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Claiming Space: Exile and Homecoming in Roughing It in the Bush and Obasan

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Abstract

The narrators of Roughing It in the Bush and Obasan struggle with the notion of home and how to reinvent it in situations of exile. Moodie is estranged when she emmigrates from Britain to Canada to find her role compromised by the rigors of the pioneering experience. Naomi, a Japanese Canadian is estranged when she and her family are expelled from their home, relocated in internment camps, and dispersed across the country during the Second World War. I argue that reinventing home requires both questioning and claiming material and discursive spaces.

Moodie reinvents home by negotiating Old and New World spaces of gender, class and culture. Naomi reinvents home by questioning official, exclusionary discourse and testifying to the Japanese Canadian history of internment and dispersal. Both narrators negotiate borders between private experience and public discourse and in the process, explore the question: "What is the meaning of home?"

Resumé

Les narratrices de Roughing It in the Bush et d'Obasan interrogent la notion d'appartenance et son processus de reconstruction dans des situations d'exile. L'aliénation de Moodie se révèle lorsqu'elle immigre au Canada de Grande Bretagne et qu'elle se rend compte que son rôle social est compromis par les rigueurs de l'expérience de vie de pionnière. L'aliénation de Naomi se révèle quand sa famille et elle-même sont expulsées de leur maison, placées dans des camps d'internement et dispersées à travers le pays pendant la deuxième guerre mondiale. Je défends le point de vue que pour reinventer son appartenance il faut à la fois questionner et revendiquer diverses formes d'espaces materiels et discursifs.

Moodie réinvente son appartenance en se confrontant à des espaces différenciés par le sexe, la classe et la culture reliés au Vieux et au Nouveau monde. Naomi la réinvente en questionnant le discours officiel créateur d'exclusion et en témoignant de l'histoire d'internement et de dipersion des canadiens d'origine japonaise. Toutes les deux négocient les frontières entre l'expérience personelle et le discours publique. Lors de ce processus, elles explorent la question suivante: "Quelle est la signification de l'appartenance?"

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Introduction

> Joy, to the sullen wilderness
> I come, her gloomy shades to bless
> To bid the bear and wild-cat yield
> Their savage haunts to town and field.
> Joy, to stout hearts and willing hands,
> That win a right to these broad lands,
> And reap the fruit of honest toil,
> Lords of the rich, abundant soil . . . . (Roughing It 18)

The above words, taken from the first poem presented in Susanna Moodie's Roughing It in the Bush, express the optimism of nineteenth-century impoverished British emigrants who came to Canada to seek land and wealth that they could never dream of accumulating at home. Central to this optimism is the ideology of improvement and progress: wilderness gives way to civilization as determined settlers transform themselves into "Lords" of the soil, made wealthy through honest labour. According to this ethos, individuals can change their circumstances through hard work and rise above present hardships with an eye to a future where industry will be rewarded with riches and freedom. As Susan Wood remarks in The Land in Canadian Prose: 1840-1945, British emigrants shared values "based on the development, even the exploitation of the land. In a sense a compensory mythology, it explained the hardships of the present by pointing to the prosperity of the future" (82).

The ethos of sacrifice, hard work and self-improvement, however, can be extended to many immigrant cultures. In Obasan, the Japanese Canadian narrator, Naomi, describes how her "Grandpa Nakane, number one boat builder" arrived in Canada "wearing a Western suit, round black hat, and platformed geta on his feet" (18). Her grandfather's mixture of traditional and Western dress suggests on the one hand, an affirmation of the culture he left behind; on the other hand, it suggests a desire to look forward to a future in which he will become an integrated member of the new land. Naomi describes how her grandfather started a boat building business, steadily built a client base, and "prospered" (18). Then she ties her grandfather's

prosperity to the successful founding of three generations as she recounts the genealogy of her family (18-20). Susanna Moodie values hard work for the sake of future generations; Naomi explicitly links her immigrant grandfather's work to the successful founding of future generations. Thus, both Moodie and Naomi share an ideology of prosperity based on establishing roots and claiming a place in a "strange land" (Roughing It 47).

My discussion of claiming space in Roughing It in the Bush and Obasan will focus on the themes of exile and homecoming. Although my intention is not to compare the two works, I argue that both works struggle with the notion of home and how to reinvent it when people are estranged. In Roughing It in the Bush, the narrator is estranged when she immigrates from Britain to Canada to find her role as a gentlewoman compromised by the rigors of the pioneering experience. In Obasan, the narrator is estranged when she and her family are expelled from their home and relocated in internment camps during the Second World War. Written in the 1980s during the height of multi-cultural mythologizing of the nation which culminated in the Canadian Multiculturalism Act in 1988, Obasan undermines official discourse which constructs Canada as a haven for oppressed minorities.[1] Although the two works were written during different historical periods, they both share discursive and material concerns with claiming space. Both Moodie and Naomi suffer shame at their declassed positions experienced after their respective displacement. While Moodie narrates her story in order to adapt to New World customs and culture, Naomi narrates her story in order to prevent cultural erasure within this new nation. Northrop Frye's fundamental question about New World culture, "Where is here?" (826) which was later taken up by Margaret Atwood in Survival (17), may in this case be rephrased as "Where is home?" and expanded to the question "What is the meaning of home?" The attempt of Moodie and Naomi to answer these questions is a process that I refer to as claiming space. Whereas Frye's question alludes to interrogations of national identity

and culture which I will briefly address in my discussion of the works, I am more concerned with individual identity than with theories of national culture.

Claiming space implies the desire or agency to assert power and a sense of belonging within physical, subjective, or discursive terrain. The expression "claiming space" also highlights various forms of feminist and postcolonialist concerns with giving voice to marginalized subjects and with creating an alternative to Western, patriarchal, hegemonic discourse. However, the discursive subject will not be the only path to my exploration of claiming space. I want to emphasize the importance of a very real or material desire to recover a home which is expressed by the pioneering British gentlewoman Moodie and the displaced, ethnic minority member Naomi. In tracing the relevance of history and experience as well as how experience is constructed in discourse, I examine how Moodie and Naomi articulate their respective journeys home.

In my exploration of Roughing It in the Bush and Obasan the word "space" functions as a signifier of both the symbolic and the material. As W. H. New argues, the notion of space may designate "the set of (epistemological, political, sensory, and imaginative) assumptions governing a people's attitude towards social production, social distance, and hence social power. Hence, 'space' is "culturally constructed or produced" (17). In other words, space functions ideologically. For example, in Roughing It in the Bush, Moodie repeatedly complains about the lack of distance between the so-called gentility, the labouring class, and servants. In this New World, Moodie discovers that barriers between classes are less rigid and new sets of rules governing both physical and symbolic space were being reinvented. When a Yankee neighbour accuses Moodie of inhumanity for not sharing meals in the same space as her servants, the neighbour brings into question all of Moodie's cultural and class assumptions about the hierarchical function of space which she assumes to separate classes into separate spheres. "I s'pose you Britishers are not made of flesh and blood

like us. You don't choose to sit down at meat with your helps. Now, I calculate, we think them a great deal better nor you," (137) accuses the neighbour, Mrs. Joe. While a hierarchy of class still exists in Moodie's New World--there are, after all, landowners, sharecroppers, and servants--the physical and social spaces that these classes inhabit are in a process of redefinition. This disparity between Old World and New World notions of social space profoundly heightens Moodie's sense of exile from a more civilized culture and becomes a major obstacle to integration within her community.[2] Her insistence on "keeping her distance" creates a kind of self-marginalization. In The Work of Words: The Writings of Susanna Moodie, John Thurston argues that Moodie's desire to recreate societal norms of the Old World are constantly frustrated by the refusal of New World characters to submit to her hierarchies of speech and space. "Emily and other Yankee neighbours . . . ," writes Thurston, "disconcert Moodie by transgressing on her sacred bourgeois privacy" (142). Furthermore, Thurston remarks that "[i]n Upper Canada Moodie finds her hierarchy collapse, and violations of verbal decorum are cathected with the displaced form of this trauma. Each curse she hears is an echo of the shattering of her world" (147). I would add that each encroachment she suffers on her private space is a gesture that pushes her further away from the increasingly receding Old World.

In contrast to Moodie's desire to keep a distance between herself and New World inhabitants, the Japanese Canadian community desired to integrate more fully into national life at the dawn of the Second World War. However, these attempts were thwarted, even before the period of forced relocation. Attempts at fuller participation in national life were principally made by the Nisei, the first generation of Japanese Canadians born in Canada. As Mason Harris observes, the Nisei willingly idenitfied with their country. Their desire to integrate was "reinforced by the Japanese emphasis on education, which induced the Canadian-born quickly to acquire English as their first language" (Harris 42). Despite the Nisei's social activism, they were

excluded "from most professions for which their Canadian education qualified them" (Harris 42). In response to systematic exclusion from rights granted to other Canadian-born people, Nisei activists lobbied for "full citizenship and the right to vote" (Harris 42). In his book on the history of Japanese Canadians, Ken Adachi explains that the Nisei's growing awareness of the injustice of their marginalized position was tempered by their conviction that a democratic society would ultimately grant them full citizenship (158). The dawn of the Second World War however, brought with it racial paranoia and hatred; Japanese Canadians were perceived as a threat to national security and were declared enemy aliens. Their homes and other personal property liquidated, Naomi's family is banished from the comfortable middle-class community to which they belonged in a series of forced displacements from the West Coast to the interior provinces despite mixed public opinion on the Japanese question. With the internment, the community was expelled from public space. Racist policies directed against them made it virtually impossible for them to break out of the sphere of "other" and they were thus excluded from fully particpating in national affairs.

The disparity between the capacity of the settler and the displaced person to enter public space underscores how the control over discursive and geographical space is a sign of power. For Moodie, the settler, deeper penetration into wilderness space signifies, on the one hand, a widening of the distance from the power of the imperial centre of England and on the other hand, a move towards claiming material space such as land for herself and family. As a pioneer she participates in the act of strengthening colonial power by clearing and settling land and contributes to the building of the burgeoning nation space of the colony of Upper Canada. Naomi and her family's exile from the coast to the heartland, on the other hand, represents the declassing of generations of an immigrant community that had striven to achieve a certain level of material comfort. For members of the second-generation Nisei, these forced

displacements also represented an undoing of belonging as this generation had struggled to gain all of the rights and privileges due to any Canadian citizen. As Sau-ling Cynthia Wong argues, the marginalization of the Japanese Canadian community serves to remind us that "for certain groups, deeper penetration into the land means exclusion from, instead of participation in, the nation's development" (139).

A subject's position in social or public space reveals his or her relation to power and reverberates with notions of class and ethnicity; a subject's relation to the material may also affect an individual's sense of exile or belonging. For example, Moodie attempted to fill up her domestic space in the bush with signs of bourgeois, British culture such as china dinnerware and teapots. However, as she begins to make the transition from lady to lady pioneer she incorporates items from the wilderness space such as the substitution of dandelion roots for coffee or she exchanges a necklace for an iron pot. As Elizabeth Thompson argues in The Pioneer Woman: A Canadian Archetype, in order to "cope with their situation, women were forced to learn new domestic skills and to redefine their feminine role within the family unit and within the society around them" (4). I am indebted to Thompson's discussion of the lady pioneer's struggle to balance class-based notions of work and femininity with direct encounters with the land. I am also indebted to Barbara Korte, who examines this process specifically in relation to Moodie. She argues that Moodie's engagement with physical space such as the land and her participation in menial domestic chores help to redefine her role in the New World. The more she allows herself to circulate more freely within redefined spaces, the more she invests herself in her adopted land.

In contrast to Moodie's enlargement of spaces within which she permits herself to circulate, Obasan tells a story of forced displacements which operate as a series of diminished private and public spaces to which the Japanese Canadians are permitted access. It traces the movements from Naomi's coddled and materially rich childhood within the warmth of a home in a comfortable middle-class neighbourhood

to a series of smaller, makeshift camps and shelters. Removed from the security and wholeness of the family home, the tightly knit family unravels. Commenting on the multiple dislocations of home and family life, Cheng Lok Chua observes that the family is "torn by the government's separation of them into first generation isseis and second-generation niseis, into the men for work on road gangs and the women, children, and elderly for exile in ghost towns, and even by the fact that Naomi's mother is trapped in Japan" (100) where she had gone to care for her sick grandmother. Obasan presents movements from the civilized and reassuring space of a "large and beautiful house" (50) to natural and wild spaces, an "overgrown tangle of weeds and vines" (122) of the abandoned mining town to which they are first removed, to inhospitable spaces of forced relocation to a Prairie beet field where their house is a "hovel never before inhabited in winter by human beings" (194) and finally to a new home space that is cluttered with a clash of possessions in which "there is barely room to stand" (222). But this house is also filled with dust and memories. An increasing sense of loss and the mourning of absent loved ones accompany this reduction of material space. The novel begins with the death of Uncle and ends with knowledge of the Naomi's mother's horrific disfigurement in the bombing of Nagasaki.

I have been arguing that claiming space may connote ownership of the material such as land, home, and possessions and it may serve as an indication of class, culture, ethnicity or gender. It may also signify the social sphere within which a subject circulates such as public and private space and the subject's control over these spaces--master, servant, landed or impoverished gentry, immigrant, enemy alien, prisoner, outcast. But the notion of claiming space may also serve to underscore the desire to appropriate words on a page, to tell a story, to inhabit a history. I am referring to the notion of claiming discursive space and giving voice to a story. Both Susanna Moodie and Joy Kogawa share the desire to record their stories, to map the

course of lives lived as members of a dominant culture or of a marginalized minority, respectively, to serve as witnesses to their times and to mark the pages of history with their testimony. Although the context of their stories differs in place and time, both tell the tale of women adapting to a painful process of exile and the struggle to regain a home. These women move from the private space of lives lived in domesticity to an engagement in the public space of discourse.

Moodie's Roughing It in the Bush has been interpreted variously as sentimental fiction, gothic tale and autobiography [3]. Whatever the case may be, it presents a record of an author's crisis of self-representation. The very fact that critics disagree as to what Roughing It represents points to the writer of the book as a destabilized subject who resists homogenization and blurs categories of generic space. John Thurston argues that a "desire to wrest meaning from her earliest experiences drives Roughing It in the Bush" (Work of Words 133). He argues that this desire to invent meaning is a product of "the pain charging her memories of Cobourg clearing and Douro bush" which "comes partly from her nagging sense of that period as a void in the progress of her life" (133). Margaret Atwood's The Journals of Susanna Moodie compounds this impression as she portrays Moodie lamenting her failure to grasp meaning in the wildness of the bush: "There was something they almost taught me/I came away not having learned" (27). Moodie, a fairly well-known writer of moral and sentimental fiction before she emigrated to Canada, struggles to find an appropriate voice to describe her sense of exile and process of homecoming. Thus, in her desire to wrest meaning from her experience, at times she casts herself as the gothic heroine of her sentimental fiction who becomes imprisoned in a hostile wilderness; at other times she plays the intrepid lady adventuress greeting challenges with witty remarks and bravado; still at other times she represents herself as wife, mother, and pioneer who attempts to adapt to hardship as a matter of daily survival. Susan Wood argues that emigrants to the colony in the early nineteenth-century placed

"emphasis on the future, on progress, and the transformation of 'wilderness' into 'civilization', even the unconscious evolution of the English gentlewoman into Canadian citizen" (96). If Moodie suffered from a sense of stagnation that was at odds with the settler's ideology of progress, Moodie's record of her life in the bush may be seen as an attempt to redeem those years. The book is, as Thurston observes, "the hinge upon which she articulates her colonial and her British reputation as an author" (Work of Words 134).

Like Moodie, who struggles to make meaning out of her years in the bush, Naomi and her community struggle to make sense out of the years of internment, dispersal and relocation. Unlike Moodie, however, who had access to a public forum for her work, they were excluded or, in the case of many disenfranchised members, excluded themselves from taking an active role in the shaping of their silenced collective story. They were made invisible as control over both public and private space was appropriated from them by hostile dominant groups; many community members never recovered from this loss. Obasan is about reclaiming this lost space, uncovering buried history and giving voice to a silenced people. In an interview with Magdelene Redekop, Joy Kogawa describes how Japanese Canadians in the post-war years, living on the margins of public space, were deprived of the power to define subjective space collectively:

> The identity that we had given to us as we were growing up
> was that we couldn't associate with one another. In other words,
> we had to be "the only Jap in town." We had to be proud of not
> knowing each other. We were ordered to become betrayers;
> we were ordered to betray our own. (98)

Obasan represents an attempt to reconnect fragmented families, generations, and communities and to recover silenced voices. I will argue that Kogawa's Obasan functions as testimonial literature. Like its primarily Latin American counterpart, the

testimonio, it functions as a "literature of personal witness" (Beverley 94) which is concerned with "a problematic collective social situation" (Beverley 95). This form of narrative gives voice to previously silenced communities. According to Doris Sommer, "testimonials are related to a general text of struggle" (129). These texts emphasize both class and ethnic positions. I will argue that it is the testimonial nature of Obasan that permits the possibility of homecoming.

In Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History, Dori Laub describes the painful but healing effects of Holocaust survivors bearing witness to the massive trauma of their experiences. Because of severe trauma, survivors often prefer sheltering silence to the painful recounting of their experience. According to Laub, their acts of bearing witness begin "with someone who testifies to an absence, to an event that has not yet come into existence, in spite of the overwhelming and compelling nature of the reality of the occurrence" (52). In Obasan, Naomi bears witness to the trauma of dispossession, displacement, and dispersal within Canada, and the loss of her mother in the nuclear holocaust of Nagasaki. Like the Holocaust survivors whom Laub describes, Naomi's process of bearing witness to these events begins with an absence, a "silence that does not speak" (epigram) despite her Aunt Emily's meticulous documentation of events ranging from the prewar to postwar years.

