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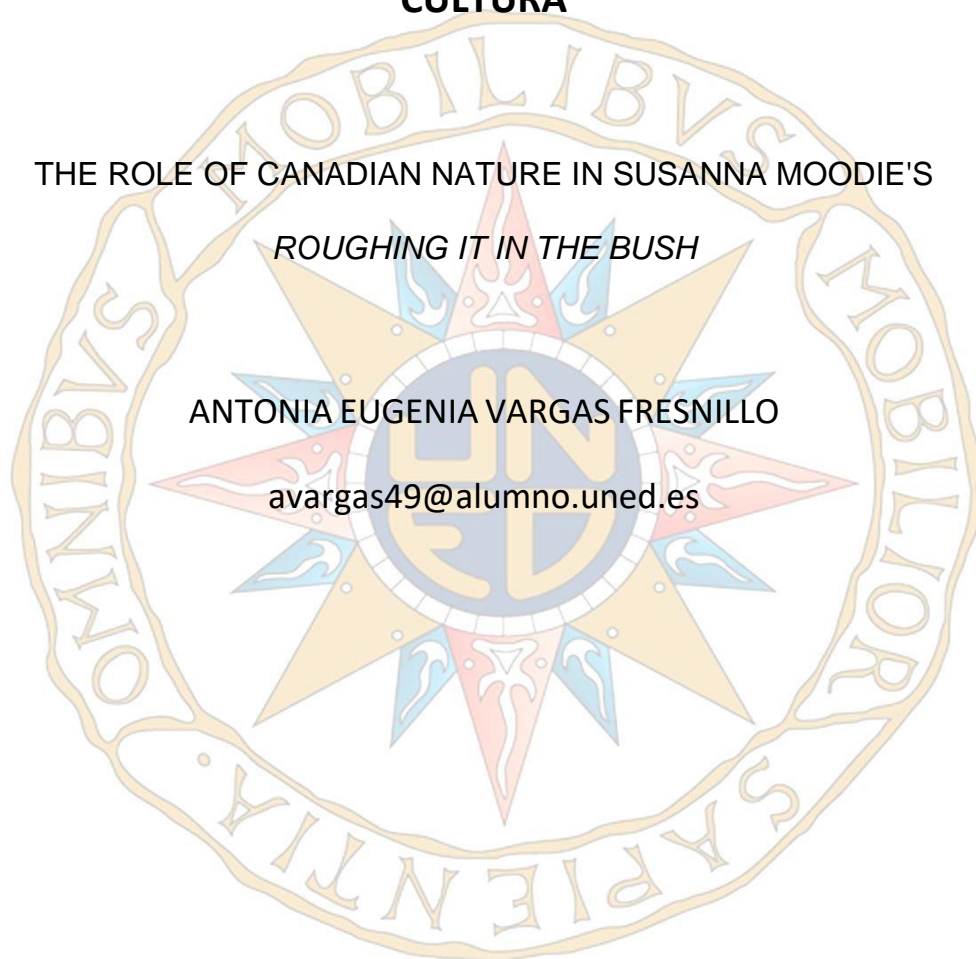
GRADO EN ESTUDIOS INGLESES: LENGUA, LITERATURA Y CULTURA

THE ROLE OF CANADIAN NATURE IN SUSANNA MOODIE'S

ROUGHING IT IN THE BUSH

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Abstract:

Susanna Moodie's *Roughing It in the Bush* shows an uncommon depiction of nature in 19th century Canadian literature. To prove this thesis statement it is essential to consider the general positive literary perspective of the era that is also present in her sister Catharine Parr Traill's writings. An analysis of Moodie's historical and social determinants of forced emigration, social class and gender is made, since they contribute to the purpose of discouraging middle-class British society from immigrating to Canada. The bleak Canadian nature also contributes to her failure as settler since her experience is far away from the sublime. The change from an idealized to a realistic representation of nature, absent in other works of Moodie, reinforces her purpose.

Keywords: Canadian Literature, nature, Susanna Moodie, pioneer memoirs, emigration.

To my family and friends, in appreciation for your support and understanding.
Thank you for listening to my long discourses.

To my husband, for encouraging me to continue with my studies and to fill my notes with amusing drawings to make me laugh.

To my tutor, Prof. Teresa Gibert, for her great help and advice through the writing of this paper.

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1. Introduction

One of the reasons for choosing this topic is that Susanna Moodie is a famous and praised author of pioneer women's memoirs set in Canada. Although she never recognizes herself as Canadian, remaining her sense of belonging in her beloved motherland England, she is considered a well-known 19th-century Canadian author thanks to her greatest literary work: *Roughing It in the Bush; or, Life in Canada*. This book constitutes an appropriate example of the harsh conditions of Canadian nature and landscape and how can they affect human psychology and character. Of course, this influence is told from the first person's perspective (typical of pioneer memoirs) of the woman who emigrates from the Old World to a New World where she finds a new self. I focus on nature because the national identity of Canada encompasses it. Thus, nature is an essential theme in the Canadian culture. As the prominent scholar Northrop Frye asserted: "everything that is central in Canadian writing seems to be marked by the imminence of the natural world" (308).

My paper is related to 'Literatura Canadiense en Lengua Inglesa' and to any other kind of Literature studied in UNED's Degree in English Studies. The historical and literary knowledge achieved helps contextualizing the work. Another area of literary studies that is of great help is 'Comentario de Textos Literarios en Lengua Inglesa', because it sets the basis for the analysis of a text (its structure and style, and its significance). With 'Aplicaciones de las TIC en los Estudios Ingleses', the student learns to compile cited works (bibliography) and to create in-text citations. This topic is also related to two other courses: 'Género y Literatura en los Países de Habla Inglesa', and 'Literaturas Postcoloniales (I-II)'. It is relevant that Moodie is a successful woman who writes her experiences in Canadian farmland for other women. In this sense, women are given voice and significance, being Moodie's aim to warn them and prevent their disappointment when they discover the New Land is far from liberating or enjoyable. As to 'Literaturas Postcoloniales (I-II)', it addresses the fate of diaspora and their feelings of isolation and alienation. Although the immigrant usually feels awkward in the country of adoption, motherland and land of adoption are both present in the immigrant's dual identity.

The academic relevance that this author and her book have is unquestionable. No other of her works is still read today like *Roughing It in the Bush*, republished several times in different editions with different contents. Moodie, or her most acclaimed work, are referred to in a significant number of reviews, books, articles and academic works in general. Carl Ballstadt highlights the important role of Moodie's *Roughing It in the Bush* for a "survey of our literary history" (32). Following Ballstadt:

her book is the one most often quoted when the historian, literary or social, needs commentary on backwoods people, frontier living conditions, or the difficulty of adjustment experienced by such upper middle-class immigrants as Mrs. Moodie and her husband. (32)

It is also worth mentioning that modern Canadians such as Margaret Atwood (considered the best-known author in Canada) see her as a model of the early settler. In the particular case of Atwood, she wrote a collection of poems based on *Roughing It in the Bush* entitled *The Journals of Susanna Moodie*. In the Afterword of this work, Atwood declared her interest in Moodie's divided personality and compared her to Canada: she is "divided down in the middle" (62), such as Canada is considered a dual country and the "national mental illness [...] of Canada is paranoid schizophrenia" (62).

1.1 Thesis statement and objectives

The thesis statement of this end of degree paper is: *Roughing It in the Bush* shows an uncommon depiction of nature in the 19th century Canadian literature.

To prove this thesis statement, it is essential to pursue the next objectives:

- Present the background information of Susanna Moodie, emphasizing her social class and gender, as well as her never-ending immigrant condition.

- Compare the general description of nature in the 19th century Canadian literature with that of *Roughing It in the Bush*. Compare Susanna Moodie and Catharine Parr Traill's view of nature. Compare Moodie's own description of nature in *Roughing It in the Bush* and in *Life in the Clearings versus the Bush*.

- Define the uncommon role of nature in *Roughing It in the Bush*: from the Romantic perspective of the sublime, to be a dangerous monster that imprisons female immigrants like Susanna Moodie.

1.2 State-of-the-art

One of the aims of this paper is to find evidence of the causes of Moodie's tensions when portraying nature in *Roughing It in the Bush*. The first section of it will focus on this goal. John Thurston speaks about the social and historical determinants that influenced the writing of this collection of sketches and which can help to comprehend the story in depth. It is important to note that Susanna Moodie fought with contradictions of class and gender in *Roughing It in the Bush*. Born in 1803 at Bungay, England, in the "salaried segment of the middle-class" (Thurston 11), Moodie's family lost the economic position during the post-war depression. Even so, they avoided to be degraded to the working class, something crucial for the proud Moodie. But the death of their father forced the well-educated Strickland sisters to write in order to make a living. As her older sister Catharine Parr Traill, Moodie began her literary career early, publishing her first works at the age of nineteen. Susanna and Catharine also married retired army officers and their husbands decided to emigrate to Canada with the mistaken idea that their brains and manners would be enough to enter the landed Canadian gentry. Moodie was orientated "to the dominant male ideology" (Thurston 27) and embraced the Victorian values. Her writing is restricted to conventions imposed on women writers, also in the description of nature, as Tihana Klepač clarifies. So, class and gender roles, as well as the fact of emigration out of necessity, are important determinants for Susanna Moodie and influence her view of a tough and demanding Canadian nature.

