their feline predators. Nowhere on earth did life offer such a spectacle of vigor, beauty, harmony, and, above all, scale. It evoked a feeling of religious awe, a sense of gratitude in many of those who beheld it for the first time" (Thurman 118). Dinesen calls it a "landscape that had not its like in all the world" (*Out of Africa* 3).

Against this charged context, the space "out of" which the narratives of *Out of Africa* and *Shadows on the Grass* arise is the enormous gap between two places (and modes) of existence: the "true home of my heart," as Dinesen described Kenya (*Shadows* 13) and the "permanent exile" of Denmark (Aiken, "Exile" 114).[17] Enroute to Mombasa on the outward-bound journey in January 1914, she had confessed her "feeling of emptiness and restless desperation" in a letter to her mother (Lasson, "Rain" xxx): "everything was an effort to me," she wrote, "getting up, dressing, the whole business of living, and time after time [...] I was so tired and depressed that I felt that I would not survive until I arrived" (*Letters* 1). Less than two weeks later she enthused in another letter about "this great new life" she had found in Kenya. "Out here," she confided, "one feels so light and free and happy" (3). Years later she would write, "I sailed into the heart of Africa and into a *Vita Nuova*, into what became to me my real life" (*Daguerrotypes* 6).[18] Kenya as the "locus of liberation" offered opportunity for metamorphosis (Aiken,

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[17] Dinesen's biographers and critics read her family home as experienced by her as a place of confinement and constraint, the locus of denied self-expression. Dinesen's version of geopathology reverses the affective meanings of the terms "home" and "exile." For an extensive treatment of this subject see Judith Thurman, *The Life of a Storyteller*, particularly "Book One: Tanne." Further, for instance, Thomas Whissen, "Isak Dinesen, Spiritual Émigré"; Susan Hardy Aiken, "Writing (in) Exile"; Frantz Leander Hansen, *Destiny and the Denial of Fate* (128); Donald Hannah, *Isak Dinesen and Karen Blixen* (28). On the notion of displacement providing the space for narrative also see Aiken (*Engendering* 211). Mary Lynn Broe and Angela Ingram, in their introduction to *Women's Writing in Exile* (1989) also find that, in a more general way, "exmatriation" – the loss of a nurturing ground of being – engenders art (8).

[18] Dinesen's case negates expectations regarding the expatriate's desire to find continuity from the old to the new environment. While Susanna Moodie, for instance, suffered from the enormous differences between Suffolk and Upper Canada, Dinesen looks for change. In this context, Barbara Brown and Douglas Perkins observe in "Disruptions in Place Attachment": "Sometimes a relocation may support a new or desired identity. Voluntary moves may also enable those who were detached or alienated to move to settings where more positive attachments can be cultivated" (288).

Engendering 37), for claiming the "new life."[19] From Africa's life-giving, revitalizing space flowed regeneration and rebirth, freeing Dinesen from the entrapment of the home as family of origin. Like Susanna Moodie, whose competing definitions of home as house and home as family I explored in chapter III, Dinesen came upon an alternate formulation for "home" in Africa, one constituting the *desired* ground of being and rooted in the sort of "origins" that go well beyond familial bonds. That she should, in her memoirs, couch her drive toward authenticity and fulfillment in a spatial vocabulary is unsurprising for someone who derived the terms of her search for self-realization inevitably, as her Lund lecture demonstrates, from *place*. Dinesen's self-inscription, accordingly, takes the form of a reconstruction of, what I would like to call, "a geography of yearning" – a phrase which, I hope, captures the nature of her exploration. *Out of Africa*, in particular, while rendering "a yearning for a country," in Hélène Cixous's memorable phrase, insists on a poetics that is distinctly geographical.

This focus emerges from the outset with the well-known first sentence of the memoir. "I had a farm in Africa," we are told (and I will shortly return to some of the implications of this sentence), in a chapter which delivers an abundance of geographical information, "at the foot of the Ngong Hills. The Equator runs across these highlands, a hundred miles to the North [...]." The narrator goes into precise detail about the land's "geographical position" (3): "The Mountain of Ngong stretches in a long ridge from North to South [...]. It rises eight thousand feet above the Sea, and to the East two thousand feet above the surrounding country." The drop to the West, towards the Great Rift Valley, we also learn, is vertical, "deeper and more precipitous" (4). Also part of the landscape is "the

[19] Dinesen was not the only white woman for whom Kenya proved to be a liberating space. See Whitlock, *Intimate Empire* (112-41).

park-like country of the foot-hills with the forest behind them, and the undulating land of the Kikuyu-Reserve, which extends to Mount Kenya a hundred miles away" (5) – all described with careful and extensive attention to detail. Again and again, Dinesen returns to her task of precise mapping, turning an actual geography into the terrain of her narrative: "Nairobi was our town," she advises instructively, "twelve miles away, down on a flat bit of land amongst hills. Here were the Government House and the big central offices; from here the country was ruled" (10). Exemplifying Helen Buss's use of "mapping" as a metaphor for autobiography, which "join[s] the activities of self-knowledge and knowledge of the world" (*Mapping* 9), Dinesen's concrete spatial representation makes *Out of Africa* a text that is both a map of a Kenya past and an image of a past self (the self who "had" a farm at Ngong; the self whose town Nairobi "was"). The text thereby also becomes the sign of an absence.

The geography thus reconstructed is fuelled by the desire created by this absence. Despite the narrator/protagonist's restrained voice and, perhaps frustrating, lack of interiority (Hannah 30; Lee 45), almost every single page contains a phrase, a line, a few sentences which positively breathe longing, a longing that brings the remembered landscape back to life. "The hill-country itself, when you get into it," she tells her readers, for example, about the countryside immediately surrounding the farm, emphasizing its unusual character, "is tremendously big, picturesque, and mysterious." The notion of great size or "greatness" recurs frequently (*Africa* 4, 6). She also lyricizes the land and its animals like poetry: "I had time after time watched the progression across the plain of the Giraffe, in their queer, inimitable vegetative gracefulness, as if it were not a herd of animals but a family of rare, long-stemmed, speckled gigantic flowers slowly advancing"

(15). Often, she ascribes to the landscape itself the quality of a work of art, suggesting its essential nature "as design" (Langbaum 134), a concept of great significance in Dinesen's writing (and one to which I will also return): "An African Forest is a mysterious region. You ride into the depths of an old tapestry, in places faded and in others darkened with age, but marvellously rich in green shades" (*Africa* 64). Dinesen's Africa, by critical consensus, is mythically reconstructed "through the poetry of its land and its people" (Pelensky, *Isak Dinesen* 98). Even something as potentially mundane, elsewhere, as the way to church, or in this case the path to the neighbouring French Mission, has the charm of "a lovely ride [...]. For a long way the road ran through the Forest Department's old wattle plantation," Dinesen recalls, "and the virile fresh pinaceous scent of the wattle-trees was sweet and cheering in the mornings" (*Africa* 28). The narrated geography is both the text's source and the target of its reach, its features retrieved from memory and revived by a burning desire.

Not surprisingly, the Ngong farm itself, as the remembered immediate ground of being, frequently is the focus of the geography/narration: "There are times of great beauty on a coffee farm," Dinesen writes. "When the plantation flowered in the beginning of the rains, it was a radiant sight, like a cloud of chalk, in the mist and the drizzling rain." Her descriptions supply images that rival paintings in their vividness: at night, for instance, lit for the roasting process, the farm's "factory, [...] hung in the great African night like a bright jewel in an Ethiope's ear"[20] (8). The narrator's self is portrayed as in perfect harmony with the landscape: "In the highlands you woke up in the morning and thought: Here I am, where I ought to be" (4). The nostalgia engendered by this perfection is the

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[20] Through her allusion to Shakespeare (*Romeo and Juliet*, I.v) Dinesen here anticipates the tragedy of her own experience with Ngong in the sense that, implicitly, the beauty and value (in various ways) of the farm cannot be grasped (nor, by extension, contained) in human terms.

desire for the place of belonging, for the "true home of [the] heart." Dinesen mourns her separation from this place in elegiac tones:

> If I know a song of Africa, [...], of the Giraffe, and the African new moon lying on her back, of the ploughs in the fields, and the sweaty faces of the coffee-pickers, does Africa know a song of me? Would the air over the plain quiver with a colour that I had had on, or the children invent a game in which my name was, or the full moon throw a shadow over the gravel of the drive that was like me, or would the eagles of Ngong look out for me? (79)

This language of longing, this "discourse of love," in Kristeva's phrase (*Tales* 336), creates a sensuous word image which stands in the place of the actual Kenya. Dinesen's writing recreates the lost landscape, straining, in a sense, to *replace* being there. The language itself becomes the medium for a "complex return journey 'home' through the power of [Dinesen's] own bewitching craft, reviving [...] the matrix of her deepest yearnings" (Aiken, *Engendering* 210).[21] The story thereby becomes a new means of self-location: *Out of Africa* is a quest for place through narrative. Moreover, Dinesen's decision to write in English contributes to the "transporting" qualities of the language (*Africa* 295), as her first biographer, Parmenia Migel, has remarked: "[Dinesen] took refuge," Migel writes in *Titania*, "in a language which was not her own" (93). As the *lingua franca* of "her 'spiritual homeland,' [...] the language by which she measured her most profound experiences" (Whissen 66), English was invariably tied to the place of desire.

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[21] In her essay "Writing (in) Exile," which is primarily a reading of Dinesen's story "The Dreamers," Aiken appears to make a somewhat different point when she concludes that writing is "a form of exile" for Dinesen (115).

Dinesen's imaginative return to her geography of yearning unfolds as an exploration that reaches beyond the self and her own life to a level of comprehension that encompasses the large and the small, the unknown and the remembered, the material and the spiritual – all those dualisms she resists so adamantly. Both the resistance and the quest for understanding are partly cultural – Kern explains that, influenced by Nietzsche, the "old scaffoldings" which had supported a world view "ordered in discrete and mutually exclusive forms" were dismantled and new modes tested by modernism (210)[22] – and partly highly personal: in 1935, when Dinesen sat down to write *Out of Africa*, the answer to the question "who am I?" was for her, again, uncertain. Reading her memoirs against the dialectic of modernism demonstrates that their return thrust is articulated on both macro- and micro-levels, through a focus on motifs of return, repetition, echoing, and other forms of going back – a strategy aimed at gaining, as Brooker explains in connection with Eliot, "a broader perspective" (55). Dinesen herself, in "Sorrow-Acre," one of her most powerful stories, speaks of "yearn[ing] only to comprehend in full the oneness of the world" (*Winter's Tales* 61).

The return movement is pervasive. In *Out of Africa*, for instance, the beginning of the memoir's much-quoted first sentence, "I had a farm in Africa," has been widely read as a statement of loss and thereby as the narrative's "psychic reference point" (Thurman 284).[23] The phrase also implies a return of sorts, however, a revisiting of a place, and this meaning, arguably, is present to an equal extent, since Dinesen not only establishes an

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[22] *Out of Africa*'s epigraph is from Nietzsche, who rejects the "Christian heritage of dualism: fate, rather than guilt or sin, is the cause of suffering"; one's fate must be "embraced courageously" (Thurman 50). For the influence of Nietzsche on Dinesen see Thurman, Aiken (*Engendering*), and Langbaum. Langbaum also treats extensively Dinesen's engagement with the ideas of another influential philosopher, fellow Dane Søren Kierkegaard (100-101, 218-19, 232-33, 253-54, and 274-83).

[23] Critics here have taken their cue from Langbaum (119). Donald Hannah expresses what would become the critical consensus when he observes that the "end is foreshadowed in the very first sentence. Nostalgia turns the pages of *Out of Africa*" (46). Notably, the term *nostos* itself means "return."

unchanging kind of geography in her first few paragraphs (which, through its very immutability facilitates a return), but also quickly shifts from description in the past to synchronic present tense ("The Mountain of Ngong stretches"). *Shadows on the Grass* performs a similar return movement, as Dinesen, in "tak[ing] up episodes of my life in Africa," goes back to the very beginning of that life and her first encounter with Farah Aden in 1913 (3), as well as to the story told in the earlier memoir. Both books in themselves are structured in circular fashion: *Out of Africa* forms a loop by returning, as noted, to an expansion of the loss implicit in the first line. The movement in *Shadows on the Grass* is similarly circular as that book ends with mini-portraits of members of Dinesen's household at Ngong, a structure that echoes the more extensive portrait of Farah at the start. What is more, *Shadows on the Grass* concludes with a letter, or "word" – a thing never taken lightly in Dinesen, as I will show – from Kamante (128), the same Native who in *Out of Africa* is the first character to speak (following the chapter dedicated to the description of the geography) (26). This link simultaneously closes the story cycle and returns it to the beginning.

Thematically, *Out of Africa* figures a return in the form of an attempted "homecoming," or what Sirkka Heiskanen-Mäkelä calls a "*regressus ad originem,*" a return to origins, which tells, in Heiskanen-Mäkelä's archetypal reading, of the initiation of a "visionary or shaman." For the author, he argues, the book is "pledge and proof of her shamanic capacity to revisit her Paradise at will" (455). My own analysis seeks to discover the qualities of Dinesen's geography of yearning that might enable such a "visionary" return, and finds that perhaps the most notable and extraordinary feature in her rendering of the Kenyan space is its provision of an overview. The outstanding characteristic, for

instance, of the farm and its surroundings, stressed from the outset, is "the height of the land" (*Africa* 3). This makes for a "unique view" from the Ngong Hills (5), as Dinesen assures us again and again: "The views were immensely wide. Everything you saw made for greatness and freedom, and unequalled nobility" (4). Much of this "greatness" is embodied in the very mountain range of Ngong, her "house mountain" as it were, which, at an elevation of thousands of feet, represents literally a higher sphere, its substance "distilled up [...] like the strong and refined essence of a continent" (3). Even the grave site Dinesen has marked out for herself, the same site where Denys Finch-Hatton is buried after his plane crash, is characterized in the same way: "There was an infinitely great view from there; in the light of the sunset [one] saw both Mount Kenya and Kilimanjaro" (353). The "uniqueness" of the view enables a privileged perspective not to be had anywhere else "in all the world."

Dinesen's insistence on phrasing her experience in this precise and specific geographical vocabulary suggests that commanding heights and wide vistas denote not just sight but, more so, vision and insight, tying the quest for understanding and authenticity to the ability *to see*. In Dinesen's fiction as well, characters' efforts at self-realization are "frequently narrated in terms of metaphors and similes [...] of sight" (Blackwell 50), a strategy explained by Robert Langbaum as "emerg[ing] from the romantic interpretation of the fall":

> Since the romanticists interpreted the fall as a fall in perception, they saw the main problem left by it as a problem of epistemology or psychology. The problem was how to regain a connection with the outside world, how to find a basis for action or an action adequate to one's awareness of one's own potentiality. The question was

> at what level of behaviour – and in literature through what kind of plot – a person manifests his [*sic*] true self. (52-53)

The extent to which Dinesen is preoccupied with just this problematic is vividly demonstrated through her explicit engagement with the issue in her correspondence, where questions of authenticity and perception surface repeatedly.

"Indeed, the longer I live," she writes, for instance, in a 1928 letter to her mother, "I feel that *truth* is the most important thing for me [...]. Truth comes first.—And here [in Kenya] I can be true, I can be myself.—" She continues, "What is it then 'to be oneself'?," and goes on to cite a passage on the subject from an essay on Ibsen she has recently read:

> "God meant something when he made each of us. For a man to embody that meaning of God in his words and deeds, and so become, in a degree, a 'word of God made flesh,' is to be himself. – But what if a poor devil can never make out what God *did* mean when He made him? Why, he must feel it. But how often your feeling misses fire! Ah, there you have it. The Devil has no stauncher Ally than want of perception." (*Letters* 375; original italics)

"But out here," she concludes her reflection, "I anyhow have nothing to do with this devil. I think that here it comes naturally to me to be myself, to be what I believe that 'God meant when he made me'" (376). This passage spells out, in a nutshell, the apparently simple but *de facto* complex relationship between place and identity. Dinesen interweaves these concepts inextricably and ties the need to align one with the other – in a search for authenticity and truth – to the need for perception.

In the memoirs, the landscape of the Kenyan highlands enables perception. It literalizes concepts of sight, vision, and perspective, and Dinesen's reconstruction of that

landscape in her geography of yearning takes this "unique" quality of the land yet a step further by repeatedly rendering the air – "this high air [which] you breathed easily, drawing in a vital assurance and lightness of heart" – as water: "the air was live over the land," she writes on one occasion, "it scintillated, waved and shone like running water" (*Africa* 4). On another, she remarks, "The air in the forest was cool like water" (64), and finally explains more fully: "The early morning air of the African highlands is of such tangible coldness and freshness that time after time the same fancy there comes back to you: you are not on earth but in dark deep waters, going ahead along the bottom of the sea" (228). By transforming an invisible medium into a visible one, Dinesen externalizes, as Langbaum astutely observes, "the atmosphere of insight" which she associates with her Kenyan environment (136).

Concerned as Dinesen is with understanding what she herself is "meant to be," the (in)sights offered by the African landscape are by no means limited to the "scaffolding of [her own] identity" (Thurman 248). Instead, Dinesen is keen to come to grips with the larger questions of life, and to figure out, as she writes in the story "The Dreamers," what "God mean[t] by creating the world, the sea, and the desert, the horse, the winds, woman, amber, fishes, wine" (*Gothic Tales* 348). This is the kind of intentionality which, in "Sorrow-Acre," she calls the "secret which connects the phenomena of existence" (*Winter's Tales* 61). Dinesen, in other words, is interested to see the "entire life as a whole, [...to] become integrated as only one element in the total picture" (Dinesen qtd. in Hannah 143-44). The notion of all life forming a kind of mosaic, or design, is central to Dinesen's philosophy and explains why achieving an "overview" is so important to her, indeed "the most vital thing to aim for in life" (*Letters* 417). This is the message also of

the small parable, "The Roads of Life," in which a man stumbles through a number of trials he does not understand. Yet "he finished his course, he kept his faith," only to find that his seemingly erratic movements had resulted in the design of a stork (*Africa* 252). In order to understand the meaning of patterns in which one participates – the patterns of one's own life, much as the stork is an ancient symbol of life – it is imperative that one see correctly. For this reason, the "bird's eye view" is, if not a divine view, then a divinely inspired one. Just as the true character of Molly the mule (who is called "Kejiko" by her handler, which means "spoon," because she looks to him like a spoon), is visible only from above – "unusually narrow across the shoulder [with] broad plump hindquarters" – so being able to see *truly* is aided by an elevated viewpoint. "God and the angels," writes Dinesen, see that way: "He that cometh from above is above all, and what he has seen that he testifieth" (297).