In beginning her story by testifying to an absence Kogawa emphasizes how Japanese Canadians were made invisible. As Aunt Emily tells Naomi, the community "never recovered from the dispersal policy. But of course that was the government's whole idea--to make sure we'd never be visible again" (34). Any traces of their thriving, upwardly-mobile presence on the coast as well as evidence of their years in ghost towns to which they were displaced are erased. Twenty years after the relocation to Slocan Naomi and her family look for evidence of their presence. They find none: "Not a mark was left. All our huts had been removed long before and the

forest had returned to take over the clearings" (117). Furthermore, the secret of Naomi's mother's disfigurement in the bombing of Nagasaki was kept buried for decades by the mother's wish to spare the children the painful truth. In Obasan, the emergence of Naomi's narrative as a testimony from her marginalized position becomes an act of reclaiming a voice for herself and her community in order to speak of the injustices committed against them . Kogawa's book represents a recovery of buried history and a reclaiming of public space because she tells the story of Canada on the home front during the war from the perspective of a silenced victim rather than that of hegemonic writers of official history. As Laub argues, "repossessing one's life story through giving testimony is itself a form of action, of change, which one has to actually pass through. . . . The event must be reclaimed" (85). It is this repossession of the narrative space which initiates a process of homecoming and reasserts the will to join the public space of Canadian history. The story of Obasan clears a decolonized, alternative space in the nation's collective memory and makes a place for the previously excluded community. In an article on the importance of rootedness and place, Liisa H. Malkki observes: "now perhaps more than ever before, people are chronically mobile and routinely displaced, inventing homes and homelands in the absence of territorial, national bases--not in situ but through memories of and claims on places that they can or will no longer corporeally inhabit" (52). For the internally exiled Japanese Canadians displaced from their original homes on the West Coast, the task is to recreate a community across a diaspora, to rebuild bonds, and affirm a place for themselves on the terrain of the contested spaces of memory, history, and nation.

In the first part of my thesis, I examine Moodie's estrangement as a product of the clash between Old World and New World values. In Chapter 1, I focus on class privileges and domestic and gendered spaces in order to argue that it is through the integration of her Old World writing talents and New World pioneering skills that Moodie enacts the process of claiming New World space as her home. In Chapter 2, I

examine this process in terms of her encounters with the land and natural spaces. I argue that although Moodie constructs a discourse of desire and appropriation of New World land, these impulses are moderated by the discrepancy between her colonial expectations and New World realities. In this case, her veritable homecoming entails the transformation of nature into culture.

In the second part of my thesis, I address questions of exile and homecoming in Obasan. In Chapter 3, I focus on the notion of alternative, decolonized spaces created in the context of uncovering buried history. I argue that the novel functions as a testimony to the Japanese Canadian experience of internment and dispersal. The testimonial nature of Obasan opposes the official public discourse of national history with private memory and experience and in so doing, creates an alternative decolonized space to tell the collective story of Japanese Canadians. In Chapter 4, I examine how interior and natural spaces shape Naomi's adaptation to exile and homecoming. I argue that it is through these spaces that she approaches the difficult question of her personal and collective identity.

Citizens, as Lisa Lowe argues in Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics, "inhabit the political space of the nation, a space that is, at once, juridically legislated, territorially situated, and culturally embodied" (2). She argues further that, national culture or "collectively forged images, histories, and narratives" (2) profoundly shapes citizens' material and discursive positions. Moodie and Naomi are exiled from their original homes and attempt to make sense out of the experience. In the process they forge a place for their stories in the collective memory of the nation. Both Susanna Moodie and Joy Kogawa present subjects who negotiate the borders between private experience and public testimony and in so doing, search for answers to the question "What is the meaning of home?"

Notes

1. The Canadian Multiculturalism Act encourages the "preservation, enhancement, sharing and evolving expression of the multicultural heritage of Canada" and provides for the assistance of "ethno-cultural minority communities to conduct activities with a view to overcoming any discriminatory barrier, and in particular, discrimination based on race or national ethnic origin" (Hutcheon and Richmond 371).

2. Fowler and Thomas recognize her reluctance to integrate as well.

3. In The Work of Words: The Writings of Susanna Moodie, John Thurston provides a summary of critics' attempts to confine this text to a genre. In this summary he includes comments on Carl Klinck, Carl Ballstadt, Marion Fowler, Carole Gerson, Michael Peterson, and Susan Glickman (138-139). See also Helen Buss' work on Roughing It in the Bush which classifies it as autobiography.

Part One

New World Spaces in Roughing It in the Bush

Chapter 1: Susanna Moodie On the Frontiers of Identity

As part of a wave of British emigration to Canada in the early and middle nineteenth-century, Susanna Moodie wrote back to the imperial centre in order to describe, define, and interpret the experience of settling the colony of Upper Canada. Her text functions in part as immigration propaganda that was inundating Britain at the time. She explains in her introduction: "Canada became the great landmark for the rich in hope and poor in purse. Public newspapers and private letters teemed with the unheard-of advantages to be derived from a settlement in this highly-favoured region" (12). She wrote her book in order to counter the wild claims that were too good to be true. As she explains: "What the Backwoods of Canada are to the industrious and ever-to-be-honoured sons of honest poverty, and what they are to the refined and accomplished gentleman, these simple sketches will endeavour to portray." (15). Moodie's emphasis on the contrast of the meaning of the colony to the labouring class and the meaning of the colony to the middle gentry signals anxiety about class divisions. Throughout the text, her preoccupation with class divisions generates narrative tension as she strives to preserve class distinctions in a New World where notions of class were in a process of redefinition. As Marian Fowler remarks, "She seems determined, all by herself, to create a one-woman garrison of custom and ceremony" (98). Moodie's invention of Canada, then, is inextricably linked to her experiences of demoting in class and geographical and cultural displacement.

My reading of Roughing It in the Bush is informed by Susan Wood's thesis that English Canadian literature developed in conjunction with a system of beliefs based on a notion of progress through the transformation of the wilderness. She argues that, "British immigrants like the Moodies came to Canada to rebuild the homes and societies they had left behind" (85). As Clara Thomas articulates in her discussion of Moodie and her sister, Catherine Parr Traill, the world that Moodie had left behind

was cultivated, educated, and literary. It was a refined world in which ladies and gentlemen read and wrote Romantic books and poetry and in which the literary imagination reigned supreme. In Moodie's family, all of her sisters were attracted to writing. As Thomas describes, "literate and highly articulate, enchanted by the process of writing as well as by its products, Eliza, Agnes, Jane, Catherine and Susanna busily scribbled" (46). The Strickland sisters published their materials in literary journals, satisfying the "growing demand for light and polite reading material, suitable for ladies of all ages" (Thomas 46). Transplanted in the New World, Moodie attempts to impose Old World order under environmental and social conditions which resisted such a vision. Confronted with a new reality of shifting cultural values in which Old World conventions no longer have the force of authority, Moodie redefines herself in the process. While discursively inventing a nation out of her own encounters with the land and her confrontations with a clash of values in the colony, Moodie maps out new territory of subjective space. She acts on the social space of the New World--especially as a writer--while at the same time, it acts on her. In this chapter I will trace her attachment to her new home in terms of the confrontation in the New World with her Old World notions of class privilege and domestic and gendered spaces. I will argue that she enacts a process of inhabiting the New World by integrating her Old World writing talents with New World pioneering skills.

Three factors exert great influence on Moodie's representation of her experience. First, Moodie held a moral conviction that she must prevent the impoverished English gentry from committing the same errors that she and her husband committed in buying unsettled land from unscrupulous land speculators; hence, she was committed to telling the truth as she experienced it. In the introduction to the 1871 edition she claims: "I gave the experience of the first seven years we passed in the woods, attempting to clear a bush farm, as a warning to others, and the number of persons who have since told me that my book 'told the history' of their

own life in the woods, ought to be the best proof to every candid mind that I spoke the truth" (527). This truth-claim, however, is countered by Moodie's tendency to embellish her self-representation with literary conceits. According to Clara Thomas, her writing "had always been conventional, moral, sentimental, having to do with heroes, heroines, and villains of her own or higher rank" (59). Moodie also continued to write sentimental fiction after she made the move to the colony. Third, aside from discursive concerns, Moodie had to cope with very real situations outside of the realm of the drawing room or imagination. Cultural differences in the New World as well as sickness and economic hardship combined to force her to adopt the role of a pioneer rather than of an exclusively gentlewoman observer of events.

Moodie's intention to counter immigrant propaganda that painted a picture of Canada as a new Eden, combined with the conventional claim to truthfulness of representation shape her representation of experience. In the epigraph to Roughing It in the Bush, Moodie signals to readers that she has the authority to speak of such matters:

> I sketch from Nature, and the picture's true;
> Whate'er the subject, whether grave or gay,
> Painful experience in a distant land
> Made it mine own. (iii)

As a counter to some of the more exaggerated accounts of the New World, Moodie's book "contributed to the massive documentary reportage" (Dahlie 12) of the colonies. Aware of the damaging effect of narratives published by "interested parties which . . . set forth all the good to be derived from a settlement in the Backwoods of Canada" (Roughing It 13) while carefully concealing "the toil and hardship to be endured in order to secure these advantages," Moodie is determined to set the record straight. Her concern, however, is specifically for the educated middle-class. She freely admits in her introduction that members of the working-class proved more successful in their

endeavors in Canada: These men, whose "wholesome labour from infancy has made them strong," become "wealthy and prosperous" (15). Their "labour is wealth, not exhaustion; it produces independence and content, not home-sickness and despair" (15). The "poor gentleman", however, is "totally unfitted, by his previous habits and education, to be a hewed of the forest and a tiller of the soil" (527). In other words, gentry are meant to write about the settling of the land, not to have direct contact with it. From the beginning, then, Moodie establishes her audience and therefore constructs her text for the consumption of the British gentility. Lamenting the "want of wealth alone" that "places an impassable barrier" between the emigrant and the more "favoured offspring of the same parent stock" (12), Moodie explicitly aligns herself with the British gentry. This insistence on gentry class membership shapes Moodie's entry into the New World. Furthermore, her effort to impose strict class notions of social space impedes her integration into her new community.

Many customs and practices in Upper Canada are not only foreign to Moodie but are upsetting to her notions of propriety as well. The "sauciness of the servants, who, republicans in spirit, think themselves as good as their employers" (14) adds to her estrangement. Servants, Yankees, and working-class squatters don't hesitate to assert their equality in the face of Moodie's snobbery. For example, Moodie's neighbour at her first settlement insists that she is of equal or superior status: "Now, don't go to call me 'gal'--and pass off your English airs on us. We are *genuine* Yankees, and think ourselves as good--yes, a great deal better than you. I am a young lady" (94). John Thurston argues that Moodie's "revulsion" at the proximity "of the vulgar characters who populated the settlement is palpable" (Work of Words 140). In his examination of the discourse of Roughing It in the Bush, he argues that these characters' words, often reproduced in the form of dialogues in which Moodie moralizes or attempts to expose character flaws, serve only to undermine her attempt to appear morally superior to her lower class neighbours. As Thurston describes her

discourse, by "allowing the voices of the vulgar into her writing, she establishes a zone of contact wherein their discourses subvert hers" (Work of Words 141). These reproduced dialogues, moreover, often serve to expose Moodie's lack of understanding of New World customs.

Her utter lack of mastery of the borrowing system, for example, prevented her from participating in a form of social contact and commodity exchange in a context in which both basic goods and the money to purchase them were scarce. Although Thurston cites Moodie's description of the borrowing system as an example of her inability to control her own discourse, I am more interested in her account of the system as an illustration of cultural and class based approaches to public and private spaces. Written in a tone that oscillates between comic exasperation and bewildered desperation, the chapter on the borrowing system illustrates how Moodie experienced New World estrangement in the form of the breakdown of class and spatial hierarchies. Although Moodie perceives borrowing as a "pernicious custom" (88), she does recognize that "this system of borrowing is not wholly confined to the poor and ignorant; it pervades every class of society" (109). Yet, she still finds the custom offensive and beneath her. She mocks the fact that "if a party is given in any of the small villages, a boy is sent round from house to house to collect all the plates and dishes, knives and forks, teaspoons and candlesticks. . .for the use of the company" (109). She clings to her bourgeois notions of private property by failing to accept that in settlement culture, private belongings may also become community resources in a system of sharing which promoted close ties and trust among community members. Cutting herself off from community rituals, Moodie delays integration into the colony. Failing to understand the borrowing system, which she perceives as "swindling expeditions" (98) and refusing to take advantage of it herself, she is cheated and exploited by neighbours who sense her vulnerability.

Equally disturbing to Moodie and intensifying her sense of dislocation is the lack of distance and decorum she perceives in her new neighbours. They not only "swindle" her out of precious goods; they intrude on her private, domestic space. Emily, for example, pushed the door to her cabin open and "squeezed" herself "into the crowded room" (93). Emily invades Moodie's sacred space, "her keen black eyes glancing obliquely to every corner of the room, which she examined with critical exactness" (93). As for Betty Fye, "once admitted into the house, there was no keeping her away" (102). Furthermore, hired help "demand to eat at your table, and to sit in your company" (199). It is as if between the intrusions of her neighbours and the lack of space in her new home, Moodie's world shrinks before her eyes and she feels there is no room left for herself. Crowded out of her private space and losing control over the capacity to act as she would in polite society, Moodie discovers a chaotic and diminished world in which she becomes isolated despite constant contact with her neighbours.

Moodie's attitude toward logging bees, "a vital community ritual" (Thurston Words 152) provides a further example of her reluctance to participate in community functions. As Susan Wood observes, "In the bush, the basic tasks of clearing land and sustaining life unified communities. 'Bees' provided necessary labour and equally necessary social contact, physical help and psychological reinforcement." (82). Moodie, however, rejects the possibility of communion with her fellow settlers. Instead she calls these community activities "odious gatherings" and "tumultuous, disorderly meetings" (322). During the logging bee at her own homestead she describes a scene in which "the house rang with the sound of unhallowed revelry, profane songs, and blasphemous swearing" (321). An "occasion for familiar contact across class barriers" (Thurston Words 152), Moodie reacts to the colonial custom with disgust. After a strenuous day preparing and serving food to the men who participated in the logging bee Moodie, "tired with the noise, and heat, and fatigue"

(Roughing It 321) retires to bed but even in the inner sanctum of privacy, the colonial custom transgresses her personal space as "[t]he little bed-chamber was only separated from the kitchen by a few thin boards" and she was able to "hear all the wickedness and profanity going on in the next room" (321). Once again the mingling of gentlemen, Irish, Scots, Yankees, workers and squatters threatens her sense of order and increases her sense of displacement.

As a counter to the chaotic New World, Moodie constructs an ideal England where order and decorous beauty reign. She returns to an idyllic England in her dreams: "nightly I did return; my feet again trod the daisied meadows of England; the song of her birds was in my ears; I wept with delight to find myself once more wandering beneath the fragrant shade of her green hedge-rows; and I awoke to weep in earnest when I found it but a dream" (89). Homesickness penetrates her first years in the colony. It is exemplified in her exclamation of an intense feeling of exile upon her arrival in Canada: "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*?" (48). The offending custom of her neighbours to casually enter her home space uninvited only serves to heighten a sense of loneliness. As Moodie explains: "many a hard battle had we to fight old prejudices, and many proud swellings of the heart subdue, before we could feel the least interest in the land of our adoption of our home" (197). Isolated in the wilderness of the backwoods and not yet accustomed or willing to participate in settlement customs and rituals, Moodie contemplates her surroundings but dreams of England. As becomes a delicate gentlewoman, she would "sit for hours at the window" until, as she describes, "fancy transported me back to England, and the songs of birds and the lowing of cattle were sounding in my ears. It was long, very long, before I could discipline my mind to learn and practise all the menial employments which are necessary in a good settler's wife" (306). Clinging to her notions of feminine gentility and disoriented by culture

shock, Moodie looks nostalgically back to a pastoral England, securely settled and defined in its class boundaries and divisions; she forgets that it was because of the English custom of privileging eldest sons while leaving younger sons of landed gentry impoverished that she and her husband left in the first place, as she herself explains. The impoverished but "educated persons, accustomed to the refinements and luxuries of European society" (11) are motivated to emigrate because they "can trace no difference between themselves and the more fortunate individuals of a race whose blood runs in their veins, and whose name they bear. The want of wealth alone places an impassable barrier between them and the more favoured offspring of parent stock; and they go forth to make for themselves a new name and to find another country, to forget the past and live in the future" (12).