Another important issue to address is the depiction of nature made in the early 19th century Canadian literature. *Roughing It in the Bush* is the most popular book written in the mid-nineteenth century concerning the harsh early years as settlers of a family of upper middle-class immigrants. Bearing in mind that this work constitutes a canon, and although nature is enhanced at times, the negative portrayal of nature that permeates this story of pioneer life is stronger. As a result, it might seem that the most extended custom among the contemporary writers of Susanna Moodie was to supply a negative description of nature. But there is a consensus on M. L. MacDonald's idea: "before 1850, with few exceptions, all the evidence points to an essentially positive literary view of the Canadian landscape" (48). Hence, the positive literary perspective of

the Canadian nature that governed the 19th century, as well as most of Moodie's works (see for example *Life in the Clearings versus the Bush*), find an exception in *Roughing It in the Bush*. It is one of the few works with tensions in the representation of nature. It is also important to clarify that Catharine Parr Trail did not share her sister's vision of Canadian nature and the settlement, as Charlotte Gray explains.

Concerning the definition of the specific role of nature in *Roughing It in the Bush*, there are conflicting emotions inside Susanna Moodie's mind that result in a "violent duality" (Atwood, *The Journals* 62). On one hand, there is the Romantic consideration that nature exists to please humans. On the other hand, there is the version of the enemy, or the "prison-house," as Moodie defined nature at the end of the prose passage of "Adieu to the Woods":

If these sketches should prove the means of deterring one family from sinking their property, and shipwrecking all their hopes, by going to reside in the backwoods of Canada, I shall consider myself amply repaid for revealing the secrets of the prison-house, and feel that I have not toiled and suffered in the wilderness in vain. (515)

This passage constitutes a declaration of the purpose of her writing of the work, and a crucial determinant in the representation of Canadian nature. The experience of Susanna Moodie in Canada is one of psychological torture under the designs of a Canadian nature unsuitable for her. Moodie always thought of herself as "a tragically exiled English lady" (Gibert, *Canadian* 1) forced to abandon her place of birth in order to improve an adverse economic situation. In *Roughing It in the Bush*, she tries to avoid to the middle-class gentlemen immigrants a "choice of the country" (xvi) mistaken because of "pamphlets, published by interested parties, which prominently set forth all the *good* to be derived from a settlement in the Backwoods of Canada; while they carefully concealed the toil and hardship to be endured in order to secure these advantages" (xvii). Moodie understands that the "industrious" and "sons of honest poverty" (xxi) can be successful in "the emigrant's hope of bettering his condition" (xvi), but "refined and accomplished gentleman" (xxi) usually loses his few resources and fails. Hence, gentlemen do not feel at home in Canada. Her purpose is clearly connected to the three decisive factors about Moodie I intend to analyse.

With this purpose in mind, it is obvious that Moodie regrets her emigration to Canada and aims to discourage prospective immigrants of her social class and gender. One strategy to accomplish this goal is a monstrous depiction of nature that grows stronger as the story progresses. Although it starts with the emigrant's hopeful anticipation of an idyllic nature described with the European traditional vision of the sublime and beautiful, and although Moodie keeps this Romantic view especially when she is able to control her surroundings, the final realistic representation reinforces her explicit purpose.

In reading *Roughing It in the Bush*, there are several tensions Moodie faces. Regarding changes in her cultural identity, she is against assimilation since she rejects giving up any of her previous English customs and traits. There is a difficult process of acculturation in Moodie, who learns to defend herself from a shocking borrowing system in Canada, who understands that "you must become poor yourself [...] before you can sympathise" (427) with the disadvantaged classes, who gains new abilities and who learns to appreciate things that are different from the English ones, such as happens with the beauty of Canadian nature. But adaptation does not occur voluntarily and some of the few changes portrayed in this story are even unsure. Perspective about different issues is changed and changed back again. As Thurston indicates, the book has "internal instability" (138) up to the point of questioning authorship: "*Roughing It* is not the product of an autonomous author, nor can it be reduced to a hypothetical authorial intention. Moodie abdicated authorial responsibility" (138). Assertion that might be so, since Thurston claims "the aid of her husband, Bruce, and Bentley" (153) caused Moodie's self-image to appear not unified because of the limitations they imposed. Tensions in her real life were transmitted to her work, which even lacks a genre within which to be inscribed.

Tightness in her representation of Canadian nature is a noteworthy one. Nature leads the aim of displaying that oppositions are always present. Ambivalence in nature encompasses distinct matters. Susan Johnston provides a key definition for understanding Moodie's European aesthetics and the problem arisen by Canadian nature. They required the "objectification of landscape in the gaze of the human subject" and "the phenomenal world" or nature is "constructed by and in relation to the subject of the gaze" (par. 5).

Moodie is able to apply this aesthetic control over the British landscape, but the wild Canadian landscape becomes the subject of the relationship and subdues her. So, the sublime, the beautiful and the picturesque as they were understood disappear. The Canadian settler depends on heavy physical labour to survive, and lacking wealth and time to contemplate beauty, he appreciates "the available and the useful" (par. 6) in nature. If Moodie often appreciates this in Canada, or the Canadian nature is not a mothering figure for her, is something that will also be analysed. It is unquestionable that Moodie admired Canadian nature, but "the ideal form of nature can only be seen in England" (Johnston par. 28), where she learned how the world is ordered. Feeling not a true Canadian, and longing for her country of birth, the dichotomy between Canadian and English nature is rooted in Moodie's sense of belonging.

Moodie's concept of home is also divided. Thomas affirms that she is "a figure who is out of place" (107) in Canada. Its "physical features are literally repellent" (107) and the "unmanageable environment" (112) threatens their security. So, Canadian nature is unwelcoming. Attention should also be given to what Elizabeth Thompson says: "if Canada is great, thanks is due in large part to a British heritage" (par. 36). Moodie often stresses this in *Roughing It*, as her words to "British mothers of Canadian sons" (20) show, which also "implies that first generation immigrants are never naturalized" (Thurston 159). But it is also interesting what David Stouck affirms: her motherland "did not provide her family with a livelihood and forced her to emigrate" (467). This might suggest that Moodie truly wanted to find a home in Canada, which will also be analysed.

But aside from considering these tensions in nature, other problems may be extracted from the reading. Loneliness and homesickness felt in the wilderness of Canada "refutes the common Romantic assumption that living in a wilderness area, far from the corruption of cities, makes a person both spiritually and morally stronger" (Farahmandian and Ehsaninia 156). Another valuable idea is the way in which *Roughing It in the Bush* merges with colonial discourse describing nature as able to kill in order to justify the violence towards the colonised country. Hence, Barbara Kijek intends to "prove that Mrs. Moodie portrays nature as monstrous mainly because, as a European and an inveterate Romantic, she 'judges' it in strictly moral categories, applying English norms

and English imperial stereotypes" (66). Another consideration is that R. D. MacDonald "creates unity in duality" (Thurston 7) in *Roughing It* thanks to nature. The "representation of nature does unify" Moodie's work (R. D. MacDonald 21). Contradictions only exist if irony is not noticed. For instance, the young British immigrant's Romantic assumptions are portrayed in the passage "A visit to Grosse Isle," where Moodie does not want to hear the captain warning that "many things look well at a distance which are bad enough when near" (10). But written in retrospection, *Roughing It* travels "from nature as beautiful and benevolent to nature as a dangerous taskmaster" (R. D. MacDonald 30). This author finds logic in the messy "design of the chapters" (21) and the character sketches, as they stress Canadian nature is not suitable for gentlemen.

In conclusion, Moodie intended to present a truthful account of events in *Roughing It in the Bush*, but some contradictions appear in her narrative. The main aim is to explore specifically the uncommon ambivalence towards the depiction of nature. In addition to the aforementioned authors of secondary sources, other ones will be discussed as the paper progresses.

1.3 Methodology

In order to prove the thesis statement of this paper, a qualitative methodology was followed, since it is suitable to generate and consider new ideas. This kind of methodology works collecting and studying closely non-numerical data, in this case, texts.

The step-by-step process that I followed began deciding what kind of literary resources I was going to use. Although I also resorted to some books, I focused mainly on academic reviews and articles in journals due to their great number and easiness in their free accessibility. The main chronological period in which the secondary sources were published is the second half of the 20th-century, but I also included some 21th-century secondary sources. In spite of being fewer, scholar articles on nature in Susanna Moodie's *Roughing It in the Bush* can still be found in the current century due to the relevance of the author inside the Canadian literature. It is also important the great impact that nature has in the minds of the inhabitants of one of the least populated countries in the world, to

the point that inside the search for a national identity in Canada, its nature is always kept in mind.

I searched for some key words such as *Roughing It in the Bush*, Susanna Moodie, Canadian nature/wilderness/landscape and some different combinations of similar words, resorting to electronic resources accessible from the platform of the UNED: the search engine of the Library of the UNED, the Academic Search Ultimate, JSTOR and LION.

After the decision of the kind of resources to find and the collection and organization of them, I proceeded to the exploration of the information contained in these sources. A good solution I found is the underlining of ideas, the writing of the more important ones, and the combination of all of them, in order to present a coherent work.

2. Background information

2.1 Emigration

One of the causes for a negative description of Canada and its nature resides in the opening pages of *Roughing It in the Bush*, where Moodie admits that emigration is “a matter of necessity, not of choice” and “an act of severe duty, performed at the expense of personal enjoyment” (xv). Moodie angrily defines emigration to Canada as “the infection” and criticise British society for having a “Canada mania” (xix). *Roughing It in the Bush* narrates the Moodie’s voyage in 1832 and first seven years as settlers in Upper Canada. Moodie refers to the concept of “exile” in this work (31), a highly theorized concept. Being exiled is defined as “the impossibility of coming home” (Thomas 106). It also implies being homeless and being dispossessed. Thus, Moodie’s feelings of extreme seclusion and psychological tensions under harsh experiences in the hostile Canadian land in the 1830s constitute her discourse of home.