The height, literally, of this perspective is achieved in the activity of flying over Africa, an experience in which nothing at all limits one's vision. The "tremendous views" to be had once one has ascended open up a new and "surprising" angle on the life below, both bringing it into focus and giving it coherence (*Africa* 238). In Dinesen's understanding, truth does not reveal itself in a close-up; instead, one gets at the truth "by seeming to move away to an esthetic distance, [...] by assimilating [a] particular event to a recurring pattern, [a] particular self to an archetype" (Langbaum 20). Paradoxically, distance and perspective prepare the way for a higher level of comprehension: what makes the activity of flying a "transporting" experience is "not the visions" as such, but the immediacy obtained. The vistas are preliminary to "the full freedom of the three dimensions," in which existence itself is barely subject to the "laws of gravity and time"

(*Africa* 238). It is this immediacy which is so difficult to achieve and so important to gain, both in Dinesen's thinking and in the dialectic of modernism, because it is a precursor to transcendence. Specifically, as Brooker explains in her analysis, knowledge, according to principles Eliot appropriated from F.H. Bradley's epistemology and made central to his own work, occurs in stages, including immediate and transcendent experience. Both of these are free of dualistic categories, and the stage of transcendent experience represents a "return to the unity of the first stage" (69). In this view, as in Dinesen's own, immediacy enables access to transcendence, much as "sight" makes room for "insight." The "transporting pleasure" of flying over Africa ends with an affirmation of just this centrality of vision to knowledge, and with "the consciousness of a great new discovery": "'I see,'" writes Dinesen summarizing her experience, "'This was the idea. And now I understand everything'" (*Africa* 237, 239). The perspective and immediate sense of release provided by flying give access to the "secret of the universe" by disclosing the "pattern" that structures the created world.

The "unique" milieu of perception that characterizes Dinesen's Kenya enables a totally different mode of being, one manifestly free of "the distortion produced by dualistic or binary logic" (Brooker 69). From the site of overview, divisions and distinctions between apparent opposites are erased. For Dinesen, entry into a world structured not by an "either/or" mentality but by a radical "both/and" view, was "a magnificent enlargement of all [her] world," as she says in the context of her relationship with the Africans (*Africa* 17).[24] Africa brought about "an enormous expansion of sympathy, that ability to love and reconcile opposites" (Langbaum 6), particularly such

[24] Dinesen had felt her Danish world to be determined by just such an "either/or" logic, inhabiting the dual influences of her paternal and maternal families. See Thurman (6 pp.).

apparent opposites as white and black, tame and wild, culture and nature. Dinesen delights, for instance, in "the free union" between the farm and the antelope Lulu, who "came in from the wild world to show that we were on good terms with it, and [who] made my house one with the African landscape, so that nobody could tell where the one stopped and the other began" (*Africa* 76-77). The insistence that only a "both/and" perspective makes possible an understanding of the whole picture is a sign of "intellectual comprehensiveness," as Brooker argues, again in connection with Eliot, and "illustrates a foundational pattern in modernist art and thought" (55). Eliot (and modernism in general) substitute complementarities for polarities. Traditionally conceived "antitheses between past and present," for instance, or between "community and individual [...] are simply false. [...] The past is part of the present; the community is part of the individual" (70). The way forward is always also (as well as always-already) a return.

Dinesen explicitly shares this view. "In order to form and make up a Unity," she writes,

> in particular a creative Unity, the individual components must needs be of different nature, they should be in a sense contrasts. Two homogeneous units will never be capable of forming a whole [...]. A hook and an eye are a Unity, a fastening; but with two hooks you can do nothing. A right-hand glove with its contrast the left-hand glove makes up a whole, a pair of gloves; but two right-hand gloves you throw away. (*Shadows* 3-4)

Like Eliot, whose rejection of binary thinking includes a rejection of synthesis, so Dinesen also looks for the kind of "'Unity,' or a type of reconciliation, between opposites, [which] is not at the cost of compromising the integrity and identity of either part of the dualism"

(Brantly 7). Her approach differs from Catharine Parr Traill's collapsing of binaries, illustrated in Traill's cheerful creation of compound nouns.[25] Instead, Dinesen unites opposites in a way that results in a "mysterious expansion," each entity growing "fuller and richer" in the process (*Shadows* 4-5). This thrust toward unity "is predicated on the conviction that antitheses," as Brooker explains about Eliot, are distortions (70; also 55). For Dinesen, authenticity lies in wholeness: "true vision in Dinesen's world is a kind of Blakean double vision" (Blackwell 52), which perceives truth in the union of "things wholly different" (*Africa* 17). On every level, Dinesen's memoirs (and her writing in general) find authenticity in the dynamic interplay of dualities and polarities that makes distinctions between love and loss, self and the world, hope and despair, between the "curious sweetness" of a song and its evocation of "the salt taste of tears" finally meaningless (275), because *together* such opposites form a "unity." Preserving the apparently antithetical and transcending it "in a higher comprehensive notion" gain access to the truth that is only found in wholeness (Brooker 60).

Dinesen sees authenticity and wholeness in her African surroundings, where, as she observes in connection with Finch-Hatton's return to the farm, she could hear "the things [...] all telling what they really were" (225). Such a place of authenticity enables honesty in the search for self-knowledge and fulfillment, for truth, in other words, in "perfecting the work of art of one's life" (*Letters* 49). This configuration reverses the experience of exile, which here is not, as expected, a crisis in which "the expatriate, opened to new desires in a seemingly unreal place, discovers internal contradictions and tensions" (J.G. Kennedy 240), but rather a resolution, in which place itself brings clarity

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[25] Although Traill's tendency is toward synthesis, she is, nevertheless, also able to contain apparent opposites in a way that facilitates self-location. See my chapter II.

while erasing and harmonizing those contradictions. For Dinesen the endeavour leads to the realization "that I myself am in harmony with my life here" (*Letters* 270). Such harmony marks the place, to borrow again from Kristeva, where the self lifts to the other, and where "[s]ingle meaning [...] toppl[es] over into infinity" (*Tales* 336). This, as Brooker notes in her analysis of Eliot's work, marks the place of "the knowledge of the beginning" (68). Here, then, lies the ultimate place of return, the true "home" and "origin." Much as for Susanna Moodie, for Dinesen the question of identity is a question of origins, but these are not the origins found in one's native land, or in one's family, but the origins of all life. For Dinesen, the landscape in Kenya harbours "the stillness of the eternal beginning," as Carl Jung writes of the Athi Plains near Ngong (284). Here she can approach the point of origin because of the very qualities of the land: it holds primal knowledge, "a knowledge that was lost to us by our first parents; Africa, amongst the continents will teach it to you: that God and the Devil are one, the majesty coeternal, not two uncreated but one uncreated, and the Natives neither confounded the persons nor divided the substance" (*Africa* 19-20). The point of origin is equally the place of unity, of wholeness, of undifferentiation; it is, finally, "the place where God topples over into Satan and *vice versa*" (Kristeva, *Tales* 336; original italics).

The journey back to the beginnings here reveals its spiritual dimension as both an enactment of the Book of Origins, with Kenya as the Garden of Eden, the place where humankind started, and a recovery of "that mighty female deity, who had existed in old ages, before the time of the Prophet's God" (*Africa* 180). By mythologizing Africa as Great Mother, the source of all life, Dinesen brilliantly anticipates late-twentieth-century paleoanthropological theorizing, which postulates that human evolution had its origins in

the Eastern part of Africa, approximately 150,000 years ago.[26] More, she identifies the Mother's land, the mother/land, as the source of the primal desire that powers both the geography and her own (imaginative) return to it. The quest's spiritual aspect here becomes a psychological one, as it figures a relation between parent and child and, correspondingly, the desire to retrieve connection and oneness. The end, in both senses and of both dimensions of the return journey, is the recovery of completion, of wholeness – rendered in *Out of Africa* as the ecstatic reunion of self and "Africa": "The grass was me, and the air, the distant invisible mountains were me, the tired oxen were me. I breathed with the slight night-wind in the thorn-trees" (272).

Yet while this merging is undoubtedly joyous, it has a different quality than, for example, Anna Jameson's blissful re-entry into the maternal womb of Canada. Dinesen's Africa is constructed in a more complex way: it is both a paternal and a maternal space, inhabited by "God" and "Satan" as well as by the Great Mother; or rather, Dinesen's writing is a reminder that "'God' [...] *was first mother*, in both senses of the word" (Aiken, *Engendering* 238; original italics). Africa as divine space contains both God and the Devil, and it also contains the duality that is inherent in the character of the Mother, who is "the giver not only of life but also of death" (Neumann 67). Accordingly, the "forest matriarchy" of Lulu and her offspring is set against the destruction caused by grasshoppers (*Africa* 78, 324), the killing of an ox by a leopard (250), the encounter between the chameleon and the rooster (369), and ultimately the deaths of several of the major characters. When Dinesen relates in the context of Denys Finch-Hatton's burial that "Africa received him, and would change him, and make him one with herself" (356), she

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[26] The "recent single-origin hypothesis" (RSOH), popularly known as the "(Recent) Out-of-Africa model," is widely accepted. See, for instance, Hua Liu et al., "A Geographically Explicit Genetic Model of Worldwide Human-Settlement History," *The American Journal of Human Genetics* 79 (2006): 230-37.

describes the death quality of the Mother Goddess, which "takes everything that is born of it back into its womb of origination and death" (Neumann 30). Dinesen's dual vision takes in *all of life*, embodied in Africa, as both good and evil, spirit and matter, masculine and feminine.

In just this way, the return to the knowledge of the beginning – for Tania Blixen, pioneer woman, failed coffee-grower and farm manager, who eventually becomes "Isak Dinesen," successful writer and enigmatic icon – is necessarily a journey that both unfolds within and crosses categories of gender. Dinesen's ambiguous gendered self-inscription has been the subject of much critical commentary,[27] but it is perhaps not so very remarkable that someone whose vision perceives "duality [...] as totality (the complementarity of the forces [...] represent[ed])" (Blackwell 58), should also erase lines between masculine and feminine. Dinesen's memoirs (as well as her tales) problematize identity, particularly female identity, by questioning and challenging boundaries previously drawn around self and gender. The strategy recalls Shari Benstock's comment about American female modernist writers and their emigrations to France, in which she observes, "What seemed oppressive to many of these women [...] was the family, especially as it polarized (and paralyzed) the masculine and feminine" ("Expatriate" 28). Dinesen also left what she considered to be a "polarized" environment behind in Denmark.[28] In the liberating space of Africa, dual vision directed to one's identity almost inevitably results in an androgenous self-concept: androgyny means wholeness. It means a sense of "oneness" that existed "before any separation was made" (Breen 9). It means the

[27] Langbaum's comments on Dinesen's male pseudonym initiated the discussion (55).
[28] Thurman extensively develops the idea of antithetical paternal and maternal influences (6 pp.). Also see my footnote 22.

kind of unity which reveals, in an echo of Dinesen's Lund lecture, neither the masculine nor the feminine but one's essential humanity.

Out of Africa, specifically, contains few markers of the heroine's gender. On the contrary, it shows the narrator/protagonist in what Simon Lewis calls "male" roles (34):[29] she manages the farm, making strategic decisions and guiding operations; she functions as doctor to the local squatters; she practices archery; she leads an oxen-transport to deliver troop supplies during the war years; she goes on safari and shoots large and dangerous animals. She is, in short, "master of her farm, living a life of masculine independence and autonomy" (Brantly 90). Remarkably, the narrator also "manages to keep her name out of the book" (Langbaum 121), and based on the gender-crossing authorial signature of "Isak Dinesen" alone, readers of the first North American edition might well have been surprised to come across a reference, as late as page 265, to "my husband."[30]

If, however, Africa allows Dinesen to throw off the patriarchal influence of her Danish past, then it also becomes the ground on which she seeks, not just the maternal but the paternal, by assimilating both. The journey back to her origins involves engaging with both mother and father, and placing these relationships into the context of her Kenyan existence. This turns out to be a highly ambivalent undertaking, because Dinesen "simultaneously idolized and resented [her father] and [...] both distanced and adored [her mother]" (Aiken, *Engendering* 31). Dinesen's correspondence with her mother, in which

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[29] The term perhaps suggests the critic's own bias as to what women can and cannot do. By contrast, see Judith Lee in "The Mask of Form in *Out of Africa*": "The heroine of *Out of Africa* has a 'hybrid' nature in that she has qualities conventionally ascribed to both men and women, what Dinesen calls 'womanliness' and 'manliness'" (51).
[30] Dinesen, in fact, relates on page 26 of the memoir that Kamante addressed her as "Msabu," an Indian word used by the Natives for white women. This description should have raised questions about the author's sex.

she regularly addresses Ingeborg as "My own beloved Mother" (and frequently diminutively as "little"), contains passages such as these:

> I know that when I am with you once again there will be [...] unending joy. To return to one's mother and feel her arms around one is the same eternal, natural miracle as when the trees break into leaf every year; the bleak and open fields where one is buffeted by all the winds of the world suddenly arch over into a shelter, a hiding place [...]. (*Letters* 53)

> For me you are the most beautiful and wonderful person in the world; merely the fact that you are alive makes the whole world different; where you are there is peace and harmony, shade and flowing springs, birds singing; to come to where you are is like entering "heaven." (111)[31]

The comparison of being with the mother to "entering 'heaven'" echoes Kristeva's semiotic *chora* (*Reader* 93). Similarly, in the analogy of "mother" to "tree," reinforced by the reference to "shelter," Dinesen reaches unconsciously for a powerful archetypal image of female wholeness, used for the Great Mother.[32] Dinesen's close identification with her mother – and with Africa – is also suggested in a passage from a later letter to her sister, Ellen Dahl, in which she writes, "because of various circumstances I myself feel like a tree that is blossoming and bursting into leaf" (*Letters* 327). At the same time, however, she excises her mother from her text even though Ingeborg, already in her seventies in the

[31] On women's (over)identification with their mothers see Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering*.

[32] See chapter I.

1920s, made two visits to Ngong, thereby supplying potential material for maternal presence.[33]

About her father Dinesen does write in *Out of Africa*, explicitly identifying herself with him (18), as she also does in her letters: "I think my greatest misfortune was Father's death. Father understood me as I was, although I was so young, and loved me for myself" (*Letters* 110). Furthermore, she notes that her house is called "Bogani" by the Natives, which means "forest" (44),[34] and in her correspondence she frequently gives her location as being at "Bogani," as though she had slipped into her father's identity as the hunter "Boganis." Indeed, "where Isak Dinesen uses the word 'life' it is often synonymous with the word 'father'" (Thurman 7). At the same time, however, another letter about the father to Ingeborg illustrates the complexity of Dinesen's attempt to come to terms with the paternal figure:

> [I]f I can do it [achieve success, especially with the farm] and make something of myself again, and can look at life calmly and clearly one day, – then it is Father who has done it for me. It is his blood and his mind that will bring me through it. [...] I think that there is something in the way that I love you that resembles the way Father loved you. [...] And so you must allow me to write to you as you would have allowed Father to write. [...] And imagine that Father is sitting beside you perhaps talking anxiously too about this child of yours out here [...]. [...] Yes, talk about me to Father. It is really he who is responsible, for he deserted me and must have seen that things were not going to be easy for me. (*Letters* 110-11)

[33] Thurman reports that the manuscript of *Out of Africa* contained a section about Ingeborg, which Dinesen chose to delete (282).
[34] The name is occasionally spelled "Mbogani."

In a series of "dizzying positional and emotional shifts" (Aiken, *Engendering* 32), Dinesen first explicitly identifies with the father, then brings him close while also distancing him – by taking his place and thereby replacing him – and finally ends in what amounts to the father's rejection, and her own retreat to the "shelter" provided by the mother.[35] If Dinesen's struggle to comprehend the influence on her of both "the ethical philosophy of her mother's family and the sensuous esthetic of her father's" is, in Africa, waged on ground that enables the erasure of oppositions (Thurman 338), as I have argued,[36] it is nevertheless a distinct feature of her texts that they always seek and strive to retrieve unity, including of "father" and "mother," "masculine" and "feminine." In a comment readily applied to *Out of Africa*, Florence Lewis has remarked about Dinesen's tale, "The Poet," that its narrator "is bigger than man or woman. The speaker has incorporated both sexes, for one sex alone will get in the way of perception. The speaker is androgenous" (68).

This characteristic, and its import for the production of text, are captured in the story of Jogona Kanyagga, which illustrates the process by analogy. The production of that story comes about as a result of the shooting accident on the farm which takes up all of section II of *Out of Africa*. The consequence of a Native child handling the overseer's gun, the accident leaves one child dead, and several hurt (including one badly), and has the young perpetrator flee to the neighbouring Masai tribe. In the aftermath of the tragedy, the dead child Wamai's adoptive father, Jogona, impelled by a dispute over the boy's

[35] Also see Aiken's similar (and more extensive) reading of this letter in *Engendering* (31-32).