A very genuine feeling of alienation and homesickness which is related to the disparities between Old World and New World values pervades Roughing It in the Bush; however, Moodie also turns her sense of exile into a literary conceit. A writer of sentimental fiction, she casts herself as a sentimental heroine who, as Marian Fowler explains, was constructed in the literature of the time as "physically delicate," (106) and "constantly weeping" (107). She also demonstrates "patience and fortitude in the face of...suffering" (109). True to the character type of the sentimental heroine, Moodie weeps when she is happy, depressed, inspired, frightened, homesick, or overjoyed. Patient forbearance in the face of suffering characterizes Moodie's decision to accept exile. "I bowed to a superior mandate" explains Moodie, "the command of duty; for my husband's sake and the sake of the infant, whose little bosom heaved against my swelling heart, I had consented to bid adieu forever to my native shores" (194). As Fowler details, Moodie at times resembles a gothic heroine, a variation of the sentimental heroine, who shares the characteristics of her sentimental sister but with "additions of certain refinements" (Fowler 111) such as a habit of finding herself locked away in haunted castles, crumbling mansions or imposing

dungeons. Furthermore, gothic heroines such as those of Ann Radcliffe "are exiles in a foreign land, isolated in wild natural settings and pining for their lost homes" (Fowler 111). Comparing the colony to a prison, Moodie dramatically affirms that at the time of their first move to the log dwelling, in her "love for Canada was a feeling very nearly allied to that which the condemned criminal entertains for his cell- - his only hope of escape being through the portals of the grave" (135). Once again contemplating nature, hearing a stream's "deep and fretful sighs," Moodie weeps:

> I fancied myself lamenting for the land I had left
> forever; 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. (134)

With "tears [that] flowed unchecked to its plaintive and harmonious music", her "winged thoughts [fly] homeward" (134). It is only when engaged in writing or in "distasteful occupations" (134), that she ceases to hear the mournful sounds. In Varieties of Exile: The Canadian Experience, Halvard Dahlie attributes Moodie's "violent duality" (Atwood Journals 62) of her dramatic opposition between Old and New World to a "significant aesthetic component" of early nineteenth-century writers "whose writing careers coincided with the growth of a distinct Canadian consciousness" (12). In other words, a pervading sense of exile informed the literary aesthetic of her era.[1]

When not casting herself as an exiled heroine--when exile is not used as a literary conceit-- Moodie turns it into a position from which to moralize on the sacrifices that she and emigrants like her have made for the sake of the future progress, and ultimately for the sake of the nation. "Forced by a stern necessity " (73) to leave her homeland, she and her husband are bolstered by the belief that in Canada, "the industrious can never lack bread, and . . . there is a chance that wealth and

independence may reward virtuous toil" (195). Looking back on her often painful years in the bush she is able to rationalize that her family's sacrifices have served to contribute to the growth of a nation: "Contrasting the first year of my life in the bush, with Canada as she now is, my mind is filled with wonder and gratitude at the rapid strides she has made towards the fulfilment of a great and glorious destiny" (528). Finally, she concludes her book with a wish for all Canadians: "If the Canadian people will honestly unite in carrying out measures proposed by the Government, for the good of the country, irrespective of self-interest and party prejudices, they must, before the close of the present century, become a great and prosperous people, bearing their own flag, and enjoying their own nationality" (534). Moodie's assertion that Canada has made great progress is transformed into a wish for the independence of the nation.

I have been arguing that both Moodie's literary and cultural values shape her representation of exile. I will now turn to an examination of how Moodie's attitude towards labour and gender shaped her approach to the New World. Emigration to Canada entailed a redefinition of the rules of behavior for genteel immigrants. Most left England for the same reasons as the Moodies: "as a matter of necessity, not of choice" (Roughing It 11). Lacking wealth but not education, genteel immigrants came to Canada in hopes of improving their situation by settling large tracts of land that they could never dream of owning in Britain. However, once in Canada, genteel immigrants were forced to contend with what Moodie prudishly describes as a society that "was composed of elements which did not always amalgamate in the best possible manner" (201). In other words, the lack of a rigid British hierarchy in which all members of society had their place -- from the King and the Queen to the humblest servant -- produced a society in which hired help, labourers and landowners mixed on a more egalitarian level and even performed some of the same tasks.[2] This mixing of classes, or what Catherine Parr Traill called "the equalizing system of America" (103)

caused no end of consternation to Moodie, but forced her in a drastic way, to redefine her gentlewoman self-image. Tracing her development of her self-representation in relation to physical work and writing offers insight into her own exile and eventual homefounding in Canada. In her examination of the lady pioneer as a Canadian archetype, Elizabeth Thompson notes that "the challenge for lady emigrants was to reconcile two apparently incompatible roles of refined lady and hard-working pioneer woman" (15). I argue that for Moodie as a writer the challenge also consisted in reconciling Old World skills of writing, with New World skills of managing a homestead.

Although Thompson only touches on Moodie in her examination of the pioneer lady, my own discussion of Moodie borrows from her work on the cultural and social values of British gentlewomen. Thompson explains that in nineteenth-century British fiction, "a lady was always immediately recognizable as such by her appearance, her skills, her manners, and her way of life" (10) The middle or upper class gentlewoman is "accustomed to a life of leisure in which she can display her many decorative, drawing-room talents" (10). British gentility was based on a social and economic system which freed this class from physical labour. Moodie, who insists on several occasions that she and her husband belong to the genteel class in spite of their having to emigrate to Canada for lack of wealth in England, must learn to cope with the necessity of menial and hard physical labour in the New World. Moodie describes her interaction with the land in terms of economic necessity: "My husband and I worked hard in the field; it was the first time I had ever tried my hand at field labour, but our money was already exhausted. . .we could not hire, and there was not help for it. I had a hard struggle with my pride before I would consent to render the least assistance on the farm" but "it was not only my duty to obey that call, but to exert myself to the utmost to assist my husband, and help to maintain my family" (352). As Barbara Korte observes in her exploration of the self-image of British pioneer women, "the

gentlemen and women in the bush were obsessed with how they could preserve their rank while performing . . . duties of an inferior class" (149). Lacking both servants and the infrastructure of "civilization" in the bush, genteel immigrants were forced to perform both domestic and agricultural labour as a matter of survival. Pledged to truthfulness about her description of her years in the bush and writing for a genteel audience with whom she identifies, Moodie creates a strategy of self-representation in which she associates pioneer work with sacrifice. Gradually, however, the association shifts to a growing sense of personal investment in the colony as she encounters the land in terms of her own physical labour which enables her family to survive disaster. In terms of spatial considerations, Moodie moves from a marginal position in the New World as an immigrant who must decode new rules of social distance or proximity, to multiple and flexible positions which allow her to circulate more comfortably and knowledgeably in a wider variety of social situations as part of her acculturation to the New World.

Conforming to the stereotype of the passive, obedient spouse, Moodie casts herself as the "reluctant female pioneer" (Korte 151) who follows her daring and enterprising husband out of a sense of duty to a new land as an "exile's bride" (Roughing It 33). Her narrative, permeated with a sense of duty toward her husband and children, reveals a keen sense of loss of society which gave meaning to her life. Even more than the physical hardships to be endured in the New World, it is her loss of ties to the members of her class that Moodie regrets the most. Recalling her feelings as she prepared for emigration, Moodie admits:

> I still turned and looked back, and clung with all
> my strength to the land I was leaving. It was not
> the hardships of the immigrant's life I dreaded.
> I could bear mere physical privations philosophically
> enough. It was the loss of the society in which

> I had moved, the want of congenial minds, of
> persons engaged in congenial pursuits, that made
> me so reluctant to respond to my husband's call. (196)

This self-sacrificing representation of herself functions as an appeal to her readers for sympathy and reader identification. Invoking "congenial minds" Moodie allies herself with the middle class society she left behind. However, the gap between "her attitudes shaped by the old world and those generated by the new" (Dahlie 17) will ultimately force her to renegotiate her alliance to middle class values and assumptions. Exile, then, is expressed in more than just a genuine feeling of homesickness; exile becomes a valuable experience because she turns it into a literary conceit in her book destined for middle-class consumption. At first, exile is the lense through which she perceives New World. Later, it develops into a trope through which she approaches her writing.

According to Barbara Korte, the gentlewoman's "education had prepared her for the supervision rather than the performance of household work" (152). In keeping with the construction of herself as a gentlewoman, Moodie represents her first attempts at menial domestic chores as clumsy and inept. Incompetence in household work signals gentle femininity and thus functions as a means for Moodie to preserve her gentlewoman status. Her first attempt at washing "some small baby articles" ends in failure as she "knew nothing about the task." (136). In her domestic ignorance, she explains: "in a few minutes [I] rubbed the skin off my wrists, without getting my clothes clean" (136). A similar episode of New World domestic bumbling entails her burning her first loaf of bread. Her family friend Tom exclaims at this incident: "Oh, Mrs. Moodie, I hope you make better books than bread!" (121) This first reference to a link she makes between her previous literary production and the development of her New World skills will become important in the tracing of her attachment to her

adopted home. At this point, clearly the reader is invited to value the gentlewoman's writing skills over her lack of domestic abilities.

Moodie begins to break the stereotype of the delicate, passive lady as situations present themselves to her in which she is forced to take decisive action. The turning point in Moodie's self-redefinition relates to transgressing gender stereotypes and taking pride in non-ladylike tasks such as field work. The representation of herself engaged in non-traditional class and gender activities signals a new subjective assertion and a will to claim space that is particular to her own experiences rather than class-defined notions of proper behaviour. Moodie learns to operate within two spheres, the masculine and feminine, which were previously clearly defined by her class according to notions of space: women operated within the domestic sphere and men operated within the worldly spheres of work and commerce. She is able to make this move because of the links that she makes between her Old World writing skills and New World pioneering skills. For example, finding herself alone one day Moodie must overcome her fear of cattle and milk a cow. After several attempts she succeeds in filling half a pail of milk. Of this accomplishment she writes that she "felt prouder than many an author of the best thing he ever wrote" and that she "had learned a useful lesson of independence" (183). Her comparison of milking a cow to literary production signals a shift in the representation of herself as simply an honest observer/recorder of events toward an acceptance of pioneer life and the satisfaction and pride it may bring. Finding value and self-esteem in non-literary labour for the first time suggests that she begins to emerge as the author of her own destiny. Moodie values her literary skills as a sign of gentlewomanly refinement; she begins to value manual labour for the sense of independence it gives her. Writing about this incident which had occurred seven years before, Moodie perceives how one of her original wishes for independence in the New World could be fulfilled on a personal level.

While Moodie writes with her "bifocal vision" (Fowler 130) with one eye on England and the other on Canada, the second half of Roughing It in the Bush conveys a growing sense of independence which is linked to her direct involvement with the management of the homestead outside of the domestic sphere. With Moodie's growing sense of pride in her own pioneering achievements comes an affirmation of claiming space. No longer the British lady merely observing the landscape and customs of the New World, Moodie's direct participation in the survival of her family and the advancement of the bush farm lead to a reassessment of genteel attitudes towards work and the labouring class. For example, having to labour in the fields alongside her husband, Moodie expresses pride in her physical work and contrasts the pioneering Susanna with her old genteel persona: "I have contemplated a well-hoed ridge of potatoes on that bush farm with as much delight as in years long past I had experienced in examining a fine painting in some well appointed drawing room" (353). Moving outside of the gentlewoman's drawing-room space, Moodie claims allegiance to the pioneer space of the bush. This change in subjective space represents a coming home for Moodie. As Korte observes, "the act of self-creation implied in autobiographical writing becomes obvious" (157). In other words, Moodie's self-representation of actively participating in pioneering activities marks an inscription of a new subjective space in which she operates with a newly discovered independence as opposed to the strict codes of behaviour of Old World values. The uprooted, displaced exile is replaced by a rooted, homefounding pioneer.

During the rebellion of 1837-1838 Moodie's husband joins the battle and she is left alone with her helper Jenny to maintain the bushfarm. Many critics have observed that the "Outbreak" chapter in which Moodie describes her experience of managing the farm on her own represents a bold statement of independence.[3] As Korte observes, in her husband's absence Moodie "considers herself *pater familias*" (158). She dramatizes a strong will to claim space in her sense of responsibility for

the farm: she plants corn and potatoes, cultivates the garden, devises a plan to trap ducks and fish. A clear sign that Moodie no longer viewed herself as a conventional gentlewoman can be found in her account of an exchange of goods. This exchange is loaded with symbolic significance. In order to pay for the reparation of a cracked sugar kettle that she needed to produce the year's maple sugar, Moodie asks her child to give away "a magnificent coral and bells, the gift of her godfather" (418). In exchange for "the useless piece of finery"(419) she receives "a fine sugar-kettle. . . and also the other one mended." Moodie, in her new-found attachment to her home, trades a symbol of gentility for an item of concrete practicality, and in the exchange signals that her values have shifted. The item that once had great worth to her as a sign of gentility proves to be worthless to her pioneering self unless she can exchange it for something of practical value.

A parallel shift in Moodie's values is reflected in a transformation of Moodie's attitude towards her drawing-room writing and painting skills into practical, productive skills that contribute to the income of the household. In her husband's absence, Moodie thrives by becoming the successful, primary breadwinner. Skills that were once signs of membership in the educated, leisure class become a means to pay off debts and assure security for her family:

> I actually shed tears of joy over the first twenty-dollar bill I received from Montreal. It was my own, I had earned it with my own hand; and it seemed to my delighted fancy to form the nucleus out of which a future independence for my family might arise. (417)

As Clara Thomas notes, "the gains to her family were at first small, but to Susanna there were now more possibilities in the future than she had hoped for" (62). Energized by monetary recognition for both her writing and painting, Moodie works in the field by day and "no longer retired to bed when the labours of the day were over" (Roughing It 417). Instead, she stays up late into the night to continue her

labours, this time as an author, writing by the light of makeshift candles. This successful fusion of manual and intellectual labour confirms Moodie's commitment to her home; she invests both activities with a sense of purpose and pride; she now connects writing with the pioneering experience rather than as a means of escape from it.

Finally, on the eve of her return to town life in Belleville, Moodie's subjective transformation is mirrored in an image of her physical appearance as she reflects upon her life in the bush:

> For seven years I had lived out of the world entirely;
> my person had been rendered coarse by hard work
> and exposure to the weather. I looked double the age
> I really was and my hair was sprinkled with grey.
> I clung to my solitude. I did not like to be dragged
> from it to mingle in gay scenes, in a busy town, with
> gaily-dressed people. (476)

Moodie examines herself and sees a woman transformed by life in the bush. The stereotypical British gentlewoman has become an unconventional Upper Canadian woman, a pioneer, a writer, and breadwinner; the reluctant pioneer has become resistant to the idea of returning to the company of a class of people and society she had once craved.

Forced to transgress gender and class boundaries by material conditions in the bush, Moodie developed a sense of independence that helped her to accept her move to Canada. This subjective transformation can be traced by the development of Moodie's attitude towards work and writing: in inscribing herself within her own invention of Canada, she recreates herself as well. Positioned between two cultures she succeeds in integrating her Old World writing skills and New World pioneering skills and in so doing, enacts a process of inhabiting the New World.

"Transmuting life into art" (Fowler 101), Moodie writes a parable of progress in which the lesson is independence. As Moodie reflects: people are "allowed in this country a freedom enjoyed by few of the more polished countries in Europe; freedom in religion, politics, and speech . . . and they can lead a more independent social life than in the mother country, because less restricted by the conventional prejudices that govern older communities" (531). Ending with a wish for Canadians to bear their own flag and a blessing that "God rest upon Canada and the Canadian people" (534), her original wish for personal independence broadens to an outward look towards building the space of the nation. The reluctant emigrant comes home to the New World.

Notes

1 In The Embroidered Tent: Five Gentlewomen in Early Canada, Marion Fowler discusses the literary aesthetics and cultural values of early Canadian women writers. Helen Buss has produced a significant body of work on early Canadian women. Elizabeth Thompson discusses early Canadian women writers as Canadian archetypes. See also Margaret Turner for a discussion of early Canadian male authors and the early Canadian literary aesthetic.

2 Although Moodie describes the equalizing effect on class in the New World, she recognizes that the equalizing effect doesn't seem to extend to race. In a discussion about hired help, a neighbour berates Moodie for not sitting at the same table with them. The neighbour argues with Moodie: "Are you not both of the same flesh and blood? The rich and the poor meet together, and the Lord is the maker of them all" (213). However, when Moodie counters this attack by asking the same woman why she does not sit at the same table with members of the "African race" (214), the woman replies: "Good God! Do you think that I would sit down at the same table as a nigger? My helps would leave the house if I put such an affront on them. Sit down with a dirty black indeed!" (215).

3 See Korte, Fowler, and Buss.

Chapter 2: Appropriating Nature: The Colonial Encounter

As an exile from a world she calls home, Susanna Moodie struggles to make sense out of a process through which she is displaced, disoriented, and declassed. This process however, is also marked with the immigrant's hopeful desire of upward mobility and conviction that progress will lead to a prosperous future. A primary mode of making sense of "what he or she has left behind and what is experienced" in the new homeland (Itwaru 13) for the colonial settler is his or her encounter with the land. For the settler, New World land ideally represented freedom and wealth; in reality it often represented physical labour and hardship. Moodie's creation of a home space in New World territory involves reconciling an ideal dream with the harsh reality of settler life. W. H. New observes that "while the word *land* often functions as a familiar synonym for *dirt* or *earth* or *ground*. . . it sometimes also resonates with notions of ownership or social attachment" (5). In other words, while land embodies physical space, it is also an ideological construct invested with socially produced values. Susan Wood argues that to the settler, ownership of a parcel of land enforced a sense of social attachment as "the dual action" of "settling the land" and "building a nation" formed the "basis of the social mythology" in Upper Canada (82). In Chapter 1, I examined Moodie's will to claim New World space as a function of changing notions of class and gender. In this chapter, I will examine how Moodie's encounters with New World land act as a primary force in shaping her claim to New World space. I will focus my exploration of Moodie's encounter with the land by situating her within the colonial project of the transformation of the wilderness.

I will argue that Moodie creates both real and symbolic borders, as well as the possibility of crossing these borders. She does this through the opposition of conventional, colonial notions of beauty, value and nature, with her real contact with the New World land and its inhabitants. As a colonial witness borrowing from the

writing traditions of exploration, travel, and natural history, she constructs a discourse of desire and appropriation of New World land. Her controlling impulse, however, is tempered by the subversion of her expectations by New World realities. Moodie's discourse reveals a classic opposition between nature and culture. She achieves her homecoming when she regains a certain mastery over her environment and transforms New World nature into a New World culture to which she belongs.

