

**“The Habit of Close Observation”: An Ecocritical Investigation of
Catharine Parr Traill’s Nature Writing in Studies of Plant Life in Canada**

by

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of the requirements for the degree of
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ABSTRACT

Catharine Parr Traill's attitudes towards the Canadian landscape have traditionally been based on her work in The Backwoods of Canada (1836). Studies of Plant Life in Canada (1885), the most scientific of her literary texts, has been largely ignored by contemporary critics, yet in its blending of scientific and poetic vocabularies, local history, social commentary, and personal and spiritual reflections within the structure of the botanical guidebook, it provides a portrait of how Traill established a "sense of place" for herself and for her readers. Using environmental literary criticism as a broad theoretical framework, this thesis examines the strategies that Traill uses to combine competing discourses of preservation and development within her most ecologically-aware text. Also investigated are Traill's position in the history of Canadian science, her use of memory, language, naming, and her depiction of the lives of early settlers and Native communities in creating a sense of place.

KEYWORDS: Catharine Parr Traill, Nature Writing, Ecology in Literature, Early Canadian Women's Writing, History of Canadian Science, History of Botany in Canada.

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“Are such things not worth looking for?”: Prefatory Comments

I first became sensitized to the politics of land-use issues during one of the early canoe-trips that also helped me to begin to focus and articulate my love for the landscape of north-central Ontario. At the age of fifteen, I joined six other girls of my own age and two trip leaders for a ten-day journey through the lakes and rivers of the Temagami region of northern Ontario. This was during the period of time in the late 1980s when the logging debates in the area were becoming heated, and on our fifth day, near Obakika Lake, we came across a logging bridge--one of the first signs of “civilization” that we had seen since pushing off at Mowat’s landing. A pile of rocks had been started on the bridge, and someone had appended a sign reading “Place a rock, save a tree.” This was accompanied by a sign written by members of a local Native community offering an explanation of the current logging debate. With the exception of one of the members in our group, we all got out of the canoes, outraged at the affront of a logging road passing through the beautiful, and seemingly untouched, landscape. We spent about half an hour moving rocks from the foundation of the road to the road-block. That evening, at our campsite, there was a weathered sign on a tree that read: “Please, please don’t cut down this forest. For this is the finest forest in the land. If they take way this forest they will betaking something good away from man” (original spelling). At the time, I was adamant in my condemnation of the provincial government (which I viewed as the culprit) for allowing logging in Temagami, and wrote in my journal “I’m sure that if those people in Queen’s Park had ever canoed here they would never let the logging companies here!” Even so, the variety of comments made by members of our group, and the sense of unease that pervaded our well-intentioned efforts to “save trees” at the logging bridge gave me a sense of the complexity of the issues surrounding various definitions of proper, and appropriate land-use. It was, after all, only too easy to “place a rock,” and “save a

tree,” record the incident in a spiral-bound notebook, and then return to southern Ontario where the episode became a story, one memory among many others from a long trip, rather than a local and lived reality.

This thesis comes out of my on-going fascination with how Canadians, and more specifically Ontarians, perceive their relationship with the land on which they live, and how this relationship is reflected in and shaped by the literature that they study. Since that canoe trip I have often wondered about the story behind the sign on the campsite--whose words were they? Was it a quotation, or something made up by the local Native community? And to whom were the pleas directed? Surely, I thought, the words did not imply that the people staying on the campsite would also be the ones who would “take away” the forest. Throughout the subsequent years, I have spent a considerable amount of time canoeing and backpacking all over southern and north-central Ontario, simultaneously wondering at my own motivations for doing so and trying to observe (and limit) the impact that my recreational explorations have on the local human and non-human communities. I decided to use the opportunity of this thesis project to investigate the way that women nature-writers have expressed their relationship to the Canadian landscape, and how their stories document the development of our modern expectations about what constitutes “wise” and “economical” uses of Ontario’s natural resources. Catharine Parr Traill differs from later nature writers in her position as one of the early settlers in the Peterborough region, a woman who both applauded and regretted the changes that the “development” of the Ontario landscape had made to the lives of its inhabitants, and who witnessed rapid and remarkable alterations to the local geography during her lifetime. The pace of development can be seen in a passage located near the end of Studies of Plant Life in Canada when Traill observes that:

The continual changes that are being effected on the face of the country, render accurate attention to the peculiar habits of our native plants daily and yearly more difficult. To-day I go forth into the woods and discover some interesting plant, which I desire to see unfolded in perfection; a few weeks pass, and lo! the axe of the chopper has done its work, the trees are levelled to the earth, the fire has passed over the ground the blackness of desolation has taken the place of verdure and living vegetation. I must seek my plant in more distant localities, and it may be it is lost to me for ever, and I console my disappointment by the consideration that such things are among the 'must be' of colonial life, and so it is useless to grumble (253).

Yet this was a woman who also supported the agricultural development of Ontario. Traill's botanical work presents modern readers with examples of the discourses that mediated and affected the varied and changing relationships that residents of her geographical area had with the surrounding landscape. Conflicting sensibilities, expectations and values are brought into juxtaposition in Studies of Plant Life in Canada, and the difference between the "book of nature" that she sees around her, and the physical pages in which Traill records her observations provides a framework for investigating the way that Traill's language shapes and reflects her attitudes towards the local landscape.

My theoretical orientation in discussing Traill's work falls into the broad framework currently known as "Ecological literary criticism," "Ecocriticism," or "Environmental literary studies." The variety of titles for this approach illustrates its diffuse nature; as Cheryl Glotfelty observes in the Introduction to a recent collection of ecologically-informed critical essays entitled The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology (1996), even though there have been literary scholars who have expressed concern with environmental issues and topics since the seventies, they did not form into "identifiable groups," and as a result, "their various efforts were not recognized as belonging to a distinct critical school or movement" (xvii). Publications dealing with ecological issues were categorized under a "miscellany of

subject headings,” making it difficult to locate this new line of thought and follow its developments. Because of the relative obscurity of ecological approaches (in contrast, for example, with the prominence of race, class and gender as issues informing literary studies), there was the tendency for each concerned critic to “invent an environmental approach to literature in isolation” (xvii). The effect of this trend can be seen in the number of articles with titles (and arguments) calling the literary community to action in recognizing and reforming literary studies to include an investigation of the ways in which literary studies contribute to or could help to ameliorate the social conditions under which contemporary environmental problems have developed. In the past ten years, environmental criticism has become more visible within literary studies. Even so, the approaches that various critics use differ significantly. Most ecocritics have resisted the urge to define “the best” or “correct” theoretical framework for investigating environmental issues in literary studies, thereby following a basic ecological principle that locates the strength of any system in its ability to accommodate and promote diversity, and respond to local conditions.