[36] Dinesen's struggle may also suggest certain limitations in the applicability of "maternal pre-text" theorizing to women's autobiography. Much as her mother is a central figure, it is just as much her father with whom she has to come to terms. This feature also problematizes readings of Dinesen's work hoping to discover a strictly feminist thrust. Her *oeuvre* brilliantly anticipates, as Aiken shows in *Engendering Narrative*, insights particularly by French feminist critics (8), but her vision is never focused in exclusionary categories of "male" and "female."

genealogy – a question of his paternity and therefore of his true "origins" – and consequent compensatory payment, asks the protagonist "to write down for him the account of his relations to the dead child and his family." "I wrote his statement down for him," the narrator reports:

> It took a long time, for it was a long report of events more than six years old, and in themselves extremely complicated. Jogona, as he was going through it, continually had to break off his tale to think things over or to go back in it and reconstruct it. He was, most of the time, holding his head with both hands, at moments gravely slapping the crown of it as if to shake out the facts. Once he went and leant his face against the wall, as the Kikuyu women do when they are giving birth to their children. [...]
>
> When Jogona had at last come to the end of his tale, and I had got it all down, I told him that I was now going to read it to him. [...] [A]s I read out his own name, "And he sent for Jogona Kanyagga [...]," he swiftly turned his face to me, and gave me a great fierce flaming glance, so exuberant with laughter that it changed the old man into a boy, into the very symbol of youth. Again as I had finished the document and was reading out his name, where it figured as a verification below his thumb-mark, the vital direct glance was repeated, this time deepened and calmed, with a new dignity.
>
> Such a glance did Adam give the Lord when He formed him out of the dust, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. I had created him and shown him himself: Jogona Kanyagga of life everlasting. When I handed him the paper, he took it reverently and greedily, folded it up in a

> corner of his cloak and kept his hand upon it. He could not afford to lose it, for his soul was in it, and it was the proof of his existence [...]: the flesh was made word and dwelt among us full of grace and truth. (118-21)

The passage bears quoting extensively, because it illustrates Dinesen's investment in the modernist mechanism as a principle underlying literary creation, and thereby stands in as a microcosmos for the larger text that is *Out of Africa*. Jogona's story takes shape as a process of refiguring the past. It is produced by means of *regression* in the sense that he has "to go back in it and reconstruct it." The effort involved in going back is just that: a kind of work, as Jogona 'labours,' in the way of the Kikuyu women, to deliver the facts of his tale. And just as the "very idea of the modern" is "defined as a rebirth" of the ancient (Brooker 61), so the process here does indeed prove to be one of (re)generation for Jogona. Not only does he 'give birth,' as it were, to a text that restores rightful and just relations between him and the dead child, quenching questions about his legal and moral paternity (124), but the story's generativity further extends to Jogona himself by "chang[ing] the old man into a boy, into the very symbol of youth." Furthermore, Jogona's calm and dignified demeanour speaks to his realization that, as Dinesen writes in "The Cardinal's First Tale," "within our whole universe the story only has the authority to answer that cry of heart of its characters, that one cry of heart of each of them: '*Who am I?*'" (*Last Tales* 26; original italics). Narrativity engenders identity.[37] In addition, the gender dynamics of the passage are also significant. Aiken interprets the scene as demonstrating "a process of feminization," based on Jogona's assumption of a woman's

[37] A prevalent theme in Dinesen's writing, notes Susan Brantly, is "the story as a source of identity"; "a story places a person's identity in a context and crafts disparate details into a coherent, artistic whole" (98).

role, and thereby a move "to the issue of maternity" (*Engendering* 240).[38] As well, however, the passage in its entirety reads as androgenous because of *multiple* changes of gender: Jogona, the male narrator, not only becomes a woman for the delivery of his tale, but also is regendered by the larger text as a male "Adam." For her part, the protagonist's implied signature as "Baroness Blixen," which ends the shooting accident part of the book (154), is both in explicit contrast to the differently gendered authorial identity of "Isak Dinesen" and also alternates with the role of male Creator ("the Lord"). Jogona and Isak Dinesen/Karen Blixen both "father" and "mother" the text(s), and it is this joint effort which reveals the truth. Multiple insertions of Dinesen's narratorial "I" ("I wrote"; "I read"; "I had finished"; "I handed him the paper") also ensure a shared parentage of Jogona's story between the narrator and Jogona himself. Much as in Dinesen's private correspondence, therefore, both paternal and maternal forces are at play here. Gendered both male and female, the text's joint authorship ultimately manages to inscribe itself as free from either category while encompassing both.[39]

In its most deeply symbolic form, Dinesen's identification both with the androgenous perspective of completion and with Africa, with which she associates such totality, is articulated in the motif, repeated and revisited frequently in both memoirs, of the lion pair. The protagonist/narrator adopts for herself the "totem" of a female lion (Aiken, *Engendering* 314 n. 36), as seen in the addresses "*Lioness Blixen*" and "*Honourable Lioness*" (*Africa* 70; original italics). She further tells us that "when Denys and I went for a ride, the lions of the plains would be about, as in attendance" (227),

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[38] For Aiken's detailed analysis of this passage see *Engendering* (238-41). Aiken also sees the production of Jogona's story as paradigmatic of the larger text.

[39] In her fiction, Dinesen often reverses the sex of a character (Thurman 89). For an extended discussion of sexual transformations in Dinesen's tales see Sara Stambaugh, "Imagery of Entrapment in the Fiction of Isak Dinesen" (170-71).

symbolizing the couple's union and "mysterious tie" with Africa (Heiskanen-Mäkelä 465), and suggesting that both she and her mate are recognized by the lions themselves as of a kind, but of superior stature. The lion shootings in *Out of Africa* and *Shadows on the Grass* are carefully constructed to allow both Finch-Hatton and the protagonist to kill one lion each, a scenario different from the sequence of events described in Dinesen's private correspondence (*Letters* 360-61). The symmetry of the couple working in tandem against the similarly paired animals produces a state of such exceeding harmony that it cannot be contained in language: "We did not speak one word," the narrator explains about their return to the house. "In our hunt we had been a unity and we had nothing to say to one another" (*Africa* 237). As Dinesen would have it, this state of completion is shared with the lions: "a lion-hunt each single time," she asserts in *Shadows on the Grass* about the encounter between human and lion, "is an affair of perfect harmony, of deep, burning, mutual desire and reverence between two truthful and undaunted creatures, on the same wavelength" (47). Erich Neumann discusses the representation of the Great Goddess in connection with lions as "the Lady of the Beasts." In this form, Neumann postulates, "she is the *whole*" inasmuch as she [and through her the lion] dominates both "wild as well as gentle and tame beasts" (275, 272; original italics). As well, some Jungians envision what they call the "Royal Couple archetype" as "the polarity that most broadly underlies and symbolizes all wholeness." It is "associated with the royal lion and lioness" (Demetrakopoulos 202). Dinesen uncovers this archetypal meaning, which places the lion as an elementary figure at the "beginning of things," including it in the primal desire that fuels the return journey "home": "sitting there again [by the campfire]," she writes in a letter, "listening to the lions far out in the darkness was like returning to the really true

world again, – where I probably once lived 10,000 years ago" (*Letters* 60). Further, after the narrator has left Africa, a friend writes to her that lions have been seen "on Finch-Hatton's grave in the Hills. A lion and a lioness have come there, and stood, or lain, on the grave for a long time." From this site, it is suggested, the lions have a good "view over the plain" (*Africa* 360). Africa herself, in the form of the two lions, here mourns one of her own, for "Denys," as Dinesen has already explained, "had watched and followed all the ways of the African Highlands, and [. . .] had known their soil and seasons, the vegetation and the wild animals, the winds and smells. He had observed the changes of weather in them, their people, clouds, the stars at night" (356). What is more, the lions visiting his grave both suggest the wholeness Dinesen associates with the point of origin and are emblematic of the state of insight that coincides with it.

For the protagonist herself, however, the failure of her African life in the end turns on a lack of perception. Despite the inherent ability of the landscape to foster insight, the protagonist's own capacity to see is ultimately found to be faulty – a problem that hinges, again, on the question of geography. The protagonist's misperception confirms that the primal oneness of Eden cannot be recovered. "Critics generally agree that *Out of Africa* retells the Genesis myth, depicting the irrecoverable loss of an idyllic time[40] and place" and "revising the central myth of our culture," feminist scholar Judith Lee summarizes that consensus, which she disputes, however, in her own argument. Instead, Lee's own reading discovers persuasively that Dinesen "found the Genesis myth inadequate as a

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[40] While the focus of my own analysis is the concept of place, the treatment of time in the memoir is also of interest. Robert Langbaum was only the first of several critics to comment on the "vague chronology" (119) in *Out of Africa*, a strategy that imparts, by consensus, a "time before time" quality. The narrative presents itself, in a sense, as a conflation of time and space: the eternally unchanging landscape has an anti-temporal quality, as though timelessness itself had assumed spatial form. Timelessness might also be regarded as a "unity," as a flowing together of the present and the past. Such an "atemporal" reading, however, as Aiken points out, "elides both the text's and the author's problematic relations to history" (*Engendering* 213). The memoir's end, at any rate, reverses the evasion of historical time.

paradigm for female experience," and that her revision "subordinates it to the myth of the rebellion of Lucifer" (46-47). In addition to re-interpreting these two myths, *Out of Africa* also brilliantly if obliquely rewrites the oedipal plot as the story of a heroine who loses both her position and her state of being as a result of having insufficient insight. The memoir ends with the protagonist's last view of the Ngong mountain range, "[b]ut it was so far away that the four peaks looked trifling, hardly distinguishable, and different from the way they looked from the farm" (389).

The oedipal plot in *Out of Africa* is refigured in a series of references to blindness and blinding, beginning with the story of "how Odysseus [...] had put out Polyphemus' eye" (49), and followed by repeated mentions of "the old blind Dane by the name of Knudsen" (56), and the fading sight (and consciousness) from the eyes of the dying Esa, which, significantly, held "the remembrance of the country such as I had always wished to have known it, when it had been like a Noah's Ark" (291). In her correspondence with her family Dinesen equates leaving Africa with losing her sight (Hansen 127): mere weeks before her departure she writes to her brother, "I have not been able to see any way forward whatsoever for myself," and again, "it is really very difficult to see what if anything I can do in this world." She adds: "To me it would seem the most *natural* thing to disappear with my world here, for it seems to me to be, to quite the same extent as my eyes, or as some talent or other I might have, vital parts of myself." In Denmark, she fears, she will "lose that capacity for taking an overall view that it has cost me so much to attain" (417-19; original italics). Yet if Dinesen perceives herself, in Kenya, as the recipient of insight, for her, much like for Oedipus, understanding comes as the consequence of loss: "What business had I had ever to set my heart on Africa?," she asks,

years later, in *Shadows on the Grass* (99). Having been privileged to enjoy Ngong's unimpeded vistas and concomitant perception, it is only with the hindsight of her loss, voiced explicitly as retrospect, that the narrator realizes about herself in Kenya, "I was at the height and upon the roof of my own life" (50). The relationship between the oedipal plot and the overall narrative thrust is critically important, because the protagonist's search for understanding, for "that supreme moment of complete knowledge," to borrow a phrase from Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (another work that engages the modernist dialectic; [114]), is articulated throughout as a matter of *being able to see clearly* from her place of existence.

On a profound level, however, precisely her perspective is jeopardized by a longing of the kind that constructs an altogether different point of view than that which delights in the "glorious sight" of ancient Africa (*Africa* 66): in one of the earliest descriptions of the farm, the narrator voices a desire to *contain* the geography she sees by relating the European "yearning" to transform "the wildness and irregularity of the country" into "a piece of land laid out and planted according to rule," thereby creating a patchwork of "geometrical figures." She obtains this vision through a misuse, as it were, of the elevated viewpoint, by becoming "familiar with the appearance of [the] farm from the air" (7). The desire to overlay the "wild" African terrain with an alien geometry expresses a colonizing view that is false because it takes no account of the true nature of the land. It demonstrates disregard, therefore, precisely for the authenticity Dinesen otherwise values so much. Subsequently, this misperception *dis*figures and even corrupts the map the narrator draws inasmuch as the very feature of the landscape which also figures as its most transcendent quality is re-articulated as a problem of location: the

altitude. The activity of the plantation – coffee-growing – thus emerges as a fateful topic and as the fatal flaw of the protagonist's placement: "The land was in itself a little too high for coffee, and it was hard work to keep it going; we were never rich on the farm." If the heroine is only too aware of the inadequacy and, I would argue, lack of desirability, of the European effort to reconfigure the untamed character of Africa – she immediately warns that "[c]offee-growing is a long job. It does not all come out as you imagine" (7)[41] – the "wrongness" of the farm's altitude nevertheless becomes a recurrent motif. That wrongness, however, lies in the failure of the farm to produce according to colonial norms of efficiency and value only. Yet Dinesen revisits the notion repeatedly and almost *verbatim*: "My farm was a little too high up for growing coffee," she writes, and then again after the failure of the venture and sale to a Nairobi company, "They thought that the place was too high up for coffee" (319, 328).

The farm's altitude, furthermore, is tied to a lack of rain. "We were short of rain, as well, in the Ngong country, and three times we had a year of real drought," the narrator explains (319). The text develops shortage of rain as a further problem of placement (and another recurrent motif). "One year the long rains failed," Dinesen states, for instance, early in the narrative. "That is a terrible, tremendous experience, and the farmer who has lived through it, will never forget it. Years afterwards, away from Africa, [...] he will start up at night, at the sound of a sudden shower of rain, and cry, 'At last, at last'" (42). The frequency and severity with which the subject is treated establish climate and weather as essentially unmanageable and as part of the untameable nature of Africa – just as the "richness of growth and the freshness and fragrance everywhere" after the return of the rains cannot be ordered and controlled either and are equally "overwhelming" (274). The

[41] Abdul JanMohamed observes, "Dinesen exalts the freedom of the untamed" (52).

urge *to see* the land in terms of its use for the systematic planting of coffee is thus doomed from the start. It is destined for failure because it turns on an error of location, placing the individual in a position that inevitably leads to tragedy. Given the protagonist's intimate identification with the ground of her being, this conclusion is logically articulated as a process of the land withdrawing from her, and her final alienation from it:

> When I look back upon my last months in Africa, it seems to me that the lifeless things were aware of my departure a long time before I was so myself. The hills, the forests, plains and rivers, the wind, all knew that we were to part. When I first began to make terms with fate, and the negotiations about the sale of the farm were taken up, the attitude of the landscape towards me changed. Till then I had been part of it, and the drought had been to me like a fever, and the flowering of the plain like a new frock. Now the country disengaged itself from me, and stood back a little, in order that I should see it clearly and as a whole. (*Africa* 330)

Ascribing the intention to be seen "clearly and as a whole," incongruously, to the "lifeless things," however, is an act that arises, again, out of hindsight. The statement implies the very absence of clear and complete vision, and Dinesen does indeed also write that, at the time, "I only thought that I had never seen the country so lovely" (330). The problem of seeing while at the same time *not* seeing speaks to the curious relation between the self and its ground of existence: in Africa, Dinesen is both "at home" and alien. Having been in a place which has nurtured her in a mystical way, she can neither own nor inherit this place, as the story ultimately reveals. The problem, as Aiken correctly points out, all along has been the protagonist's impossible desire "to *have* 'a farm in Africa'" (*Engendering* 216; original italics). More, by capturing a moment of *not* seeing and *not* knowing, the

passage marks a counterpoint to the earlier elevated state of insight, which had given "evidence" of the protagonist's having penetrated to "the heart of things, [...as] an ever-present perceptual condition" (Langbaum 130).

The episode which represents the "lowest" (my term) point in the relations between the heroine and place is the encounter of chameleon and rooster. Dinesen here relates with some urgency that, not understanding her "run of bad luck," she endeavours to discover the "central principle within it." To do so, she ventures outdoors: "If I looked in the right place," she writes, "the coherence of things might become clear to me. I must, I thought, get up and look for a sign." Yet while looking for just this "coherence" and "unity" (368), she happens to witness a disturbing encounter between a cock and a chameleon, in which the cock plucks out the chameleon's tongue. Explaining that the animal needs its tongue to catch insects and thus to stay alive, Dinesen reports killing the chameleon with a stone to save it from starvation. Shaken by the scene, she tries to understand its meaning:

> Very slowly, only, in the course of the next few days, it came upon me that I had had the most spiritual answer possible to my call. [...] The powers to which I had cried had stood on my dignity more than I had done myself, and what answer could they then give? This was clearly not the hour for coddling, and they had chosen to connive at my invocation of it. Great powers had laughed to me, with an echo from the hills to follow the laughter, they had said among the trumpets, among the cocks and Chameleons, Ha ha! (*Africa* 369-70)

The nature of the "echo" here is substantially different from Dinesen's earlier and subsequent uses of the image.[42] The derision that comes back from the land to the quest(ion)er is, in a sense, the opposite of the visions offered earlier. Whereas before, Africa had enabled insight, unasked, through vistas of all-encompassing totality, Dinesen now has to "get up and look" for meaning. Whereas before, she had relied for perspective on the, literally, elevated viewpoint to make possible the sought-after overview, the "dreadful vision" of the cock and chameleon (Jacobs 73) now makes her sit down and "look[...] down," as she "dare[s] not look up" (*Africa* 369). Whereas before Dinesen had been "guided" (my term) to insight, as though she were not capable of independent comprehension, now is "not the hour for coddling," and the great powers of Africa "connive" at her plea for continued and perhaps even greater guidance by merely laughing at her. The "echo from the hills" is an answer only by being no answer. Yet paradoxically, by giving nothing – by giving non-knowledge – Africa supplies the antithesis to the earlier insight, and together these opposites constitute "the most spiritual answer" possible. Perception, true perception, which is not simply offered, as Dinesen may have believed, but which has to be obtained through effort, comes from the unity of the two poles, the knowing and the not knowing, the seeing and the not seeing, for in the moment when these opposites are held in balance and transcended, the human sees (like) the divine. This

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[42] "Echo" is an important concept in Dinesen's *oeuvre*, one which ties directly into the return thrust of her narrativity. In her memoirs, the phrase "echo in the hills" is employed in the context of Finch-Hatton's burial (in *Out of Africa*); it denotes the "answer back" on the part of the environment ("Africa"), in response to the dead man, that Dinesen regards as a critical prerequisite in her definition of authenticity of self. As well, in *Daguerrotypes and Other Essays*, she writes: "In the long valleys of the African plains I have been surrounded with sweet echoes, as from a sounding board. My daily life out there was filled with answering voices; I never spoke without getting a response" (7). The echo is an indication of the harmony between place and the individual. Similarly, the section entitled "Echoes from the Hills" in *Shadows on the Grass* implies that, even after the passage of many years, the narrator's harmony with her former ground of being is still intact in some sense, since she still receives "echoes from the hills" in the form of communications from the Natives who meant much to her. On Dinesen's fascination with echoes (and other modes of repetition) also see Aiken (*Engendering* 260, n. 8).

is the moment when the seeker, comprehending the totality of the origin, returns to the point of undifferentiation.

Finally, in Dinesen's philosophy, the moment of return is captured in the art of the story. Just as telling his story had allowed Jogona Kanyagga to transcend his great loss, so Dinesen redeems her own loss through the haunting tale of her yearning. Just as Jogona's story – written on a piece of paper and carried in a bag around his neck – never loses its power to capture the past and thereby to unite the past and the present, because as a text "it did not change" (*Africa* 124), so both Dinesen's storytelling and the text it produces become the way through death and loss to regeneration and life. The narrator's voice "reassures us" that "the most traumatic losses can be survived, and more, transcended" (Thurman 284), a feature which distinguishes *Out of Africa* as "one of the finest enactments in Western literature of the transcendence and transformation [...] that may issue from ultimate loss" (Aiken, *Engendering* 244). Its transcendent quality makes the story the "divine art," Dinesen writes in "The Cardinal's First Tale," in a description that highlights once more the essentiality of perception: "In the beginning was the story. At the end we shall be privileged to view, and review it" (*Last Tales* 24). The power of *Out of Africa* as a text lies in "a sense that its tellings act as a sacred text, where the generative word is supreme" (Pelensky, "Introduction" xvi).