As stated above, *Roughing It in the Bush* is a novel whose literary genre is difficult to define. Janet Giltrow and Tihana Klepač define it as a travel narrative, which is important for the self-definition of Moodie as an unwilling emigrant. Although Moodie never returns to England, her book lacking the typical structure of the genre, it is evident that she always feels a tourist who relates first her enthusiasm and then her torments to her European readers. Nature is

strongly felt in her account, but she fails to render concrete observations and provides an enthusiastic description representative of an unimplicated visitor, for example, in her description of the St. Lawrence River or the panoramic vistas of Quebec. Hence, nature also serves the purpose of separating Moodie from her country of adoption. Written nearly twenty years after her arrival in Canada, *Roughing It* still represents Moodie as a newcomer who curses her destination. She even desires to conclude her journey in a spectral way. As Thomas asserts, "in the conflation of 'tomb' and 'womb', death also promises a form of reunion with the Mother" (118). A recurrent theme for Moodie, death is the element that unites her with her motherland: "Dear, dear, England! [...] Oh, that I might be permitted to return and die upon your wave-encircled shores, and rest my weary head and heart beneath your daisy-covered sod at last!" (62). Canada, on the other side, is seen as follows: "The offspring of Britain, thou must be great, and I will and do love thee, land of my adoption, and of my children's birth; and, oh, dearer still to a mother's heart-land of their graves!" (62). Again, future success of Canada comes owing to English aid and the affection is mainly raised because it is the motherland for Moodie's children.

A principal conflict for Moodie is her desire to end the journey in England. Moodie's assertion that she will love Canada finds a contradiction in what Thurston explains: the Moodies talked about leaving the adoptive country for 35 years after they arrived, and their hope was ruined when the husband's health deteriorated. Her unconscious represents herself as a traveller who comes back, but much to her regret, she is a settler who lacks this opportunity.

2.2 Social class

Moodie's statement that emigration is forced by necessity "is more especially true [...] of persons of respectable connections, or of any station or position in the world" (xv). In addition, Moodie's conception of gentlewomen is never adapted to her new circumstances. A gentleman is defined as somebody who "can neither work so hard, live so coarsely, nor endure so many privations as his poorer but more fortunate neighbour" and states that the struggles always lead their families to "hopeless ruin" (515). As was already mentioned, there is a clear distinction between working class and middle-class position in *Roughing It in the Bush*. While the first one is designed for hard physical labour in the

backwoods, her own social class is depicted as a superior one for being refined and educated. Moodie is stubborn in her idea that gentlemen need no changes in behaviour. She knows the gentlewoman condition is just a title of nobility useless in Canada, but she needs to feel comfortable in an advantageous position. Hence, she imposes distance with her inferior neighbours even when she clearly lacks the useful skills in the new environment.

There are some interesting examples in *Roughing It in the Bush* that illustrates the previous ideas. For example, Mrs. Dean asks Moodie: "You don't eat with your helps, [...] Is not that something like pride?" (234). Moodie explains that: "There is no difference in the flesh and blood; but education makes a difference in the mind and manners, and, till these can assimilate, it is better to keep them apart" (235). Another example is Mrs. Joe, who exclaims that "I am glad to see you brought to work at last" and that she does not see why "you, who are no better than me, should sit still all day, like a lady!" (140). Moodie answers that she should "pay a little more respect to those who are possessed of superior advantages" (141).

Character sketches also pose an interesting subject matter to develop. They serve a purpose against Canadian nature, in the sense that they show British gentlemen who were unsuccessful in the Canadian bush, and they anticipate failure if the Moodies stay in there. For example, the one devoted to Tom Wilson, a friend who went to Canada before them and presages that if they go to the woods, they "will repent" (70). Wilson states that all the miseries, inconveniences and evils found in there provoke that the "horrid word *bush* became synonymous with all that was hateful and revolting in my mind" (72). What is seen by some as madness, or even excessive, ends up being a tough truth. Malcolm and Brian are the same kind of illustration.

Moodie envisions Canadian nature as hostile and undisciplined in *Roughing It in the Bush*. These two qualities are transferred to natives, who also upset and break the nerves of Susanna to the point that it is as if she considers them monsters inside the wilderness and not human beings. The same happens with lower-class immigrants that yell and behave like animals in "A visit to Grosse Isle" chapter. The story is full of examples in which, on one hand, Moodie finds relief in nature to the annoyances of the lower classes, and, on the other hand,

she eludes the pain nature inflicts on her in the company of those people she supposedly dislikes. As to the last statement, an example is: "Glad enough was I of her presence; for to be alone in the heart of the great forest, in a log hut, on such a night, was not a pleasing prospect" (438). Her strict vision of things prevents her from sincerely changing her conduct, which leads her to uneasy situations. As MacLulich states, Moodie refuses to accept inferiority or "ridicule" in Canada and this is a reason for changing "an already-cleared property" in Hamilton to one "further into the bush, to an uncleared homestead" (121) in Peterborough with more suitable neighbours. Before rejecting Moodie for being a snobbish proud person, it is worth considering Stouck's words: "it is a simple truth that pride invariably has its source in feelings of self-doubt," and "her role playing throughout is a bulwark against a profound sense of inadequacy" (466).

I agree when Johnston suggests that Moodie's aesthetic appreciation of nature changes when her economic situation declines. Since Moodie is forced to work the tough Canadian lands on economical shortage reasons, money also triggers contradictions in her representation of nature. Her European aesthetics change and Moodie sometimes depicts herself enjoying useful things in nature such as crops: "a well-hoed ridge of potatoes" (343). But her pleasant descriptions of nature, as the paper will discuss further later, are few. The truth is that Moodie depicts little of her learning in *Roughing It*. She has learned "all the menial employments which are necessary in a good settler's wife" (296) and she accepts "manual toil, however distasteful to those unaccustomed to it, was not after all such a dreadful hardship" (342). But as Thurston explains, she never truly forgets her "reliance on servants specific to her class in England" (157) and abandons work in Belleville. Although she manages to appreciate the working class, Moodie always refers to them with the third person, depicting herself mainly as a gentlewoman unable to develop the suitable skills to work the Canadian lands and farms.

2.3 Gender

Unlike contemporary women writers, women in the 19th century accepted to have an "empty, absent, bare and sterile place reserved [...] in a patriarchal system" (Almeida 154). On this point, women must conduct their social duties and stay at home, which does not appropriately identify with life in nature where

they are out of place. The Victorian values also address her writing intention as embarrassing. As Dean remarks, Moodie uses strategies to hide her writing matter. There are a lot of gossiping "with great asperity in [...] look and tone" in *Roughing It* about her use of the pen, neglecting the "useful employment" (218) for a woman of making "a shirt" or seeing "the cleaning of her house" (219). Moodie defends herself affirming that "I tried to conceal my blue stockings beneath the long conventional robes of the tamest common-place" (219). Moodie needs to conceal "the unconventional fact of her public appearance in the literary text" with the strategy of the "self-conscious conformity to conventions of feminine behaviour" and the "self-effacing 'good woman'" (Dean 25). The conventions of the genres a woman can employ are also restrictive factors that Moodie complies with. There is no evidence that she aspired to enter the Canadian canon. Her admitted aim was to warn English emigrants of the miseries and misfortunes in Canada, especially for women.

As to the conventions while writing, Klepač indicates that Moodie employs in *Roughing It* a sentimental narrator, one focused on her private sphere. Moodie eludes to provide valuable information about the geography and the wildlife. As a woman, instead of collaborating to the official cartography, Moodie depicts a private naming of natural things as a mere and trifle play. For example, what is officially named "Mount Rascal," she affirms that "the island was so beautiful, it did not deserve the name, and I christened it 'Oak Hill'" (338). Moodie's descriptions of nature are not based on scientific purposes, but she narrates she is found "painting some wild flowers" (193) one day. In order to reach authority, she depends on the authenticity of her own experience. So, her narrative is full of words as the following: "I have given you a faithful picture of a life in the backwoods of Canada" (514). Klepač asserts that Moodie "is constructed as imprudent female, more ignorant and more credulous than Moodie actually was" (68), such as the conventional discourses about women required. The existence of letters that evidence a prudent and reasoned decision before emigration is hidden after dishonest advertising. *Roughing It* also places the resolution of travelling to Canada on the part of the husband, the one who attends the lectures: "My husband finally determined to emigrate to Canada" (60). While men go to the outer world, she appropriately stays at home

and proceeds with her feminine tasks: "I had provided a hot supper and a cup of coffee after their long walk" (57). She was also portrayed as fragile, not being able to place her feet on hot rocks in Grosse Isle. While her husband is responsible for sheltering and providing food for his family, and negotiating for a suitable land to survive, Moodie seems concerned by feminine frivolities: "I felt so anxious about the result of the negotiation, that, throwing my cloak over my shoulders, and trying on my bonnet without the assistance of a glass, [...]" (130). She usually puts women at a disadvantage. For instance, Moodie speaks about the "weak hand of a woman" (490) unsuitable for overcoming the rapids of the river. Although she survives, she warns herself "never to cross the lake again without a stronger arm than mine in the canoe to steer me safely through the current" (494). She, as a woman, is always afraid when her husband is not present: "I begged the man to stay until he arrived, as I felt terrified at being left alone in this wild, strange-looking place" (84). Whenever she oversteps the limits of her womanhood, such as happens in "The fire" chapter when she bravely saves her family, she is always justifying her actions with masculine absence: "this was terrible news, with my husband absent, no man in the house" (385). When the suitable masculine help appears, her proper feminine behaviour is shown: "knees trembled under me, I felt giddy and faint, and dark shadows seemed dancing before my eyes" (388).