My discussion of Moodie's representation of land is informed by Susan Wood's examination of the role of clearing the land in the development of both a settler identity and a cohesive national mythology, and by W.H. New's foregrounding of the play of power relations in the construction of individual identity and a national mythology based on land development. Whereas Susan Wood is interested in identifying common values based on the exploitation of land that informed early Canadian writing, W. H. New is preoccupied with highlighting the implications of inclusion and exclusion involved in the act of representing land. Wood's analysis that Upper Canadian settlers' ideology of land development arose out of particular social conditions helps to explain Moodie's vision of land to be exploited for the good of future generations. Wood's analysis does not help to explain however, how or why Moodie may depart from this tradition. New's exploration of representation of land takes Wood's thesis one step further by his interest in explaining how representations of land may both function to "question or confirm configurations of power" (5). My discussion of Moodie's representation of land as a shifting emblem of displacement or belonging relies on Wood's notion that Upper-Canadian writers wrote within a tradition which upheld material values of industry and progress. At the same time, I share with New a preoccupation with questioning the assumptions upon which these values are based.

In Imagining Culture: New World Narrative and the Writing of Canada, Margaret Turner argues that "the order the pioneer creates in the landscape is his

defence" (58). One way in which Susanna Moodie attempts to create order in the landscape is by locating her new homestead with relation to previously existing marks of civilization: "Our bush-farm was located on the border-line of a neighbouring township, only one degree less wild, less out of the world than the famed 'English Line,' the boast and glory of this *terra incognita*" (439). The words that Moodie chooses to situate the location of her bush-farm suggest a fear of the unknown and a drive to reduce this fear by setting limits and borders of known space. She constructs an opposition of nature and culture: the mark of civilization is implied with words such as "border," "farm," "township," and "English Line; this civilization is contrasted with the mysterious natural world with terms such as "wild," "out of the world," and "*terra incognita*." Drawing on the motif of mapping to order space, these words reveal the appropriating gesture implicit in her description: she attempts to represent space as a knowable, definable entity which is discrete from other defined spaces. Yet, by setting up the opposition between the known space of human occupation and an unknown space defined by absence of human knowledge, she also sets up the possibility of border crossings. Her bush farm is settled but it is only "one degree less wild" than the surrounding land. This fragile boundary between the settled and the wild suggests anxiety that she cannot contain her space. The "wild" threatens to engulf her defined geographical space into *terra incognita*, land unknown. In an exploration of ideology and the creation of novelistic space, Lennard Davis argues that "description is profoundly dependent on cultural notions of what one can claim, envision, or comprehend in words" (66). Although Moodie constructs most of her surroundings as *terra incognita* or land that she herself cannot comprehend, her borrowing of the term from the discourse of exploration sets up the possibility of further penetration into the wilderness. Within a social and cultural frame, Moodie reproduces a borderline space. As I will argue later, her inability or unwillingness to understand her New World neighbours and their customs accentuates her sense of

occupying a space on the edge of the wilderness. She describes her parcel of land as "residing in such a lonely, out-of-the-way place, surrounded by . . . savages" (97). These savages are not natives, but "semi-barbarous" Yankees (197). "Surrounded" by wild forests and wild inhabitants, Moodie's civilized space hovers on the verge of disintegration.

In The Journals of Susanna Moodie, Margaret Atwood writes: "Whether the wilderness is / real or not / depends on who lives there" (13). In Moodie's case, her first home in the settlement of Cobourg functions as a material sign of this mindscape. In her essay "Women in the Wilderness" Heather Murray formulates the concept of "pseudo-wilderness" to describe a rural area or camp which is often perceived as wilderness because it lacks the worldly comforts and distractions of a civilized city space. Murray develops Atwood's thesis by arguing that "wilderness in Canada is where you make it, or imagine it to be" (75). She suggests that the pseudo-wilderness belongs on a continuum of city/pseudo-wilderness/wilderness. This model of the pseudo-wilderness can be seen as another form of subjective displacement in that it represents a transitional state or border space. Throughout Roughing It in the Bush, Moodie represents her homestead on the periphery: it is home but it will never be the home that England represents to her; it is settled yet it verges on the wild. Writing about her encounter with the land becomes an act of appropriation, of grounding herself within what was for her a strange, unknown space.

In Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World, Stephen Greenblatt argues that the first act of possessing the New World demanded "the primal act of witnessing" (122). As the principle "I" in Roughing It in the Bush, which was written to "warn settlers. . . not to take up grants and pitch their tents in the wilderness, and by so doing, reduce themselves and their families to hopeless poverty" (527), Moodie engages in the "primary act of witnessing" for the benefit of her British readers. The first chapter emphasizes this act of witnessing as Moodie

sails down the St. Lawrence River and begins her first observations of the land before her. Her account also reveals however, that even as she attempts to domesticate the wild space of the colony through a discourse of colonial witnessing, the reality of the wilderness impinges on her civilizing mission.

Many cultural theorists such as Mary Louise Pratt, Peter Hulme, and Paul Carter, as well as Stephen Greenblatt have remarked on the gaze on nature and the landscape by the explorer, colonizer, or settler as an act of possession or appropriation.[1] In Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation, Mary Louise Pratt suggests that in imperial accounts of landscape scenery, the land "presents itself to the invisible European seers" (60). This eye that regards "prospects in the spatial sense" also knows that it is scanning "prospects in the temporal sense" which include "possibilities of a Eurocolonial future coded as resources to be developed, surpluses to be traded, towns to be built" (61). Moreover, the visual descriptions attempt to naturalize the European's transformative projects. Moodie's description of her arrival provides a rich frame through which to examine the imperial gaze as a means of appropriating the land:

> As the sun rose above the horizon, all these matter of fact circumstances [hunger, fatigue] were forgotten, and merged in the surpassing grandeur of the scene that rose majestically before me. The previous day had been dark and stormy; and a heavy fog had concealed the mountain chain, which forms the stupendous background to this sublime view, entirely from our sight. As the clouds rolled away from their grey, bald brows and cast into denser shadow the vast forest belt. . . They loomed like mighty giants--Titans of the earth in all their rugged and awful beauty- -a thrill of wonder and delight pervaded my mind. The spectacle floated dimly on my sight--my eyes were blinded with tears--blinded with the excess of beauty. . . . Never had I beheld so many striking objects blended into one mighty whole! Nature had lavished all her noblest features in producing that enchanting scene. (26)

The most remarkable feature of Moodie's witnessing is how she sets up nature as the producer of a drama for the benefit of herself as the enthralled audience. Nature performs for her. Mountains provide the "stupendous background" and set the scene for the clouds to dramatically "roll away" the stage curtain. Nature so generously and lavishly offers the "vast forest belt," "the glorious river," and "many striking objects' which she "beholds" as such an appreciative audience. Moodie's description also produces a highly eroticized space in which "mighty giants- -Titans" rise up in all their "rugged beauty" and thrill and delight her. At this point she demurs to continue the erotic description by pleading "blindness by excess beauty." This recording of her arrival in the colony encodes a space of desire and underscores the powerful link between her discourse and its material implications. For the writer and poet this space of desire is a poetic trope but for the colonial witness, this is the desire of the settler who perceives vast natural resources to be developed, exploited, and transformed. Contrary to Thurston's observation that depictions of landscape in most settlement narratives value "most those picturesque scenes that most recall old-country pastoral" ("Remember" 188), in this passage Moodie's depiction of the landscape values the sublime ruggedness of the scene. By encoding the wilderness that she perceives in a discourse of desire and seduction, Moodie naturalizes the colonizer's appropriation of the land and natural resources.

In The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration, David Spurr argues that "colonial discourse takes over as it takes cover. It implicitly claims the territory surveyed as the colonizer's own" (28). At the same time however, this "proprietary vision" masks itself by transforming it into the response to an appeal by the colonized land or people. Furthermore, "this appeal may take the form of chaos that calls for the restoration of order, of absence that calls for affirming presence, of natural abundance that awaits the creative hand of technology" (28). The function of masking the appropriative gaze is to establish the

colonizer's right to "take over." Spurr's notion of a simultaneous "taking over and taking cover" may apply to Moodie's witnessing as she surveys the land but transfers the motivation of her gaze to the exhibitionism of nature. Her discourse of appropriation or claiming physical space thus "transfers the locus of desire onto the colonized object" (Spurr 28) itself, in this case the object is that of the natural world. By transferring her colonial desire into the desire of the colonial object Moodie establishes the settler's right to claim New World space.

Moodie's description of the landscape continues her "sweeping visual mastery" (Spurr 17) of the scene as the ship sails down the river. Her commanding view conforms to what Spurr describes as the rhetorical trope known as parataxis--placing things side by side-which had become "a standard adaptation of language to the scientific method in which the process of knowing the world became largely a matter of establishing natural objects as visually accessible" (18):

> Your eye follows the long range of lofty mountains until their blue summits are blended and lost in the blue sky. Some of these, partially cleared around the base, are sprinkled over with neat cottages; and the green slopes that spread around them are covered with flocks and herds. The surface of the splendid river is diversified with islands of every size and shape, some in wood, others partially cleared and adorned with orchards and white farm houses. . . In more remote regions, where the forest has never yet echoed to the woodsman's axe, or received the impress of civilization, the first approach to the shore inspires a melancholy awe, which becomes painful in its intensity. (27)

In this passage, Moodie's eye moves systematically out to the horizon, then returns to the foreground to inspect the details of the scenery; she arranges space from the point of view of the imperial eye. Her gaze roams around the scene before her, providing a background, middleground, and foreground, including sweeping overviews and small details similar to a landscape painting. The highly sensory and

aestheticized scene that the imperial eye records for the benefit of readers contrasts the pastoral countryside with the imposing forest. As Mary Louise Pratt argues in her discussion of colonial descriptions of landscape, "the eye scanning prospects in the spatial sense knows itself to be looking at prospects in the temporal sense--possibilities of a Eurocolonial future coded as resources to be developed, surpluses to be traded, towns to be built" (61). In this way Moodie links the forest which hasn't "yet echoed to the woodsman's axe" to the comforting vision of settled land. The implication is that just as the neat cottages and cleared land were once part of the imposing forest, the wild forests and remote regions can be transformed into valuable, productive, and manageable land. Susan Wood argues that "future oriented, material values dominated English-Canadian thought during the period of settlement in the Canadas" (83). I situate Moodie's discourse as a product of these material values. If the wild forest inspires a "melancholy awe" almost painful in intensity, one way to eradicate the pain and melancholy is to impress on the wild forests "the mark of civilization." Moodie's production of space through discourse naturalizes her claim on New World space and creates a moral imperative for her to do so.

In spite of her imperial eye, however, Moodie also gazes at the land with the regard of the immigrant anxious to put her "foot upon the soil of the new world for the first time" (28). In contrast to the performance that nature lavished on her when she was looking out from the ship, the "extraordinary spectacle" (29) that greets her sight as she walks on the New World land is nothing like what seemed to be "a perfect paradise at a distance" (28). The human misery of the Irish emigrants that assaults Moodie's English gentlewoman sensibility on Grosse Isle forces her to reexamine her surroundings and acknowledge the human in the landscape. This disruption of her rapturous narration thoroughly disgusts her and she judges the "motley crew" as far beneath the idealized Indian, "one of nature's gentleman" (29). According to Moodie, the Irish emigrants are like disposable leftovers, "vicious, uneducated barbarians who

form the surplus of over-populous European countries" and are "far behind the wild man in delicacy of feeling or natural courtesy" (29). Moodie's ethnocentric observation is ironic because later in the book she explains that her husband's impulse to emigrate derived from material conditions which disfavoured younger males of landed gentry. She explains that her husband's decision to emigrate to Canada was motivated by the fact that he was not "overgifted with the good things of this world" as "the younger sons of old British families are" (525). The implication is that the younger sons of England are "surplus" in that most wealth, land and possessions were inherited by the older sons, leaving the youngest to struggle to provide for his family. However, to Moodie, only the poor Irish "form a surplus" whereas the impoverished gentleman constitutes an individual who deserves to better his condition.

In order to differentiate themselves from the "revolting scene" (29) Moodie and her husband withdraw through a woodland path to the back of the island where she once again assumes her appreciative, appropriating gaze. This time however, she is unsuccessful as the "discordant yells of the filthy beings [sully] the purity of the air and water with contaminating sights and sounds" (31). I interpret Moodie's description of her first contact with the New World and its inhabitants as an example of what Thurston describes as a "zone of contact" (Work of Words 141) between her unified, English self and what she perceives to be a chaotic, discordant mob of non-English or lower-class emigrants. Thurston argues that in a zone of contact, Moodie's authoritative voice is subverted because she cannot dominate the discourse of the other. When she allows the "voices of the vulgar" (Work of Words 140) into her narration these voices resist her civilizing impulse. I situate the Grosse Isle scene as an example of what Thurston calls a zone of contact because Moodie retreats from what she constructs as a mob, thereby losing her authority to control the space. The clash of humans that she perceives upon her first contact with the New World, then,

disrupts her appropriating gaze and resists her desire to recreate an Old World civilization in the space of the New World.

Moodie's process of inhabiting colonial space is marked by attempts to appropriate the colony yet she also feels subjectively displaced by it. Simon Ryan argues in The Cartographic Eye: How Explorers Saw Australia that "the explorative gaze is a mastery of space" (6). While gazing at the land from a privileged perspective constitutes a moment of power that embodies Moodie's will to claim space, her sense of displacement arising out of New World contact is accompanied by a loss of this mastery. As Thurston observes, Moodie's neighbours disturb her by "transgressing on her sacred bourgeois privacy, initially by reversing the mastery of the seer over seen that she exercised on the Grosse Isle mob" (Work of Words 142). He cites the example of Moodie's Yankee neighbour, Emily, who takes possession of Moodie's belongings through the borrowing system, while also taking over Moodie's private space by gazing back at her. Moodie describes her sense of invasion of personal space through the neighbour's gaze, "surveying all our proceedings in the most impertinent manner" (93): "And there she stood, staring at me in the most unceremonious manner, her keen eyes glancing obliquely to every corner of the room, which she examined with critical exactness" (93). Another neighbour, also cited by Thurston, (Work of Words 142-143) "wandered about the room, turning over our books and papers, looking at and handling everything" (105). Thurston does not mention, however, that this neighbour's gaze also extends to the symbolic centre of her home as he takes "a lid off from the pot on the fire, to examine its contents" (105). In another incident, even Moodie's attempts at resisting the neighbours' gaze are thwarted: "when I civally requested them to leave the room, they would range themselves upon the door-step, watching my motions, with their black eyes gleaming through their tangled, uncombed locks" (135), she laments. These instances of New World characters gazing at Moodie usurp her authority and signify, as Thurston

argues, "her loss of the objectifying mastery of the gaze, even in her own home" (Work of Words 143). Much of Moodie's claiming of New World space involves exchanges of power in which she alternately exerts her appropriating impulse and loses this mastery through contact with a New World culture that displaces her.

To add to Thurston's observation that New World characters subvert Moodie's mastery of the gaze, I would suggest that the nature of Moodie's homestead itself, which functions as an emblem of her declassed status, resists her desiring gaze of appropriation. When she first views her home, which she declares "not a house but a cattle-shed or pig-sty" (90), Moodie is "perfectly bewildered" (91); she "could only stare at the place" with her "eyes swimming in tears" (91). In this instance, the powerful gaze of the colonizer is transformed into a powerless stare of an exile within the wild space of an unfamiliar home by her inability to grasp her New World space. Her Upper Canadian home does not correspond to the paradigm of a home as a haven of comfort and civility. Home for Moodie, after all, was an ordered England where nature provided protection and security. For example, before her emigration to Canada she makes a final visit to "the beloved home" (72) of her youth and describes a world in which all aspects of nature function in perfect harmony: "The woods were bursting into leaf, the meadows and hedge-rows were flushed with flowers, and every grove echoed to the warblings of birds and the humming of bees" (72). It was also in this harmonious space that she learned how to write poetry by learning "from the melody of waters the music of natural sounds" (73). By contrast, in the New World, her home inspires fear rather than comfort. Just as she described the location of her homestead as verging on the wild, the actual home itself also threatens to disintegrate her notion of home as a haven of civility. Reluctantly, she takes "possession of this untenable tenement" (91). W. H. New's comment on Moodie's description of her New World home is pertinent. She is afraid of her home, "Afraid of its 'strangeness', afraid even of being alone in the world that she has claimed as her own" (36). Moodie

may attempt to construct borders between the civilized and the wild, but in New World space, her borders are neither respected by its inhabitants nor by the realities of the bush. As New comments, "expectation and experience are at odds, in language as well as in 'reality' " (35).