Fittingly, a recurrent motif in *Out of Africa* is the activity of storytelling, through which narrative is established as an empowering and ancient female tradition: in their "enclosed" world, the Somali women of the farm "relate fairy tales in the style of the Arabian nights," in a way which allows "the heroine, chaste or not, [to] get the better of the male characters and come out of the tale triumphant" (180). Dinesen places herself

deliberately within this female tradition[43] by referring to herself as "sitting on the floor, cross-legged like Scheherazade," while telling stories to Denys Finch-Hatton (226). If Dinesen's identification with the figure of Scheherazade grounds the act of narration in the idea of death (Aiken, *Engendering* 45), the potentially open-ended spiral the tales jointly describe – in which each story looks both back and forward – defies and evades the concept and actuality of an ending. Scheherazade saves her life by spinning a regenerative cycle of stories, literally recovering and restoring her self with every tale that returns to its predecessor. Given Dinesen's own recovery of a life following the failure in Africa, along with her "reviving herself again and again" through the art of storytelling (47),[44] Scheherazade's narration may well be regarded as both the central trope of the text and the primary representation of its modernist dialectic: not merely endlessly regressive *and* endlessly regenerative, but regenerative *because* they are regressive, Scheherazadean tales ensure the life of the text and the storyteller with every turn back.[45] Each return is a rebirth.[46] More, each return, paradoxically, also brings one closer to the beginning, for, as Peter Brooks argues in the context of self-propagating fictions, "[d]esire is the wish for the end, for fulfillment, but fulfillment delayed so that we can understand it in relation to

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[43] As well, Dinesen's choice of a male pseudonym – in addition to other implications – also points back to a subversive and insubordinate group of women writers, which includes George Sand and George Eliot.

[44] Donald Hannah expresses the dominant critical view of Dinesen, which holds that "the writer begins where the woman ends" (59). Similarly, Judith Thurman reports that Dinesen regarded her life in Denmark as "an after life, rather than a future" (256). Dinesen fuelled this perception by referring to her existence after Kenya as a kind of "death," and to herself as "printed matter" (*Daguerrotypes* 196).

[45] Dinesen's entire *oeuvre* is self-reflexive and highly metatextual, characteristics which complicate prior readings of individual works and, in a sense, also re-write endings and conclusions. Also see Aiken, *Engendering* (xx).

[46] The ability on the part of the narrator to lead, as it were, "through suffering and death, sacrifice and annihilation, to renewal, rebirth, and immortality" recalls a Sophia figure, one of the most powerful manifestations of the Great Mother in Western culture. Representing ultimate wisdom, in this manifestation the Goddess is so far transformed "as to become a pure feminine spirit, a kind of Sophia, a spiritual whole in which all heaviness and materiality are transcended. Then she not only forms [...] life, [...] but is also the supreme essence and distillation to which life in this world can be transformed" (Neumann 291, 325). Dinesen both evokes and identifies with the Great Mother in her description of the Somali women (*Africa* 180), and in the story "Sorrow-Acre" she uses the character Sophia Magdalena to tap into the same subversive archetype. See Aiken, "Dinesen's 'Sorrow-Acre': Tracing the Woman's Line."

origin, and to desire itself. The story of Scheherazade is doubtless the story of stories" (299).

The regressive nature of the narrative is supported by a style of writing which interweaves Classical, Hebraic, and Biblical myths, from the *Odyssey* to an extended analogy between the Song of Songs and Dinesen's own "song" of Africa (*Africa* 78). Myth is employed as both a reference point and as the "scaffolding," as Brooker suggests about Eliot's use of Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, for "extend[ing the] mind backwards in time as far as human consciousness can go" (67). Dinesen, who in her letters refers to Africa as "Arcadia" (54), particularly re-interprets pastoral modes. *Out of Africa*, which in Langbaum's memorable description is "an authentic pastoral, perhaps the best prose pastoral of our time" (119), suggests itself as a pastoral elegy through its "quintessential conflation of writing and mourning" (Aiken, *Engendering* 231). Dinesen revises the genre's conventions, however, both by recasting the poet/shepherd (or farmer, in her case) as female, thereby "subverting the masculine perspective" (314 n. 35), and also by refiguring the reading process for the text: the narratee of the Scheherazadean tales is the same character, Finch-Hatton, who, as the narrator explains, "taught me Latin, and to read the Bible, and the Greek poets" (*Africa* 226). He influences directly, in other words, the form and/or content of the stories he is told. As well as blurring gendered boundaries of authorship, the text here, in one of many instances of circling, turns back on itself by making Finch-Hatton not just the object but also the source of the elegy. What is more, his death leaves, as it were, a space for another listener, and, indeed, "[f]ew texts signal a place for the narratee to enter and listen as brilliantly as *Out of Africa*" (Whitlock, *Intimate*

Empire 132). The process involves the listener actively in the continuation of the story and implicitly in the underlying dialectical thrust towards transcendence.[47]

The inclusion of the listener/reader in its textual dynamics is perhaps the biggest allure of Dinesen's great memoir. *Out of Africa* holds out the promise that, as it reiterates what the heroine *saw*, it will once again approach the point of origin, taking the reader along with it. There to be found at the first "home," at the place where we all once dwelt (to paraphrase Cixous), is the wholeness of the beginning, alpha and omega, light and darkness, mother and father, life and death. And because, for Dinesen, "who" depends on "where," this recreation of "home" figures also as a revisioning of the narrative of self-definition. To her, the geography at the centre of the return – Africa's "mysterious" forests, the plains alive with animals, and above all the "immensely wide" views – embodies primal connection and the totality which alone enables self-fulfillment and authenticity. Language comes closest to recapturing this connection, because the word *was* at the beginning and will be there again at the end. *Out of Africa* both reveals the separation, the common loss that underlies the human condition, and offers "paradoxical consolation" in the form of language, in "the very words that are inseparable from the wounding" (Aiken, *Engendering* 245-46). In a text that, "through its dazzling display of metaphor," never ceases to draw attention to its own symbolic nature (Smith, "Other Woman" 428), Dinesen "paradoxically" also manages to evoke an undifferentiated and "whole" state of being, liberated from divisions and from the law of the father: timeless, placeless, and ungendered.

[47] Brooker and Bentley analyze the reading process of modernist texts as an important aspect of the modernist dialectic in *Reading* The Waste Land: *Modernism and the Limits of Interpretation* (1990).

Chapter VI

Woman's Place in (White) Man's Country: Gender and Displacement in Alyse Simpson's *The Land That Never Was* and *Red Dust of Kenya*

Alyse Simpson's work makes a fitting subject for the final chapter of my study, because Simpson's two memoirs of extreme alienation in East Africa in the 1930s throw into high relief much of the theorizing that has supported my discussion so far: Simpson's sense of "outsideness," of a "geopathology" that highlights the personal meaning of "victimage of location" and that is remedied only by departing from Kenya, her feelings of isolation and helplessness vis-à-vis an environment that appears hostile – feelings which speak to a perceived lack of control and thereby of diminished "self-efficacy," one of the critical markers of locatedness – all illustrate the concepts and ideas that have helped me to explore the strategies of self-representation in pioneer women's autobiographies. Simpson's narrating "I" pursues both the concept and reality of exile to the limit, as estrangement and despair confront the reader on every page of *The Land That Never Was* (1937) and *Red Dust of Kenya* (1952). Furthermore, Simpson's story of expatriation links back to the much earlier Canadian writers with whom I began my analysis: it echoes aspects of Catharine Parr Traill's and Susanna Moodie's accounts of their emigrations – notwithstanding the passage of a hundred years and the distance of thousands of miles – because Simpson and her husband, much like the Traills and Moodies, embarked on a search to better their lives after being lured to their destination by overly optimistic promotional literature. Like the Strickland sisters, Simpson writes partly to correct the

picture of an idealized colony[1] and to attempt to set straight the record of settler experience.

In addition, Simpson narrates an acutely gendered form of displacement by articulating the narrator/protagonist's sense of inadequacy and dislocation in her Kenyan exile as a conflict between feminine and masculine values and points of view. She insists explicitly that pioneering is harder for women than for men, in part because women must attempt to adjust to a male perspective that is alien to them. A central feature of both books is the narrator's unease with, and scorn for, the dominant patriarchal systems of ordering life, which are to blame, in her telling, for women's inability to find any kind of purpose or meaning in godforsaken and bleak places like Kenya. Simpson thus ponders the large question of woman's place in a male world. Her exploration of this question brings into increasingly sharper focus a figure that has repeatedly (and I am tempted to say, reliably) surfaced in earlier chapters: the mother. That figure, whether as mother country or as maternal adoptive land, whether as the author's biological mother or as her own experience of motherhood, whether as the concrete actuality of mothering or as an abstract concept, has emerged as crucial to self-definition in all of the women whose writing has occupied me here. Simpson's engagement with the figure takes the form of sustained reminiscences about her mother, which shape the discourse, I argue, in her autobiographies, both overtly and covertly, and increasingly so in *Red Dust of Kenya*, a book in which the daughter-writer's dialogue with the absent mother vies for equivalence (literally, in terms of the number of pages) with the narrative of settlement the reader might reasonably expect.

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[1] Also see Gillian Whitlock, *Intimate Empire* (120).

The identity of the writer who produced these complex meditations is, in the words of Italian scholar Nicoletta Brazzelli, who has worked extensively on Simpson, "shrouded in mystery" (*Fools' Paradise* I).[2] Brazzelli, who conducted her research primarily at Cambridge University Library, was unable to shed much light on the writer's enigma (I). Little is known of Alyse Simpson's life.[3] A few bare details may be excavated from her autobiographies, but even these cannot be taken at face value, as Brazzelli also notes, since the genre itself does not guarantee truth in any way, and, furthermore, Simpson disguises what might otherwise be verifiable data by inventing names and locations. Nevertheless, the information that can be gathered from the writing suggests that Simpson was of Swiss origin,[4] and that she was born into a middle-class family, probably in the first decade of the twentieth century. The name "Alyse" seems to be a translation, or rather a transliteration, of "Aloysia," while the last name appears to be that of her husband.[5] As a young woman of no more than twenty Simpson apparently spent two years in a Swiss convent. She left, having become disillusioned with the life, and shortly afterwards married John, a Briton, whom she had met some years earlier. She followed him to England, by her own account to a Midlands town named Mannington, but in fact no such town exists, although there is a place by this name in Dorset, in the South of England.

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[2] ("[L'identità della scrittrice] è avvolta nel mistero.") (All translations from the Italian are my own.)
[3] Elizabeth Richmond, who includes Simpson in her sociological study of white women settlers in Kenya, was likewise unable to unearth any information. Simpson's elusiveness makes her a case of her own, in Richmond's view ("European Women Settlers in Kenya 1905 – 1975," unpubl. Master's thesis, University of Essex 1985, [21]).
[4] Brazzelli seems certain of this detail (I). Two contemporary reviews of Simpson's books in the *New York Times* (dated 1940 and 1955, respectively) likewise refer to Simpson as Swiss. Similarly, the cover of *Red Dust of Kenya* (1952) describes the author as follows: "Born in a Swiss village overlooking the Lake of Constance, Alyse Simpson followed her British husband to remote Kenya after their marriage."
[5] Brazzelli states that she found the author's name indicated as "Aloysia, Seraphina, Irma" in the *British Library General Catalogue of Printed Books to 1975* (*Fools' Paradise* 65, n. 5). These are also the names Simpson herself mentions in her last autobiographical work, *An Innocent in England* (1961), in which she gives her maiden name as "Jurg" (20). A database search using these parameters yielded no results, but Brazzelli confirms that copies of Simpson's work are preserved in the Swiss National Library at Bern (*Fools' Paradise* II).

Dissatisfied with the lack of opportunities (in what would have been post-World War I Britain), and tempted by positive reports about Kenya, the couple, according to Simpson, emigrated with two thousand pounds in capital, a sum which turned out to be vastly insufficient. The precise timing of the Simpsons' venture is unclear (her account omits any kind of chronology), but the "frequently quoted figure" for the interwar period is four to five thousand pounds as the minimum capital requirement, and more for developing previously uncultivated land. Substantial amounts of money were necessary for farming in Kenya because of the "continual uncertainties of commercial agriculture in the colony." New settlers, however, were all too often "woefully ignorant of such vital matters as what crops would grow on their land" (D. Kennedy, "Foreword" vi). Large numbers of "small undercapitalized and underconnected white farmers" failed to prosper in British East Africa, and during the 1930s Depression nearly as many people left Kenya and Rhodesia as entered them (Whitlock, *Intimate Empire* 119). The main reasons for failure were both "such unpredictable natural depredations as drought, disease, and locusts" and the disastrous economic situation during the late 1920s and the 1930s. These circumstances privileged settlers who were "least dependent upon turning a profit from agriculture" (D. Kennedy, "Foreword" vi-vii). The Simpsons had purchased a one-thousand-acre farm in a low-lying (as well as arid and drought-prone) part of the Rift Valley – Alyse calls it the "Simba" valley in one book, and the valley of "Saltlick" in the other, both seemingly made-up names[6] – the only area they could afford. This was far removed, both literally and figuratively, from Karen Blixen's "white" highlands, which were the "happy hunting grounds" of Kenya's aristocratic elite. As a result, in no small

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[6] Brazzelli reports that "Simba" is the name of a station on the Uganda Railway line, but as the name of a valley it appears to be invented (*Fools' Paradise* 106, n. 15).

measure, of their location, the Simpsons' experience was characterized by abject poverty and physical hardships. They sold their farm (at a loss, apparently) after nearly six years of struggle to make a success of it, and returned to England (although Simpson, fascinatingly, rewrites this ending in her second African book). Alyse's literary output is the only record of her later years.

That output consists of five books, written over a period of approximately two and a half decades, and composed in what Brazzelli calls an "autobiographical key" (*Fools' Paradise* 67)[7] – memoirs which concern themselves, without exception, with the same ten to fifteen years in the protagonist's life, leading up to and including the time in Kenya. The first of these works to appear was *The Land that Never Was*, subtitled *A Narrative of Life in Kenya*, which was published in 1937 by Selwyn & Blount in London – in the same year, coincidentally, as Dinesen's *Out of Africa*, but apparently overlooked by critics.[8] The book narrates a young couple's failed settlement experience from the woman's point of view, without, however, providing much factual detail; locations and characters' names are invented, and dates are entirely missing. In 1939 Simpson published another memoir, with the title *The Convent*, which appeared a year later also in a North American edition by Alfred A. Knopf. Introduced by the narrator in her epigraph as a "memory of much suffering," and described by the contemporary *The New York Times* reviewer as "a moving and penetrating book" (Walton 83), this work is constructed as a young woman's narrative of her time spent in the Swiss Convent of the Mystic Rose (probably also an invented name, see below). Factual details are again missing or heavily disguised (some of the "Swiss" names, for instance, sound rather British), suggesting that the author is intent

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[7] (With reference, for instance, to *An Innocent in England*: "è un altro resoconto in chiave autobiografica.")
[8] Brazzelli reports that she found no reviews or other references that would indicate critical interest (64, n. 3).

on manipulating key personal points in her narrative (Brazzelli, *Fools' Paradise* 66). Following a twelve-year hiatus, Simpson published a second book about her African experience in 1952, originally titled *Red Dust of Africa* and reissued two years later in North America as *Red Dust of Kenya* (subtitled *A bride and groom pioneer in Africa*). Geographical details and a precise timeline are missing here as well. In 1955, a further volume of autobiography appeared, called *I Threw a Rose Into the Sea*, which narrates the period between Alyse's first meeting of John and their early married life. The courtship is significantly interrupted by the protagonist's two-year residence in a convent, here called The Sacred Heart. Simpson also includes recollections (if this term is indeed justified) of her earlier childhood. *The New York Times* review called the work "truly out of this world" and "most delightful" (Fremantle BR28). Simpson's final book, yet another memoir, entitled *An Innocent in England*, was published in 1961. Here, too, the narrator/protagonist revisits the early years of her marriage to John, following her departure from the Convent of the Sacred Heart.[9] In this volume, the protagonist's main preoccupation is the painful process of adapting to life in another country, Great Britain in this case (following her move from Switzerland), a transition narrated in bleak and despondent tones similar to those employed in the earlier narratives to describe the similar sense of alienation in Kenya.

To date, Alyse Simpson's work "remains obscure" (Whitlock, *Intimate Empire* 116), studied by only a handful of critics, an oversight which I hope to redress in some measure with my own analysis. Scholarly attention has focused on *The Land That Never*

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[9] The narrator specifies "[o]ne day in February 1928" as the date of her leaving the convent (1). As with all of Simpson's work, however, this may or may not be a reliable fact. Elsewhere she writes that she and John emigrated to Kenya after having spent five years in England (*Land That Never* 7), which would make 1933 the earliest possible year for their emigration. If she really spent six years in Kenya, her first memoir could not easily have been published in 1937. In any event, the chronology of events is unclear.