It is also interesting Rebecca Raglon's division of women in two types: women who "rebelled against the 'Canadian experience,'" and women who "managed to adapt to their new homes" (514). The first cases mainly occur in the nineteenth century. Confined to remain at home or in a garden, women like Moodie did not feel included in the experience of settlement, so, it was frequent for them to feel homesickness for the abandoned country. Her sister Traill, one of the few examples of women in the 19th century who liked and enjoyed nature, also recognised difficulties on the part of women in the new country¹.

The same sense that Victorian values define women, men also have their part. Christa Zeller Thomas affirms that Mr. Moodie is depicted as guilty of his family's homeless state in *Roughing It in the Bush*. He decides to emigrate, is

¹ See for example *The Backwoods of Canada*.

unable to provide a suitable home and his absences when most needed force her to perform the unsuitable role of leader for a woman. Hence, she is displaced because of marriage. Motherhood also displaces Moodie: she "had contrived to write several articles after the children were asleep" but she "had never been able to turn my thoughts towards literature during my sojourn in the bush" since "the body is fatigued with labour" (419). As Gray states, Moodie wants to devote her life to literature and be published, but the adoptive land and her feminine circumstances trap her. Since she must be a docile wife, Thomas indicates her criticism of these problems is not open. Susanna ends up "both intoxicated and embarrassed by her hunger for fame" (Gray 27). Thurston also declares that Canada, or "the colony," frustrates "her lyric impulse" (140), which of course includes the horrid Canadian natural conditions.

In sum, the three times conditioned middle-class female immigrant is unable to see nature as "a source of moral and spiritual rejuvenation" (Farahmandian and Ehsaninia 156), or to feel a sublime experience, as she only perceives fears and perils living in nature. So, nature is negatively depicted.

3. Contrastive points with the general description of nature in the 19th century Canadian literature

The aim of this section is to provide a brief introduction to the description of nature in the 19th century Canadian literature and how it contrasts with *Roughing It in the Bush*. As mentioned before, in early 19th century Canadian Literature, the prevalent description of Canadian nature is positive. Christian faith has taught society to believe God is unable to create something unpleasant. Therefore, nature is something beautiful to admire and there is the need in literature to thank the Creator for its splendid work. The aesthetic theories of the sublime and the picturesque in this period also reinforce the vision of nature as beautiful. The leading idea of the sublime is developed by Edmund Burke in his work *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, which provides the Romantic movement with the concept of the sublime as encompassing both inspiration and terror. While Frye develops his brilliant metaphor of the "garrison mentality" used to refer to feelings of terror because of nature, and explains he is "specifically referring to poetry of the nineteenth century," "not to all Canadian Literature" (Turner and

Freedman 173), M. L. MacDonald and many other experts deny this idea. In reading Susan Glickman's work, she states that the expression of terror, the consciousness of "the unknowable power of the world" (39) is not understood as a negative feeling aroused by nature in that period, but as part of a positive experience of the sublime.

M. L. MacDonald names Moodie and a few more examples of writers who highlighted negative images of the natural world in some of their works, such as John Richardson specifically in *Wacousta*. MacDonald explains that this fact comes from the "unhappy souls" who wished "they had never left home" as "Eden itself would have been flawed" (62). Thus, Canadian nature appears as hostile in *Roughing It in the Bush* on the grounds of nostalgia and because of tensions between the expectations and the reality of settlement. Most writers described Canada as beautiful since they felt at home in the new country. Positive views of wintry scenery, pleasant descriptions while in the woods, human control of the environment for example in hunters, are part of a large list of instances of positive responses of the era. *Roughing It* participates in this kind of representation for example in the description of the Otonabee or the St. Lawrence rivers, but Moodie's rejection of Canada as home leads her to highlight small annoyances in nature as mosquitoes, or a "swarm of mice" (176) in order to show her dissatisfaction.

For Farahmandian and Ehsaninia, the settlers' representation of nature as Moodie's *Roughing It in the Bush* is essential in the 19th century literature of Canada, since they found an unexplored country with a vast and unpopulated natural territory as it was those days. D. M. R. Bentley states that most 19th century writings encouraged immigration and depicted settler accomplishments. In this aspect, *Roughing It in the Bush* differs greatly. Thurston asserts "the idealized, romantic figure of a founding pioneer, so often put forward in the commentary on *Roughing It*, did not exist" (172). David Stouck states that this book does not portray pioneer life as one heroic period of history. On the contrary, it describes a story of defeat and misery that turns the pioneer hero into a loser. So, the book is not a classic, but a complex story of the harsh reality. Moodie felt an internal conflict towards Canadian nature that directs "us to an undercurrent of negative feeling about the country and the conditions of

pioneer life" (Stouck 465). Thus, and in line with Atwood, while her public voice follows the myths of the era and exalts Canadian nature, her private voice rejects Canada and mounts an attack against a wicked nature:

no rain fell upon the earth for many weeks, till nature drooped and withered beneath one bright blaze of sunlight; and the ague and fever in the woods, and the cholera in the large towns and cities, spread death and sickness [...]. (295)

One last consideration is that the renowned image of *Roughing It in the Bush* is not given by its differences with most of its contemporary works. Gray affirms that prominence in history comes since it is one of the few documents that contain the domestic life of Upper Canada in its early years.

3.1 Susanna Moodie and Catharine Parr Traill's differences

In Unit 1 of the course 'Literatura Canadiense en Lengua Inglesa', Gibert asserts that the best-known writers of pioneer memoirs are currently Traill and Moodie and that their works "primarily addressed a female readership" (1). Both emigrated with the aim of prospering. But, as they adapted to the new country unequally, some differences can be found in their response to Canada and its nature. As Charlotte Gray states, Moodie reluctantly acceded to emigrate. Unable to withstand her husband's enthusiasm and wanting to give their children a better future, she resented her husband and children for her exile forever. But Traill's response to emigration was different, since she enjoyed the idea of starting a new life in Canada. As a botanist and student of nature, the idea of finding and identifying novelties was exciting. Their ability of adjustment also differed. Instead of a desired division of social hierarchies, Moodie initially found a chaos of classes that appalled her in Canada and resorted to nature to find relief. If both received deference from social inferiors in England, the sweet nature of Catharine was able to display her reliance on everybody's humanity, ignore the uncouth manners and adjust to the new context.

According to MacLulich, while Mrs. Traill voluntarily changes her "ideal of the English gentry" (118), Moodie is not willing to change "her identity as a gentlewoman" (120). Hence, she rejects the physical labour required to survive and forces herself to face an unavoidable failure. As Peter A. Russell puts it, the improving of economic and social status in Canada was after an agricultural base and the hard labour done in clearing the forests to produce farmland. But

while Traill understands that these physical tasks are beneficial, Moodie faces a problem of arrogance in performing them. She snobbishly needs to justify themselves for working because they do not have money to employ servants. She also needs to clarify that desperation forces her to work in the farm as her husband is absent. Opposed to her sister, she considers the gender equality Canadian society displays a barbaric custom.

Many of Traill's works contributed to the scientific knowledge of Upper Canada's forests in those years. Traill's most famous guide to a pioneer's lifestyle is *The Backwoods of Canada: Being Letters from the Wife of an Emigrant Officer*, where she extensively describes Canadian nature and shows a stronger desire to settle down. This contrasts with the traveller's vision of Canadian nature attributed to Moodie, who sometimes appreciates the particular features of her surroundings: "gorgeous butterflies floated about like winged flowers, and feelings allied to poetry and gladness once more pervaded my heart" (*Roughing* 177). But Moodie's focus resides more on the general beautiful panorama that sometimes leads her to solitude and imprisonment. She also reflects, as Ballstadt indicates, "the sense of challenge which the bold extremes of Canadian climate and landscape demanded" (37). Hers is an unfavourable vision, whereas Traill simply accepts Canadian climate conditions.

As Gray asserts, Traill learned from her father the interest in botany and natural history. Catharine Parr Traill's love for nature, the beautiful image of a benevolent God, was what helped her to overcome adverse situations in Canada. While Susanna was more interested in metropolitan life and was afraid of being alone in the wilderness, Catharine preferred to live in the country and to observe how the cycle of seasons changed nature. She struggled to identify new species and took careful notes, which led her to devote around 40 pages of *The Backwoods of Canada* to describe Canadian fauna and flora in detail, leaving little space for negativity or small inconveniences. Susanna did not share this scientific interest and just painted birds and butterflies to sell the drawings to her brother Samuel's friends in Peterborough and earn money.

Traill's *The Backwoods of Canada* agrees with the literature of the 19th century in that it encouraged emigration to Canada and enhanced Canadian nature and the settlers' lifestyle. In the Advertisement of the book, it is stated

that it is written "to the wives and daughters of emigrants of the higher class who contemplate seeking a home amid our Canadian wilds" (5). Including herself as Canadian, she continues with the aim of teaching women "to discard everything exclusively pertaining to the artificial refinement of fashionable life in England" and to spend their money in "articles of real use," and in doing so "they may enjoy the pleasure of superintending a pleasant, well-ordered home" (5-6). Traill adds "she would willingly direct their attention to the natural history and botany of this new country, in which they will find a never-failing source of amusement and instruction" (6). She affirms to "the person who is capable of looking abroad into the beauties of Nature [...] are opened stores of unmixed pleasure" and that nature "will not permit her to be dull or unhappy in the loneliest part of our Western Wilderness" (6). The book exude optimism and although it recognizes that "the struggle up the hill of Independence is often a severe one" and that "the hardships and difficulties" of this kind of life "are felt peculiarly by the female part of the family," "it is with a view of ameliorating these privations that the following pages have been written" (7).