While Moodie struggles to cope with the demands of managing the domestic space of a pioneer homestead located on the edge of wilderness, she attempts to exert control over the exterior space of nature. One of her methods for "consoling" herself for the subjective and material displacement that she experienced, along with "writing long letters to home friends," (163) is by "roaming about the fields and woods, and making acquaintance with every wild flower as it blossomed" (163). In the evenings, she and her family "wandered through the woodland paths, beneath the glowing Canadian sunset, and gathered rare specimens of strange plants and flowers" (167). She enjoyed these expeditions because, as she states: "Every object that met my eye was new to me, and produced that peculiar excitement which has its origins in a thirst for knowledge, and a love of variety" (168). Moodie's description of collecting and classifying the flora of her New World space arises out of an Imperial tradition established in the eighteenth century. As Pratt explains: "Specimen gathering, the building up of collections, the naming of new species, the recognition of known ones, became standard themes in travel and travel books" (27) in the second half of the eighteenth century. She argues that natural history became an integral aspect of the production of knowledge that enabled colonial appropriation of territory. It "provided a means for narrating inland travel and exploration aimed. . . .at territorial surveillance, appropriation of resources, and administrative control" (39). The act of naming entailed in natural history is "directly transformative" (Pratt 33) because it creates order from chaos. As Pratt argues, "the naming, the representing, and the claiming are all one; the naming brings the reality of order into being" (33). Moodie, in the image of "a European bourgeois subject simultaneously innocent and imperial"

(Pratt 33) collects and names the wild species around her bush farm as a gesture of claiming space and producing knowledge; in naming, she domesticates the wilderness for settler occupation.

In her discussion of natural science, Pratt is primarily concerned with the controlling gesture that specimen naming and collecting entails. Moodie's naming and collecting certainly arise out of this Imperial project. Her sister Catherine Parr Traill even developed this gentile pastime into a pragmatic science.[2] As Clara Thomas observes of Traill: "She commenced a programme of self-tuition which led her beyond the status of amateur and which made her, finally, an international authority on Canada's plants and flowers" (53). Moodie's specimen collecting may also be seen, however, as a learning gesture. When Moodie takes the time to closely observe the flora and fauna of the bush she begins to appreciate her New World environment not only for its abstractions of beauty or novelty but for its utility. For example, when she collects wild dandelion roots and grinds them up to produce a coffee substitute, she enacts an appropriating gesture. This gesture is not that of the Imperialist observer, however; it is the gesture of a pioneer woman adapting to the reality of frontier conditions. In this case, Moodie transforms a gesture that originated out of imperial conventions into a form of contact which helps her to adapt to her home space.

On the domestic front Moodie battles with displacement and adaptation, while within the pastoral space of domesticated nature she exerts her power. This pastoral space is differentiated from the wilderness by what is describable, and hence knowable. As she experiences both fear and appreciation of the Canadian landscape, her appropriating, imperial gaze develops into a more complex, more uncertain regard. As Heather Murray suggests, Moodie demonstrates a "simultaneous attraction and aversion to the wilderness" (78). On one hand the wilderness represents to Moodie danger, hardship, isolation and the unknown. On the other hand, she perceives the wilderness as pure, inspirational, and sublime. It offered her the possibility of

independence and a special communion with God. She also perceives it as abundant natural resources waiting to be transformed into commodities to be exchanged in order to create wealth. Susan Wood argues that settlers were influenced by Old World notions of beauty: "Educated British emigrants brought with them a mental baggage of Burke's sublime, Chateaubriand's romanticism, Rousseau's Noble Savage, [and] Wordsworth's pantheism" (96); however, she adds, the reality of the challenge of transforming the land also "shapes responses to it" (97). As I have been arguing, in Moodie's case the claiming of New World space as a home entails an adaptation of her preconceived expectations to her specific reality.

The chapter "Brian, the Still Hunter" contextualizes Moodie's shifting sense of exile and homecoming as it plays out in her representation of the wilderness. Brian, the reformed drinker turned noble savage embodies Moodie's simultaneous aversion and attraction to the wilderness. As the embodiment of the nature and what it represents to Moodie, Brian is "a gentleman" (478). While he is silent and "strange," he is also a "benevolent" (478) presence who instinctively communicates with animals and children and who shows Moodie the nobility of the forest and the material and spiritual sustenance it may provide. As Helen Buss recognizes however, Brian also represents madness or "the terror of being 'bushed'" ("Two Exemplary Early Texts" 91). Having already once attempted suicide, he falls into a "moping melancholy" which ends in "self-destruction" (191) once the Moodies leave the "pseudo-wilderness" for the back woods. By linking Brian's madness to his close association with the wilderness, Moodie expresses her own fear that she too may become overwhelmed by "dark presentiments of ill" (193).

John Thurston corroborates the argument that Moodie identifies with Brian by observing that in contrast to other character sketches, the case of Brian presents a more developed character. Brian the gentleman addresses "her from an ideological position she recognizes. . . . She in turn [quotes his] words in a voice indistinguishable from

her own and speaks to her English readers, hailing them to recognize their shared subjectivity/subjection" (Work of Words 149). By "hailing" Thurston refers to the interpellation of a subject which tends to demand or construct shared ideological positions. He argues further that Brian, along with Tom and Malcolm, the two other English gentlemen that Moodie writes about, present " the spectre of madness and sin lurking within the colonial bush beyond the orderly society of the imperial centre with its moral strictures" (149). Yet Brian also represents innocence and escape from the material worldliness of civilization. Rather than exploiting and transforming nature like a colonizer, Brian lives in symbiosis with the natural world. Moodie recognizes in him a childlike quality; he is "all nature" (Roughing It 181) as opposed to Moodie's culture. Brian's innocence teaches Moodie that 'beautiful things are hid away in the wilderness" (181). Brian then, represents a figure of marginality; he lives on the edges of civilized society and inhabits a marginal subjective space on the borders of wisdom and madness. He supplies Moodie with an externalization of her relation to the natural world in that he exemplifies two approaches to the land that Moodie learns to negotiate: an appreciation of both the beauty and utility of nature on the one hand and on the other hand, the threat of subjective disintegration.

In a moment of particular homesickness, Moodie selects the following lines to represent her own alienation from her surroundings:

> O land of waters, how my spirit tires,
> In the dark prison of thy boundless woods;
> No rural charm poetic thought inspires,
> No music murmurs in thy mighty floods;
> Though vast the features that compose thy frame,
> Turn where we will, the landscape's still the same. (163)

Here, the land is unreadable; it is defined by absence. In spite of its looming presence she cannot detect distinguishing features in the landscape. Her homesickness blinds

her to the charms that she so enthusiastically described as she scanned the panoramic spectacle of nature upon her arrival in the colony. She has come to recognize the "rugged fields, with rude huts dotted o'er,/show cultivation unimproved by art" (163). Her art, Roughing It in the Bush, demonstrates the shifting nature of the exile's desire and apprehension to be rooted in new land.

Moodie's sense of exile is gradually transformed into a sense of belonging as she is forced to come into direct contact with the realities of transforming wilderness into productive land. As Wood observes, her expression of exile and her discourse of the sublime give way to "a concrete language of experience" (97). The following passage, in which Moodie describes her management of the farm while her husband fought to put down the Rebellion of 1837, contrasts sharply with her breathless account of her arrival as she sailed down the St. Lawrence River. She moves from a position of observer to participant in the transformation of landscape into productive land:

> The spring brought us plenty of work; we had potatoes and corn to plant, and the garden to cultivate. By lending my oxen for two days work I got Wittals, who had no oxen, to drag me in a few acres of oats, and to prepare the land for potatoes and corn. The former I dropped into the earth, while Jenny covered them up with the hoe. (421)

This change in discourse from the effusive, colonizing imperialist to the pragmatic, proud pioneer represents a will to claim the space of her New World settlement. To borrow Margaret Turner's phrase for describing the occupation of the New World, Moodie's pragmatic discourse represents a "transformation of space to place" (56). My use of this phrase suggests that through her many years of contact with the land in the bush Moodie becomes successful in staking her claim to the colony. What was once to her a space which she filled with preconceived notions of beauty or

strangeness imported from her Old World culture becomes a real place she takes possession of through direct contact.

Finally, it is important to note that even though Moodie regains a sense of belonging to a place in the bush, the gentlewoman still longs to inhabit a more civilized space, far from the physical hardships of homesteading. She and her family inevitably move to town when her husband is offered the post of sheriff in the city of Belleville. While the move is tinged with sadness, to her it represents a form of progress. Appraising her new premises she externalizes this sense of progress in the words of Jenny, her helper: "Och! Who would have thought, a year ago, misthress dear, that we should be living in a mansion like this, and ating off raal chaney? It is but yestherday that we were hoeing praties in the field" (488). "Yes, Jenny, God has been very good to us" (488) she agrees. With this move to a bourgeois space, Moodie fulfills the promise of progress in the settler's "ideology of development" (Wood 86). Wood argues that settlers "sought the emotional security of material possessions" (94). Moodie's acquisition of her "china tea-service" (488), then, can be seen as an emblem of confidence in her place in the New World. It signals a reassertion of the gentlewoman in the drawing room, transformed, however, with the sense that her physical labour has contributed to the progress of both her family and the nation.

With the move to town, the nature of the bush is transformed into a representation of nature in the interior homes of bourgeois city folk. Moodie boasts: "Our print shops are full of well-executed designs of native artists. And the grand scenery of our lakes and forests, transferred to canvas, adorns the homes of our wealthy citizens" (534). As Lennard Davis argues in a discussion of the ideology of creating and describing space, like the appropriating gaze of the explorer-settler, "painting landscapes comes out of the desire to master nature and control it" (74). He argues further that "landscape as a control of space serves to protect the viewer from the dangers of the terrain and at the same time transform the hostile environment into a

refuge" (74). Far from the dangers of the wilderness, Moodie may now contemplate nature from the comfort of her city home. Order reigns over chaos. Nature is transformed into culture as Moodie' inscribes her homecoming in a confirmation of controlled and civilized space.

Notes

1 See Peter Hulme's Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1492-1797 and Paul Carter's The Road to Botany Bay: An Exploration of Landscape and History.

2 See also Elizabeth Thompson's discussion of Traill's achievements in botany and home economics in The Pioneer Woman: A Canadian Archetype. She situates Traill's non-fiction as an attempt not only to learn about her environment but to teach others about it. She argues that these books were an attempt "to help other emigrant women to master the difficulties encountered and develop the skills required in the course of the pioneering experience" (5).

Part Two

Inventing Decolonized Space in Obasan

Chapter 3: Testimony and Discursive Space

The Japanese Canadian experience of loss of vocation, accumulated wealth, and personal property during their internment in World War Two contrasts starkly with the settler experience. Although Moodie and her husband originally experienced a loss of capital upon arrival in the colony, they were able to rebuild their lives and attain a certain level of prosperity. As pioneers, Moodie and her family cleared and farmed land, defended territory, and contributed to the prosperity of the colony. Through their writings, they also participated in the cultural life of the burgeoning colony. As Susan Wood argues, "literate settlers extended culture" (92). These "impoverished gentlefolk" brought with them to the colonies "their habits of reading, writing, painting, and discussing the arts" (92). All of these acts served to advance the process of building a nation through the transformation of its natural resources, the establishment of trade and commerce, and the invention of a national mythology through the production of literature. As Wood argues: "The immigrant grubbing up stumposts to make a potato field to feed his children, gathering with his friends to raise the logs for a home of his own, could see himself acting out, on an individual level, the task of building a nation. This dual action formed the basis of his social mythology" (82). In literature this mythology was often expressed as both a celebration of Nature and of its potential to be transformed into prosperous farms, factories, and towns. As Wood observes: "Appreciation of untouched nature, throughout English-Canadian pioneer literature, is mixed with a longing for civilization to arise and transform it" (97). The production of pioneer literature in turn interpellates "readers as subjects for the nation" as a "form of print culture [that] has constituted a privileged site for the unification of the citizen within the 'imagined community' of the nation" (Lowe 98). In Obasan, on the other hand, Joy Kogawa demonstrates that the contribution to the building and development of the nation of

some immigrant cultures, such as the Japanese Canadians, may be forgotten or erased. She also demonstrates how racist nationalist ideology may bolster dominant groups at the expense of minorities.

In 1962, twenty years after the first instance of relocation to the interior of British Columbia, Naomi and her family make a pilgrimage not to their old Vancouver home but to their first place of exile, the ghost town of Slocan. In a search for the answer to the question "What remains of our time over there?" (117), the family discovers that all traces of their existence there had vanished: "Where on the map or road was there any sign? Not a mark was left" (117). The absence of signs of their exiled community's presence at the abandoned mining town functions as a material reminder of the threat of complete cultural erasure. The absence of any physical mark of their suffering in exile provides evidence that their experience could be forgotten, vanishing from national memory like the huts that once stood there. The testimony of Obasan ensures that the Japanese Canadian experience may claim a space in the unfolding of national history by recreating a map of the experience which registers the Japanese Canadian presence. Through the testimonial voices of Obasan, it Kogawa's task to challenge the official construction of history and mark their presence in the collective memory of the nation.

During World War Two, exiled within their own country, Japanese Canadians became increasingly marginalized as they were forcibly relocated deeper within the interior of the country. As Sau-ling Cynthia Wong argues, for certain groups, "deeper penetration into the land means exclusion from, rather than fuller participation in, the nation's development" (139). These families of first, second, and third-generation immigrants lost all of the accumulated wealth and social position that they had struggled to gain when they were forced from their homes and resettled in ghost towns in which living conditions resembled those of early settlers. The Japanese Canadians' contact with the land, however, signaled drastically reduced circumstances and a

corresponding impotence to improve their situation during the period of internment and relocation. For the settler, contact with the land represented an act of growth and potential liberation; for the disenfranchised Japanese Canadians, this contact represented a negation of their contributions to the country and presented a severe restriction on their self-actualization. Furthermore, the story of their internment was excluded from official public discourse. In this chapter, I am interested in discursive forms of claiming space. I will argue that Obasan may be situated as a form of both private and public testimony. As a testimonial to the suffering and resilience of Japanese Canadians, the novel resists the interpellation of the national subject of official discourse and proposes in its place a space from which to question the production of this subject. In other words, it creates an alternative, decolonized space in which to tell their story.

Obasan represents a reinvention of Canada from the position of oppressed minority subjects coming to terms with how to recreate a sense of belonging in a country that has rejected them. An institutional and cultural silence surrounded this episode in history for several reasons. First, even though some politicians formed alliances to revoke the racist laws concerning the Japanese Canadians,[1] patriotic celebrations of democracy and victory after World War Two discouraged criticism of the government. Second, the dispersal of Japanese Canadians across the country and a corresponding pressure on them to assimilate within the dominant culture, discouraged the organization of a strong Japanese Canadian coalition. Third, an institutionalized celebration of multiculturalism and tolerance tended to turn a blind eye to the legislated injustices against Japanese Canadians. This testimony to the trauma of internal exile redefines personal, collective, and national identity and offers an alternate version of official history. On a personal level, the uncovering of buried national and family history legitimizes Naomi's profound sense of alienation. However, Naomi's recovery of this history also marks the foundations of

homecoming; she is able to place the fragmented pieces of her life together to form a reconfigured story, a story to which she knows she belongs. On a public level, this testimony to the internment of Japanese Canadians and its implications for the community forces a reexamination of received national history.[2] It also critiques the cherished image of Canada as a tolerant multicultural mosaic. Obasan, then, claims a space for the story of Japanese Canadians in the ongoing narration of the nation's culture and history. This space, however is a site of contestation. Constructed from the experiences of displacement, fragmentation and near cultural erasure, this space resists hegemonic constructions of history.

In Obasan, Naomi's outspoken, activist Aunt Emily gives Naomi a box filled with old private letters, newspaper clippings, official documents, and a manuscript entitled: "The Story of the Nisei in Canada: A Struggle for Liberty." The Nisei, the first generation of Japanese Canadians to be born in Canada, "strongly sought to identify with their country" (Harris 42) and actively campaigned for the civil rights of Japanese Canadians in the 1930s and the years leading up to the Second World War.[3] In this sixty-page manifesto, the lines "This is my own, my native land" are repeated like a mantra until the affirmation is transformed into a question: "Is this my own, my native land?" (Obasan 42). Emily's questioning of the nature of citizenship and belonging to a country which disenfranchised the Japanese Canadian community to which she belongs signals Kogawa's preoccupation with forms of membership in and attachment to both dominant and minority groups. Naomi's resistance to Emily's strong identification with the nation further problematizes the question of attachment to a place from which they were displaced. The exploration of the tension between exclusion and belonging is further underscored by Kogawa's use of documentary techniques which suggest that the novel provides an account of real events experienced by real people. As Manina Jones observes in That Art of Difference: Documentary Collage and English Canadian Writing, Obasan "both tells the story of the efforts of a

certain group of people to make the case of redress of injustices committed against Japanese-Canadians by the government of Canada during and after the Second World War, and provides a fictional forum for the 'hearing' of silenced historical voices" (120).

The novel bears witness to historical events and in the process, it critiques the production of national history "within a single official literary or historical tradition" (Lowe 112). If Susanna Moodie's settlement narrative represents a privileged discursive invention of Canada,[4] Joy Kogawa reinvents the nation from a marginalized position, thereby creating a new space from which to construct national identity. As a settler writing back to the imperial centre of England, Moodie constructs a Canada of limitless potential. It is a nation in which "men are allowed. . . a freedom enjoyed by few of the most polished countries in Europe" (530), a country in which children of "honest tillers of the soil have steadily risen to the highest class, and have given to Canada some of her best and wisest legislators" (531). Kogawa, on the other hand, deconstructs the image of Canada as a land of freedom and opportunity by demonstrating that at a high point of nationalism during the Second World War, the Canadian government legislated the oppression of a group of its own citizens. In the bundle of documents that Aunt Emily gives Naomi, this "short harsh history" is summarized: "'Seizure and government sale of fishing boats. Suspension of fishing licenses. Relocation camps. Liquidation of property. Letter to General MacArthur. Bill 15. Deportation. Revocation of nationality" (33).[5] This racialization and disenfranchisement directed towards a specific ethnic minority locates Japanese Canadian history as a space within which to critique dominant versions of Canadian history as one of dialogue and compromise. I situate Obasan within a minority discourse that Lowe describes as a "site for the emergence of another kind of political subject, one who has a historically 'alien-ated' relationship to the category of citizenship" (Lowe 12).[6] In this context, the notion of home is problematized. In

Obasan, Naomi must work through possible answers to a complex question on the nature of belonging: Can you belong to a place that has excluded you?