There are, however, some common beliefs and queries shared by ecologically-oriented literary critics, and these bear mentioning. Glotfelty suggests that “all ecological criticism shares the fundamental premise that human culture is connected to the physical world, affecting it and affected by it” (xix). In analyzing the interaction between “writers, texts and the world,” the world is defined as including not only the human social sphere, but also all elements of the biosphere—plants, animals, entire landscapes and geological formations (xix). The scope and implications of this interrogation can be disorienting for the literary student or scholar who is used to understanding the range, utility and force of language as occurring within and affecting only interactions between humans. Environmental approaches to literature are concerned with examining the ways in which literature,

and the language we use to describe the landscape in which we live, affect our attitudes towards the rest of the environment, and end up shaping our behaviour. In seeking to explore the ways in which literature and literary studies have contributed to the creation of separate categories for “Nature” and “Culture” in our literary imagination, many critics suggest that literature must be understood as a natural artifact, part of the “ecology of the human species” (Meeker 9, also cited in Glotfelty xix). The mechanisms by which certain social relationships and behaviours are defined as “natural,” and the long-range effect that these social definitions might have on the rest of the biosphere are also investigated.

The eventual goal towards which ecocritics direct their readers’ attention is a change in the way that humans relate to the rest of non-human nature. In the words of Lawrence Buell in The Environmental Imagination (1996), “if, as environmental philosophers contend, western metaphysics and ethics need revision before we can address today’s environmental problems, then environmental crisis involves a crisis of the imagination the amelioration of which depends on finding better ways of imaging nature and humanity’s relation to it” (2). Towards this end, ecologically-oriented critics have begun by investigating and articulating the ways in which our current method of imagining the environment has been expressed in our literary works. On the one hand, this has involved re-evaluating poems and fictional works that have occupied time-honoured positions within the canon from an ecological perspective. On the other, it has meant rejuvenating and re-exploring the significance of fictional and non-fictional nature writing that has been overlooked as not sufficiently “literary.” This process of recovery is of particular importance in Canadian criticism, where nature writing has not, generally, experienced the prominence that it has in the United States or Britain. This thesis participates in this project by looking at the position of Catharine Parr Traill’s botanical writing within the canon of Canadian literature, and

then exploring the literary strategies she uses in her nature writing to present the relationship between nineteenth-century Canadian society and the landscape in which that culture was situated.

I have not aligned my critical work with any particular theorist; nor have I offered extended commentary throughout the thesis on how my approach to Traill's text agrees with or is distinct from other environmental approaches to literature (though I have, on occasion, spoken to this issue in the footnotes). So many critics have listed and commented upon the reasons why it is imperative that we, as a literary community, begin to pay attention to environmental concerns in our scholarly activities that it is now surely unnecessary to justify this approach. Indeed, so much time has been spent "calling-to-action" that relatively little work on specific texts has actually been accomplished, particularly in Canadian literature. I decided that it would be better to devote the majority of the thesis to a detailed examination of Traill's later botanical writing, rather than confirming the critical inclinations of theorists who have promoted this type of inquiry. I will state in advance, however, that the range of questions that I have asked in studying Traill's work, and the approaches with which I have experimented have been influenced by the work of such critics as Lawrence Buell, Joseph Meeker, D.M.R. Bentley, Annette Kolodny, Neil Evernden, Frederick Turner, Christopher Manes, Cheryl Glotfelty, Gary Snyder, Helen Buss, David Abram, Sylvia Bowerbank, and Arne Naess. This is by no means an exhaustive list, and those critics who are not cited in the body of the thesis have been included in the list of Works Cited and Consulted.

The first chapter, which begins with a short biographical sketch, provides a broad introduction to the thesis by situating it within the context of previous critical commentary on Traill's work. The reasons that Traill's later botanical work and nature writing have been largely ignored by literary critics will be investigated, leading

to a discussion of how situating her “scientific” work within the broad category of nature writing can offer new insights into the way in which she perceived her relationship to the Canadian landscape. The second chapter explores in greater detail the reasons that Traill’s botanical work has been dismissed as “amateur science” by placing it within the history of science in Canada, and tracing its generic similarities to the natural history texts--particular those written by women--that were popular during the late eighteenth and early-to-mid nineteenth centuries in England and Europe. Following the background and contextualizing information contained in the first two chapters, the third and fourth chapters examine Studies of Plant Life in Canada in greater detail. The third chapter begins with a brief discussion of “place” as understood by bioregionalist, post-colonial, and a number of ecologically-oriented critics. Traill’s strategies for linguistically transplanting the flowers, trees and ferns that she expected to disappear with the clearing of the forests are then analyzed, with the intention of offering some conclusions about how her botanical work, in its mixing of scientific and literary discourses, creates a rich portrait of her “sense of place.” The fourth chapter extends the discussion of Traill’s place-sense by focusing on her presentation of many different types of “relationship” between humans and the land, and on the implications of Traill’s decision to imbed anecdotes relating the local history of the region within her “floral biographies.” The Conclusion draws together the broad concerns of the thesis, and then offers some comments on how using an “environmental” approach to Traill’s later botanical writing can encourage contemporary readers to understand the way in which Canadians’ relationship to the landscape has developed by returning to early non-fictional texts, such as Studies of Plant Life in Canada, which took the natural landscape as their primary subject.

Chapter One

An Introduction to Traill's Nature Writing and its Context in Canadian Criticism

I

In an 1845 letter to Canon Richard Gwilym, Catharine Parr Traill compares the misfortunes of her family to the success that other immigrants had in Canada, writing that she “rejoice[s] in the increasing prosperity of [Canada’s] inhabitants and hope[s] yet to see [her] sons and daughters happy and honorable members of society beneath the shades of her mighty forests” (IBless You 52). Traill’s vision of an “honorable society” located “beneath” the forests is problematic, for throughout her nature and botanical writing, the “onward march of civilization” is predicated upon the transformation of the forests and “waste places into a fruitful field” (Wildflowers 8).¹ Traill’s comment illuminates the constant tension in her writing between a love for the Canadian woods and her acceptance that their disappearance is “among the ‘must be’s’ of colonial life, and so it is useless to grumble” (Studies 253). W.J. Keith observes that for early settlers, “the forest that was expected to provide an image of continuity...instead offered an elusive emblem of continual change” (Keith 27). While it seems that Traill was evoking the forest as a symbol of social stability in her letter to Gwilym, her writing in works that explicitly take the forest as their primary subject--such as Studies of Plant Life in Canada--returns again and again to “the continual changes that are being effected on the face of the country” (Traill, Studies 253). Traill’s work in Studies of Plant Life in Canada has never been thoroughly