Following Turner and Freedman, both sisters share some tensions in their vision of Canadian nature. Although they enhanced it, it is still less beautiful than the English nature. In addition, as well as regretting the damage done by humans to nature, they also believed that a human domestication and exploitation of the natural world is beneficial. But by reading the purposes of *Roughing It in the Bush* and *The Backwoods of Canada*, it is clear that the content of the two books is quite different. Traill sometimes depicts the landscape in the same overpowering manner than Moodie: "to the mere passing traveller, who cares little for the minute beauties of scenery, there is certainly a monotony in the long and unbroken line of woods, which insensibly inspires a feeling of gloom almost touching on sadness" (56). But she enhances the situation by adding that "still there are objects to charm and delight the close observer of nature" (56). Traill's enthusiasm confronts Moodie's description of the wilderness as a detrimental element in *Roughing It in the Bush*. Contrary to her sister, Moodie's description of pioneer life is pessimistic. There is an instance of this difference in Moodie's work, when she recognises that Traill "predisposed me to view things in the most favourable light" (262). As to their

vision of nature, there is a very illustrative example in Moodie's work when she reaches the land where the Tralls are settled in the backwoods of Canada and states that "there was very little beauty to be found in the backwoods" (258) while her "sister was enthusiastic in her admiration of the woods" (261).

3.2 Description of nature in *Life in the Clearings versus the Bush*

Moodie's description of nature in *Life in the Clearings* is not divided or does not go from a divine and splendid spectacle to something harmful as happens in *Roughing It in the Bush*. This is rooted in the different purposes of these two works, seen in the introduction of the sequel *Life in the Clearings*:

But while I have endeavoured to point out the error of gentlemen bringing delicate women and helpless children to toil in the woods, and by so doing excluding them from all social intercourse with persons in their own rank, and depriving the younger branches of the family of the advantages of education, which, in the vicinity of towns and villages, can be enjoyed by the children of the poorest emigrant, I have never said anything against the REAL benefits to be derived from a judicious choice of settlement in this great and rising country.
(viii)

In *Life in the Clearings*, Moodie still grasps the idea that "there are a thousand more advantageous ways in which a man of property may invest his capital, than by burying himself and his family in the woods" (ix), but "God forbid that any representations of mine should deter one of my countrymen from making this noble and prosperous colony his future home" (viii). As Shields states, Moodie wants to correct what she affirms is her public's mistaken understanding of *Roughing It*, as she never wanted to discourage emigration, but to direct the middle or higher classes unfit for hard work to already cultivated farms or towns. The woods are still portrayed as a "green prison" (xii) that prevents her from knowing the life in Canadian towns and villages. Resenting snobbishly the way poorest emigrants enjoyed better opportunities, she also praises Canadian riddance of classism at the end of *Life in the Clearings*. As Shields affirms, Moodie's feelings are ambivalent, and it is not clear if she accepts or rejects Canada. But it is meaningful that, after leaving the wilderness and establishing in the populated Belleville as the wife of a sheriff with no need of working hard to survive, Moodie writes a friendly work towards Canada:

Since my residence in a settled part of the country, I have enjoyed as much domestic peace and happiness as ever falls to the lot of poor humanity. Canada has become almost as dear to me as my native land; and the homesickness that constantly preyed upon me in the Backwoods, has long ago yielded to the deepest and most heartfelt interest in the rapidly increasing prosperity and greatness of the country of my adoption, [...]. (xii)

Following Gray, Belleville was one of the most important towns in Upper Canada where “she no longer had to struggle [...]” with nature but “she could purchase staples at a store” (154). Her freeing from the backwoods left Moodie with time to “reestablish herself as a professional writer” (Gray 159) to increase her family income, what constitutes a chance to see nature as a delight, not an enemy. In *Life in the Clearings*, future prosperity of Canada is still introduced, now presumably as a defence against “the pride so common to the inhabitants of the favoured isles” (5) referring to England. It is also seen as highly positive the taming of the wilderness to obtain places such as the “populous, busy, thriving town” (9) of Belleville. Now, Moodie invites us to contemplate the beauty of nature, “the waters of this beautiful Bay of Quinte” and the “picturesque shores” (5). Moodie speaks about her desire to visit the Falls of Niagara as an attraction for her English readers. She returns to being “a true daughter of romance” who uses terms such as “glorious ideal” or “wonder of the world” and describes “the mighty cataract” as a “sublime ‘thunder of waters’, whose very name from childhood had been music to my ears” (2). Accompanied by her husband, she makes her desired journey to recover her health. Thus, nature is a source of recovery. In her travel she states that her Canadian “home” is “peaceful” and “happy” (4), and its nature is “enchanted” (3) and smiles upon her “more lovingly than usual” (4). Hence, nature keeps the Romantic meaning of something beautiful to enjoy in every circumstance and as the image of God, as is evidenced by this section of *Life in the Clearings*:

Next to the love of God, the love of nature may be regarded as the purest and holiest feeling of the human breast. In the outward beauty of his creation, we catch a reflection of the divine image of the Creator, which refines the intellect, and lifts the soul upward to Him. This innate perception of the beautiful, however, is confined to no rank or situation, but is found in the most barren spots, and surrounded by the most unfavourable circumstances; [...]. (4)

Nature is felt firmly as benevolent and a source of vitality. Moodie declares that "a day spent thus happily with nature in her green domain, is one of pure and innocent enjoyment" (91). When referring to Death, she does not want to judge negatively natural norms and affirms that "Nature presents in all her laws such a beautiful and wonderful harmony, that it is as impossible for death to produce discord among them [...]" (176). This contrasts with the cruelty of natural laws depicted in *Roughing It in the Bush*. Brian the Still-Hunter relates a merciless action of nature. A "noble deer" (192) is harassed by "a pack of ten or fifteen large, fierce wolves" (91). The courage of the noble beast and its struggle is magnified, and the pointlessness of its efforts when it is "torn to pieces by his ravenous foes" (192) is seen by human morality as an undeserved destiny. Even God is criticised for permitting such terrible misfortune to happen.

In *Life in the Clearings*, their voyage is described as "very pleasant" (331) and, at arriving Niagara cataract, an eruption of Romantic descriptions appears "when, on raising my head, the great cataract burst on my sight without any intervening screen, producing an overwhelming sensation in my mind which amounted to pain in its intensity" (339). Nature is described as having a "great heart" (341) and, near the end of the story, Moodie says that "all nature contributed to heighten our enjoyment" and that they "seemed surrounded by an enchanted atmosphere" (366).

Still, in *Life in the Clearings* there are a few examples that contain negative qualities. It still figures the character of the failed "man of talent and refinement," as for example Dr. Huskins who emigrated to a new country to withdraw "himself from society," and to pass "the remainder of his days in a solitary, comfortless, log hut on the borders of the wilderness" (62). In the chapter known as "Lost Children," written for *Roughing It in the Bush* but finally included in *Life in the Clearings*, it is spoken about "the danger of going astray in the forest" when referring to new settlers who have "their children lost" (270) in them. Mrs. H states that "it is a frightful calamity to happen to any one" and mentions the "claws of wild animals" and the few opportunities one strong man has to survive many days in the wilderness (272-273). The Canadian wilderness is defined as "desolate," but it is gladdened with the "beauty" of "fruits and flowers" (338). Despite this, the main portrayal of nature is one with positive traits. As Shields

explains, contradictions do not reside here in her depiction of nature, but for instance in how she praises the beauty of the natural world and at the same time criticises the impolite manners of local tourists.

In sum, I have presented two instances of positive responses to nature in that period. With a better vision of emigration, or a better place for a gentlewoman, Traill or the same Moodie focused on positive traits of nature.

4. The role of nature in *Roughing It in the Bush*

As a miscellaneous work composed of poetry, prose, autobiographic sketches, and as a contradictory document that reveals many kinds of tensions in Moodie's life, it is important to recover the idea of unity that Canadian nature constitutes for the structure of *Roughing It*. Chaotic in the chronological order of events and in presenting conflicting questions even simultaneously, I agree with the crucial role that R. D. MacDonald gives to nature. It directs the story to depict a chronological transformation of Moodie's Romantic view of Canadian nature into something "monstrous" (Kijek 66). Since the book was written years after the experiences were lived, and old documents were recovered, divided views of nature and Canada appear. It is important to read between the lines and notice that her ecstatic description of St. Laurence River as a scene with such a "surpassing grandeur" that "a thrill of wonder and delight pervaded my mind" (7) and "my eyes were blinded with tears - blinded with the excess of beauty" (7) is not shared by Scottish emigrants or the captain who makes the warning about sceptical appearances of the picturesque. Her Romantic view is frequently alternated with the dispersal of the same point of view, attributable to retrospection. For example:

I scarcely regarded the old sailor's warning. So eager was I to go on shore - to put my foot upon the soil of the new world for the first time. I was in no humour to listen to any depreciation of what seemed so beautiful.