Although Obasan is a novel, Kogawa's references to real people and real historical events in her public acknowledgment, as well as the documents she embeds within the book, suggest that Obasan might be read as an interrogation of the nature of fact and fiction. Supported by Linda Hutcheon's theory of historiographic metafiction which "thematizes the postmodern concern with the radically indeterminate and unstable nature of textuality and subjectivity" (Hutcheon, Politics 48), David Goellnicht asserts that in Obasan "history is not fixed, but discursive," a "form of saying founded in language which is always in flux" (294). I would argue, however, as Rachelle Kanefsky argues in her exploration of humanism in Kogawa's novels, that a postmodern interpretive strategy which insists on a purely discursive nature of history tends to erase the very real and very painful material events experienced by oppressed individuals and groups. As Kanefsky argues, "Advancing the postmodern belief in the essentially unstable nature of signification, postmodern critics. . . argue that language cannot reflect empirical reality. History is not, therefore, an accurate record of past events but it is like fiction, a subjective construct" (11).

Kogawa does demonstrate mistrust of official discourse through the characters of Naomi and Aunt Emily, but she does so not in order to reject the possibility of knowing truth, but in order to promote a counter story. Like the narrators of *testimonios*, who are "conscious of working in a translated, borrowed language," (Sommer 121) Naomi, a victim of the power of words to oppress, does "not have to be reminded of the arbitrary nature of the sign" (Sommer 121). She questions Emily's project of activism because she lacks the will to face the painful memories of her past. She questions the utility of Emily's project: "are you thinking that through lobbying and legislating, speech-making and story-telling, we can extricate ourselves from our foolish ways? Is there evidence for optimism?" (199). Naomi's mistrust of language

is evidence of a severely damaged individual who was a victim of the power of words to label, lie, and oppress; her unease with Aunt Emily's notion that words may also empower and transform is a natural reaction for someone so traumatized. Furthermore, her reluctance to imitate her activist Aunt Emily who exhorts her to "scream! Cry it out!" (50) is evidence of the extreme estrangement from the validity of her own experience. A desire to forget or remain silent may also be a form of self-protection for Naomi. Kogawa 's representation of silence is in keeping with Dori Laub's theory of testimony. Laub suggests that the one who listens to stories of extreme trauma "must listen to and hear the silence" of the survivor for whom silence "serves them both as a sanctuary and as a place of bondage" (58).

The key for Naomi to free herself from self-imposed bondage will be to join the voices of her damaged community and appropriate her experience as alternative but legitimate history. She must "own" her story and let herself belong to this history of suffering and survival. This is a process that many postcolonial and feminist critics call "decolonization." Although not without theoretical contestation, the concept of decolonization describes a "process of thorough social transformation" and an "ongoing project of resistance struggles" (Lowe 107).[7] Helen Tiffen emphasizes that decolonization is "a process, not an arrival; it invokes an ongoing dialectic between hegemonic centrist systems and peripheral subversions of them" (95). It dismantles forms of colonial rule which "emphasized the reconstruction of hierarchical relations of region, culture, language, and especially race" (Lowe 108). Lowe argues that decolonization "can be defined as necessarily antagonistic to existing institutions of representation, aesthetic and literary as well as constitutional or political" (108). We can therefore "read Asian American writing as emerging out of decolonization, in this sense" (107). Because Obasan shares with most Asian American writing a subversion of dominant discourses of official history, I situate it as a decolonizing discourse. The novel's non-linear, disruptive narrative breaks out of the traditional realist aesthetic

while its narrator, Naomi undergoes a process of decolonization as she begins to interrogate her past and the power structures that displaced her community. Lowe argues that the writing of the decolonizing novel "takes place necessarily by way of detour into the excavation of 'history'" (108). I argue that through the testimonial voices in Obasan, a process of the excavation of history is reenacted.

In light of the fact that Obasan represents an excavation of buried history, coupled with the response of the Canadian government to the work, I propose to read Obasan through the lense of testimonial literature. John Beverley describes the *testimonio*, the Latin American term for testimony, as "the literature of personal witness" (94). A form of resistance literature, the *testimonio* "represents those subjects excluded from authorized representation" (93). It also represents "an affirmation of the individual subject, of individual growth and transformation, but in connection with a group or class situation marked by marginalization, oppression, and struggle" (103). It is connected to decolonizing writing in that it "expresses transitional material relations in neo- and post colonial societies and disrupts mainstream literary conventions" (Kaplan "Outlaw Genres" 122). Although Beverley insists that the narrator of a *testimonio* must be a real person who continues living after the story is told, and also cautions against an appropriation of the *testimonio* by literature, I would argue that in light of its semi-autobiographical status and the real voices of history speaking through the documents embedded in the novel, Obasan functions as a testimony in the sense of an oppressed subject bearing witness to a historical event. Like the *testimonio*, which "has been important in the maintaining and developing of the practice of international rights and solidarity movements" (Beverley 99), Obasan has been instrumental in Japanese Canadians' struggle for recognition of the historical injustices that they endured. In Obasan, exile functions not as a modernist literary trope of the expatriated artist, nor a condition of alienation of the individual brought on by *fin de siècle* angst, but as a collective material

experience, a forced condition of marginalization and cultural erasure.[8] Moreover, homecoming represents not only an individual's nostalgic longing to return to a familiar, idealized place; it also represents claiming a collective alternative space in a national landscape where evidence of their internment was erased. Physical marks of their experience were wiped off the map as traces of the internment such as holding pens, work camps and ghost towns were obliterated. The collaborative character of the *testimonio* which implies the "heavily mediated process" between the "'speaker' who tells the story and the 'listener' who compiles and writes the narrative" (Caplan "Outlaw Genres" 123) is reconfigured in Obasan as the multivalent voices who bear witness to the experience of displacement through Aunt Emily's documents and Naomi's narrative, and the reader who makes sense of the voices and constructs meaning.

I have been arguing that Obasan functions as as a discursive form of claiming space by uncovering buried history. In order to understand how Naomi's testimony represents a homecoming, it is important to recognize the extent to which Naomi was alienated from her history. The material conditions of exile of Naomi and other members of her family shape both their resistance and desire to belong to a community and to a place. The tension between the traumatic experience of exile and the longing to be rooted in one place affects each member differently according to their identification to both an ethnic and dominant "Canadian" identity. Naomi's mistrust of official history and suspicion of language due to her experience of internment, loss of both parents, and her declassed status result in her retreat into silence. Her silence in turn provokes her alienation from community and loss of faith in social change. On the other hand, the silence and restraint of Obasan and Uncle stem both from a wish to protect Naomi and her brother Stephen from knowledge of the horror of the atomic blast that their mother suffered in Japan, as well as from a sense of duty to remain resigned and grateful for survival and the fulfillment of basic needs. The silence of all

three members is further reinforced by cultural notions of decorum and quiet endurance. As King-Kok Cheung argues, "The issei believe in *gaman*, in quiet forbearance, in dignified silence" (145).[9] Emily's own witnessing of events in the form of her journal, as well as her exhortation to Naomi not to deny the past but "remember everything. . . Cry it out! Scream!" (50), however, give Naomi the will to remember and testify to her experience of exile. Claiming space is in enacted on both public and private levels in the articulation of testimony; Naomi appropriates her painful history and in so doing, recognizes the history of her community. In the process, she highlights the "tension between an ideological demand for identification with the nation and the contradictory material conditions within which that demand is made" (Lowe 146).

As King-Kok Cheung suggests, Naomi must negotiate between "voicelessness and vociferousness" (128), two modes of expression embodied by her two aunts, Obasan and Emily. As Naomi herself observes, "How different my two aunts are. One lives in sound, the other in stone. Obasan's language remains deeply underground but Aunt Emily, BA., MA., is a word warrior" (32). While Naomi is a member of the Sansei, or third-generation, she was raised by her aunt and uncle, members of the first-generation Issei who "sought a dignified accommodation with the surrounding society, but without joining it or altering their way of life" (Harris 42). As she was raised by her aunt and uncle from the age of five, Naomi grows up with conservative values of the Issei, such as decorum and restraint. Like a bridge between the first and third generations, Emily, a member of the Nisei or second generation, represents a struggle of a minority group to gain legitimacy within an often racist and hostile dominant society. As Mason Harris argues, much of Naomi's mistrust of community membership is a result of the internment which severed the link between generations, thus disrupting a normal process of transition and acculturation integral to adjustment to the adopted country of any immigrant culture (41-43).

Exile, as Edward Said argues, represents "a fundamentally discontinuous state of being" ("Reflections" 163). Naomi lives in a discontinuous state of being as she is separated from her mother as a child by circumstances linked to the ravages of war. The silence enshrouding her mother's absence intensifies Naomi's discontinuous subjective state because she cannot put her questions about her mother to rest without knowing why her mother never came back from Japan and never attempted to contact her family. She is "consumed by the question. Devoured alive" (26). She is "trapped" by "memories of dead--all our dead--those who refuse to bury themselves" (26). Dispossessed of both private home and national membership, Naomi is also caught between two generations whose sentiments towards their adopted country are contradictory; she is unable to identify fully with either position. Compounding Naomi's sense of alienation from a shared sense of belonging, the government's policy of dispersal prevented the community from associating and organizing in the years following the war. As Mason Harris observes, the internment and dispersal destroyed the progressive Nisei movement that was developing on the West Coast prior to the war (41-43). These circumstances left Emily and members of her activist group without a political community and Naomi a deracinated Sansei "with the psychological conflicts of the Nisei and no ethnic community to mediate between her sense of alienation and the WASP world of rural Alberta" (Harris 43). These forms of discontinuity are represented in Naomi's reluctance to make a commitment to an ideal or to form personal relationships. Aunt Emily attributes this state of discontinuity to her denial of pain and injustice: "Denial is gangrene. Look at you, Nomi, shuffling back and forth between Cecil and Granton, unable to either go or to stay in the world with even a semblance of grace or ease" (50).

Naomi's state of exile and discontinuity is also reflected in her characteristic irony, a mode of expression characterized by obliqueness, distance, and subversion. One of the first glimpses of Naomi in Obasan has her commenting ironically on the

function of identity cards. She imagines her identity card to contain personal information on her state of subjectivity, inscribed in the official language of bureaucracy: "Marital Status: Old Maid. Health: Fine, I suppose. Personality: Tense. Is that past or present tense? It's perpetual tense." (7). Naomi's ironic play on her identity reflects the distance she feels from herself and others and signals her lack of faith in the transparency of words. Unlike Emily, she feels skeptical that language can adequately express subjective states. I have argued that Naomi lives in what Said terms a "discontinuous state of being," because she is in perpetual limbo, neither willing to articulate the past nor able to commit to the present by establishing a sense of home, community, and the intimacy of personal relationships.

It is Naomi's incapacity to engage in a dialogue with the past that relegates her to the passive position of mute neutrality. Emily's testimony disturbs Naomi's carefully sought-after passive state of non-involvement and apathy: "If it is not seen, it does not horrify. What is past recall is past pain. Questions from all these papers, questions referring to turbulence in the past, are an unnecessary upheaval in the delicate ecology of this numb day" (45). Naomi refuses Emily's pursuit of justice in favour of a state of numb suspension, thereby aligning herself with Obasan and Uncle who reject both Emily's direct speech, and her non-traditional, North-American values. (36). With her silent forbearance, Obasan insists that the ultimate quality that the family should value is "Arigatai. Gratitude only" (42). Uncle agrees that "This country is the best. There is food. There is medicine. There is pension money. Gratitude. Gratitude" (42). Aligning herself with a passive acceptance of the status quo, Naomi pretends that she does not care about the loss of rights to which all Canadians can lay claim. Emily, however, identifies passionately as a Canadian and interprets the Japanese Canadian tragedy as a national tragedy: "What this country did to us, it did to itself" (33). By contrast, Naomi is alienated from any sense of belonging. Her only wish is to "seek the safety of invisibility" (32). Naomi's initial

sense of absence and loss is further intensified by her insistence to keep the past buried along with the graves of family and community members, or banished to the dusty corners of cobweb-filled attics. Alienated from an ethnic community that might have given her strength and belonging, incapable of establishing intimate relationships and self-condemned to spinsterhood, Naomi lives in emotional and cultural isolation. "None of my friends are Japanese," she confirms (38). Radically out of place in white, rural Alberta, her "exile from her place of exile" (197), she cannot feel at home there, even after thirty years. "In all my years in Southern Alberta, I have not been able to look long at this" (3), she says of the Prairie sky. Her overwhelming sense of homelessness carries over into her affective life as well, making her both a physically and emotionally displaced person. She is thus multiply dislocated on social, racial, ethnic, regional, and national levels.

Stripped of her rights as a citizen of Canada because of government supported racist hysteria, Naomi resists identification with a country that disenfranchised her family and deported them from their home in Vancouver. As each relocation pushes her further and further away from her home, Naomi sustains a series of losses related to a declassing process most clearly evident in the series of dimininshed houses that dislocate her from the total security and warmth of her bourgeois Vancouver to the utter destitution of the "chicken coop 'house'" (194) which the family didn't even own. As Sau-Ling Cynthia Wong observes, "the family members, once thriving human beings, are reduced by the struggle for survival to a barely differentiated huddle of suffering animal bodies" (141). That is why Naomi resents her Aunt Emily, who escaped the most degrading humiliations of relocation. Naomi cuts Emily's words off by telling her: "I cannot tell about this time, Aunt Emily. The body will not tell" (196). Naomi's utter resignation is embodied in her feelings about Emily's activities:

> All of Aunt Emily's words, all her papers, the telegrams

> and petitions, are like scratchings in the barnyard, the
> evidence of much activity, scaly claws hard at work.
> But what good do they do, I do not know--those little
> black typewritten words. . .They do not touch us where
> we are planted here in Alberta, our roots clawing the
> sudden Prairie air. The words are not made flesh,
> Trains do not carry us home. Ships do not return again.
> All my prayers disappear into space. (189).

For Naomi, words dissolve into meaninglessness when juxtaposed with the hard reality of her experience. As the "body will not tell," she buries her memories and attempts to "carry on" (9).

As I have suggested, Naomi's distrust of words relates both to her position as a marginalized, displaced person, and the influence of her aunt Obasan on her formative years of socialization. It is Obasan who teaches Naomi the lesson of silent endurance by setting the example of forgetfulness: "Everything is forgetfulness. The time for forgetting is now come." (30). Thus Naomi becomes estranged both from Canadian society at large, and from any sense that her own suffering might be valid and legitimate. The construction of Japanese Canadians as "other", on the one hand, and the severing of community ties with the move to small town Alberta, on the other hand, dislocates Naomi from any sense of who she is and who she could be. "'Once a Jap, always a Jap' and that means us. We're the enemy" (83), writes Emily in her diary describing the racist discourse that was intensified during the war. Japanese Canadians were dispossessed from "their position as Canadians, both because they are not recognized as such . . .and because their civil rights are suspended" (Jones 128). They are defined as the "saboteurs" (Obasan 92), "spies" (82), and "enemy aliens" (92). "None of us," says Aunt Emily, "escaped the naming. We were defined and identified by the way we were seen" (118). In other words, they were powerless to

claim a space for themselves in public discourse because their minority ethnic status, unlike Moodie's majority ethnic identity, prepared the way for exclusion from the nation.

Both Naomi and Emily understand the power of words to obscure and obfuscate reality. In sifting through Emily's box of documents, Naomi consistently comments on how official discourse hides the truth of experience. However, unlike Aunt Emily who also believes in the power of words to set the record straight- - "to write the vision and make it plain" rather than obscure, Naomi's comments on discursive power represent an ironic reading of a subject alienated from her own experience. For example, she reads the "toneless form letter" from B. Good who rejects Aunt Emily's claim to her mother's property because "Mrs. Kato is a Japanese National living in Japan at the outbreak of the war, all property belonging to her in Canada vests in the Custodian" (37). She forms her own subtext to the letter. This subtext demonstrates Naomi's resistance to any sense of national belonging: "Be good, my undesirable, my illegitimate children, be obedient, be servile, above all, don't send me any letters of enquiry about your homes, while I stand on guard (over your property) in the true north strong, though you are not free. B. Good" (37). Naomi's ironic subtext exposes the contradiction of a national ideology of a benevolent government by underscoring how Japanese Canadians were excluded from membership through both discursive regulation and confiscation of property. Her subversion of the national anthem demonstrates the impossibility for Naomi to "buy into" the national ideology of multiculturalism, an ideology which levels "the important differences and contradictions within and among racial and ethnic minority groups" (Lowe 103). Contrary to Aunt Emily, who strongly desires to participate in national affairs by insisting on her Canadian identity and lobbying for redress, Naomi disassociates herself from Emily's insistence that "we are the country" (42). "Crimes of history," thinks Naomi, "can stay history" (41).