¹This is one of the many biblical allusions in Traill’s nature writing. The phrase “waste places into fruitful fields” is repeated in various permutations throughout Canadian Wildflowers and Studies of Plant Life in Canada. It seems to be loosely based on the following passage from Isaiah: “until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is deemed a forest” (Isa. 32.15).

examined by Canadian literary critics who tend to base their comments about Traill's relationship to the Canadian land primarily upon her work in The Backwoods of Canada, and ignore her more "scientific" work as outside their area of investigation. Yet Traill's juxtaposition in this later text of ecological observations with statements concerning the economic worth of various Canadian plants, and her persistent reference to old settlers, herbalists, backwoodsmen and members from local Native communities within her botanical descriptions suggests that her project in Studies of Plant Life in Canada was to preserve and record memories about the plants and people that she expected would disappear as southern Ontario became more prosperous and agriculturally proficient. Through her use of memory, Traill linguistically reconstructs "a place and the ideas that have developed about how to live in that place" (Berg and Dasmann, quoted in Ivakhiv 1).

Catharine Parr Strickland was thirty years old when she agreed to marry Thomas Traill and move to Canada with him, leaving behind her elder siblings in the knowledge that she would live near her brother Samuel in the colony, and soon be joined by her sister Susanna and Susanna's husband, Dunbar Moodie. She arrived in Montreal in August 1832, optimistic about her prospects in Canada, and within months had settled with Mr. Traill near Peterborough in the townships of Douro and Verulam, on Lake Katchewanook. The couple's background in England had not prepared them for the roughness of life in the backwoods, and Thomas Traill's indifferent skill at farming combined with bad financial luck and the demands of four young children caused him to sell the farm in 1839. Even after this move, however, the Traill family was continuously beset by financial hardship from circumstances that were often beyond their control, such as the destruction of their house, Oaklands, by fire in 1857. Thomas Traill's frequent depression, which had been a source of concern to Traill throughout the 1850s, increased after the fire, and he died in 1859 after a slow

decline in health. At the time of her husband's death, Traill had given birth to nine children, seven of whom reached adulthood.

To help support her family, Traill continued the publishing career that was well established before she married and left England. The first of the Strickland sisters to publish a book, she became known for her instructional children's tales, including The Tell Tale: An Original Collection of Moral and Amusing Stories (1818) and Little Downy: or, the History of a Field Mouse: A Moral Tale (1822). The books that she released in the years immediately before her marriage continued to be directed towards the juvenile reader, but were more explicitly focused on the study of nature, an interest that she had shared with her father as a child. These titles included Sketches from Nature: or, Hints to Juvenile Naturalists (1830) and Narratives of Nature, and History Book for Young Naturalists (1831). She had even written a book entitled The Young Emigrants: or, Pictures of Life in Canada (1826) six years before she was to set foot in North America.

When her economic circumstances after marriage necessitated extra income, Traill began to send manuscripts to England, and her sisters Eliza and Agnes aided her in finding publishers and securing basic writing materials. Her first Canadian book was, of course, The Backwoods of Canada (1836), an epistolary collection of observations about settling in Canada. It was directed towards the "female emigrant," and was intended to provide the domestic information missing from emigration manuals available at that time (Traill, Backwoods 9). Although she continued to publish stories and make short contributions to magazines such as John Lovell's Literary Garland throughout the next decade, the most active period of her publishing career began late in the 1840s after the birth of her last child, and continued for the next eight to ten years. During this period, she contributed a series of nature sketches entitled "Forest Gleanings" to the Anglo-American Magazine, and sent short pieces to

other journals in Canada and England. Canadian Crusoes: A Tale of the Rice Lake Plains (1852), a juvenile story about lost children that is set on the Rice Lake Plains, was immediately successful in Britain as well as Canada. She continued to write shorter children's stories, some of which were printed in the Canadian periodical Snow Drop: or Juvenile Magazine (1847-53) and the Canadian annual Maple Leaf (1852-3). It was the latter that published Traill's serial novel for children entitled The Governor's Daughter: or, Rambles in the Canadian Forest (1853), which was later reprinted as one volume in both England and the United States. At this time, she also wrote The Female Emigrant's Guide, and Hints on Canadian Housekeeping (1854), a practical reference book that showed her continued interest in assisting other women who moved to the backwoods.

Although the editors of the volume of Traill's letters entitled I Bless You in my Heart (1996) suggest that Traill wrote as if her "major literary achievements were behind her" by the time she petitioned the Queen for financial support in 1854 (25), it was during the long, and certainly less prolific years after Thomas Traill's death that her major nature writings were published. This was also the period of time in which Traill produced the text for Agnes Fitzgibbon's illustrations of Ontario's flowers in the book Canadian Wildflowers (1867). This text was excerpted from a much longer manuscript, which was composed over a twenty year period and drew upon almost fifty years of observing the flora and fauna of the colony. It was later published under the title of Studies of Plant Life in Canada in 1885. Her final book of nature observations, Pearls and Pebbles: or, Notes of an Old Naturalist (1894) was published to critical acclaim when she was ninety-two years old.

Traill's later works were very popular in Canada, and secured her reputation as an accomplished naturalist. Even so, very little extended attention has been paid to these works in subsequent literary or historical studies. This thesis will focus

primarily on Studies of Plant Life in Canada (1885), the major botanical guidebook which Wayne Grady suggests “earned her an international reputation as a natural scientist” (7), and which Carl Ballstadt, Michael Peterman and Elizabeth Hopkins label “the summit of [her] literary-scientific achievement” (UBless You 137). Less fictional and “literary” than the nature essays that appeared in The Literary Garland or Pearls and Pebbles (1898), Studies of Plant Life in Canada is perhaps the least likely candidate among all of Traill’s texts for treatment as a book of “literature”; on first appearance it seems to be merely a detailed catalogue and description of the plants of Canada, much like the Audubon or Petersen guides now available for identifying wildflowers and trees. Yet Traill’s use of history, anecdote, and poetic language to bring scientific descriptions alive in Studies of Plant Life in Canada challenges any categorization of the text as merely a non-fiction, popular and “useful” guidebook. The text is divided into four major sections: “Wild, or Native Flowers,” “The Flowering Shrubs of Central Canada,” “Forest Trees,” and “Native Ferns.” Within each section the text is organized according to discussions of specific plants. Yet the information included to describe each plant differs widely, containing any or all of the following: scientific measurements and descriptions, discussions of economic and medicinal uses, historical information about the lives of early settlers and Native groups, and quotations or entire poems from the British and American canon. The book was published with the help of Agnes Chamberlin (previously Fitzgibbon, with whom Traill had collaborated on Canadian Wildflowers, and who provided the illustrations for Studies of Plant Life in Canada). John Macoun, a member of the Canadian Geological Survey, and James Fletcher, the Parliamentary librarian who later became a botanist for the Central Experimental Farm in Ottawa, encouraged Traill to seek publication. Both men helped Traill by meeting with the printer (Woodburn), and Fletcher in particular was instrumental in proofreading, correcting

and editing the manuscript (see I Bless You 233, 242). Studies of Plant Life in Canada was published by subscription in 1885.