It was four o'clock when we landed on the rocks, which the rays of an intensely scorching sun had rendered so hot that I could scarcely place my foot upon them. How the people without shoes bore it I cannot imagine. (10)

Hence, alternating visions of things are important for her discourse of homecoming, which is an unsuccessful attempt from the beginning as Thomas asserts. Besides having a very hot climate, there is also a negative

consequence of the new land over the passengers. Those "who while on board ship [...] appeared the most quiet, orderly set of people in the world," were transformed and "became infected by the same spirit of insubordination and misrule, and were just as insolent and noisy as the rest" (11-12). The alternative narration continues and Moodie enhances Canadian nature, "the shores of the island and mainland," "the dark shadows of the mountains" and "the sunbeams" that "fell in stars of gold, or long lines of dazzling brightness, upon the deep black waters, producing the most novel and beautiful effects" (12-13). This serves to contrast nature with "the filthy beings who were sullyng the purity of the air and water with contaminating sights and sounds" (13). In this sense, Moodie suggests that nature without human intervention is perfect.

In Grosse Isle, Moodie's family is depicted as "anxious [...] to return to the ship," "hungry, tired, and out of spirits; the mosquitoes swarmed in myriads around us, tormenting the poor baby, who, not at all pleased with her first visit to the New World, filled the air with cries" (14). Contrasting with these negative feelings, in Quebec the Romantic vision of Canadian landscape comes back when Moodie looks at it from the inside of the vessel with admiration. From the St. Lawrence River, "the island and its sister group looked like a second Eden just emerged from the waters of chaos" (17). If England is her perfect Eden, the Canadian enchanting natural scenes can turn the new land into a second Eden. Moodie declares that the "Author of all being" should be thanked (18) for the creation of such objects that awoke her "emotions of astonishment and delight" (17). It seems that Quebec is an "astonishing panorama" formed by nature and the "picture perfect, and worthy of its Divine Originator" (18). Moodie admits that she "cried like a child -not tears of sorrow, but a gush from the heart of pure and unalloyed delight" (18) while her soul was "alone with God" (19). These stupendous panoramas awaken a religious fervour in Moodie. In Quebec, she recognizes she "never before felt so overpoweringly" her "own insignificance, and the boundless might and majesty of the Eternal" (19). Moodie envisions nature as the exact image of its kind Creator and turns down the cautions she receives. She lets her Romantic traditions and literary aesthetics loose, and the sublimity of the natural beauty becomes a plentiful inspiration.

Moodie describes Canadian nature in such high terms in "Quebec" chapter that she patriotically suggests that a huge landscape gives rise to a great country for Canadians. But soon Moodie's words change. She regains the point of view of disillusionment, when she announces that she "must again descend to common work-a-day realities" (21) and she presents a cholera-plague raging in Quebec. Passengers who visit the city also come back to the vessel disenchanted with the "filthy hole, that looked a great deal better from the ship's side than it did on shore" (24-25). This shows that "man has marred the magnificent creation of his Maker" (25). From now on, although Romantic description of nature is still found, the book turns more a "catalogue of narrowly averted disasters" (R. D. MacDonald 24). The high tone employed for nature diminishes, and there are more definitions of the severity of the weather conditions: "The country [...] appeared beautiful in the clear light of the moon; but the air was cold, and slightly sharpened by frost" (42). As the time passes, her Victorian values and morality collide with an undisciplined, amoral Canadian nature that, although still praiseworthy, becomes a disturbing challenge. Abusing the adjective "wild" that Moodie connects with all dimensions of nature and the feelings it inspires, the "exotic other" (Kijek 68) that delights also becomes "the demonic other" (Kijek 70). Moodie can identify with a canonical nature, but as Canadian nature is incomprehensible, it turns into a malevolent entity difficult to reach, a "demon of unrest" (176). So, Canadian nature ends up as a harsh ruler that destroys British gentleman emigrants like the Moodies.

A powerful factor in the Moodie's failure as settlers is Canadian nature that, according to Barbara Kijek, has a "forbidding, incomprehensibly cruel and frustrating aspect" and "inflicts gratuitous harm" (66). One surprising characteristic that Moodie connects to Canadian nature is the quality of being animate and possessing deliberate choices towards foreign settlers. In her utter despair trying to survive, she blames nature on the terrible charge of being an unethical enemy. For example, when "not a breath of wind stirred the leafless branches," "it seemed as if Nature had suspended her operations" because "she was sleeping" (241). Equated to "fortune," nature seems "never tired of playing us some ugly trick" (409). If Mr. Moodie's leg, the one "on whom we all

depended for subsistence" (409) is broken because of a stump, nature appears as the implacable guilty that ends hope. Other instance of the malice of nature:

Before I felt a breath of the mighty blast [...] branches of trees, leaves, and clouds of dust were whirled across the lake, whose waters rose in long sharp furrows, fringed with foam, as if moved in their depths by some unseen but powerful agent. (Moodie 437)

As it was already mentioned, Moodie never adjusted to the new situation she had to endure. Such as the colonial discourse does, her desire to appropriate the land and civilise it to find something tamed like English nature, and her failures, lead her to depict its landscape as dangerous and inhospitable. Her obstinacy to change Canadian nature is shown like this:

It is very evident, from the traces which they have left behind them, that storms of this description have not been unfrequent in the wooded districts of Canada; and it becomes a matter of interesting consideration whether the clearing of our immense forests will not, in a great measure, remove the cause of these phenomena. (442)

Nature seems to have almost a human character. Its purpose might be a defence against the human imperial intention employing fires and tornadoes to torture, defeat and finally displace the settler. But if most of the times the actions nature performs are harmful, other times a downpour saves human lives from a fire as *Roughing It* shows in "Burning the Fallow" chapter. In this sense, it is difficult to prove the idea that nature has a malignant will towards Europeans, as Moodie seems to support, and it is more probable the unordered and undetermined character of nature, that behaves with its own laws.

The story is full of instances where nature kills or almost kills a human being. Either a tree that falls, savage animals, someone who gets lost in the woods, or the Canadian climate with fires, violent winds, storms and such low temperatures that you can be killed by freezing, nature is portrayed as something uncontrollable and disorganised that affects human lives and minds. The Moodies lost their crops on several occasions, such as in the summer of '35, and remained in a state of starvation and pain. Natural arrangements as responsible, the "image of total desolation and abandonment" (Kijek 70-71) is what remains near Canadian nature, the indifferent agent. Psychological tensions and severe sufferings on the part of the settlers are constant, being the

"iron winter of 1833" an ideal instance of the matter: "the rigour of the climate subdued my proud, independent English spirit, and I actually shamed my womanhood and cried with the cold" (Moodie 149-150). Nature is deafening with what it produces: "the roaring of the thunder, the rushing of the blast, the impetuous down-pouring of the rain, and the crash of falling trees" (Moodie 438). It is described as a predator, far away from an idyllic garden. At the same time, in the backwoods Moodie is aware of the hugeness of an unpopulated wild land, which destroys her nerves as "buried as we were in the heart of the forest, no one could discover our situation till we were beyond the reach of help" (299). It seems the only one who can assist her is the Lord.

After having suffered torments that will oppress her until death, such as a storm whose "vivid recollection of its terrors was permanently fixed upon my memory" (435), something changes in Moodie's mind and moves *Roughing It in the Bush* closer to a Bildungsroman novel. While she struggles to adhere to her old-world identity, Canadian nature changes her perception of the world. An evil nature that comes from experience contrasts with the benevolent image of the emigrant's expectations, which implies a development of her character with two different images of Canadian nature. The Romantic one comes from Moodie's references and the mythic concepts of nature and pioneer life spread by land speculators: "Oh, ye dealers in wild lands -ye speculators in the folly and credulity of your fellow men" (xviii). The portrayal of nature as "monstruous" (Kijek 66) comes from mature experience in a hateful land.

Thomas highlights that Moodie's sense of placement in the new country in *Roughing It in the Bush* is what receives most of the scholar focus. Is she able to feel at home in Canada? This question raises an extensive debate on migration theories. The notion of home is essential for a settler. Moodie is not an exceptional emigrant in that she hopes to find a new home. But her plot never diminishes her discomfort and displays an unsuccessful account of home from the very beginning. In showing an illness that exterminates people and hordes of lower classes taking possession of the beautiful landscape, it is a doubtful country from start. For Moodie, the concept of home is clear: "the heart acknowledges no other home than the land of its birth" (31). Unable to find her position in that strange land, she tries to find a location in the world in her

family. But, as stated previously, this is another displacing field since it is what Moodie defines as "duty" (xv).

As already exposed, nature in some sense interrupts Moodie's Romantic expressions and it is also one of the elements that lead her to a position of exile in Canada. Canada and its nature face a huge problem in that Moodie's self-identity resides in England, where she found love and learned her lessons of life. So, everything is contrasted, and nature also divides mother and adoptive country. Moodie points out that if "Edinburgh had been the *beau idéal* to me of all that was beautiful in Nature," now "all these past recollections faded before the *present* of Quebec" (18). She recognises beauty in Canadian nature. But it is in "Quebec" when Susanna Moodie first realizes that she "was a stranger in a strange land" and that her heart "yearned intensely" for her "absent home," England, while Canada will not ever become a "home" for her, but a country of "exile" (31). Thus, regrets starts and Romantic anticipation in her approaching to the new land is replaced by homesickness for her beloved England. According to Elizabeth Thompson, "the voice of the emigrant" (par. 5) predominates even in this Romantic chapter. Although Canada is beautiful, this kind of description does not mean a complete approval of Canada, since, as it was already mentioned, the future grandeur of the new country depends on its reflection of the lost British Eden Susanna Moodie so profoundly mourns. "The Lament of a Canadian Emigrant" also reinforces the image of a hellish Canada opposite to an English paradise. England is the "Bless'd Isle of the Free" and "my best thoughts, my country, still linger with thee" (77). Motherland is "lovely" because of its nature: she speaks about "soft waving woodlands, thy green, daisied vales" and laments when her "soul, dearest Nature! shall cease to adore thee" (78). Being in Canada is regretted as "my fortunes are cast on this far-distant shore" (77). Nature is not enhanced, but something that saddens and imprisons her: "in the depths of dark forests my soul droops her wings; / In tall boughs above me no merry bird sings; / The sigh of the wild winds - the rush of the floods - / Is the only sad music that wakens the woods" (77-78).