Was, Simpson's first book, which Brazzelli considers "without doubt [Simpson's] most original and complex work" (*Fools' Paradise* 67).[10] It is, she says, "a text which merits to be read and studied even in the absence of reliable information about the author" (II).[11] The existing critical readings take a postcolonial perspective, exploring the text as a counter-narrative *par excellence* to imperial discourse. The tone for this approach was set with the 1985 reprinting of *The Land That Never Was* (by the University of Nebraska Press), in which historian Dane Kennedy's short "Foreword" emphasizes Simpson's desire to distance herself from depictions of Kenya as a colonial paradise: "It is this overwrought reputation that Alyse Simpson seeks to controvert," Kennedy claims, "in her aptly titled memoir. Her tale is one of disillusionment, providing a revealing and valuable corrective to the roseate popular image of the white settler's experience in Kenya" (v). Other scholars have taken up Kennedy's assertion. Kathryn Tidrick lauds Simpson's book as a rare example of a woman's point of view of empire, in which the colonizing discourse is revealed as such (149). Gillian Whitlock calls *The Land That Never Was* a "[d]ystopian autobiography" and stresses its "emphasis on the absurdity of colonizing schemes" (*Intimate Empire* 118, 119). Nicoletta Brazzelli's detailed and insightful analysis, the most extensive as yet, is a book-length study entitled *"Fools' Paradise": Alyse Simpson nel Kenya degli Anni '30* ("Fools' Paradise": Alyse Simpson in the Kenya of the 1930s), in which Brazzelli argues that Simpson's memoir is "constructed from the beginning in terms which appear different from conventional ones" because of the book's "critique of

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[10] ("Si tratta senza dubbio del suo lavoro più originale e complesso.")
[11] ("*The Land That Never Was* è un testo che merita di essere letto e studiato anche in mancanza di informazioni certe sulla sua autrice.")

the traditional imperial vision" (63-64).[12] Brazzelli also uses the descriptors "bitter and anomalous" in her discussion of the text (69).[13] In a second study, the article "In and Out of Africa" (published in English), in which she contrasts Simpson's memoir to Dinesen's famous one, Brazzelli comments that *The Land That Never Was* "corrects and deconstructs the romantic popular image of colonial Kenya as a 'Paradise'" (91). Similarly, Whitlock also sees Simpson's memoir as a "foil" to *Out of Africa* (*Intimate Empire* 116). "The resemblances," Whitlock argues, "are produced by Simpson's desire to unravel the vision of British East Africa as a lost Eden by pursuing the other term in the oppositions which are the repertoire of the East African dream: regeneration and degeneration, freedom and imprisonment, and eloquence and silence" (118).

This brief critical overview both hints at the complex and dark nature of *The Land That Never Was,* and also illustrates the interpretive consensus the book has generated. This agreement may not have served the text – which is extreme in its negativity, as well as ambiguous and often self-contradictory, as Brazzelli also observes (*Fools' Paradise* 120) – at all well. While I have no wish to dispute the postcolonial lens for reading Simpson's work – she repeatedly questions the lived reality of colonizing – I hesitate to regard this approach as "definitive" or as the only possible one for the book. Not only does the critical position appear to have foreclosed other lines of inquiry, but it also seems to imply intentionality on Simpson's part to construct a "corrective" text. To read the *The Land That Never Was* purely as a counter-narrative of empire or as a subversion of that discourse is problematic, I find, because Simpson's story both acts out and resists the imperial project.

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[12] ("[La] narrazione [...è] costruita in termini che appaiono fin dall'inizio diversi da quelli convenzionali poiché in esso preval[e] [...] la critica della visione imperiale tradizionale.")
[13] ("[Il resoconto della Simpson è] amaro e anomalo.")

This ambiguity is manifest, for example, in the narrator/protagonist's comments about the Africans. Her first impressions affirm the benignity of imperialism: "The natives," she reports shortly after arriving in Nairobi, "were anything but down-hearted; British rule did not apparently oppress them" (*Land That Never* 27). As well, once brought into contact on the farm with the Africans who present themselves to offer their labour, Simpson relies for her depiction of the relationship on "the entire repertory of stereotypes established in colonial literature" (Brazzelli, *Fools' Paradise* 116).[14] Odero, the cook, for instance, is described as "a perfectly murderous-looking fellow with but one tooth to light up his pockmarked face. Like an ape's, his enormous hands reached well below his knees" (68-69). To exacerbate her ethnocentrism, Simpson, as a general rule, refers to Odero – one of only a few Africans whose names we learn, both in *The Land That Never Was* and *Red Dust of Kenya* – more frequently by his function ("the cook") than by his name, a habit that hardly bespeaks the "uncommon sympathy and respect" Dane Kennedy discovers in her portrayals ("Foreword" vii). The Native women, in particular, are represented in demeaning and negative terms. "Docile, ox-eyed, the women walked along in the dust, barefoot and contented," Simpson writes on one occasion, and then makes the even blunter observation (in connection with a Native dance), "Women, dozens of them startlingly ugly and seemingly all alike, stood in a circle" (*Land That Never* 26, 128). Later, she has little positive to say when inspecting the Africans' "primitive huts and even more primitive women" (253). Simpson's derogatory posture aligns with Dorothy Hammond and Alta Jablow's findings in their study of British attitudes towards Africa,

[14] ("Di fatto, la Simpson utilizza tutto il repertorio degli stereotipi che si sono consolidati nella letteratura coloniale.")

The Africa That Never Was (1970):[15] Hammond and Jablow observe that the "fundamental theme" in Britons' twentieth-century writing about Africa and Africans is one of "a world apart [...] too alien to be encompassed within the normal rubrics of civilized understanding" (124). By contrast, it is difficult to fathom how Kennedy can conclude that Simpson "expresses none of the sour, impatient, hostile feelings toward black servants and laborers that pervade most settler memoirs" ("Foreword" vii-viii).[16] At the same time, however, we also learn that Odero "proved to be a godsend, a very good friend, indeed, in years to come" (*Land That Never* 69). Similarly, facing danger on safari, Simpson recalls, "I realized should I be eaten by a lion there and then I would carry the memory of all our Negroes with me on my journey and hug it as one might clasp a priceless pearl" (*Red Dust* 229).[17] Even while admitting to "a great liking for these natives" (*Land That Never* 238), Simpson's true sympathy is all "for the plodding White man" (133). In the end, upon leaving the farm after nearly six years, she idealizes, much like Susanna Moodie did with regard to the Native peoples of Upper Canada, her relations with the Africans, stereotyping, however, to the last: "I must confess that I had no other regrets at leaving Kenya except having to part from the natives as we knew them. Willing, cheerful, loyal and trusting as they were, their memory will always be dear to me" (265). The implied message that "savages" (initially unthinking, "ape"-like, and "ugly") are tamed, as it were, by the friendly and caring colonizing couple and thereby turned into "loyal and trusting" creatures does not recommend the writing definitively as a counter-narrative to imperial rhetoric.

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[15] Disappointingly, Hammond and Jablow list *Red Dust of Kenya* in their bibliography (mistakenly adding a definitive article to the title), but they do not discuss Simpson's work at all in their study.

[16] One also wonders at the criticism someone like Isak Dinesen might have drawn upon her had she used language like Simpson does.

[17] Also note the use of the possessive pronoun "our" in the sentence quoted, exactly the habit for which Dinesen has been much criticized.

I propose an alternate reading, which regards the unrelieved alienation and relentless negativity in both of Simpson's African memoirs as part of a larger counter-discourse, one which subsumes her critique of empire. My inquiry begins by questioning Simpson's insistence on gender difference in pioneering, and by drawing attention to her unusual choice of retelling in the second of her African books, *Red Dust of Kenya*, precisely the same settlement story she had already narrated in the first one. In this book, however, the difference between male and female viewpoints is heightened and the story is interwoven with a tale of courtship and powerful maternal influence. This surprising narrative repetition has not been sufficiently explored by scholars. Whitlock's analysis does not concern itself with *Red Dust*; she makes no reference to it. Brazzelli dedicates seven pages to her reading of the book, but she evidently sees this second work as inferior, or certainly as less significant: "The dystopia of Africa," she argues, "is corrected in a narrative which assumes properly the form of a novel" (*Fools' Paradise* 131).[18] Mainly, she sees the ambiguities and the "oppositional structure" of the earlier text as "resolved" in *Red Dust* (132),[19] perhaps because Simpson rewrites the ending in a way which has the protagonist choosing to stay in Africa. Despite this altered ending, the critique of colonizing, as well as the sense of alienation, are still overt. I would suggest, therefore, that Simpson's startling revisiting of her original African material – to tell not another or a different story, but instead to tell essentially the same story, only differently – and her insistence in all her writing to rework the same critical years repeatedly (covering courtship, convent, early marriage, and emigration) make useful a reading of Simpson's texts which attends to signs of a more repressed script.

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[18] ("La distopia dell'Africa viene corretta in una narrazione che assume propriamente la forma di un romanzo [...].")
[19] (["La] struttura oppositiva del testo [ ] compare stemperata [...].")

The strategy for such a reading presents itself in the form of an approach based in feminist narratology and postulated by Susan Stanford Friedman in her essay "Spatialization, Narrative Theory, and Virginia Woolf's *The Voyage Out*" (1996).[20] Feminist narratology, in Robyn Warhol's concise definition, "is the study of narrative structures and strategies in the context of cultural constructions of gender" (21). It provides a means of exposing the impulses behind "ambiguous discourse or the indeterminacy of narrative" (Mezei 13). Friedman, for her part, takes the starting point for her framework from Kristeva's model of spatialization, which "allows for the visualization of the text-in-process, the text as a dynamic [...] 'operation'" (111). She adapts Kristeva's theorizing specifically for use as "an interpretive strategy," not as a typology (112). Spatialization constitutes the text as a "verbal surface or place," including both a horizontal and a vertical narrative axis (111). One can briefly summarize that the former refers to "textual space and time" and involves the sequence of events and character movements, which trigger a certain expectation of disclosure (and closure) in the reader (113-14). The more interesting, for my purposes, vertical axis involves the space and time of the writer and reader. It is not manifest on the level of sequential plot, but rather requires "reading 'down into' the text" (115). Friedman explains that the vertical narrative axis can be separated into three strands, namely literary, historical, and psychic. Analyzing the first two of these relies on intertextuality, or more specifically, on reading the horizontal narrative of the text along with other texts to determine their (literary and

[20] This essay is an expansion of Friedman's earlier study "Spatialization: A Strategy for Reading Narrative" (1993), which appeared in the journal *Narrative* and which consists of portions of the theoretical argument of the article cited above. I found Friedman's application of her model to Woolf's writing helpful, and my references are therefore exclusively to the expanded 1996 version.

historical) "resonance," a quality which is not found in the mind of the characters but "narrated" by the reader (115).

It is the psychic aspect of the vertical narrative that primarily interests me here, for it involves "recognizing that a text can be read as a linguistic entity structured like a psyche, with a conscious and an unconscious that interact psychodynamically." Friedman regards the text as analogous to a dream, in which the desire to reveal competes with the compunction to conceal, resulting in a "compromise that takes the form of disguised speech. The text, then, can be read as a site of repression and insistent return." A vertical reading strategy thus provides "some sort of access to the textual unconscious" (117).[21] Repeated returns to a particular story, for instance, might be increasingly self-censorious, or conversely, Friedman argues, they "can be read as a kind of repetition compulsion in which the earliest versions are the most disguised, with each repetition bringing the writer closer to the repressed content" (118-19). In Simpson's case, *The Land That Never Was*, the text which has been the almost exclusive focus of critical attention, is also the one which is most heavily disguised. Unlike in all her other works, the autobiographical protagonist is here called "Joan" rather than "Alyse" (or "Lyseli"). Any Swiss connection is completely suppressed, with the exception perhaps of one fleeting reference to schooling "abroad" in a school with German, French and Italian girls (36); "Joan" is represented as just another adventurous young British woman whose nostalgia for "home," accordingly, centres on Britain. There is no hint that the union of Joan and John (whose name remains the same in all books) has required an earlier relocation on the woman's part. Nor is there any hint of Joan having spent time in a convent (which would

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[21] Friedman also points out that spatialization is, of course, not the only approach to provide such access. It does, however, "facilitat[e] some new readings of narrative that might not otherwise exist" (128).

perhaps have been too unlikely for a character constructed as British), and neither are there any references to Joan's side of the family.[22] All these omissions are filled in in *Red Dust* but have not drawn any critical commentary. Friedman posits that a reiterative process of "working through" repressed material, something which also happens in psychoanalysis, applies especially to autobiographical writing, where it amounts to a "writing cure." She therefore suggests reading "[e]arlier or later versions of the horizontal narrative [...] together as a composite text," in which certain events, circumstances, and feelings are not narrated until later in the "series" (119). I find this advice particularly helpful for my exploration of Simpson's memoirs, because it offers an approach to "opening up" the limited, currently existing critical terrain, made up exclusively of analyses of Simpson's joint narratives of settlement and empire. Moreover, using Friedman's model of spatialization emphasizes that it is the reader and not the author who imposes an interpretive framework on the text. As a reading strategy the approach "discourages 'definitive' and bounded interpretations" in favour of "a notion of the text as a polyvocal and dynamic site of repression and return" (128); as such it holds out promise as a tool for studying Simpson's work.

In order to disentangle the thread that particularly interests me in Simpson's narrative – her insistence that colonizing weighs more heavily on women – I want to analyze three recurrent concerns of the narrator/protagonist in *The Land That Never Was* that relate specifically to this contention, and then pursue these "vertically" through *Red Dust of Kenya*. All three of these preoccupations – the question of individual freedom in Kenya, the question of the "gender" of the Kenyan terrain ("(white) man's country"), and

[22] Jane Marcus observes in the context of women's writing in and of exile: "[The woman writer] is already in exile by speaking *his* tongue, so further conditions of exile simply multiply the number of 'veils' and complicate the problem of exegesis" ("Alibis and Legends" 270; original italics).

the question of Kenya's suitability as a place for mothering – surface frequently and directly link issues of gender and place. As such, they not only shed light on the nature of Simpson's dissatisfaction and sense of alienation and displacement in the colony, but they also signal the very ground on which gender roles are defined.

The notion of freedom is of great significance in the first text. An unsigned and unidentified notice that precedes the narrative as such, presumably inserted by the original publisher, tersely stresses that the "heart-breaking" account of failed settlement to follow "is a record of fact, [...] a true record of first-hand experience," and equally curtly but prominently points to the single reason that drove the couple's decision to undertake such a risky and ultimately disillusioning venture: "lured by the idea of freedom and open spaces," the note reads, "[they] 'took the plunge'" (n.p.). The story itself poses a question mark from the outset as to the gender compatibility of Joan/Alyse's and John's definitions of freedom: "when John [speaks] romantically of freedom," Joan, "[w]oman-like," remembers "the need for courage and probably discomforts," a thought that immediately strikes her as "somehow [...] all wrong" (5). Yet initially for her, too, "woman's freedom and the African climate still seem to coincide" (Brazzelli, *Fools' Paradise* 73).[23] "Africa," Joan admits, "obsessed me. I wanted freedom; I wanted the sun" (*Land That Never* 10).

The fantasy of freedom for the pseudonymously named protagonist is quickly thwarted, however, by the discovery that the place is not in the least her domain of action. This discovery also reveals that the notion of freedom is closely tied to the reality of "home," a concept that is once more of great importance, for this traditionally female domestic space is not a refuge in *The Land That Never Was*. Instead, much as in Susanna Moodie's construction of home-as-house as inferior in the colony, the dwelling that awaits

[23] ("Libertà femminile e clima africano sembrano ancora coincidere.")

Joan at the end of her tiring journey by ox-wagon from "Nymba," the nearest town (another invented name), is "a dark brown mud house with a corrugated-iron roof – a poor sort of place, resembling a neglected barn" (68). Again as for Moodie, the disappointing building for Simpson, too, is emblematic of the discrepancy between expectations and reality, between her hopes and the actual experience. The house does not improve upon closer inspection, revealing itself as "a desolate sort of outpost" and as the embodiment of precisely the "discomforts" Joan had feared before leaving England, and which come to characterize her entire time in Kenya:

> The incredibly coarse grass which grew right up to the doorstep almost rattled in the breeze. The place was littered with tin cans and other empties which had obviously been got rid of by just being thrown out the door! Nearly all the window panes were broken; some of the gaps were filled with pieces of American cloth. There was no floor, no ceiling. The rafters above were festooned with cobwebs, and at my approach an enormous hairy spider fled into the darkness....Hornets flew in and out; some rotting animal-skins in the bedroom were alive with a strange species of brown, hairy maggots which crawled everywhere. A giant lizard fled up the wall, balancing on the rafters, to meet its mate aloft. (69, original ellipsis)[24]

Barely able to settle in for all the strange sensations (sudden and abrupt nightfall, the hum of a variety of insects, a cacophony of animal voices), the protagonist discovers further unpleasantries the next morning: "There were maggots crawling between my sheets, my face was swollen with mosquito-bites and a toad had hidden in my slipper" (71).

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[24] *The Land That Never Was* is riddled with ellipses, another feature of the text which merits further attention. As the omission or suppression of words that might clarify meaning, Simpson's interpolation of elliptical space may be a narrative principle that parallels her self-censoring.

I am quoting the Simpsons' arrival passage in some detail, not only because it illustrates Joan's unflinchingly negative assessment of the residence she finds in Kenya – an assessment that mirrors Susanna Moodie's equally disillusioned description of her first house in Upper Canada – but mainly because the dwelling is emblematic of the new home-as-homeland in relation to which pioneer women must redefine their identity. The nature of Simpson's residence, again like Moodie's, literalizes the instability, insecurity, lack of permanence, vulnerability to outside influence, and in this case, hidden terror, associated with the experience of exile. Primarily, the building does not mark out a properly enclosed space, a feature that hints at Joan's fears of being similarly overcome, of "being swallowed up by the landscape, [...] never to be heard of again" (*Red Dust* 201): the grass threatens to overgrow the shabby dwelling, most windows are broken, floor and ceiling are missing, and a variety of creatures vie for its possession, both with each other and with the young couple whose home it is meant to be. Furthermore, throughout the entire narrative the house never stops being invaded, as everything from deadly snakes to flesh-eating ants finds its way in. For the newly arrived Joan the dwelling "represents a provisional element incapable of offering stability and of distinguishing the civilized space from the wilderness" (Brazzelli, *Fools' Paradise* 77).[25] "Home" in Kenya is bewildering and poorly defined, discouraging attempts at self-location: "Never had a woman less sense of home than I had in this cabin," Simpson writes in *Red Dust* (180). Such a home lacks all the qualities expected in a safe "base" from which a young settler woman might gain the confidence to venture into the new environment, to build independence, and to seize the desired freedom.

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[25] ("[La] dimora rappresenta un elemento provvisorio, incapace di offrire stabilità e di distinguere lo spazio civilizzato dalla *wilderness*.") For a more extensive analysis of the representation of home and homelessness in *The Land That Never Was*, also see Brazzelli, *Fools' Paradise*, especially 72-84.