Prolific and varied as her writing career was, Traill often had difficulty finding publishers for her work, and in obtaining payment for pieces and books that had been published.² The financial rewards of writing in Canada proved to be slim, and while she enjoyed success, there are almost as many instances of projects that did not come to fruition as there are published volumes under her name. She continued to need financial support from friends and family despite her best efforts to generate income through her literary efforts (see I Bless You 116). The attempt to gain some financial recognition from the Crown for her contributions, mentioned earlier, came to nothing, and it was bequests from family members that helped her to achieve some financial security as she approached her eighties. It was not until several years before her death that she began to receive grants of money in honour of her achievements as a writer and a naturalist. In 1896 she was made honorary president of the Peterborough Historical Society, and honorary member of the Canadian Women's Historical Society of Toronto, and in the subsequent two years she was the recipient of a grant from the Royal Literary Fund, and of a fund established to honour her achievements. This latter fund, in particular, indicates the esteem in which she was held by the Canadian public: supported by subscription, the testimonial "contains the signatures of many of Canada's most influential men of science and letters, publishers and editors, friends, family and admirers" (I Bless You 270). In her letter of thanks to Sir Sanford Flemming for his role in organizing and administering this fund, Traill is characteristically modest about her own achievements, remarking that "it does seem

² For detailed information about these difficulties, see I Bless You 2-24.

too great for such small services as has been given,” and seems to find equal if not greater satisfaction in the warm words of praise that accompanied the gift (269, 392).

The tribute that so pleased Traill not only celebrates her literary skills and acuity of observation, but also mentions her “courage”, her “useful life” and “vigor” in its recognition of her “personal worth” (270). Nor is this unusual. Traill was persistently characterized in journalists’ reports as a “wonderful old lady,” and her warmth and curiosity are celebrated not only in letters from her family and friends, but in their public reflections on the effect of her personality. Her great-niece, Mary Agnes Fitzgibbon, decided to mention only briefly the hardships of Traill’s life and the personal losses she suffered in the biographical sketch that appeared in Pearls and Pebbles, instead focusing on Traill’s energy and force of personality. She writes that observers “would realize that the secret of her peaceful old age, her unclouded intellect, and the brightness of her eye, is due to her trust in Providence” (Pearls xxxiv). Statements recognizing the strength of Traill’s faith, personality, and love of both her family and the natural world around her are common in assessments of her character, both by nineteenth-century and contemporary commentators.

II

By the time of Traill’s death, then, it was her skills and accomplishments as both a naturalist and a literary writer that were celebrated by her admirers; however, to the disadvantage of texts such as Studies of Plant Life in Canada, subsequent literary critics have chosen to focus primarily on works such as The Backwoods of Canada that fit into the more traditional literary genres—in this case, the settler’s guide or journal. As Peterman notes in a 1990 article, there has been a “noticeable tendency to downplay or ignore the entire botanical aspect of Traill’s work” (173). This oversight or neglect, compounded by the practice of evaluating Traill’s work alongside that of

her sister Susannah Moodie, and, at times her brother Samuel Strickland as well, has created a history of criticism of Traill's writing that rarely stretches beyond the first decade of the sixty-seven years of her active writing career in Canada, and that often sacrifices a balanced interpretation of her work to a project in which her writing is contrasted with, or violently yoked to, the books written by her younger sister.

A recent example of these tendencies is found in Judith Johnstone's article entitled "'Woman's Testimony': Imperialist Discourse in the Professional Colonial Travel Writing of Louisa Anne Meredith and Catharine Parr Traill" (1994). Johnstone compares The Backwoods of Canada with a similar text by the Australian settler Louisa Anne Meredith, and concludes that both women use similar discursive strategies to record their observations of the land to which they have moved, and that, as a result, neither woman offers "a truly unique picture" of "two lands so potentially disparate" (34). In tracing Traill and Meredith's literary complicity in the "colonial enterprise," Johnston admits that she is purposefully focusing on writings produced within four years of the women's arrival in the colonies; yet even this qualifying comment does not adequately suggest the extent to which Traill's linguistic methods of negotiating her presence in unfamiliar territory and her relationship to its Native inhabitants are altered and questioned in her subsequent botanical writings. Nor does it address her undeniable ability, especially later in life, to evoke detailed descriptions of specific locales. Johnstone's observations are often fair and incisive, but present an incomplete picture of Traill's development and activities as a colonial writer because they do not stretch any further than the publication of Canadian Crusoes in 1852.

Published in 1973, Edward H. Dahl's study entitled "'Mid Forests Wild': A Study of the Concept of Wilderness in the Writings of Susanna Moodie, J.W.D. Moodie, Catharine Parr Traill and Samuel Strickland," is an example of the sort of critical work that elides differences between the writers in an effort to create a unified

conclusion about the gentlefolk's "aversion" and "antipathy" towards the "immorality", seclusion, "disorder" and "uselessness" of undeveloped backwoods territory (Dahl 18-23). Quotations supporting Dahl's statements about the discomfort that the Stricklands, Moodies and Traills felt in the wilderness are drawn primarily from Susanna Moodie's work; quotations from Traill's writing deal more with the change that actual experiences made to her preconceived notions about the lifestyle that she was to expect in the backwoods than they do with any expressions of distaste, yet are shaped to support the more negative comments and responses found in Moodie's writing. Traill's work figures more prominently and evenly in the section of the study where Dahl looks at the settlers' positive reactions to the land. Even in this section, though, he is not critically attuned to the differences between the siblings in their observations of the backwoods. Dahl's decision to investigate "wilderness" only as a symbol or idea that was directly linked to social development in the minds of the Stricklands, Moodies and Traills limits his ability to provide fresh insights about passages, particularly in Traill's work, where "wilderness" is treated in all of its material and physical vibrancy. It is not surprising that, like Johnston, Dahl chooses to ignore Traill's later botanical and nature writing, and that he was therefore able to understate the obvious so grossly when he writes that "the attention Mrs. Traill, who had extensive botanical interests, gives to details of the flora and fauna is in itself perhaps an indication of her love for nature and wilderness" (27).