Another poem in *Roughing It in the Bush* that colours Canada with a "gloomy" nature is "Oh Canada! Thy Gloomy Woods." Here, Canadian nature "will never cheer the heart," "but cause fresh tears to start" (109). Despite this

pessimistic description of nature, Moodie recognizes that "No more I weep to cross the wave, / My native land to see" (109). Instead of lamenting separation, Moodie states that beautiful England will "cheer my mental eyes" (109) in Canada. She also thanks "The Almighty hand that spread / Our table in the wilderness / And gave my infants bread" (110). Laments and regrets are somewhat softened in the poem, but they continue as the story progresses.

In "A Journey to the Woods," the beauty of Canadian nature is emphasized. When they cross "the wild, rushing, beautiful Otonabee river" (248), Moodie contrasts English and Canadian rivers and flatters Canadian beauty. As well as dedicating a positive poem to this beautiful river, the prose of "The Wilderness, and our Indian Friends" chapter also describes a "prospect of opening the Trent and Otonabee for the navigation of steamboats and other small craft" (259). The positive improvement of Canadian nature to benefit human's lives is "a favourite speculation" due to the "great advantages to be derived from it" (259), such as connection with England, her "home of the heart" (Thomas 113).

"A Trip to Stony Lake" represents one of the few intervals in the disasters the Moodies suffer. Defined as "a romantic spot," the children are "enchanted" (323) by nature in a "little lake" that "lies in the heart of the wilderness" (324). When Moodie finds one of her "favourite flower" in England, "the harebell," her soul is "flooded [...] with remembrances of the past, that, in spite of myself, the tears poured freely from my eyes" (335). Hence, her pleasure in Canada is not complete. But the chapter quickly returns to joy with "a magnificent scene of wild and lonely grandeur" (335) and with an "exquisite panorama" (336). Moodie concludes the chapter with such an assertion: "In moments like these, I ceased to regret my separation from my native land; and, filled with the love of Nature, my heart forgot for the time the love of home" (339). Hence, and despite its malevolent side, Canadian landscape serves the purpose of consoling Moodie when her nostalgia for England arises, as Martín Párraga affirms. But as the sentence is limited in time, the pleasant intervals only exist "in moments like these" and most of her life is pervaded by an incessant homesickness.

It seems that Moodie begins to sense differently the love of nature and the love of home. Her ideal nature resides in England, but her alternating story suggests Canadian nature has also some degree of beauty. Concerning her

notion of home, the tension is never solved since scenes of disorder come one after the other. Their awkwardness among uncultured and shameless inferiors, their first house that "is not a house, but a cattle-shed, or pig-sty" (83), and the unwelcoming side on the part of Canadian nature: "the rain poured in at the open door, beat in at the shattered window, and dropped upon our heads from the holes in the roof. The wind blew keenly through a thousand apertures in the log walls;" until everything in Canada directs them towards a distasteful feeling that "nothing could exceed the uncomfortableness of our situation" (85). Although the Moodies fix their first house attacked by nature to be more comfortable and she asserts that "when things come to the worst, they generally mend" (85), the story is full of wrong places and abandoned houses.

As indicated earlier, the notion of home includes the close relation between nature and mother. Thus, England is the place that can nurture and protect Moodie, while in Canada there is a process of replacement of mother in favour of the term father, or God, who is the one who saves them from a ferocious Canadian nature. Moodie judges nature from her English learned notion and expects that "Nature, arrayed in her green loveliness, had ever smiled upon me like an indulgent mother, holding out her loving arms to enfold to her bosom her erring but devoted child" (62). But she only finds the "view of the lake" that cheers her up "till fancy transported me back to England" (296) and sounds of birds and cattle in Canadian nature. Hence, it fails to be a caring mother and, instead of providing security, it arouses the following feelings:

Panting with terror, I just reached the door of the house as the hurricane swept up the hill, crushing and overturning everything in its course. Spell-bound, I stood at the open door, with clasped hands, unable to speak, rendered dumb and motionless by the terrible grandeur of the scene [...]. (437-438)

The discourse of home also comprises the management of Canadian nature to produce something usable for humans. When she lives next to her sister in Peterborough, life is described as "the halcyon days of the bush," with "fishing and shooting excursions" that "were delightful" (264) and "pleasant excursions on the water" in the company of people who alleviate her solitude (488). The improvement of Moodie's skills is sometimes presented, for example: her garden "as usual, was very productive, and with milk, fresh butter, and eggs,

supplied the simple wants of our family" (488). The large presence of a natural world that needs to be tamed has a great influence on the settler's minds. As a result, authors of 19th century start to show less traditional uses of the sublime and the picturesque principles. The Romantic majesty of the natural panoramas and human's insignificance are still inside the sublime concept, but agreement with Canadian nature is only found if the settler can domesticate the landscape to survive independently. *Roughing It* shows that the available in nature is appreciated when the Moodies have food: "how I enjoyed these excursions on the lake the very idea of our dinner depending upon our success" (346-347); "that harvest was the happiest we ever spent in the bush" since they "had enough of the common necessaries of life" (430). But these are few moments that, as Thurston declares, do not alleviate the "many bitter years of toil and sorrow" (Moodie 254). Moodie does not portray a successful settlement, but her failure predominates, which is symbolised by her "knowledge of the use of the paddle" that "was not entirely without its danger" (488). Canadian nature is always an enemy in their homecoming that dispossesses them of what they need. So, Moodie's Romanticism is unable to link nature to a nurturing mother in Canada, where an uncivilized nature that occasions sufferings and deaths mirrors Moodie's own rejection of the whole country.

Even the two moments of abandonment of Moodie's houses in the Canadian wilderness, when it seems for her pain that she finds the concept of home in what she leaves behind, the narrative is alternating and dubious. The "beautiful, picturesque spot" that "in spite of the evil neighbourhood" she "had learned to love" finds an anticlimactic explanation for being left "not without regret" (240): Moodie has "a great dislike to removing, which involves a necessary loss" (240) and she does not know what "awaited us in those dreadful woods" (240). The most remarkable and problematic leaving happens when her husband is offered to be sheriff of Victoria County, and they must relocate. He sees it as "a gift sent from heaven to remove us from the sorrows and poverty with which we were surrounded in the woods" (497). But her feelings are different:

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 already thickly 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 and with gaily-dressed people. I was no longer fit for the world; I had lost all relish for the pursuits and pleasures which are so essential to its votaries; I was contented to live and die in obscurity. (497)

Following Thurston, her home never belongs to the present; it always resides in the abandoned place. Despite the sorrow, nature is depicted as a demon with "furious storms of wind and snow" that act "like a lion roaring for its prey" (500) and "a person abroad in the woods to-night would be frozen" (500-501). Moodie changes perspective again and clings to her painful departure from the bush and declares that it is "the dear forest home which I had loved in spite of all the hardships which we had endured" (501-502) and its inhabitants are "true friends to us in our dire necessity" (503). But if "every object had become endeared" to her, the "lonely lake," her "little garden," "cows" or her "noble water-dog" (505-506), the end of the story changes abruptly, reaffirms the aim of her sketches and states about the bush that: "To the poor, industrious working man it presents many advantages; to the poor gentleman, *none!*" (515).

The book is full of instances like this, or the Grosse Isle scenery, where one place is positively and suddenly negatively depicted. Florian Freitag affirms that this is caused "by Moodie's changing sense of control over the scene" (96). When she feels protected by circumstances that reinforce her English values and class system, she shows a Romantic perspective of nature. When her sense of order is lost, the natural loveliness of Canada disappears. Hence, Moodie can finally love her farms because she is in control of the scene with the promise of bettering her conditions in Peterborough or Belleville in mind. This same fact can be explained by the loss of what Thomas speaks: "a primal fear of separation" (117) from her mother. Although Moodie ceases to employ maternal terms for wild nature in the backwoods, recalling her separation from England grieves her. For Stouck, *Roughing It in the Bush* is inside the Canadian imagination because "the curious affection Mrs. Moodie feels for her forest home at the time of departure is an ascetic form of imaginative pleasure which recurs with significant frequency in Canadian art" (471). Thus, Moodie prefers to bear a divine punishment in a humble refuge to protect from the wilderness, than to think about an outstanding future.