Although Naomi wishes to bury forever her painful experience of internment, relocation and hard labour in the beet fields of Alberta, Aunt Emily works to promote the necessity of telling and reminding people of the dangers of forgetting in order to restore a collective social conscience that was virtually obliterated with the internment and dispersal of families: "You are your history. If you cut it off you're an amputee. Don't deny the past. . . Denial is gangrene" (50). The images of Naomi as crippled, fragmented and dismembered confirm Aunt Emily's position (65, 142, 150, 242, 243). However, Naomi's encounter with Emily's personal diary will send her on a painful process of remembering the past in which memories of violent dreams and feelings of amputation and disease will shock Naomi out of her "delicate ecology" (45) of numbness. Naomi maintains her distanced position towards the official discourse of the past as she scans the dusty documents in the box; however, when she comes to Emily's diary she can no longer retain her disinterested stance: "'Dearest Nesan,' her diary entries begin. The sight of the word Nesan cuts into me with a peculiar sensation of pain and tenderness. It means 'older sister' and was what Aunt Emily always called Mother." (46). The book "feels heavy with voices from the past- - a connection to Mother and Grandma Kato I did not know existed" (46). Unlike her numb attitude toward the clipping and form letters, Naomi feels "a strong urge to put everything aside and read the journal" (46). Like Moodie, who discovers that writing can provide a means to connect to the pioneering experience instead of only providing a means of imaginary escape, Naomi finally discovers a link to words describing past events which connects her to the past rather than making her want to distance herself from it. The testifying of Aunt Emily in the form of the diary, then, in turn gives Naomi the courage to bear witness to her experience of multiple forms of displacement and helps her to claim an alternative but legitimate space for her personal story.

For the first time Naomi is compelled to consider her painful memories of loss and abandonment; the personal words of Aunt Emily addressing Naomi's mother

cause her to embark on a painful journey into past remembrance. Her reaction to the journal suggests that she differentiates between levels of discourse and feels a sensitivity to the personal and private testimony of her aunt because she feels compelled to read the words directed towards her mother. It also demonstrates that although Naomi has cut herself off from both a Japanese community based on shared experience and culture, as well as a personal investment in other forms of relationships, she yearns to feel connected . It is Aunt Emily who shows her how to do this by bridging the gap between past and present. As Kanefsky argues in her discussion of Aunt Emily as a "jarring witness" whose role is to make the Japanese community's experience legitimate and comprehensible both inside and outside her community, it "is also Aunt Emily's role to dismantle the politics of negativity that have separated Japanese Canadians from their social memory or history. It is her task specifically, then, to convince Naomi of the veracity of her own testimony" (23). Estranged from any faith in official discourse, Naomi discovers truth and fellowship in Emily's personal words.

Lowe observes that "the violences done to the narrator and her family, figured throughout Obasan in metaphors of abuse, silence, darkness, and disease, cannot be lightened or healed; they can only be revealed, narrated, and reconfigured" (51). I would suggest, however, that the revelation of buried history constitutes a gesture toward healing. The recovery of buried history displaces totalizing national mythologies; homecoming becomes an act of imagining a community which reaches across time and space. Like testimonial discourse, which functions as a "literature of personal witness and involvement designed to make the cause of [liberation movements] known to the outside world" (Beverley 94) Obasan functions as a narrative of witnesses to historical events marked by repression and violence. While Naomi functions as the ambivalent narrator, the testimonial voices of Aunt Emily and Naomi's mother, severely disfigured in the atomic blast of Nagasaki, are heard.

Obasan then, shares with testimonial literature a concern "with a problematic collective social situation" in which the narrator "speaks for , or in the name of, a community or group" (Beverley 95). Naomi's gradual emergence as the unlikely teller of the family's and community's tragic history indicates a reintegration of fragmented and dispersed generations. In this sense, a communion, or coming together of the "broken generations" (Harris 41) through time and space suggests an enactment of homecoming--not in fact, for the exiled community can never really return home--but in a symbolic sharing of bereavement. Transcending geography and time, the testimonial voices come together as witnesses in defiance of systematic attempts to disperse, silence, and bury the past. Emily insists that the Canadian government's idea was "to make sure we'd never be visible again" (34). In defiance of these attempts at cultural erasure, Naomi describes Emily's package containing the evidence and accounts of human rights abuse as "symbols of communion" (182). In this case, the meaning of homecoming is created in asserting the will to cultural survival.

In attempting to differentiate Naomi's two aunts, most critics emphasize Obasan's stone-like silence and Emily's outspoken nature.[10] Although these differences are made clear in Obasan, many critics have failed to recognize Obasan's "outspoken" gesture. On the day of Uncle's death, Naomi rushes to Obasan's house in Granton to comfort her and organize the details of the funeral. In the middle of the night Obasan wakes up Naomi with an urgent desire to search for an item in the attic. Quiet forbearance and a fierce wish to protect the secret of Naomi's mother's disfigurement "for the sake of the children" has turned Obasan into "a silent territory, defined by her serving hands" (226). However, when Obasan climbs the stairs to her attic to look for Emily's box of documents that she sent to Naomi, she joins Emily in a gesture of uncovering buried history. Although Obasan herself will never retell the story of their exile and that of Naomi's mother, with her "serving hands" she attempts to unearth part of history by passing the box on to another generation. Through

Emily's box of documents filled with her testimony then, the three "broken generations" (Harris) are united.

Aunt Emily's assertion to "write the vision and make it plain" (31) suggests testimony in the religious sense of confessing or telling the truth before God. In this sense Emily gives her personal testimony a wider significance in that it will ultimately be God who judges the crimes of history. In this case, claiming space moves beyond a national context and figures claiming space as an act of communion. This religious context is further enforced by the fact that it is the Christian minister Nakayama-Sensei who suggests that "It is better to speak, is it not?" (232) after he reads Grandma Kato's letter describing the horrors of the atomic bombing that devastated Nagasaki and grotesquely disfigured Naomi's mother. It is he who reads to Stephen and Naomi the crumbling letter, written thirty years earlier, that was contained in Emily's box of documents and through him, Stephen's and Naomi's questions surrounding the disappearance of their mother are finally answered. "Naomi, he says softly, "Stephen, your mother is speaking. Listen carefully to her voice" (233). Nakayama-Sensei's religious presence represents a possibility of healing through forgiveness as he prays to "teach us to see Love's presence in our abandonment. Teach us to forgive" (243). Whether or not Naomi or other family members can forgive is unknown, but the minister's presence there represents the possibility of healing.

Testifying becomes an act of resistance towards a government that preferred to keep history forever interred, as well as an act of resistance by overcoming the shame related to loss of livelihood and the humiliation of forced relocation and forced labour. The revelations of Grandma Kato's letter, which had spent decades stashed away among other documents, help Naomi to transcend the opposition between home and exile, between presence and absence, and between place and belonging because the words help her to unite her own suffering with that of her mother: "I am thinking that for a child there is no presence without flesh. But perhaps it is because I am no longer

a child I can know your presence though you are not here. The letters tonight are skeletons. . . But the earth still stirs with dormant blooms. Love flows through the roots of the trees by our graves" (243). In this instance, physical and material distance is bridged by a "re-membering" (Lowe 140) of a fragmented family and community. With the uncovering of buried history Naomi may at last put her questions to rest and join Emily in telling her story. As Lynn Magnusson notes, at the end of the book, Naomi puts on Emily's coat to drive to the coulee that she visited each year with her uncle (66). She thus bridges the worlds of Emily and Obasan. This time she understands that annual visits were an act of mourning for her mother and all the departed members of the community. Mourning represents an act of claiming space in the sense that it transforms private, unspoken loss into a shared communal ritual of remembering. With this act, the Issei, Nisei, and Sansei generation are connected in an act of communion. Through unburdening tragic memories, Naomi affirms her belonging to a painful and fragmented history from which she previously felt estranged. Through the act of testifying to past injustices involving three generations of her family, Naomi may initiate a process of reintegration of "herself with her history through a recuperation of that past" (Chua 101). The spiritual sustenance offered by the reparation of the fragmented bonds suggests that a shared sense of collectivity may be the first step toward empowerment. The intensely personal experience of remembering and telling, however, also encompasses a political act; it defies the silencing of voices engendered by displacement and material and discursive privation. This blending of the personal and political suggests that the very act of reconnecting to shared history affirms a space for Japanese Canadians on the terrain of national discourse from which they were violently excluded.

In an article on the literature of exile, Oscar Campones argues that in a "classic scene of exilic writing" the exile returns to his or her homeland and takes "the first glimpse of home after an absence of many years" (67). In Obasan, the irony is that

Naomi's family is internally exiled, or exiled within their own country, so that a return to home would entail remaining in the same nation space. In Obasan, a return home is not enancted in visiting a geographical place. Rather it is enacted in the retrieval and legitimization of Emily's package of documents and Naomi's memories. The recovery of buried history testifies to a loss of home and the need to remember. The testimonial voices in Obasan, then, mark the presence of Japanese Canadians in the collective memory of the nation.

Notes

1 See the excerpt of the "Memorandum sent by the Cooperative Committee on Japanese Canadians to the House and Senate of Canada, April 1946" in Obasan (248-50).

2 In 1988, the Canadian government officially apologized to the Japanese Canadian community and conceded the community's claim for redress. At the offial ceremony, parts of Obasan were read. As Arnold Davidson notes, "the injustice portrayed in the novel was still very much with us when Obasan was published in 1981. It was, in fact, still not offically acknowledged . . . and thus provided a powerful literary lever for Japanese Canadians attempting to gain offical apology and some redress" (14).

3 See Ken Adachi's The Enemy that Never Was for an account of the struggle of the Nisei to claim the rights of full membership in Canadian society and for a discussion of generational differences among Japanese Canadians.

4 According to Robert Lecker's research on canonical trends in Canadian Literature anthologies, Susanna Moodie is the twelfth most anthologized writer in anthologies of Canadian Literature containing fiction (63).

5 Although no one from Naomi's family is deported, the government did pursue a policy of deportation. In 1945, "the choice to go east of the Rockies or to Japan was presented without time for consultation with separated parents and children" (Obasan 183).

6 I am indebted to Lisa Lowe whose work on the history of Asian American immigration and citizenship has inspired my discussion of the nature of belonging in Obasan.

7 For theoretical discussions on decolonization, see Lowe (107-8), Smith and Watson (xiii-xxxi), Katrak, and Smith and Katz.

8 In Questions of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement, Caren Kaplan provides a critical and lucid examination of the rhetoric of exile in twentieth-century modern and postmodern Western literature, criticism and theory.

9 King-Kok Cheung provides an extensive examination of the levels of silence in Obasan (127-67).

10 See Cheung (132-33), Magnusson (62-64), Howells (123-25), and Willis 240-44).

Chapter 4: Spaces of Belonging

At one point in Obasan, Naomi reflects on the disempowered position of the "Issei, and the Nisei and the Sansei" (112): "We are the despised rendered voiceless, stripped of car, radio and camera and every means of communication. . . . we are those pioneers who cleared the bush and forest with our hands, the gardeners tending and attending the soil with tenderness, the fishermen who are flung from the sea to flounder in the dust of the prairies" (111-12). In this passage, she emphasizes the intersection of the material and the cultural in the marginalization of dispersed Japanese Canadians. Like the settlers of Eastern and Central Canada, they too participated in the growth of the nation through their contact with the land and sea on the West Coast. This group of settlers, however, were powerless until years after the Second World War to claim a space for themselves in the official public discourse of national history.[1] Whereas the pioneering Moodie became a Canadian archetype by writing about her experience in the bush, the Japanese Canadians were silenced in spite of their efforts to make themselves heard. The link that Naomi makes between her community and pioneers serves as a powerful reminder that in the construction of a national mythology, certain groups are privileged, while others are excluded. Moodie's source of privilege is her ethnicity as well as class. As colonizer and member of the majority ethnic Anglo-Canadians, she partakes more easily in the Canadian dream of upward mobility. Naomi and her family, on the other hand, undergo a process of dis-integration with each move they are forced to make. In an article on the structure of Obasan, Erika Gottlieb suggests that it is "through the landscape that [Naomi] approaches the troubled question of her Canadian identity" (42). In the Chapter 3, I examined how Naomi claims discursive space. In this chapter, I focus on physical space and the role of each displacement that Naomi suffers in the construction, destruction, and reconfiguration of her identity. I will

argue that it is through Naomi's encounter with interior/domestic spaces and exterior/natural spaces that she approaches the question of her personal and cultural identity.

W. H. New observes that "control over the land is a tacit demonstration of success" which in turn "reiterates and reinforces both the value of independence within the received system and the moral superiority of those who attain and maintain such independence" (79). Hence, "ownership ostensibly produces independence" (79). But, the question "to whom does the society permit the privilege of ownership?" (New 79) must be asked. As New argues: "To ask this question helps to understand that land signifies more than just simple nature or territory in this interlocking system of social and moral values; it signifies a version of power that was tied to economic right" which is "in turn connected with gender and race" (79). As emigrants lured to Canada by the promise of cheap land, Moodie and her family gain independence through ownership and after years of toil, satisfy the "emigrant's hope of bettering his condition" (Moodie 526). The opposite process marks the experience of Japanese Canadians dispersed during the war. The level of middle-class comfort that the community had achieved was systematically destroyed through government appropriation and sale of Japanese Canadian owned land and businesses. The history of Japanese Canadians is marked by spatial dispersal and geographic control of their existence by state regulation. Landless and powerless, community members were forcibly displaced from the West Coast. In Obasan, a series of movements across the land and a parallel loss of material security dominate Naomi's diminishing sense of rootedness to a place. For her family, each move marks a further loss of independence and power to claim space. In the case of the history of Japanese Canadians the question of to whom society permits the privilege of mobility must be asked along with New's question about the privilege of ownership and independence. As Sau-ling Cynthia Wong argues, the narrative of mobility is privileged in the myth

of America as it "regularly connotes independence, freedom, an opportunity for individual actualization and/or societal renewal" (121), whereas the Asian American discourse of mobility "is usually associated with subjugation, coercion, impossibility of fulfillment for self or community" (121). The disenfranchisement and relocation of Japanese Canadians at once confirm the argument that ownership produces independence and debunk the myth of mobility as an exercise of freedom. In this case downward mobility functions as a sign of their oppression. Each displacement reinforces a process of what Wong names "the un-doing of homefounding" (134) and what I describe as an un-doing of the pioneer's progress. I argue, however, that Naomi's encounters with the land do not only enact this process of disintegration but help her to reintegrate into a wider community.

Naomi recognizes the links between place, rootedness and deracination: "We come from a country that plucks its people out like weeds and flings them to the roadside. We grow in ditches and sloughs, untended and spindly. We erupt in the valleys and mountainsides, in small towns and back alleys, sprouting upside-down on the prairies. . . our feet rooted nowhere" (226). The opening of the novel signals this preoccupation with place in Naomi's family. Naomi and her uncle, who was a fisherman and boat builder like many Japanese Canadians before the war, visit the coulee where the undulating prairie grasses seem to have a soothing effect on the uncle as the grass provides a sense of a link to a lost lifestyle: " 'Umi no yo,' Uncle says, pointing to the grass. 'It's like the sea' " (1). Here, her uncle's nostalgic yearning for the sea signals the many forms of exile that the Japanese Canadian community endured: the loss of vocation, the dispossession of homes and property, and the dispersal of the community from the British Columbia coast to the interior and prairie provinces. The departure and of Naomi's mother shadows Naomi as the first act in a chain of dispersals of her family. As I have described in Chapter 3, between 1941 and 1942, a time of war and mass anti-Japanese hysteria, the Canadian government

ordered the confiscation of property held by Japanese Canadians, refused them the right to work, sent the men to labour camps, and finally ordered the relocation of all Japanese Canadians living within the "protected area" along the B. C. coast. Many members of the fractured community were relocated to abandoned mining towns in the interior. Her uncle's yearning for the sea evokes a symbolic separation from Japan and tradition as well as a loss of a sense of continuity of generations. Naomi's presence there also signals that she is yearning to belong to a place: "My fingers tunnel through a tangle of roots till the grass stands up from my knuckles, making it seem that my fingers are roots. I am part of this small forest. Like the grass, I search the earth and the sky with a thin but persistent thirst" (3). In this passage, the image of roots generates multiple meanings that recur throughout the novel. Naomi and her family are deracinated from their homes and yearn to belong, to be rooted firmly to a place. At the same time, Naomi searches for her roots as she emerges from a willed amnesia and struggles to understand the real story of her dead father, her absent mother and even of her family in Japan.

Throughout the novel, Naomi's original home functions as a powerful symbol for all that she has lost: family, security, and status. It also functions as a symbol of culture as represented by tradition, art, and refinement. This symbol of culture stands in contrast to the various forms of nature that Naomi is forced to confront through the series of displacements of her family. Naomi's memories of her childhood home evoke a powerful sense of nostalgia because she remembers her Vancouver home as a place of idyllic security, wholeness, and unity; however, rather than figuring this prelapsarian world in terms of a garden of paradise, Naomi associates this world with interior space. She equates security and belonging, then, to this harmonious interior space. This is the world of a bourgeois middle-class home filled with possessions. When Naomi recollects her childhood she remembers material things: a fireplace, a clock, shelves of books, dolls, sofas, a toy train, "a deep blue India rug" (50), a

record player, and musical instruments. Part of Naomi's nostalgia then, is a yearning for the things of which her family was dispossessed. These possessions act as emblems of social status and membership in society. Within the cozy interior textured with material possessions, Naomi also remembers a space of intimacy, connectedness, and the quiet but powerful presence of her mother. It is a place of Japanese decorum and ritual where Naomi bathes with her grandmother, then is wrapped up in a "nemaki" in which she feels "supremely safe. . . under the under the heavy bright-coloured futon in [her] house" (49). Here she listens to music played by her father and brother, and her mother sings with her "soft and tender yasashi voice" (51). In the warmth and security of the house her mother and grandmother recount her favorite Japanese legend of Momotaro in which a little boy emerges from a peach. It is a place where all needs are fulfilled by "accurate knowing" rather than by words and where a sweater covers her "before there is any chill and if there is pain there is care simultaneously" (56). This interior space of the home from which Naomi is forever severed contrasts with the harsh open space of the Alberta beet fields where she will be relocated.