In "The English Gentlefolk in the Backwoods of Canada" (1959), Lloyd M. Scott, while more critically sophisticated than Dahl, is also able to conflate the two sisters without any qualms, and, like Dahl's, his discussion of their attitudes towards the land focuses on the way that life in the backwoods challenged their expectations of class behavior and social organization. As his title suggests, Scott also relies only on The Backwoods of Canada for information about Traill's beliefs, and often silently

foregrounds both Susanna's work and the narrative of her experiences in Canada when speaking of the opinions of both sisters. He suggests that both women's writings are equally influenced by European Romanticism (while quoting only from Moodie's texts), and offers nothing by way of conclusion except the comment that, while the sisters were not "conscious artists," their writings do offer "valuable historical perspectives" about the "sentiments of this powerful minority" that "have become, to a large extent, the mood and temper of a nation, and have been influential in shaping Canada's own social structure" (66-68). Although Scott and Dahl link the settler's "unsettled" attitudes towards the land with their attempts to establish a solid class structure in the colonial societies, their failure to discriminate between Traill and Moodie offers only one model for understanding the settler's response to the forests, a model that does not recognize the nuances in Traill's later writings.

In reading Roughing it in the Bush and The Backwoods of Canada as primarily historical documents, Dahl and Scott present a unified picture of the British upper middle-class sensibility in the early development of Ontario. Other commentators, in resisting the urge to collapse the distinctions between Traill's and Moodie's interests and productions, have tended to identify the sisters as godmothers of two opposing camps in the history of Canadian literature and literary criticism. For example, in "Traill and Moodie: The Two Realities" (1973), William Gairdner talks of Moodie and Traill having "entirely opposite life style[s]," and suggests that Traill was only able to apprehend her life and surroundings rationally (using faith to explain occurrences that challenged a rational understanding of events). As a result, he suggests that The Backwoods of Canada is full of "coldness and factualness" (77). Conversely, Gairdner maintains that Susanna responded more emotionally and subjectively to her experiences, finding truth in an interior, psychological reality from which Traill's "rational positivist" outlook excluded her (78). Tracing Moodie's debt

to the Romantic movement and its aesthetics, Gairdner suggests that she is “very modern, for she sees man as an *irrational being*” (79), and concludes that the modern reader must, because of her more poetic and inward-turning sensibility, “sense a certain kinship with Moodie,” and admire the “fundamental uncertainty” underlying her characterizations of life in the forests (80). He postulates that what makes these two texts “Canadian” is the testing of the two mutually opposed “faiths” of Romanticism and rational empiricism “against a fundamental natural world” that “gave rise to the revelation of the inadequacy of conventional European modes of thought in [the sisters’] new environment” and the consequent “humbling” of their characters (81). From Traill he traces a lineage that stretches from “Grove, Duncan, Callaghan, MacLennan and Ross to Richler”; Moodie’s “line” includes “Connor, Elliot, Mitchell...Watson [and] Cohen,” and the “Canadian personality” is defined through the “on-going struggle” between these two genealogies.³ While Gairdner’s analysis of the difference between the two sisters is revealing, the stringent categories that he establishes in situating the sisters as “the polar extremes” are of little use when trying to evaluate their impact on Canadian literature, since his readily discernible preference for Moodie’s writing implicitly sanctions the line that he draws from her text through the Canadian canon. This preference places him within a group of critics that includes Carl Klinck and Margaret Atwood, who favour Moodie for her position

³To reach this conclusion, Gairdner had to ignore a large amount of evidence about Traill’s life and writing. For example, he suggests that Moodie turned away from conventional spirituality “towards individual mysticism,” and seems unaware that Traill was also involved in the spiritualist activities undertaken by her sister. (She was later glad to have resisted the influence of the spiritualists.) Additionally, he seems to mis-read her amazement at the capacity of oxen to return to the homestead after they had been removed by a subsequent owner; while Traill continues to wonder at and admire instinctive behaviour over her lifetime of animal observation, Gairdner interprets her unanswered curiosity as an uneasy, and threatening “bewilderment.” He also seems only to be able to interpret exaggerated outpourings of conventionally emotional responses to the landscape as full of feeling; how else he could find Traill’s writing cold and lacking in emotion is difficult to understand.

as an alienated outsider within the imaginative “wasteland” of the Canadian landscape.⁴

Responding to the efforts of Gairdner and other scholars such as Klinck and Clara Thomas to set Moodie at the beginning of a Canadian canon of literature, David Jackal suggests in “Mrs. Moodie and Mrs. Traill, and the Fabrication of a Canadian Tradition” (1979) that “the ‘tradition’ supposedly headed up by Mrs. Moodie is factitious” and argues that “such a tradition serves the interests of contemporary authors and critics because it distorts or misrepresents some essential features of our literary history” (2). Faulting Moodie’s use of conventional, sentimental landscape description and narrative technique and criticizing the concern with her own interior responses that Gairdner found so appealing and “modern” (8), Jackal points out that reason and emotion need not be diametrically opposed (indicating that Traill’s writing displays both capacities), and that Traill’s ability to describe a landscape without excessively imposing herself on it, to listen to the opinions of the people she meets, and to become an inhabitant rather than a “frustrated” spectator, is more valuable than

⁴ Gairdner’s preference for Moodie and his assessment of her as the more modern, relevant and interesting of the two Strickland sisters follows the tone set by Carl Klinck’s influential Introduction to the New Canadian Library edition of Moodie’s *Roughing it in the Bush* (1962). Klinck states that Moodie’s work, because of its fictional nature, was part of a natural progression towards a more developed Canadian literature. He writes: “*Roughing it* represented a level beyond Mrs. Traill’s *The Backwoods of Canada*,” even though “superficially these books were similar” (xii). After complimenting Traill’s style, tone, and presentation, he dismisses her by stating that she was “on her way to fame as a naturalist,” while Moodie, “practicing a less admirable style wavering between plain speaking and rhetoric, was on her way to fiction, a further stage in the growth of immigrant literature” (xii). Having in this way distinguished between the sisters by relegating Traill to a more factually based discourse outside the concern of literary critics and audiences, Klinck cements Moodie’s superior importance to the literary development of Canada when he observes that her sketches “were written by a novelist” (xii). The strength of the book rested in its status as an “imaginative creation” in which the narrator’s psychological responses to the landscape are of greater concern than factual information (xiii). Klinck located the “enduring interest” of the text in the unity provided by the centrality of the author as the central character, and was therefore able to excise at least eight chapters while, he claimed, maintaining the overall balance and tone of the original (x). The resulting text supported an image of psychologically split, or garrisoned, woman, against whom Traill’s relatively subtle and unintrusive self-presentation seemed cold and therefore less “mature.” This Introduction also diverted attention away from the possible literary merits of Traill’s later writing as a naturalist.