Just after Moodie's last and severe warning about the bush, it is surprising to find a poem that praises Canada and its nature: "The Maple-tree." Here the woods are touched by "the sun's last beams" that "brighten the gloom below" (516). The winds are "sad" and does not violently blow, but emit "a tender plaint of woe" (516). Moodie mentions "the coming year" and "the forest dark" (517) is less fateful, the life portrayed in Canada less terrible. Patriotism towards Canada is felt and Moodie seems to consider herself a Canadian at last: "our soil" (518). With this last poem, it is not surprising that Martín Párraga affirms nature turns Moodie into "a true, proud, Canadian" and "living the myth of the American dream and enjoying freedom and prosperity for her and her sons and daughters" (327). Elizabeth Thompson states that Moodie's poetry inside *Roughing It* receives very little attention in literary studies and that it leads the story to a different place. Her prose reinforces her exiled feelings and depicts nature as a way to discover differences between the two countries, so the desire of settlement never comes. But Thompson defines Moodie's poetry as a "message of hope" (par. 19). Her poems are placed as if they were her "last word" (par. 19) in many of the chapters and direct Moodie to settlement. Hence, poems like "Canada" reinforce the emigrant's feelings. "The Sleigh-bells" speaks about scary animals and sounds of nature but starts to forget about homesickness. "The Otonabee" and "The Maple-tree" are poems that celebrate Canadian nature and close the story with the joy of settlement. Moodie's ambivalent feelings also reside in the different paths prose and poetry walk.

Although Moodie declares that "now, when not only reconciled to Canada, but loving it, [...] I often look back and laugh at the feelings with which I then regarded this noble country" (85) and Groening states she accepts unwillingly Canada as her new home, it is not clear if Moodie ever accepts Canada. The story overflows with despondency and she ends the book stating the country is not suitable for English gentlemen. As Thurston puts it, Moodie affirms she learns "to love Canada" to compensate her younger self's "hatred so intense" that she "longed to die" (Moodie 20). Perhaps she wants to convince Canadian readers of her change with scarce positive descriptions, while she maintains her purpose for the British readers. Farahmandian and Ehsaninia contribute that Moodie's warning is to wait a few years when Canada improves, then emigrate.

Something in Canadian identity needs to be changed, since "life in the bush was a disgusting picture, in which Man had the main part" (161). But they also add the necessary transformation of the wild Canadian nature.

One last consideration about nature in *Roughing It* is the psychological dimensions of its influence over the settler. In her attempts to protect against the perils of nature, Moodie develops the "garrison mentality," a metaphor coined by Frye in his "Conclusion to the first edition of *Literary History of Canada*" that constitutes an integral part of Canadian identity and refers to a besieged pioneer who is "confronted with a huge, unthinking, menacing, and formidable physical setting" (289). Atwood furthers Frye's metaphor when she gives a diagnosis of paranoid schizophrenia to Moodie. Moodie's conflicting description of Canadian nature as something laudable but also harmful seems a proof of Atwood's statement in *The Journals of Susanna Moodie* that Moodie has a divided mind. Moodie also laments the "destruction of the wilderness" but "preaches progress and the march of civilization" and shows two opposing feelings towards Canada: "a stranger" in a hateful and harsh land, and "an ardent Canadian patriot" (Atwood 62). Nature, or the bush, can finish both mental and physical lives of its human inhabitants. As Atwood affirms in *Survival*, "Death by Nature" is "something in the natural world" which "murders the individual" (54). Sometimes "Death by Nature" turns into "Death by Bushing," "in which a character isolated in Nature goes crazy" and "the character sees too much of the wilderness, and in a sense becomes it, leaving his humanity behind" (55). The anticipation of death that follows the intense and desperate struggle for survival also comes to Moodie's mind: "my love for Canada was a feeling very nearly allied to that which a condemned criminal entertains for his cell - his only hope of escape being through the portals of the grave" (138). In her article "Spectrality in Margaret Atwood's 'Death by Landscape'" Gibert asserts that the pioneer feels "fear and anxiety" (87) in the presence of nature, or landscape, which is something that "can actively kill," "a malevolent monster which destroys people rather than a nurturing mother" (88). In addition, "Death by Landscape" suggests that man is also guilty in the tragic event, since landscape includes the human transformation of nature.

Freitag contributes that Moodie's divided mind and "garrison mentality" is not only developed by her obstinacy to remain English, but also by her "deep fear of disorder and a loss of control" (95). Since the Moodies fail in their efforts to civilize and organize the wilderness, she writes a pamphlet against emigration.

Atwood's vision of Moodie is not shared by other experts. Thurston recognizes this as a "psychological novel" (6) and defends she writes with internal disunity because of this fact, but also because of her "political, social and economic environment" (9). For him, dichotomy comes because of differences in her purpose and her ideology. Laura Groening shares this idea and states that, at Moodie's times, it was believed that an autobiography should have a moral influence on its readers. Hence, Moodie had a warning purpose in *Roughing It in the Bush* and contradictions such as her divided vision of nature do not reside in a psychological dimension, but they are triggered by Moodie's social determinants. In addition, Moodie's characters are not a proof of a maniac personality that dislikes everybody, but they are connected to her principal purpose to avoid English emigration with hateful or loser characters as instances of the life in Canada. Groening states that in denying one work's authority as something that comes from a lunatic, the whole history of the formation of Canada is at risk. Susan Johnston also speaks about the relationship of *Roughing It in the Bush* with *The Journals of Susanna Moodie*. She suggests that the influential reconstruction that Atwood makes of Moodie's most recognised work is powerful in the creation of a new vision of the original text. Hence, the contradictory perception that currently exists might constitute a legacy of the 20th century look at the 19th century creation.

5. Conclusions

The thesis statement of this end of degree paper that *Roughing It in the Bush* shows an uncommon depiction of nature in the 19th century Canadian literature was developed and proved. I presented Moodie's determinants that I found more connected to her failure as settler and to her warning purpose. As a reluctant emigrant, she rejected Canada as a whole. As a rigid gentlewoman, she thought she belonged to a superior social class and fought with the very idea of manual work necessary to survive in the harsh natural conditions of Canada. As a woman, she presented herself as not being able to decide her

own destiny, fragile, hopeless and not entirely included in the settlement process, but she must have been more capable and resolute than depicted.

The following step was to explain how nature was positively described by most of her contemporaries on the grounds of theology and Romantic notions, which is supported by a consensus of experts on the matter. I have also resorted to the fashion in the literature of the era: to portray beautiful nature and great achievements in pioneer life in order to encourage emigration. I provided two instances of positive responses to the natural world. Moodie's flexible sister agreed with the traditions and displayed a friendly vision of emigration in her work *The Backwoods of Canada*. Traill's purpose was to lead women to enjoy Canadian nature to overcome the hardness of life. In *Life in the Clearings*, Moodie showed a different picture while living in a more appropriated place and spoke about real benefices of living in Canada. She enhanced a Romantic, invigorating Canadian nature that was a source of recovery and that did not turn the life of British middle-class emigrant women into a nightmare as happened in *Roughing It in the Bush*, an anti-emigration document that contradicts the rule.

The last step was to analyze the uncommon depiction of nature in the most renowned of Moodie's works. The image starts with Moodie's idea that "nature had lavished all her noblest features in producing that enchanting scene" (7) in Canada and changes to present "remote situations" whose nature demands "hardships that would kill a domesticated animal at home" (515). The reader's mind is dominated by the idea of a "prison-house" while living in the bush or the backwoods of Canada. In this way, Canadian nature was better from a distance, or from a vantage point as the arriving ship, because it was one chief enemy in Moodie's homecoming when near. Hence, the purpose of avoiding emigration of people with determinants like the Moodies is reinforced with a malevolent representation of nature that turns every gentleman in the bush into a loser, some of them considering his own death. Canadian nature includes climate, wildlife and landscape that were all hostile and tough, having a deep influence in the emigrants' minds. If at first Moodie eluded social disorder with her love for nature, then nature turned into the chaotic or purposeful opponent endurable better with the help of whoever available. Moodie did not understand for nature something that was threatening, that was barren or that was not tamed like

English nature. Hence, I am not sure if strict Moodie connected nature to Canada. It seems that there were some moments in which Canadian nature helped her to cease to regret emigration. But while her ideal form of nature was somewhat altered in her recognition of beauty in Canadian nature, the whole story is dominated by the sensation that Canada is not a suitable "home." It is meaningful that Moodie only considered hateful wild places her home when she had a better economic prospect in mind and she distanced herself.

I believe the role of nature in *Roughing It in the Bush* is to support the idea that emigration must not be decided with a credulous mind. Canada was not the promised land of hope, as interested groups spread in those years. Canadian natural conditions were extremely rough, and the land required too many sacrifices, unsuitable for most people especially for the middle-upper classes. She learned that she was forced to abandon all her Canadian "homes" because everything physically threatened and psychologically tortured her, remaining the maternal figure of home in England. I think Moodie employed a distorted portrayal of nature as a deliberate and hostile monster because it was convenient for her aim. Her change in her beautiful vision of nature might have impacted greatly her readers, accustomed to other kind of representations. Moodie felt contented if her pessimistic message prevented English families from a deception. So, she chose to remain faithful to events. She faced poverty that left few choices, lacked or did not learn enough skills and was constantly menaced by starvation. Hence, Moodie depicted nature as sending an army of adversaries to obstruct her survival and to displace her.

Canadian nature is a divided element inside of Moodie's conflicting brain. It either grieves or comforts her, it is a beautiful ally or a merciless aggressor devoid of any beauty. Despite this uncertainty, nature is a constant element in her depiction of Canada as an unsuitable destiny and a powerful factor for Moodie principal character's development. Nature forces Moodie to constantly revise her skills and values. Although she proudly keeps her fundamental rules, she is crushingly defeated by nature and her English sense of order is lost. So, pessimism towards nature is the kind of representation that boosts her moralistic purpose against a country she never truly wanted to populate.

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