Nor does freedom from domestic chores – even the poorest white settlers could avail themselves of an abundance of cheap labour from the Africans, as Dane Kennedy notes – necessarily translate into "leisure and freedom from drudgery," as he also suggests ("Foreword" viii-ix). In Simpson's case, it left her with little occupation, making idleness itself a burden; she frequently complains about the monotony of her days and about having nothing to do: "I felt like a drone," she says, "bone-idle and useless" (159; also 102, 180, 184). While Anna Jameson in 1830s Toronto was able to combat her own inactivity by taking up German translation and studies, the differences between the two locations perhaps limit Joan's options; the extreme heat alone in Kenya, in a poorly insulated house, would have been quite incapacitating. Simpson's experience, as Kennedy more correctly also observes, is an indication that "the extended leisure available to Kenya's white women probably accentuated the psychological burdens of loneliness and boredom" (ix). In response to these, Simpson appears to have had little recourse to counteract her steadily declining morale and to keep her expectations from falling apart. She resorts to reading "the whole of the Bible at frequent intervals. There was, indeed, very little else to occupy my time. The days and weeks and months seemed like eternity. The Kenya of my dreams, the country of my fertile imagination, crashed to pieces" (153).

"Home" in the larger sense, beginning with the landscape immediately surrounding the farm house, is no more conducive to "freedom." For instance, as one might expect, the nearest neighbours are some distance away from the Simpsons, making it difficult to sustain interaction with other people. Unlike Karen Blixen, who by her own account found completion in her life with the Africans on her farm, Joan/Alyse longs for encounters with white people (104, 228). Also unlike Blixen, who even in her direst financial straits at

Ngong was never destitute in the way the Simpsons were, and who often had guests and entertained frequently (including the Prince of Wales in 1928),[26] the protagonist in *The Land That Never Was* is as unimpressed with her neighbours as with her house: "socially," she declares, following brief portraits of some of the nearby settlers, "our valley was, indeed, a washout" (74). Similarly, the settlers in a neighbouring valley "were known to be 'queer': given to strange habits, violent outbursts and unsociability" (146). This dismal scenario is only exacerbated by the fact that Joan and John's farm is located thirty miles away from the district town, Nymba, a near-insuperable distance when the only means of transportation, over a rough road, is an ox-cart. Consequently, for much of her six years in the valley, Joan is more or less trapped in a home she despises.

The primary reason for this entrapment, according to the narrator, is the nature of the surrounding terrain itself. Unlike the trio of European settler women associated with the popular image of Kenya – Karen Blixen, Beryl Markham, and Elspeth Huxley – who apparently revelled in riding, hunting, and the abundance and nearness of wildlife, Simpson is never without apprehension on the rare occasions when she ventures out. Put simply, she is afraid of the environment (and perhaps reasonably so). Whether "[w]alking carefully for fear of snakes through the waving dry grass" (150), being "frighten[ed] to death" by the "quantities of green snakes" which occasionally drop down from the eucalyptus trees in which the snakes live (159), whether stumbling upon the "sun-bleached skeleton of a donkey at the side of a path, and a human skull nearby" (232), or encountering a lion out for a ramble (85), "Joan has a sense of being overwhelmed by

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[26] See, for instance, Frans Lasson's introduction, "The Rain at Ngong," to Dinesen's collected African letters. Lasson explains that, wishing to include the most penetrating and important material, he had to leave out a sizeable amount of correspondence relating to "Karen Blixen's remarkably extrovert cultivation of social life during much of her life on the farm" (xxii).

everything, and she perceives a perennial hostility in everything that surrounds her" (Brazzelli, *Fools' Paradise* 79).[27] "There were places in Kenya," the narrator/protagonist notes, "that brooded evil and such a place was our valley" (*Land That Never* 191). Her perception that the environment is hostile – and she herself uses this very term repeatedly – is an indicator of its perceived unmanageability. It does not respond to her attempts to "tame" it, and her efforts, for instance, at cultivating a garden and raising poultry fail. Put differently, with regard to her new home Simpson suffers from a reduced sense of self-efficacy, a primary marker of locatedness and defined as the "belief in one's capabilities to meet situational demands. It is used as a measure of personal agency" (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell 208). Joan/Alyse is frightened into near-total inactivity, boredom, and a sense of being "in prison" by surroundings in which she has difficulty functioning at all (103). Rather than finding in Kenya a liberating ground of being, as she had imagined, Joan discovers that "[Africa] does not bring freedom and adventure because its territories are inhospitable and hostile" (Brazzelli, "In and Out" 92).

The precise "meaning of freedom" in the narrative, furthermore, as Gillian Whitlock observes in her reading of the text, "becomes an important issue" (*Intimate Empire* 121). When cousin Jim, on a visit from his secure overseer post in Nairobi, remarks about the "[n]ice life" on the farm – "So free," he finds it – Joan questions him on what he means: "Free for what?" (*Land That Never* 120). His reply sums up a "masculinist dream," in Whitlock's phrase (121), that a "chap can jolly well do as he likes here," freed from the obligation to dress, shave, and belong to the church or some other institution. Joan is unconvinced, insisting that she both likes dressing and misses it, and arguing that

[27] ("Joan ha l'impressione di essere del tutto sopraffatta, percepisce una sensazione di perenne ostilità in tutto quello che la circonda.")

in Kenya one spends more time than "at home" getting cleaned, because of the need to remove carefully fleas, ticks, and jiggers from one's body. "It doesn't seem free to me, Jim," she counters. "On the contrary, we are tied hand and foot here" (120). Yet if Simpson here allows feminine values to penetrate and undermine the masculine structures that contain them, this deconstruction of patriarchal discourse misses its counterweight by failing to offer a construction of female experience as something other than negative: as a general rule, even when Joan regards Kenya as a male "fools' paradise" (*Land That Never* 214), it is she who is on the outside of the masculine African world, and she who perceives herself as at odds with its dominant perspective.

Nevertheless, the exchange cited above marks a place in the text where the gender thread openly unravels from the settlement story told in *The Land That Never Was*. I have been tracing the narrative preoccupation with freedom in some detail, because the issue of freedom, of woman's freedom of action and choice – the freedom to act and choose on her own behalf and in her own interest, including the choice of whether and whom to marry – is arguably at the heart of all of Alyse Simpson's work. Her first memoir most effectively disguises this concern through a counter-discourse of empire, yet the "unadulterated sameness" and "tedium of life" that make "[t]ime seem[...] eternal" in Africa nevertheless leave little doubt about Joan's lack of freedom, which makes her feel that she is serving "a kind of penal servitude" (191, 196, 180, 83). John may also lose his freedom, as Whitlock suggests (*Intimate Empire* 121), yet it is Joan's imprisonment, associated directly with Kenya, that assigns a gendered passivity to her, and which comes to be seen as a limit on her as a person: returning from one of her "idle walks," for instance, Joan confides, "I honestly wished I were dead" (*Land That Never* 175).

Beginning with Joan's already-mentioned "woman-like" hesitation in response to John's "romantic" elaboration on the idea of going to Africa, the narrative constructs Kenya as a location of masculine experience, in which woman is placed in the position of passive and almost uninvolved "other." Joan is trapped not just in a physical geography but also inside tightly plotted gender roles; her insistent geopathology harbours within itself an equally insistent and insidious alienation from patriarchal value systems that is made more evident in Kenya. Her displacement is represented as expressly "female [...] otherness from [...] the African landscape" (Brazzelli, "In and Out" 94). One of John's reasons for wishing to emigrate there, for example, is his desire "to lead a man's life in future" and thereby to emulate his grandfather, who, as a village blacksmith, had had "a man's job" (11). The life Joan gloomily anticipates for her and John is a question of "*his* battle, *his* hopes, *his* future, [...] *his* Hell," with her own part in it one of passive association and, remarkably, almost an afterthought (13, italics added). Once in the Simba valley, a sharply drawn line divides the couple, with "John toiling" on one side and "[Joan] waiting" on the other (83). "There was always so much for John to fight against," the protagonist complains, "but to me time hung heavily" (180). Neither the work nor the hopes, apparently, are shared: it is John who is "in constant conflict with the elements" (118), and ultimately John whose "high hopes had not materialised" (256). Even in the "farcical episode" of the safari (Whitlock, *Intimate Empire* 121), the couple assume opposite roles: John has a "gleam" of adventurousness in his eyes as he and neighbour Bill prepare to track and shoot a lion, while Joan feels both "afraid" and nostalgic for England, preferring to "camp[...] by a Derbyshire moorland stream" (242-45). Cumulatively, these instances of acting out the traditional binary opposition of masculine and feminine values

add up to an image of Kenya as a man's world, as the proverbial "white man's country" in which woman is distinctly out of place. *The Land That Never Was* holds back – as the later *Red Dust of Kenya* does not – from having the narrator/protagonist herself make an explicit statement to this effect. Instead, another passenger aboard the ship to Africa voices an almost identical observation: "It's a man's life, my dear young lady," he tells Joan with regard to settlement in the colony. "There's not much you can do, you know, except look after your man" (14).

The narrative gendering of Kenya as masculine – which in turn, as I will shortly show, is tied to its construction as "hostile" – leads to the depiction of the terrain as sterile and barren, implying both deprived maleness and perhaps the worst form of female aberrance. Unlike Isak Dinesen's nurturing maternal ground of being, where the air itself had the quality of water (and thereby was evocative of the life-giving, nourishing amniotic fluid), Alyse Simpson's arid Simba valley is barely able to sustain life: its main feature and shortcoming is the absence of water. As Brazzelli observes, "Joan's attention lingers" on this fact (*Fools' Paradise* 108).[28] From the protagonist's first impressions, during the slow journey from Nymba to her new home, of the landscape as "barren" and "utterly dry," to her parting sentiment linked explicitly to the "drought" – "How much I had come to hate the Simba valley" – the absence of water determines the couple's fortunes (*Land That Never* 63, 258). More so, it informs Joan's response to life in Africa, which to her is precisely no life at all, for just as might be expected of "extreme" conditions without rain for a year and a half, "months and months of drought" with "dust ris[ing] high above the trees" reveal first and foremost "[h]ow lifeless the tropics really are" (104, 174).

[28] ("[L]'attenzione di Joan si sofferma [...] sull'assenza dell'acqua.")

The consequences of such un-generative lifelessness – and its attendant characteristics of infertility, sterility, and perversity – are apparent everywhere in the text. Initially, immediately following their arrival, the Simpsons learn that "any amount of irrigation could not counteract the scorching sun, which caked the surface of the soil. Unable to lift their heads, the necks of the [coffee] beans were scorched and withered. John and the boys scratched the ground like hens, trying to save the saplings, but few survived" (71). The incapacity of the land – resulting from its dry, barren nature – to nourish that which springs from it,[29] translates narratively into further and similar failures, namely failures of mothering that add up to Joan's "secret conviction that live things in Kenya invariably became a liability" (154): piglets are "frequently eaten by their mother" (88); little birds are abandoned by their mother, and when placed in another nest, are "cruelly" thrown out by the mother-bird (136-38); similarly, another settler woman's child dies in the next room while Joan attends a dance in Nymba (188-92); and a neighbour's still-birth is regarded as a blessing by Joan, based on the logic that the child would have had to face "a lonely, unhealthy existence" (216). In a sterile world, "maternal care [is] damned to futility" (Whitlock, *Intimate Empire* 122). Furthermore, maternity brings suffering and death upon the mother – as vividly illustrated in the case of the Simpsons' cow, who, "unable to feed her calf because of a diseased udder," has to be killed (159). All this makes motherhood a risky, undesirable, and fatally dangerous business. Accordingly, in *The Land That Never Was* "[d]ebased images of maternity and mothering accumulate" (Whitlock, *Intimate Empire* 122), conveying the inherent "brutality" of Africa and the Simpsons' particular environment (Brazzelli, "In and Out" 94).

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[29] Once the long awaited rains arrive, the over-supply of water is equally destructive (118), as Brazzelli also notes (*Fools' Paradise* 108). Both the absence and the destructive presence of water in Simpson's text negatively represent the maternal archetype, which associates water with the origins of all life.

Most disturbingly perhaps, Joan's own experience of motherhood – she learns that she is pregnant just as she and John get ready for their move to the farm – is similarly narrated in terms that associate it with bleakness and danger: thus, finding out about her pregnancy is "nothing less than a terrible blow" for Joan (44); the child, a daughter by the name of Marie, "did not seem to want to live at first" and later is a constant concern, "forever needing [Joan's] attention" (77, 96); exposed to the "unhealthy" environment of Kenya, Marie is successively attacked by flesh-eating ants, and stricken both with an eye infection and with dysentery (124, 95, 111). What is more, on her first outing with Marie, Joan not only encounters a prowling lion with her own cubs, but she also stumbles upon the dead body of a Kikuyu woman, who subsequently goes unmourned by her son (85-86). In the male-dominated, "degraded and perverted African world, motherhood, whether animal or human, assumes a negative meaning" (Brazzelli, *Fools' Paradise* 110).[30] The threatening terrain never offers an image of maternity as anything other than "a terrible blow" to the already limited self. Joan's negativity with regard to child-bearing and child-rearing may therefore also be indicative of the response of a woman who, trapped in an oppressive environment regulated by patriarchal forces, sees herself, as Helen Buss suggests (in general terms), as "a prisoner inside her own body, the prisoner on a reproductive road she does not choose" (*Mapping* 129). Joan's depression at the news of her pregnancy, for instance, may have to do with her realization that she does not even have power over her own physical self. What is more, Simpson's text enacts the strict "binary divisions of patriarchy" – beginning with the split between male and female – an "ideological separation" that invariably leads to "aggression against the less empowered

[30] ("Nel mondo africano degradato e perverso, la maternità, sia animale che umana, assume un significato negativo [...].")

term in each pairing" and thereby to the "impulse [...] toward violence against the mother" (Warhol 37-38). The "evil" and "hostile" nature of the environment is directly responsible for the mother's "Calvary," as Joan calls her suffering in connection with Marie's eye disease (*Land That Never* 111), a suffering which, the text suggests, is native to Kenya.

The gendering of place – along with other concerns that flow from it – is made more explicit in Simpson's second African memoir (a point to which I will shortly return). Part of my argument in this chapter is that reading Simpson's autobiographical volumes as a composite work reveals a gradual lifting of the textual layers of disguise. Accordingly, the protagonist in *Red Dust of Kenya* is no longer called "Joan" but rather "Alyse" (or "Lyseli") like her author, and she is now identified as a young woman originally from Switzerland. The narrative itself – except for its altered ending, which I will also discuss – bears little evidence, in my reading, of the "idealization of the African experience clearly tied to the mellowing of memories," which Brazzelli detects (*Fools' Paradise* 133).[31] The landscape here is still as "unbearably strange and lonely" and as "shabby and dead" as it was in the earlier volume (*Red Dust* 52, 60). Water is still a precious commodity in "this hot parched land," making the location "a bad place to grow things, a sterile place giving nothing in return" (52, 90). The Simpsons' home still barely merits the label "house" and is still described as "bleak" and "very insignificant and frail" (88, 52). "It seemed a terrible thing," Simpson writes about the farm, "that this was now the place where my daily bread was eventually to grow" (92). The couple are still beset by a multitude of disasters, from locust invasions to hens being snatched by mongoose and oxen dying "mysteriously" (279, 142, 93).

[31] ("L'idealizzazione dell'esperienza africana è legata evidentemente allo sfumare dei ricordi [...].")

Primarily, the link between place and gender is never abandoned, for this story, too, is plotted from the outset within distinctly and narrowly defined categories of male and female. The oppositional structure produces the Kenyan terrain as attractive to men but not to women (or at least not to the narrator/protagonist): Alyse informs us that, already upon entering the valley of the Saltlick, John "was happier than I, for he was now living with his whole self, whereas I was merely looking on, watching, dreaming, as any woman might" (1). Similarly, once they have arrived at their final destination, John, unlike Alyse, "did not find the vastness of the land, or even the size of the farm, oppressive" (91). Again she has little to do and therefore resorts to "a life of reading and writing letters" (188), while suffering from an ever-widening gap between herself and her environment (266). Simpson's protagonist may well have an "extraordinary love for her husband" (Brazzelli, *Fools' Paradise* 134),[32] yet identifying her marriage as a happy one is complicated by the equally extraordinary sense of misery (Joan)/Alyse continuously experiences. Among other things, the disconnect between Alyse and John is evidence that the definition of woman as "other" in patriarchy is insidiously inscribed, and re-inscribed again and again, in marriage. Alyse's inactivity epitomizes her difference from John (and the other men): she may refuse to accept their perceptions as the norm – the narrator's use of irony and parody implies such a refusal – but she nevertheless takes her husband as her "constant point of reference" (134).[33] The extent to which Kenya exacerbates this female form of displacement is brought into focus when one considers Alyse's psychological

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[32] ("[La protagonista deriva la forza con cui sopporta le difficili condizioni di vita] dallo straordinario amore per il marito".)

[33] ("Tutta la narrazione ruota attorno [alla figura del marito], il punto di riferimento costante per la narratrice.")
A small scene near the end of *The Land That Never Was* symbolically captures Simpson's loss of subjectivity (and evokes a similar scene in Susanna Moodie's *Roughing It in the Bush*): Joan has not brought a mirror of her own with her on safari and thus has to use "John's shaving-mirror." Furthermore, the reflection that looks back at her seems hardly like her because of appearing "already [...] years older" (243).

internalization of the effects on her of the masculine structures in the colony: one of the most distressing features of Simpson's text(s) is the protagonist's unrelieved passivity. She is never able to overcome the "victimage" of her role compounded by location, and she hardly ever undertakes anything on her own impulse. In addition, Joan/Alyse's negativity and inaction place the responsibility for colonizing precisely where she suggests it has traditionally been: in male hands.[34] At the same time, however, while Simpson is critical of life in Kenya as she finds it, it never seems to occur to her that her passive demeanour may well foreclose any possibility to assume a more involved and responsible role in shaping the place. Her account illustrates dramatically both the scarcity of options for women in patriarchal society and the psychological effects of this limitation.

Throughout the book, the instances proliferate in which Alyse's female experience of life diverges sharply from the male viewpoint she confronts: she enjoys herself "in other ways, different ways" than men (147); she finds "the world unsafe and unknowable," while the men are unworried (160); she is bored, on behalf of "most women," by the men's talk of shooting elephant (222); she does not know what to say when John speaks of his plans for the farm, because a "woman [feels] so very differently" (238). The foregrounding in *Red Dust* of this narrative thread – equivalent to the shedding of a layer of disguise compared to *The Land That Never Was* – is that Kenya is now explicitly identified by the protagonist herself as a man's country: Alyse's extreme and consistent sense of displacement centres on the complaint that Kenya "was a male world, that was the trouble" (177). This notion is voiced repeatedly (199, 212), as though the narrator is no longer satisfied to transmit the message just implicitly through her

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[34] Note the complete contrast to someone like Catharine Parr Traill, who stresses the centrality of the wife/mother in the organization of colonial life (and whose writing affirms colonialism).

compilation of gendered differences of experience. Alyse's geopathology bespeaks her struggle to locate herself in Kenya's male world, where even failed male settlers are more "at home" (my term) than she is, and where husbands are "impervious" to a woman's depression and despair (231).