Moodie's "tourist" vocabulary (5). As Jackal himself observes in concluding his critique of Moodie's "self-centred, sentimental assessment" of her time in the backwoods, he finds fault with the very characteristics that critics have lauded in raising her text to the status of a classic in the canon of Canadian literature. Yet in his virulent attack on both Moodie's writing and the critical standards that have favoured her, Jackal risks reversing the process by which Traill was cast as the lesser writer against whom Moodie has been favourably compared: he highlights the critical and editorial practices that "accept romantic dogmas as the basis for our literary tradition," and establish a canon based on those expectations rather than an effort to "read individual works in search of a tradition of excellence," and then offers The Backwoods of Canada as "one of the starting points of a more obviously admirable Canadian tradition" (12). Praising Traill's "quality of mind, her real sensitivity, [and] her moral vision," Jackal chides the critics who, in establishing two opposing traditions, have created a series of dualisms (such as feeling and thought, self-expression and order, imagination and reality) that "a mature and vital tradition would not set...in opposition" (20). Although well argued, Jackal's final sentences indicate that his interest lies as much in promoting a re-evaluation of a whole trajectory of mythic-thematic critical methods and canon-making as it does in promoting a recuperation of Traill's work.

Many critics have chosen to discuss Traill's work in combination with a discussion of Margaret Laurence's novel The Diviners (1974). Inevitably, this discussion is paired with a discussion of Susanna Moodie and Margaret Atwood's The Journals of Susanna Moodie (1970). In "Margaret Atwood, Margaret Laurence, and Their Nineteenth-Century Forerunners," Ann Edwards Boutelle suggests that Laurence and Atwood's incorporation of the "spirits and energies" of earlier women writers into their works reveals their "relationship to the inherited tradition" in their search for

female “predecessors and forerunners” (41). Although Boutelle’s article seems to promise a feminist re-working of the impulse to place Moodie and Traill at the beginning of Canada’s literary tradition, she remains mired in the “contradictory” nature of the myths surrounding each of the women, and she maintains the women in antithetical positions throughout her discussion of Atwood’s and Laurence’s responses to them. Similarly, in “Resurrections: Susanna Moodie, Catharine Parr Traill and Emily Carr in Contemporary Canadian Literature” (1981), Eva-Marie Kroller suggests that the presence of nineteenth-century writers in contemporary texts “has provided a mythic framework and/or catalyst for feminine self-definition” (42). Her critical vocabulary and framework remains highly indebted to the idea that Moodie’s psychologically “split” personality is more attractive and productive for contemporary writers such as Atwood and Carol Shields. As a result, like Boutelle, Kroller presents Traill only as the ancestor against whom Morag compares herself, and whose tradition she eventually rejects.

While each of these scholars seems genuinely interested in the writing of Moodie and Traill, the use of the two women as maternal figures in discussions of the history of Canadian literature, and the concurrent blindness to their later writings, particularly Traill’s, when making statements about the early settler’s attitudes towards the land, indicates that the critics were, to varying degrees, shaping the sisters’ works and attitudes to support their perceptions of the development of Canadian literary, and social, culture. This interpretation is, of course, part of any effort to create a narrative of the literary history of a country, yet the widely differing evaluations of Traill’s work in comparing it to that of her sister suggest that a more comprehensive study of her writing is required. The early feminist attempts to reclaim Moodie and Traill for a lineage of women’s writing in Canada without first

reformulating the critical tradition that devalues Traill's contributions point out the need for alternative frameworks within which to investigate Traill's writing.

The conflict between Gairdner and Jackal in situating the Strickland sisters within the Canadian canon, and the larger history of critical attention that has alternately suggested that they are radically different or similar enough to be indistinguishable, are examples, in microcosm, of the effects of the "critical war" that Diana Relke ("Feminist Ecocritique as Forensic Archaeology: Digging in Critical Graveyards and Phyllis Webb's Garden" [1998]), suggests accompanied the practice of literary criticism in Canada after the 1970s as the critical canon was expanded to include post-structuralist thought (2). Relke argues that "the absence of a feminist perspective in the war between structuralists and post-structuralists" meant that many women's works were buried or ignored because they resisted "oversimplification" within the "humanist episteme" that both supported "Frye's structuralist school of thought" and fueled postmodern readers' responses to the earlier critical tradition (4). Observing that "several new critical perspectives, including feminist literary critique, ecocriticism, and other anti-Enlightenment approaches" help to recover these earlier writers and to assess their contributions to Canadian culture, Relke writes in a footnote that she finds it "significant" that the early women writers who do hold "time-honoured places in the Canadian canon are for the most part those who appear to be the most 'garrisoned'," and offers Moodie and Traill as examples (3, 5). Relke goes on to observe that "this may say more about the unconscious selection criteria employed by the canonizers than it does about early Canadian women's writing," thereby implicitly supporting the common modernist evaluations of the Strickland sisters' writing, while pointing towards the existence of other traditions of early women's writing. It seems odd that she does not take the opportunity to note that, while it is important to recover alternative traditions of women's nature writing that

have been unfairly overlooked by the literary establishment, it is also necessary to evaluate the ways in which the criteria that excluded many women's work also provided an unfairly limited evaluation of the writing of women such as Traill.

Helen Buss is one early feminist critic who has attempted to step outside of the critical categories engendered by Frye's 1965 postulation of the "garrison mentality" as the psychological disposition unifying Canadian writers. In "Women and the Garrison Mentality: Pioneer women Autobiographers and their Relation to the Land" (1990), she suggests that most early Canadian autobiographical women writers do not "recoil" from nature to hide behind the walls of the psychological garrison, and that their writings have been under-studied because their "imaginative identification of self-development with the experience of the land" made them invisible to critics who were either looking for writers who were "garrisoned" or who were working to "remove the garrison" and "let nature in" (131, 123). Buss's observation that the post-Frygian critical framework used to evaluate Canadian writers' relationships to the land is inadequate for examining women's writing is supported by other feminist critics such as Heather Murray, who replaces the garrison as the foundation of her practice by suggesting that "women's wilderness writing forces a redefinition of the larger category" of 'wilderness' itself (74). Criticism of Traill has certainly been limited by the tendency of critics to look for responses to a natural world that is perceived of as terrifying and alien; as Buss suggests, literary commentators have tended to label any other reaction as "an oversimplification of the relationship of human beings to the environment" (123). Traill, whose keen observation displays interactive curiosity rather than debilitating fear, has been faulted for "a somewhat selective approach to the subject reminiscent of Miss Muffet" (Frye 245). The idea that settlers and pioneer writers--and subsequent Canadian artists--must respond to the land with a large dose of dread and anxiety in order to show themselves sophisticated

observers of landscape also denies the complexity and diversity of possible literary responses to the land. Feminist approaches such as those promoted by Relke, Buss and Murray, help to break up these limiting categories, allowing work such as Traill's botanical writing to be evaluated not for the ways in which it is either a flawed scientific document or a facile literary text, but for the manner in which its combination of various political, social and environmental discourses contributes to a diverse tradition of responses to the Canadian landscape.