Naomi associates the exterior world with the exile both from her home and her mother. She first makes the associations with the exterior world and exile by linking the outdoors with danger: "Inside the house in Vancouver there is confidence and laughter, music and mealtimes, games and storytelling. But outside, even in the backyard, there is an infinitely unpredictable, unknown and often dangerous world" (58). In the world outside of her home even a glance by a stranger may be interpreted as an "invasion" (47) or as "betrayal" (59). The first instance of a sense of separation, however, does not occur with her mother's trip to Japan, nor does it begin with her family's forced relocation. Rather, her first notion of separation occurs on a psycho-sexual level when she is molested by a neighbour. As a child she comes to associate this instance with the disappearance of her mother. Naomi links this original

separation from her mother with a spatial crossing to a threatening exterior world because the disruption of childhood wholeness begins with the crossing of a border between Naomi's house and her neighbour's house.

The following passage illustrates how as a young child, she is aware of a movement away from the boundaries of her own home: "I am a small girl being carried away through the break in the shrubs where our two yards meet. Old Man Gower is taking me to the edge of his garden on the far side away from the street" (62). In contrast to her ordered, decorous household Naomi perceives Gower's backyard as "a jungle of bushes, flowering trees, weeds, and flowers" (60). Natural images multiply as she expresses the memory of the knowledge that something shameful has happened to her as a "fiddlehead question mark asking with its unformed voice for answers still hidden" (61) from her. As the incidents of abuse continue, the four-year-old Naomi comes to understand that danger lurks outside and that to be "whole and safe" she must "hide in the foliage" (63). Yet, she is already fragmented as "the lie grows like a horn, an unfurled fiddlehead fist" (63). Naomi thus experiences the original exile in her life as a rupture of the idealized unity in the interior of her home. It is the result of a traumatizing encounter by an outsider which began by transgressing the physical boundaries of her Vancouver house. Furthermore, as many critics have noticed, the psychological separation from her mother, figured as rupture of the wholeness of mother and daughter, is closely followed by Naomi's mother's actual departure as she leaves for Japan.[2] Naomi figures these spatial and psychological separations as physical manifestations: "In the centre of the body there is a rift" (65), she says of this incident. The image of a rift signals that Naomi articulates her loss in terms of spatial metaphors.

The departure of Naomi's mother signals a radical change in Naomi's young life; her mother leaves the family home to visit Japan around the same time that the rest of Naomi's family is forced out of the their home. She remembers this period as a

time of loss and mourning for a destroyed way of life. As Naomi, her brother, and aunt, along with many other members of her community board the train that will take them to their place of exile, Naomi describes this time as leaving behind the "salty sea" within which swim their "drowning specks of memory" (111). Powerless, Naomi experiences their "expulsion into the waiting wilderness" as "going down to the middle of the earth" (111) as they literally tunnel through the mountain by train and figuratively descend into their nightmare and hell on earth. Likening the family's relocation to Victor Turner's concept of liminality, Cheng Lok Chua observes that Naomi "falls from a settled place in a structured society and becomes, in Turner's words 'temporarily liminal and spatially marginal. . . stripped of status. .. i.e., removed from social structure' " (100). As Chua recognizes, however, unlike Turner's concept of liminality, this spatial move will not result in an eventual reintegration with the wider community of Canadian citizens.

The abandoned mining town of Slocan to which the family is first banished marks a site of contesting notions of exclusion and belonging. It is a marginalized space that marks the resilience of a community while functioning in critical relation to the racist and fragmented national space. It is at once prison and sanctuary, exile and home, ghost town and town square. Here the boundaries of public and private break down as nature offers solace and replaces the comfort and protection of home. It is a space that is marginalized by hegemonic configurations of social space; yet, it functions as a material expression of a community's resistance in the face of oppression because community members attempt to rebuild the town in the image of their traditions. Naomi remembers Slocan as a home in the process of construction . Here the fragmented community attempts to rebuild all they have lost. In an article exploring the notion of exile and the trope of border crossings, Mae Henderson observes that associations between notions of exile and notions of home "can ironically be reversed, with home becoming a place of endangerment, and exile, a

place of sanctuary" (4). At the same time however, "living outside the borders of 'homeland' and inside the borders of 'another country' often entails a border journey into memory and imagination that negotiates between old and new, past and present, self and other, safety and danger" (4). Henderson's observation may help to theorize the borderland space that Slocan represents.

As an abandoned mining community, this ghost town experiences a resurrection by disenfranchised Japanese Canadians, who, like ghosts, have been politically wiped out of the national landscape. Slocan then, represents a marginal space doubly occupied by the presence of "ghosts." However, it is here that the battered community will struggle to impress their presence on the marginalized space as they attempt to reconstruct both their private and public lives of homes, rituals, and community. The notion that exile can become a place of sanctuary is manifested in Kogawa's construction of the symbiosis of the community and the natural world. Although Naomi's new home is a crowded wooden hut, nature in Slocan is described as "immense," "extravagant" (120), "alive" (139) and "dizzying" (141) in its generosity. Here, Naomi's uncle builds a rock garden with a small waterfall and nurtures a garden with flowers and vegetables. Gradually, they transform the place of exile into "a miniature of Uncle's and Obasan's place on the island" (138). The lush forest provides them with sustenance as they "harvest the wilderness" and they "breathe and are stabbed alive by the air" (139). In Slocan , the family moves out of the womb-like interior environment of the possession-laden Vancouver home with its "walls of dark wood lit with dim lights" (50), into the exterior world where they own nothing but nature belongs to everyone.

The symbiosis between nature and the community of Slocan can also be illustrated by traditional rituals they perform there. When Grandma Nakane dies, they give her a Christian funeral ceremony and a Buddhist cremation. The cremation takes place in the woods near an old silver mine. Tree trunks form the pyre on which her

coffin burns and she turns "to ashes on this mountain" (131). In an essay that explores Obasan in the context of Julia Kristeva's Powers of Horror and the notion of abjection, Robin Potter suggests the cremation signals a "ritualistic offering to the spirits, a cleansing, a purification, a return to the seed state" (126). This return to the "seed state" also emphasizes the continuity between the dead and the living, between generations, and between humankind and nature. In terms of claiming space, the fragile community recreates a ritualistic space of sanctuary within the space of exile. This suggests that nature recuperates the function of security that material possessions had previously provided.

Other signs of community indicate that while Slocan represents a place of exile, it also comes to represent a sanctuary. Gradually, the exiled Japanese Canadians recreate the bonds of community with the creation of workshops, schools, small enterprises, places of worship, and places of entertainment. Robin Potter suggests that the creation of a public bath serves as a focal point for unifying the community who congregate there to converse as well as to bathe. As Potter observes, the public bath is comparable to the traditional city square, "where information about members of the community is exchanged" (132). More importantly, the public bath provides a ritual which, like the Buddhist cremation, serves to purify and unite the generations. In Obasan, the bath scene is described in ritualistic terms, a sign of the possibility of healing in Slocan:

> The bath is a place of deep bone warmth and rest. It is always
> filled with a slow steamy chatter from women and girls and babies. . .
> We are one flesh, one family, washing each other or submerged
> in the hot water, half awake, half asleep. The bath times are
> like a hazy happy dream. (160-61)

Potter interprets this passage as a "scene of renewal and cleansing for the extended family or clan" (132). I would add that this ritualistic scene is reminiscent of the

intimate bathing scene of Naomi's early childhood at home in Vancouver where she bathed with her grandmother. Like at the public bath, "once the body is fully immersed, there is a torpid peace" (48). The fact that the displaced and fragmented families are able to come together to rebuild a semblance community life suggests that in Slocan, the Japanese Canadian community can reclaim some space for themselves.

This reconstituted community, however, circulates within a regulated space of incarceration. It is an abandoned, marginalized site not of their own choosing, but that of a government that wished to consign this community to the edges of public life. Within the managed boundaries of the town, the community attempts to transform the landscape into the image of tradition, hence, resisting total erasure. The community attempts to heal itself in the marginalized space of the internment camp through its traditional connection to nature. For Naomi, however, the dislocation represents a rupture with her privileged past. As a member of the Sansei generation, she is already three times removed from Japanese traditions and culture. Her Slocan home is in a state of decay: "The mortar between the logs is crumbling and the porch roof dives down the middle" (121). It is house built from the materials of poverty and expedience. There are "newspapered walls, . . . raw grey planks on the floors," and a "rough plank bed" (121). The ceiling is made from "grass and manure" (121). Slocan is not the paradise it seems. Here Naomi must strike a treacherous balance between accepting it as a home and remembering all that she lost. It is here, after all, that she witnesses the cruelty of children as they reproduce the violence perpetrated on their community through committing acts of violence against animals and classmates. It is also in Slocan that Naomi nearly drowns. It is where her violent dreams that plague her throughout childhood and adulthood begin. Loss, violence, and menace, then, lurk within this idyllic space and serve as a reminder that this is a place to which the community was relocated with brutality and force.

In contrast to the attempt to recuperate the regulated space in Slocan for themselves, Naomi and her family's later experience living as workers in the beet fields of rural Alberta is one of abjection and powerlessness. This move reverses the pioneer mythology of penetrating the interior to gain independence and build individual wealth. In 1945, the Canadian government's "segregation programme" (Obasan 173), which ordered the dispersal of all Japanese Canadians gave them the choice of deportation east of the Rockies or "repatriation" to war-ravaged Japan, a country in which thousands of these Japanese Canadian citizens had never lived or barely remembered. As an adult, Naomi acknowledges that with the new policy, "families already fractured and separated were permanently destroyed" (183). When her Aunt Emily urges Naomi to "get the facts straight," Naomi, in keeping with her edenic description of Slocan, subverts Emily's notion of historical and official facts by recalling the "facts" of the land at the time of the dispersal: "The fact is that, in 1945, the gardens in Slocan were spectacular. In the spring there had been new loads of manure and fertilizer and the plants were ripening for harvest when the orders came" (183). Naomi's privileging of the facts of nature over the facts of official history resists the dominant culture's version of events. It also creates a decolonized space in which she can tell her personal version of events.

With the shift to the arid prairies, there is a parallel shift in Naomi's encounter with the land. The life-seeking roots of the opening image become an image of the displaced family, their "roots clawing at the sudden prairie air" (189). In contrast to the mountain air of Slocan that "stabbed" the family alive and enticed them outdoors, the dust and the wind of their new place of exile again moves the family to an interior space. Unlike the sense of rootedness that the interior of the Vancouver home provided, however, this interior space serves as a demarcation of utter abjection and displacement. Naomi remembers their arrival there as the need to barricade themselves against the forces of nature: "We prop open the door against the buffeting wind and

form a convoy, carrying and dragging boxes into the room. When we are done at last, and close the door, we are finally able to breathe" (192). They are cut off from their past as even the boxes they "brought from Slocan are not unpacked" (197). But their taking shelter from the elements of this place of exile signals an ironic reversal of the perfect unity of the living room of Naomi's Vancouver home; Naomi's parents are absent and the hut is utterly devoid of objects and comfort. The bathing ritual that used to provide peace and a sense of kinship is now described strictly in practical terms: "its everybody taking a bath in the round galvanized tub, then Obasan washing clothes in the water after"(195). The family is further declassed and impoverished. Furthermore, during their exile there, the family receives news of the father's death by tuberculosis; this time no funeral service can be performed. Their incapacity to perform a communal healing ritual at this point signals the ultimate disintegration of a community.

For Naomi, this disintegration is compounded by an alienation from her body. In what she calls their "exile from [their] place of exile" (197) she experiences puberty, which she associates with her forced labour in the fields. She remembers how the mud coated her legs as she worked the fields: "the skin under the boots beneath the knees. . .grows red and hard and itchy form the flap flap of the boots and the fine hairs on my legs grow course there and ugly" (196). "I mind growing ugly" (196), she recalls painfully. She has tried to block out the memory of this painful period not only from her memory but from her body as well. "I cannot tell about this time," she says to Aunt Emily, "the body will not tell" (196). Her encounter with the land in this case represents a punishing physical state of loss. What she does remember is the sheer physical hardship of working in the beet fields, labouring to increase the productivity of Canadian farmers. She remembers the house of the farmer they worked for which stood in stark contrast to their "hut. . .at the edge of a field" (192). Naomi remembers the farmer's house as "a real house with a driveway leading

to a garage" (192). This house with its "white lace curtains" (192) makes her think of "our house in Vancouver" (192). It is a site of a majority culture's privilege and hence a further demarcation of Naomi's loss. In opposition to the liberating sense of the immensity of nature in Slocan, Naomi describes the open skies and clouds of Alberta as "the shape of our new prison walls" (196). As Mason Harris observes, "the winter sky over Alberta becomes associated with a sense of strangled development in the midst of her adolescence" (48). To Naomi, the "sadness and absences are like a long winter storm. . . . Something dead is happening" (200). As Harris notes, this sense of "frozen process" (49) is reflected in Naomi's state of resistance to remembering and telling. Although Naomi continues to live in Alberta as an adult she continues to feel alienated by the prairie land. "I never got used to it" (194), she laments. Restrictions on Japanese Canadians were removed "on April Fool's Day, 1949" (198) but for Naomi, "the old sores remain" (198). Naomi is effectively homeless, her home and the sense of belonging that it brought to her exists only in her memory. She lives in a space occupied by mourning: "I can remember since Aunt Emily insists that I must and release the flood gates one by one. I can cry for the flutes that have cracked in the dryness and cry for the people who no longer sing" (197).

Memorializing loss in Obasan functions both as an act of bereavement and an act which permits the possibility of healing. These acts entail public and private gestures of remembrance. At the end of the novel, Naomi performs a private act of claiming decolonized space through her approach to a landscape which for her, had previously represented exile and silence. She returns to the coulee that she had visited every year with her uncle, who is now dead. This time however, she comes with a new found understanding as the gaps in her life are admitted and accepted, if not filled. It is her uncle's death that prompts Naomi to remember her past and prompts Emily and Obasan to reveal the mystery of her mother's absence. In another version of the healing/bathing ritual, the "dew and the light night rain" soak her as she inches her

way to "where the underground stream seeps through the earth" (247). This underground stream acts as a physical embodiment of the metaphorical underground stream of love "that flows through the roots of the trees" (243) in a forest of graves she imagines for her dead family and community members. For the multiply-exiled Naomi, mourning connects her to a place that for so many years had perpetuated her sense of exile. Naomi's act of remembrance at the coulee signifies a reconnection to collective memory. Within the geographical space of the coulee she creates an imagined space of community. She creates sacred space by this reassertion of the performance of a healing ritual and in so doing, claims a connection to place and community through the memory and experience of loss. Although she does not gain independence through the ownership of property or material possessions, she regains the freedom that self-actualization and community renewal provides through claiming her own story.

Notes

1 Cheng Lok Chua succinctly describes the systematic exclusion of Canadians of Japanese and other Asian origins from public discourse in the years leading up to the Second World War (97-98). The most telling exclusion was the denial of the right to vote until 1947.

2 See Harris (49-50), Magnusson (64-65), and Willis (247).

Conclusion: Homecoming

My discussion of claiming space in Roughing It in the Bush and Obasan has focused on notions of home and how to reinvent it in situations of estrangement. I have argued that in searching for answers to the question: "What is the meaning of home?" the narrators renegotiate the borders of classed, social, cultural, natural, gendered, racialized, material and discursive spaces. The narrators of the two works enact their homecoming by questioning, redefining, or reclaiming these spaces.

For Moodie, claiming Upper Canada as a home entailed a confrontation and reconciliation of Old World and New World culture and values. Transplanted in the New World, she attempted to impose Old World order under circumstances which resisted such a vision. Moodie redefined herself in the process of adapting to and inhabiting New World space. She acted on the New World as it acted on her.

Moodie signaled a will to claim space that was particular to her new experiences rather than class-defined notions of proper behaviour by representing herself engaged in non-traditional class and gender activities such as field work. Writing, which was, for women, defined as a drawing-room skill in the Old World, became a practical skill that she could use to help gain independence for herself and family. This fusion of manual and intellectual labour confirmed Moodie's commitment to her home in the New World. Writing about her encounter with the land was transformed from an act of colonial appropriation to an act of homecoming.

The notion of progress and the dream of nation building accompanies Moodie's story of coming home to the New World. Obasan, on the other hand, tells the story of the undoing of the pioneer's progress. For Moodie and other pioneers, penetration into the wilderness signaled the possibility to gain wealth through the ownership of land and the establishment of a homestead. For Naomi and the Japanese Canadian community, a move to the wilderness signaled a loss of status and

independence through the dispossession of their homes and their exclusion from public discourse. Whereas Moodie at times used exile as a literary trope, the exile of Japanese Canadians was a forced condition of marginalization and cultural erasure.

Naomi was alienated because she was cut off from family, culture, and nation. Her initial absences and losses were intensified by her insistence on keeping the past buried. She frees herself from cultural and self-imposed silence with the help of Emily's testimony. By testifying to her own experience of internment and dispersal Naomi joins the voices of her damaged community and appropriates her experience as alternative but legitimate history. The testimonial voices of Obasan create a decolonized space for the community because they resist the cultural erasure that they had been subjected to. The testimonial voices in Obasan reinvent home and national history from a marginalized position and hence transcend the opposition between home and exile, displacement and belonging. While Naomi's material displacements enact a disintegration of community membership, her encounters with the land also help her to reintegrate into a wider community. A place that she claims in the natural landscape where she can mourn her loss creates a decolonized space in which she may reconnect to collective memory.

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