In the context of grappling with the specific character of this male world, the narrator/protagonist offers a startling image: being there, she reflects one day while on safari, "was like being back in the Garden of Eden; it was not a place for women" (220). In a spatialized reading that considers the literary intertextuality of the vertical axis (and I will shortly consider its psychic aspect as well), the statement is rich with resonance: it draws on a Miltonic interpretation of the book of Genesis, in which Eve is already "other" and already subordinate to Adam, who is the Father's, as well as Milton's, favourite. Milton's inscription in *Paradise Lost* (his version of the central cultural myth of Western literary tradition) of woman as secondary reverberates through the centuries, and it is not by accident that Virginia Woolf calls Milton "the first of the masculinists" (*A Writer's Diary* 6). The Miltonic echo in Alyse's statement suggests not only that the patriarchal order in Kenya is made more oppressive because the order offered by the natural world is equally patriarchal, but mainly that this is the "original" state of things. Consequently, the world of Kenya is "terrifying" and "very upsetting to mere woman, as the Garden of Eden must have been" (*Red Dust* 140). The implication of this, for women, discouraging perspective is that the sort of rigid binary division that Simpson's texts reproduce is fixed: an oppressive order that is socially constructed can be undone (at least in theory), but an oppressive order that has "always already" existed, can presumably never be dissolved. Unlike, again, Dinesen's idealized and sheltering Eden, which was the kind of space in

which woman could be both nurtured child and generative tree,[35] Kenya for Simpson is never a maternal garden of refuge, but always already the garden regulated by the Father's law, and therefore a tough place for Eve.

In a world of eternal patriarchal structure, the only countermeasure that allows women to free themselves from their subordinate and victimized state of being is to "become" (like) men, that is to re-gender themselves male. In *Red Dust* this move begins with the erasure of the differences between male and female desire, which would otherwise maintain experience in strictly opposite categories: "I wished," recalls Alyse about her sense of inadequacy, "I had been brought up to ride and wield a gun and bring a guinea fowl or some other strange and unknown bird home with a swaggering shot to the horizon, instead of being taught to speak in five languages and do tapestries" (91-92). If the image of the woman hunter faintly evokes associations with the powerful – and masculinized – archetypal figure of Diana, there is nothing at all in Simpson's texts to suggest the affinity with untamed nature conventionally associated with the goddess of the hunt.[36] Instead, the gesture smacks of repressed anger and aggression, displaced onto the innocent animals to deprive them of the one thing they have that the protagonist wants: the freedom of flight.[37] In the male world of Kenya, Alyse is increasingly dissatisfied with her own identity. "What a tame creature I really was," she mourns, "what domesticity in my soul. Why did I not take a rifle too and gain the men's admiration?" (95). Late in the

[35] See my previous chapter.
[36] Unlike, perhaps, Isak Dinesen's Diana-like epigraph to *Out of Africa*: "*Equitare, arcum tendere, veritatem dicere.*"
[37] Ellen Moers makes the fascinating observation, in her 1976 study *Literary Women*, that the bird motif recurs frequently in women's writing. Based on her evidence she posits that the more feminist the writing, the more powerful the bird(s) depicted, as well as the converse (245-46). Simpson's wish to shoot birds, born out of frustration with her sense of self, thus may have further meaning of the kind postulated by Moers. In this context, a later scene in *Red Dust* is also interesting. Simpson writes: "A vulture, its wings white against the sky, suddenly roused great envy in my heart; he needed no boat to take him where he wanted to be. / 'Look, John, that vulture,' I said pointing skywards. / 'Would make a good shot,' he said" (238).

narrative when the "lifeless Saltlick" has long been established as the overwhelming "dead center of a terrifying silence," Alyse "wish[es] that I were a man" in order to take charge of her own destiny (264-65). Finally, at the very end of the story, when the locusts arrive to destroy the first good crop, the protagonist tells herself, "I must bear myself like a man" (281). The desire to join the male world of action arises from the frustration of having limited scope of action as a woman.

Such "manliness" for a woman, however, comes at a cost, and that cost is particularly great for the female who is also a mother. A vertical reading of the two texts traces a link between Alyse's implicit rejection of the maternal role as incompatible with the sterile environment through negative images of motherhood in *The Land That Never Was* and an escalated, or less disguised, rendition of the same concern in *Red Dust*. The rejection on the part of a woman writer of what Simpson, in another text, calls "the perfectly useless martyrdom of mothers" (*The Convent* 11), articulates a refusal, as Marianne Hirsch argues in her study of maternal repression, *The Mother/Daughter Plot* (1989), to "'consent to femininity,' to perpetuate a system of transmission in which women gain nothing" (85). It represents, therefore, a covert refusal to participate in patriarchal structures that limit women and, through the dangers of the reproductive cycle, often condemn them to suffering and death. Motherhood begins, in Simpson's second memoir, as "a tremendous invasion of personal liberty" – a representation that also clarifies Simpson's gendered definition of "freedom" – as a state which, moreover, leaves woman vulnerable to further assaults (*Red Dust* 133), for the always-already male terrain of Kenya holds out the frightening spectre of violated femininity and maternity. The escalation of this narrative thread is illustrated in the sad story of "poor, lonely" Bibi, the

cow, who had warranted just a brief reference in the first book and had remained nameless. In *Red Dust*, the narrator/protagonist repeatedly identifies explicitly with the animal: "Dear Bibi, like her I felt much alone, and like her I did not really like the Saltlick" (60). Bibi, we are told, "was like [Alyse]," because "she had not much competence for this kind of life either" (130). When Bibi's calf is born, "among a crowd of Kikuyus standing in the blood-stained mud jabbering and gesticulating," the cow is unable to bring forth her milk because of "deformed teats." Crying "pitifully" and "so tiny and shaken with chills," she is destined to die "in agony with the Kikuyus' curses in her ears." After John has shot her, the natives "feast on the flesh of Bibi and [...] have a dance." They joke while they prepare the fire for roasting the carcass. The entire event devolves into a nightmarish scene – for Alyse, not for the participants – of near-naked dancing, shrill voices, undulating bodies and sexual activity, which goes on for hours and ends "in some orgy or another" (135-36). Simpson's narration here starkly frames motherhood and Kenya as antithetical, with the "tiny" mother in a position of terrified powerlessness, subject to brutal male forces which ultimately, literally, devour her.

For the protagonist, the attempt to re-gender herself in order to evade the danger of "being swallowed up," like Bibi, by this male world results in a confused form of "double-voiced discourse," in Elaine Showalter's terminology (201), a duplicity that is evidence of the woman's desire to participate in the male realm of power. It emphasizes the challenges to female self-location – the difficulty, in other words, to feel "at home" – in (white) man's country, such as in the following scene, in which Alyse looks on as the men skin a leopard they have just shot:

> Feeling slightly sick, I decided I simply must fit myself to a wilderness life and, unlike the average run of women, I would be as callous as a shark or a crocodile. I went to view the carcass, prodding it here and there to the surprise of John, noting its muscles still twitching, noting its swollen belly, thinking of its cubs unborn. I swallowed a tendency to pity and vowed henceforth to mate with the wilderness, to help these men to tame it and to adopt their optimism and their strange improvidence – these lovable men who sometimes seemed to me so eccentric, if not definitely mentally deficient. (96)

As the erratic positional shifts in this passage suggest, Simpson's writing here strains both to place her protagonist within a male-dominated system and to distance her from it. To avoid being "consumed" by the masculine environment, she herself has to "mate" with it and "swallow" her femininity. The effort to fit in is thus partly physical, as well as alien and unnatural; in consequence, it makes her, again literally, sick. Another similar scene illustrates that it is not just white settlers who pose a threat to the feminine/maternal: Simpson writes that Odero, the native cook, "suddenly [...] sighted a gazelle and shot her in a flash, ran up and sucked the milk from her udder. This made me feel slightly sick. I wanted to dissociate myself from this male world, but watched nevertheless fascinated" (99). Even as the male world of Kenya is repellent to her, the protagonist feels that she has little choice but to adapt to it, because woman has been subordinate to male power from the beginning. The protagonist's alienation in Africa may be regarded as stemming from this prior dislocation.

A spatialized reading strategy, which draws a vertical axis "downward" from Simpson's less specific and less elaborated articulation of unease and displacement in *The*

Land That Never Was, constitutes events such as those described above as the result of a textual process "that refers autobiographically back" to the writer herself, "without being her equivalent" (Friedman, "Spatialization" 126). It draws attention to the psychodynamic, interactive nature of the process of narrative construction by situating the grounds, as it were, for Alyse's "always-already" displacement outside of Kenya in influences and experiences that occurred before – or "below," on a vertical axis – the timeline that concerns Africa. Put differently, the vertical axis itself initiates a story that is dialogically "'told' by the reader in collusion with a writer who inscribes [it] in the text consciously or unconsciously" (128). This "hidden" story, dominant in much women's writing, is "of the woman's quest for self-definition" (Gilbert and Gubar 76). In Alyse Simpson's texts, despite their autobiographical nature, it is not as readily accessible through horizontal reading alone, because the repressed content in the first book includes the figure around which the composite story revolves. As a result, *The Land That Never Was* narrates a type of displacement that functions as a disguise. The hidden story, instead, links Simpson's repeated versions of alienation in Kenya with her increasingly graphic rejection of maternity, with her perception of women's "original" state of exile, and with her gender-crossing search for self-identity. At the base of the line thus drawn "down through" the separate volumes of autobiography I find the figure of the narrator/protagonist's own mother.

The appearance of this figure in *Red Dust* comes in connection with Simpson's decision to reveal her Swiss upbringing and thereby to shed a layer of disguise. Her choice, however, to supply the account of Alyse and John's meeting and courtship in an extended separate plotline, interwoven with the settlement story, is initially surprising,

especially since this separate story is concerned less with the young couple themselves than with Alyse's family, particularly her mother. Simpson's "Mamma," as the reader quickly discovers, is both a powerful and a complex figure. Beautiful, talented, and strong-willed, she determines the course of action in Alyse's house: "Papa was soft. It was poor Mamma who had to make most decisions and it made her look more and more severe" (11). As a cross between the mother who wields the father's power and a seductive and utterly feminine 'femme fatale,' she is intimidating to Alyse but also an object of envy: "It was puzzling to know why she, who was well over forty, should be [...] clad in silks and cornflower hat and I, who was young, was obliged to wear hand-knitted stockings and crocheted underclothes" (14). It is not just her beauty that makes "Mamma" unusual, and unmotherly, in her daughter's eyes; she also has a long list of hobbies that she pursues independently, and she dares to go on holiday by herself.

Yet despite her streak of independence and her innate strength, the mother has internalized gender expectations for women, and her views on women's roles and on the question of marriage are issues of great contention for the daughter. Instances in the text when the mother is both the central point of reference and the primary object of dis-identification for Alyse abound. Alyse's subjectivity is shaped by her mother's notions, even as she struggles against them. She bemoans her education, for instance, anticipating her later difficulties in Kenya: "The trouble was Mamma had brought me up, without meaning to, however, to like books and drama, to play the piano and do embroidery. Frivolous occupations, making for idleness and no asset to any man" (29). When Alyse first meets John, she tells him, "'I shall never marry,' [...], thinking of Mamma and how she thought that marriage was all a woman was made for" (36). Similarly, Alyse reflects

about her mother, "What a matriarch she really was! [...] How she believed in early betrothals and how she was afraid of 'romantic' ideas. Mamma was a little tedious sometimes" (44). Alyse is torn between admiration and dislike: "I usually stared at Mamma thinking what a fine woman she was, a queen in her own right, a warrior. She made me feel small and feeble" (47). Once Alyse's courtship gets underway, her desire for autonomy quickly tends in one direction: "Abruptly I did not wish to live with Mamma any more, but to have a home of my own where I could be myself" (66). Similarly, the tale of a saint's superhuman escape from his enemies gives rise to the thought, "It was a pity I could not escape Mamma like that" (72-73). As well, we are told, "Mamma had a smouldering hatred for the equator" (83), and one suspects that this circumstance alone represents an incentive for Alyse to follow John there. The narrative leaves little doubt about the mother's disapproval of John and her favouring of a local Swiss man, Marti, for Alyse's husband. Simpson regards her search for self-definition as limited, therefore, not just by the patriarchal world she inhabits, but also by the socialization she has undergone. The mother, who has herself succumbed to convention and to a male-dominated system, becomes "the primary negative model[...] for the daughter" (Hirsch 11). She delimits the daughter's imaginings of her own future roles as those of wife and mother. Despite Alyse's attempt at distancing, once in remote Kenya she demonstrates the extent to which she has internalized her mother's ideas by articulating as her own belief the most extreme patriarchal image of femininity: where she comes from, she declares, woman is "a saint and a seductress all in one" (251).

Not despite but because of this very reproduction of conventional notions of womanhood, Alyse finds little common ground (both literally and figuratively) between

herself and other women in Kenya, especially women older than herself. This difficulty, which again illustrates the problem of female self-location in a male world, suggests that Simpson's critique of colonizing disguises a larger sense of displacement and a larger narrative of mother-daughter relations. Instead of taking comfort from female friendship, the protagonist acts out the contention that a daughter's desire for autonomous self-identity is "based on a disidentification from the fate of other women, especially mothers" (Hirsch 10).[38] Thus, while one of the strongest points both memoirs make is that men's and women's lives in Kenya are utterly separate, women who are represented as active and independent are not held up as examples. In *The Land That Never Was* "an old Scotch woman," for instance, "who lived by herself several miles away," is vilified by the narrator for being unfeminine: "Her yellow, wrinkled face, hard and cold, was like a man's. She dressed like a man; rode, hunted and swore like a man" (73). Despite Alyse's own attempts at becoming more "manly," the masculinized woman farmer is not a role model in *Red Dust* either. An intertextual, vertical reading of the encounter in both books reveals a narrative of repetition that provides access to Simpson's "working through" what I speculate is an initially repressed relationship with the mother (transposed to a potential mother figure). Her handling of the material in the second memoir shows a fascinating mix of emotions regarding the other woman: scorn, envy, fear, ridicule, acknowledgment of an alternative type of femininity, and finally retreat into the internalized position of "woman" that was transmitted to her by her Mamma. The neighbour, we read, "was quite elderly, armed with will power." She is dressed like a man, runs her own farm – one that is "finer" than the Simpsons' – and advises her young neighbour to learn to shoot. "Lion-

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[38] In all fairness, Alyse does make friends with Ann, a neighbour, but Ann leaves to go back to England and is never heard from again.

hunting was evidently her kind of dope," Alyse comments disparagingly. Furthermore, the narrator thinks she perceives "contempt" behind this "unknowable woman," yet she also grants that the neighbour "owned the earth and left her mark on it." In short, "[s]he was the kind of woman to be an asset to any man here." Simpson's struggle with questions of female identity informs Alyse's asking John (after the neighbour has left) "to teach me to shoot. He turned quickly on his heel and said gently but firmly that he did not want that kind of woman. I felt absurdly pleased" (174-78, 200-201).

The second scene has undergone significant expansion and revision: the narrator is now prepared to allow that a less "feminine" woman, a woman who has freed herself from some gender expectations, might find the African terrain stimulating. In a comment that perhaps cuts close to the bone she even suggests that "this was the kind of woman [John] should have married" (175). What is more, despite the neighbour's lack of beauty, her independence and strength make her sound eerily like the protagonist's own mother. Viewed intertextually, the apparent digressions and interpolated stories of "Mamma" are part of a larger narrative process through which Simpson works to arrive at a better understanding of the position of woman in patriarchy. Yet the text's probing of alternatives to conventional femininity turns into a re-authorization of limiting values and behaviours. The daughter-writer's dialogue with the absent mother, and her gradual movement towards comprehension of her own sense of radical displacement are cut short because of her ultimate inability to free herself from what she perceives to be the norms that were handed down by the mother and that are part of her matrimony.[39] Simpson's texts, in other words, are evidence of her struggle with the maternal "pre-text," in Bella

[39] Simpson's ambivalence in this respect does not appear to be unusual: many women's texts provide evidence that "the majority of women in patriarchal society [...] 'despise womanhood'" (Mills et al. 22).

Brodzki's terminology: as they disguise, veil, and withhold forms of displacement, as well as reject, resist, and endorse definitions of subjectivity, "the mother in each text hovers from within and without." More so, these narratives are "generated out of a compelling need to enter into discourse with the absent or distant mother" (245-46).

In order to illustrate both Simpson's engagement with the pre-text and the usefulness of vertical reading in connection with it, I want to consider two scenes in which the narrator/protagonist's dialogue with the mother informs her perceptions of Kenya. The aim of such a reading is to unravel the repressed story, or, as Friedman explains, to "produce another narrative that is not fully present in either of the texts read alone" ("Spatialization" 128). In the first scene, in *The Land That Never Was*, the Simpsons are on safari, walking through an area with rocks and short grass. "The only wild flower I saw for years," the narrator observes abruptly, "was a flowering red cactus which John discovered after four hours' trek. It bloomed alone, as though it had strayed from another country" (230-31). In *Red Dust of Kenya*, the two-sentence passage has been expanded into a substantial paragraph. The setting is still a safari, and the terrain is still rocky, but Alyse is now alone and she imagines the area to be of the kind "locusts laid their eggs in." It is she now who discovers the cactus, "and I stared at it for a long time," she writes, "for it reminded me of Mamma who had a cactus just like that on the kitchen windowsill." She never understood, she says, why her mother had bought the plant, "as it was [...] odd to see a cactus in Switzerland." Her mother had patiently "waited for the hideous thing to flower, but it had never done so, yet here, out of this inferno, the plant had produced one harsh and spear-shaped purple blossom which I was afraid to touch, thinking that it might open its petals and bite me" (104). Aside from the expansion, the scene has undergone

both displacement and revision that alter its meaning. In the first book, finding the vital red bloom is not an obviously unpleasant experience for the protagonist, even if it causes stirrings of nostalgia, because the cactus, like herself, seems to be a transplant from another place. Any emotional impact is hidden because of the casual and accidental nature of the discovery of the plant, and because that discovery, furthermore, is transferred to John. In the second passage, by contrast, everything about the cactus seems toxic, beginning with the soil where it grows, which breeds a form of pestilence. The flower itself is constructed as dangerous, through its nightshade colour as well as through its shape. Reading both scenes relationally produces a new "story" in which the apparently simple notion of displacement in Kenya is expanded into a complex concern consisting of the daughter's longing for the absent mother (suggested in the sustained stare), her sense of failed maternal nurture (contained in the mother's attention to something other than the child), and her anger at the mother's misplaced affection (articulated through the "oddness" of the cactus in Switzerland).[40] The new story told in this kind of reading is of the daughter's initial self-censorship of her unsatisfactory relations with the powerful and intimidating mother, and of her projection of this unsatisfactoriness onto the terrain of Kenya.[41] Kenya is rendered as something other than maternal ground – much as Alyse's

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[40] The complexity of Alyse's feelings toward her mother is also suggested in another, complementary scene, in which she goes to look at the single geranium she has been able to grow from seeds sent to her from home. "I wanted my geranium," she writes, in charged phrasing. "'What are you doing here?' I asked of the little flower, 'so brave in this lonely place and so very far from Mamma's garden in the hills!'" (*Red Dust* 236). The geranium is emblematic of remembered familiarity and the attempt to transplant it to the "wilderness" of Africa. At the same time, Alyse identifies with the flower (another exile) and voices through it her longing for reconnection with the mother.