In fact, in a country and literary tradition that repeatedly define themselves by the human community's relationship to the land, it seems absurd that whole hierarchies and genealogies of literary worth and inheritance have been predicated upon examinations of Traill's early work in The Backwoods of Canada and (sometimes) her later children's stories, with little attention paid to the botanical works and nature essays in which she takes the land as her primary and explicit subject of discussion. From Frye to D.G. Jones, from Carl Klinck to W.H. New, from Margaret Atwood right up to the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee, there has been a recognition by historians, literary theorists, writers and the government itself that the Canadian national identity and culture are inextricably linked to the land on which we live. "Nature" and "wilderness" as themes and abstract concepts have been discussed at length in Canadian fiction and poetry, yet there has been a surprising lack of research into non-fiction genres of nature writing in which writers attempt to render accurately the "protean and slippery" abstraction in its detailed and particular manifestations (Bowerbank 452). Although Klinck included a chapter by Alec Lucas entitled "Nature Writing" in the Literary History of Canada, very little subsequent work, either theoretical or interpretive, has been done on the authors that Lucas names as Canada's best nature writers. When compared to the amount of interest in and prestige associated with nature writing in American literary studies, the relative

absence of Canadian interest in this area is startling. In a 1991 editorial in Canadian Literature, Laurie Ricou mused on the possible reasons for this muted response to a critical school informed by the modern “environmentalism”: “Perhaps Canadians are naturally wary of another U.S. academic fashion. Perhaps Canadians’ writing the land as adversary inhibits eco-criticism” (3). He might well have added that perhaps Canadian literary critics’ tendency to be ‘garrisoned,’ or to limit their discussion of landscape to the sanctioned genres of fiction and poetry, have made them less likely to approach non-fictional writers whose writings about Canadian geography do not participate in these patterns of response. If Traill’s contributions to Canadian culture are to be fully understood and fairly evaluated, the diversity of her reactions to the land over the course of her lifetime in Canada must be examined, and then placed within a wider context of non-fictional responses to Canadian geography that can then be used to challenge and inform the framework we use to examine how novelists and poets refer to “nature.” This thesis participates in this project by taking as its subject Traill’s later, and to contemporary audiences of Canadian literature, lesser-known botanical writings.

The process of reevaluating Canadian nature writing has already begun in other contexts. In the last five years, two anthologies of Canadian nature writing have appeared. The first, edited by Grady and entitled Treasures of the Place: Three Centuries of Nature Writing in Canada (1992), includes writers as diverse as Grey Owl, Ernest Thompson Seton, Louise de Kiriline Lawrence and Samuel Hearne along with a number of the more prominent American naturalists (such as Thoreau, Barry Lopez, and John James Audubon) who also wrote about the Canadian landscape. The second, compiled by Andrea Pinto Lebowitz under the title Living in Harmony: Nature Writing by Women in Canada (1996), includes selections from writers such as Anna Brownell Jameson, Emily Carr and Gilean Douglas. In each of these

collections, the samples from Traill's work come from books that are more available than Studies of Plant Life in Canada; Grady includes a section from Traill's Pearls and Pebbles; Lebowitz a letter from The Backwoods of Canada that focuses on wildflowers. Both of the volumes are intended to provide a wider picture of Canadian reactions to the land, and have a celebratory tone as a result. In his Introduction, Grady explicitly offers the writers represented in his volume as an antidote to the Frygian "fear-of-nature-thesis," which, he suggests, "only partly explains our attitude towards nature, and only partly accounts for the difference between the American and Canadian response to the wilderness" (6). However, the brevity of the selections in these volumes often means that politically-charged statements in the original works that might question or render ambiguous the charm of the passages are ignored. While these collections provide necessary reminders of the existence of a more harmonious and wonder-filled tradition of writing about the Canadian landscape, this recuperation needs to be coupled with sustained critical evaluation, both of the texts being "resurfaced" and the assumptions of the excavators and reviewers.

Sylvia Bowerbank addresses this issue in "Towards the Greening of Literary Studies," (1995), an article that affirms the importance of developing ecological tools for examining literature. Bowerbank points out that in order to avoid becoming "trendy", ecocritics, or ecological literary theorists, need to continually examine "green" rhetoric and writing, and the political implications of the structure of feeling and response that it engenders in readers (446, 449). Indeed, if the study of literature is to help identify and examine the ways in which language and imaginative writing reflect and shape our attitudes towards and behaviour in both the human and biotic world--and if we are even to examine whether or not "environmentalism" should be a part of literature studies at all--then new critical work that looks beyond the fictional and poetic range of inquiry needs to be grounded in a scholarly context that does not

use struggle and conflict as its mode of operation, and that does not place humans and nature, or differing strands of Canadian literature, in opposed positions. In investigating Traill's later nature writings, this study attempts not only to reclaim those texts as valuable examples of a more ecologically sensitive, but often ignored, genre of writing about the Canadian landscape; it also critically examines both the political and social implications of her definition of "nature," and suggests that a theoretical shift towards an ecological model will bring her text alive for twentieth-century readers.