[41] Elaine Showalter likewise argues, "We must keep two alternative oscillating texts simultaneously in view"; as the "orthodox plot recedes, [...] another plot, hitherto submerged in the anonymity of the background, stands out in bold relief" (435). Also see Gilbert and Gubar on the idea of women's "palimpsestic" texts whose "surface designs conceal or obscure deeper, less accessible (and less socially acceptable) levels of meaning" (*Madwoman* 73).

mother is not motherly either – as a cross between perverted femininity, capable at best of generating freakish plants (and animals), and sterile masculinity.

The image of maternal terror is further crystallized by vertical reading deeper into the composite text, specifically to Simpson's next volume of autobiography, *I Threw a Rose Into the Sea,* which expands the interpolated story of *Red Dust of Africa.* In particular, it elaborates on Simpson's time in a Catholic convent, an occurrence only hinted at in the African books. While space here does not permit an extended analysis of *Rose*, I want to cite a few brief passages to draw attention to Simpson's increasingly less self-censorious (and increasingly more hostile) engagement with her mother. Even the book's otherwise friendly contemporary reviewer in *The New York Times* comments on the "vitriol" with which the mother's portrait is etched (Fremantle BR28): "I never thought of Mama [now spelled with one "m"] as my mother," Simpson writes for instance, "but as a glamorous figure, rather remote and incredibly gifted" (39). "I wanted very much to be a clever girl and do something important in life and highly praiseworthy, but with Mama about I never had a chance to shine" (35). "For most women," Alyse is told by her mother, "marriage was the only thing, for me especially, as I had no great gifts" (47). Mama, looking pretty and pursuing one "accomplishment" or another, "spoils" things for Alyse, provoking wildly ambivalent emotions in the daughter: "even though I loved her I hated her as well" (60, 221). While Simpson repeatedly returns to the scene of her life in Kenya, a vertical reading also reveals that she returns more insistently to the scene of life with "Mama" and to her mother's influence during the crucial formative years leading up to the daughter's courtship and marriage.

This insistence suggests to me repressed emotions, anger, mainly towards the mother for not offering alternate models of female subjectivity, because the problematic on which this mother-daughter discourse hinges always turns on the role of women:

> I wanted to be myself, to be one among many for a while and no longer under Mama's wings. But what was a girl to do? This was a male country, as Mama often said. No woman was really allowed to reach top rank in the professions, or even in business. Men were the bosses here. Hence, Mama said, a woman's business was marriage, marriage at all costs. (101)

The clear message here is that women in patriarchal society have few options, and that the mother – in collusion with patriarchy – defines the boundaries of those for the daughter. It is not just Kenya that is a man's country, as a reading of Simpson's African memoirs alone might suggest, but every country, in patriarchy, is "a male country" in which a woman perennially struggles to find her place.[42] For Alyse, however, a "miracle" happens shortly after the scene quoted above, as she watches a church performance in which "the Mother of God was borne bodily up to Heaven by four sturdy angels." She decides to dedicate herself to a "journey within" by joining a convent, rather than to a quest for a husband, a decision which causes Mama to be "alternatively hostile, sarcastic and laconic" (103-105). Women's displacement, then, as the passage highlights, and as the larger thrust of Simpson's writing demonstrates, is not limited to Kenya. Instead, the mother's advice reinforces the existing male-dominated structures which enclose woman within a limited range of action and place her as "other." Alyse's withdrawal into the convent is an act of

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[42] Precisely for this reason Shari Benstock observes that "expatriation" and "exile" have different meanings for women than for men, because "[f]or women, the definition of patriarchy already assumes the reality of expatriate *in patria*." Benstock goes on to argue that expatriation proved to be a liberating experience for some women writers, because it released them from the gendered expectations of family and home(land) ("Expatriate" 20, 21-25; original italics).

rebellion[43] and a gesture that is essentially self-preservatory. It is an attempt to escape from the trap of sex roles – wife, lover, mother – that is endorsed both by men and by mothers. In a male world, withdrawal into a female realm shows the difficulty for women to maintain their feminine "integrity": if there are no options for women, what else can a woman do who does not marry? Ultimately, however, Alyse finds the convent, too, restrictive, and she goes back to her parent's house from where she re-establishes her relationship with John.

Similarly, the ending of *Red Dust* shows that for her there is no escape from ideological scripts of female destiny. To summarize the conclusion briefly: in contrast to the earlier memoir, in which the protagonist leaves Kenya together with her husband and daughter after the farm fails, in *Red Dust* John is set to stay behind as Alyse prepares to leave for a visit to Switzerland with their daughter. Her uncle Max and her former suitor, Marti, have arrived unannounced in the Saltlick some days before. She is uncertain whether she herself will return there. Yet just as the car begins to pull away, locusts descend and devour John's first respectable harvest. Summoning her "manly" spirit, Alyse realizes she must stay. This complete alteration in the narrative closure affirms Simpson's own internalization of patriarchal authority in the sense that "narrative-as-expected" is associated with "gender-as-mandated" (DuPlessis 187). I am not suggesting, of course,

[43] The act of narration is of course another form of rebellion, in Simpson's case both against the mother and the patriarchal system with which the mother is complicit. The text is an attempt by the narrator to "get her own back," to try to overcome, as it were, the elliptical in male-dominated narrative. Comprehending the meaning and value of the (physical) world in Simpson's African memoirs is a distinctly feminine capacity; the men, by contrast, consistently misread the land's signs. Simpson's narrator, through her filtering, or exclusion, of the male voice, combined with her near-constant condemnation of the male viewpoint, sets herself up as the subject who reads/reports on just this patriarchal value system. Narration thereby becomes an empowering, subversive act: Simpson's texts gender this power as specifically feminine. On narrativity in *The Land That Never Was* see Brazzelli, *Fools' Paradise*, particularly 84, and 88-89. Furthermore, Simpson's own dark and challenging storytelling directly counters her mother's conventional one: Mama's poetry, for instance, Alyse says in *I Threw a Rose Into the Sea*, "was always published somewhere or another because it was of the popular kind and did not tax the reader" (131).

that Alyse should leave John to struggle on by himself, but rather that the need to rewrite the ending in this gender-specific way is a result of the psychological effects of patriarchal hierarchies – hierarchies which Simpson's texts reproduce again and again. Furthermore, considered intertextually, the altered ending reframes the nature of Alyse's displacement entirely as gendered: it implies retrospectively for the narratives of both books that the protagonist's problem of stalled self-fulfillment never centred on the question of place (Kenya or elsewhere) but always on the choice of husband (John or Marti). The resolution lies in her making a deliberate choice, for the second time, for John.

The settlement experience, in Simpson's African memoirs, functions as the arena for her examination of the patriarchal social order. Using a vertical reading strategy I have traced what I see as Simpson's coded critique not only of colonizing but of the larger value systems which sustained not only colonialism but also women's lack of freedom. Simpson narrates a woman's struggle to find "her place" – a home, in a profound psychological sense – in a man's world. Yet Simpson's challenge to the authority of male-dominated systems is incomplete, because her critique turns into an enactment of the very structures that prescribe conventional models of womanhood and inhibit alternative choices. In examining the cultural production of femininity, Simpson focuses on perhaps the primary role assigned to woman in patriarchal society: the mother. That this production involves a power struggle is affirmed by the many scenes, in both books, of suffering and violated maternity, by the acts of maternal resistance to the male order, and finally also by the ambivalent mother-daughter discourse that shapes the narrating "I."

Epilogue

Legacies

In 2005 the Harrison Hill Players, a community theatre company on Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia, staged repeat performances of *Lucifer's Child,* William Luce's one-woman play based on Karen Blixen's reminiscences of her life in Kenya. Performances took place during the winter, when local residents made up the audience, as well as during the summer months, when tourists could be expected to attend. A final performance was staged in the autumn. The Harrison Hill Players' interpretation was well received, both in two local newspaper reviews and by the viewing public. The play, despite being "a very sophisticated effort" for a rural area in which entertainment "usually [...] takes the form of comedy skits written by local people," nevertheless "was loved by everyone who saw it." One woman in the audience told Diana McKinnon, the actress who played the role of Isak Dinesen, after the performance, "My knees are still shaking, I'm going to find every one of her books" ("Lucifer's Child: 2005 success").

Lucifer's Child is an enormously engaging creative projection for the theatre of the character "Isak Dinesen," which was developed and first performed at Duke University, from where it went to Boston and, in April of 1991, to its Broadway premiere. While the play is written by Luce, its genesis lies in a male-female partnership that might have satisfied Dinesen's desire for the unity of opposites: actress Julie Harris, who performed the title role in the Broadway production (and who received a Tony award nomination for it), also conceived of the idea for the play, visited both Blixen's former farm at Ngong in Kenya and the family estate at Rungstedlund in Denmark (now the Blixen archives), and obtained the rights to produce the play (*Lucifer's* iii).

Set in late 1958 and in the spring of 1959, respectively, the play features Dinesen just before and immediately after the journey she undertook to New York and Boston, on which she mesmerized audiences despite her failing health. Making use of Dinesen's own words, primarily from her African memoirs and her correspondence (including her later letters from Denmark), Luce and Harris create a Karen Blixen/Isak Dinesen for whom, even near the end of her life, "only Africa is real" (59). In the play (as perhaps also in real life), this "Lucifer's Child," who traded her soul for the gift of storytelling, has come to understand, however, that "all sorrows can be borne, if you put them into a story" (viii, 52). The play's inspired appropriation of Dinesen's intensely-lived experience in Kenya and equally inspired and diligently researched realization of her self-construction offer perhaps some explanation why a small community theatre group and audiences in a rural part of Atlantic Canada might "connect" with an eccentric Danish woman, now long dead.

Yet at the same time, one might well wonder at the enduring fascination held not just by Isak Dinesen but by all the women authors in my study, for Dinesen is far from the only one among them who has been creatively re-imagined by later writers and artists. Dramatic figurations are (unsurprisingly) common, bearing out the dramatic quality of autobiography itself. Accordingly, *Lucifer's Child* and the 1985 motion picture *Out of Africa*, based, as mentioned earlier, partly on Dinesen's African memoirs, sit alongside re-enactments[1] of some of the other writers: Susanna Moodie has been dramatized, for instance, in *Daughter by Adoption* (1981), a play by Beth Hopkins and Anna Joyce, which

[1] Dinesen also serves as a model for female creativity in other ways: Italian writer Kuki Gallmann re-lives, at tragic personal cost, Dinesen's story of belonging in Kenya, recording her experience in her own autobiographical writings *I Dreamed of Africa* (1991) and *African Nights* (2000). Like Dinesen, Gallman farms, and she tragically loses both her husband and her seventeen-year old son in accidents. In her case as well, Kenya figures as original matrix. Her intimate involvement with the land – "That tree is my friend, we are sisters" (*I Dreamed* xvii) – reaches its logical personal and political conclusion in Gallmann's efforts as a conservationist during the past twenty years.

makes use of *Roughing It in the Bush* and *Life in the Clearings*, as well as of Moodie's correspondence.[2] The play structurally resembles *Lucifer's Child* in the sense that the Moodie character, like "Dinesen," acts out the roles of other characters who appear in Moodie's original writing. Similarly, Rodney Wetherell's *Ada Cambridge* (2004) relies on Ada's own words, both from *Thirty Years* and from her many novels, to recreate a feisty woman who was not afraid to walk her own path.[3] Anna Jameson has also been the subject of a dramatic projection: she features in Part One of Pepita Ferrari's *The Petticoat Expeditions*, a 1997 National Film Board of Canada series about the contributions of women to early Canadian history. The episode about Jameson is based on *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles* and highlights the adventurous nature of travel at the time, as well as Jameson's determination and intellectual curiosity and her desire to get to know members of the native Indian population. All of these revisionings – and my list does not strive to be complete – portray the women considered as highly individualistic, independent-minded and strong-willed, qualities which emerge also from their texts.

In Canada, the fame of Susanna Moodie, in particular, has received great impetus from "a series of creative projections of her character" by poets, dramatists, and novelists (Hammill 67). Foremost among these contemporary writers is perhaps Margaret Atwood, who, in her poetry collection *The Journals of Susanna Moodie* (1970), read against Moodie's own texts to foreground the silences and gaps she perceived in them. "Mrs Moodie is divided down the middle," Atwood famously declared (62), a reconstruction so

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[2] Susanna is also the subject of a television and video production entitled *The Enduring Enigma of Susanna Moodie* (1997) and she also shares the stage, as it were, with her sister Catharine in CBC Television's adaptation of Charlotte Gray's double biography, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Lives of Susanna Moodie and Catharine Parr Traill* (1999), a film also available on DVD (2000, 2004).

[3] More recently, in June of 2007, Cambridge's poetry and hymns, furthermore, were set into a liturgy at St Paul's Cathedral in Melbourne ("The Ark: Ada Cambridge"). Cambridge is now being hailed as Australia's "first significant" female poet. Ada's increasing stature in Australian literature is also affirmed by a new award, named in her honour, given to biographical essays.

influential that many independent critical interpretations of *Roughing It* "have succumbed to its lure" (S. Johnston 28). Atwood specifically invested Moodie with an archetypal role by ascribing to her a "violent duality" she still sees also in the Canadian character: her Moodie never becomes part of the (spirit of) the land in a benign way ("Afterword" 62). Even as Susanna returns to haunt modern-day Toronto, she "calls for [the city's] destruction" and she still finds Belleville wanting (Smith 86). Moodie makes further appearances in Atwood's work, including repeatedly in Atwood's retellings of the story of Grace Marks, where she figures as an increasingly unreliable source of information. In addition, in the novel *Surfacing* (1972) Atwood arguably turns Moodie's story on its head by constructing the Canadian bush as a place of healing, in which the unnamed protagonist/narrator, in a redefinition of Canadian womanhood far removed from Moodie's genteel and alienated pioneer, finds her self through spiritual renewal. In particular, Atwood's protagonist not only is not estranged from her environment, but she merges with it and ultimately becomes it, in a nurturing and life-sustaining way: "I am the thing in which the animals move and grow, I am a place" (181).

Moodie's sister, Catharine Parr Traill, has also been creatively figured in recent Canadian writing. Margaret Laurence, in particular, evokes her through her protagonist Morag Gunn as "Saint Catharine" in the novel *The Diviners* (1974). Morag's "attitude toward Saint Catharine is at first combative" (Sparrow 37), as the Traill character and Morag differ in their views of life, a difference that is articulated through Morag's preference for disorderly, "wild" gardens. While Catharine "provides Morag with an ancestor to match herself against" therefore, much as Moodie does for Atwood (and other writers, including Robertson Davies, Timothy Findley, and Carol Shields), she also

represents "an influence to formulate contradictions by" (Kröller 42). Eventually, however, Morag looks to Catharine for the sense of order that is missing in her own life. What is more, *The Diviners* is arguably not Laurence's only response to Traill: in the story "To Set Our House in Order" (in *A Bird in the House*), whose very title is a faint echo of Traill's similarly phrased admonition in *The Backwoods*, the character Vanessa MacLeod perceives the ordering in her grandmother MacLeod's house as excessive. Yet when she returns years later, she comes to understand that order stood for admirable qualities, such as determination, and she "mourns the passing" of that ordered world (Sparrow 39).[4]

As these few examples illustrate, the original writers are to some extent alter egos of the creative minds who revision them, models for subjectivity as well as reference points for discussions and commentary on questions of authority, femininity, authorship, and, ultimately, of one's "place" (in various senses) in the world. Each of the autobiographers here addressed has influenced other stories and lives and continues to generate opinions about how women could and should define themselves in specific places and at specific times. This observation includes Alyse Simpson: while, as the least known writer in the group, Simpson has so far not been creatively refigured, literary scholars and historians from around the world (from the United Kingdom to Australia, from Italy to the United States and now Canada) have been fascinated with her intense counter-rhetorical voice and have debated the implications of Simpson's destabilizing mapping of Kenya as a "Nowhere" and her struggle as a woman to locate herself in such a non-place (Brazzelli, *Fools' Paradise* 67).

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[4] The creative revisioning of original texts and characters is taken to yet another level in Donna Smyth's play *Susanna Moodie* (1976), which both dramatizes episodes from *Roughing It* and intersperses recitations of poetry from Atwood's recreation of Moodie in *The Journals of Susanna Moodie*, thereby placing the original text and a previous recreation side by side.

As for Simpson, for some of the other writers here considered, their new "homes" were also places of alienation and of crises of identity, in which selfhood and womanhood nevertheless had to be remapped in relation to poles of foreign/familiar, other/self, and displacement/home. The "ambiguities and paradoxes" of these opposing positions are "at least partly resolved," as Mary Lynn Broe and Angela Ingram note in the general context of women's exilic writing, "by finding a 'home' in writing itself" (5). Writing, in all cases here, is a means of self-definition and making a place for oneself. Denoting both psychological and geographical terrain, the concept of "home" informs the process of reclamation, recovery, and discovery in the autobiographies considered, in which it is central to self-location on the new ground of being. For the pioneer women writers whose stories of seeking home and self-identity continue to resonate, the motive force who engenders homecoming seems to be the mother, who in each text "hovers," to repeat Brodzki's phrase, "from within and without," and who shapes the daughter's process of making herself "at home" in the foreign land she now inhabits.

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