The one literary critic who has addressed Traill's botanical work is Michael Peterman in "Splendid Anachronism': The Record of Catharine Parr Traill's Struggles as an Amateur Botanist in Nineteenth Century Canada" (1990). Attempting to place Traill's botanical achievements within the context of the development of scientific inquiry in Canada during the nineteenth century, Peterman uses the comments of the prominent botanists with whom she corresponded, and of recent historians of science in Canada, to paint a picture of a woman who was not trained or equipped to undertake the sort of botanical fieldwork study and writing that would have made an impact on the development of Canadian science. While Peterman's article does provide an analysis of the factors that contributed to Traill's difficulty in gaining support and recognition for her botanical achievements, his selection and discussion of quotations from her work, coupled with the brevity of his article, do not allow him to provide the detailed analysis of her botanical writing that he indicates to be wanting in literary criticism. Peterman acknowledges that "Traill's originality belongs to the gentle way in which she blended her scientific and literary interests" (183), but his focus on scientifically-based analyses of the botanical guidebooks in which she inevitably falls short of "professional" standards, and his attempt to illustrate the impediments to her studies posed by her location in the backwoods and the circumstances of her life, in

the end support an image of a woman whose writing about wildflowers was intrinsically out of touch with the assumptions underlying the scientific rhetoric of her era (177). While Traill's amateur status as a naturalist cannot be denied, Peterman's reliance primarily on the standards of professional scientific commentary and history undermines his conclusion that texts such as Studies of Plant Life in Canada and Canadian Wildflowers exemplify a genre that combines both scientific and literary forms of discourse, creating a series of achievements that are still waiting "recognition and understanding" (183).

Peterman is the first critic to identify the need to bring together literary criticism of Traill's writing and scientific evaluations of her skills as a naturalist, and his inability to draw equally on both scientific and literary reviews of her nature essays and guidebooks points to the lack of the latter. Traill's botanical endeavours are given more attention in books devoted to the history of science in Canada, but even though the tone of these studies is often warm, science writers are generally dismissive of her as an amateur who offered comforting messages about Nature, and whose work, in its piety and natural theology, could be described as a "splendid anachronism" (Berger 35). Traill is frequently mentioned in Suzanne Zeller's Inventing Canada: Early Victorian Science and the Idea of a Transcontinental Nation (1987), yet, even here, references to her work are used as brief examples and introductory anecdotes to support wider statements about the development of science in Canada, or to introduce changes in scientific thinking by pointing out how amateurs had explained natural events and phenomena, such as the perceived change in weather as the forests were cleared (Zeller 172).⁵ The sustained focus on illustrating that Traill was scientifically

⁵ Suzanne Zeller writes: "When Canada was found by early settlers to deviate from European climatic norms at comparable latitudes, the obvious differences in population and cultivation seemed reasonable explanations" (171). Traill's references to the theory of climatic progress appear in almost every natural history text she published. For example: "it seems now to be an established fact that the

out of date has discouraged an examination of the ways in which various discourses about nature, colonialism, nation building and religion mix and abrade within her botanical texts.

By tracing the way that Traill combined these various narratives, this study suggests that Traill's view of nature was not quite as unified, complacent and "cosy" as critics from Frye to Peterman have suggested. A re-examination of the way in which Traill's botanical guidebooks draw on conventions associated with Victorian popular natural history books while also displaying the same assumptions about nation building that fueled the modernizing developments in Canadian science from which Traill was geographically remote might indicate that her approach to identifying the plants of her region of Canada was less archaic and removed from contemporary methods of understanding the landscape than critics have previously allowed because they have focused primarily on her tendency to find moral lessons in nature. On the other hand, evaluating Traill's Studies of Plant Life in Canada as a work of literature facilitates a discussion of how language and memory are fundamental to Traill's presentation of the "natural productions" of the colony in her text. Although she has been faulted and her work dismissed for its reliance on story and anecdote, these qualities are, above all, what make Traill's botanical texts books about "place."

Selecting Studies of Plant Life in Canada for treatment in a literary study helps to focus recent debate about the definition of "nature writing." After tracing the intellectual history of European writing about nature, Alec Lucas states in his chapter entitled "Nature Writing" for the Literary History of Canada that nature writing, by definition, includes only "the writers [who] have made nature a central interest and whose approaches to it are not purely factual" (367). Lucas focuses primarily on the

climate of many countries has been materially affected by the total destruction of its native forests" (Studies 153; see also Backwoods 110).

genre of the nature-essay, and places Traill's writing in The Backwoods of Canada and Pearls and Pebbles in a "vigorous" Canadian tradition of writing in the scientific-literary essay form that was originally established in Gilbert White's The Natural History of Selborne (1789).⁶ Moreover, he values various writers' observational and descriptive abilities, and suggests that twentieth-century writers have attempted to allow nature to be "its own commentator." Yet although he writes that modern nature essays "are never quite the depersonalized writing of science," he does not investigate in great detail the relationship between scientific and literary vocabularies and modes of perception in either modern or nineteenth-century nature writers. His conclusion that the "hey-dey" of nature writing, and of Canadians' interest in this genre, "has long passed" (with the implicit suggestion that this genre was part of the adolescent phase in our development towards a more mature national literature) is belied by both the appearance of the two anthologies mentioned earlier, and the developing interest in ecocriticism.

It is as part of this more recent wave of criticism that the relationship between science and literature in nature genres has been overtly queried. Rather than defining nature writing in a strict taxonomy of sub-species,⁷ Grady recognizes that nature

⁶ Traill would have approved of this classification: in the Introduction to Studies of Plant Life in Canada, she expresses her hope that the text "may become a household book, as Gilbert White's Natural History of Selborne is to this day among English readers" (3).

⁷ There has been a tendency among American literary critics to offer "specifications" of nature writing. Thomas J. Lyon offers a very healthy series of generic categories for nature writing in an article entitled "A Taxonomy of Nature Writing." What he states, before doing so, is that types of nature writing often overlap, as we see, for example, in Studies of Plant Life in Canada which follows the botanical guidebook in structure, but includes text more akin to natural history essays within that framework. He emphasizes that "nature writing is not in truth a neat and orderly field," and many critics and writers wish it to remain this way (276). His article is helpful, though, in delineating the various broad generic types within the field (so to speak). A critic at the other end of the spectrum would be Patrick Fritzell, who generates a definition of nature writing based on the extent to which it reflects one person's consciousness in facing a natural landscape. Thoreau is offered as his example of a "true" nature writer, and Fritzell then claims that nature writing is a particularly American literary genre--other countries, while they do have writers who have been concerned with the landscape, do not offer the

writers “are perhaps disposed towards breaking down barriers between genres” and suggests that it is better to look for a “sense of wonder” that animates what would otherwise be dull, quantitative description (9, 3). Lebowitz, who also uses the phrase “a sense of wonder” in outlining the characteristic that distinguishes the selections in her volume, writes that, “while grounded in natural history and scientific observation, nature writing moves us by the intensity of its details, imagery and lyric voice” (1). It is the combination, then, of critical, detailed and knowledgeable observations with a scientist’s or naturalist’s eye, and the ability to interpret and communicate these perceptions in a literary voice that, for Grady and Lebowitz, defines the best Canadian nature writers. Ricou recognizes that because the naturalists’ vocabulary is as important as the poetic language in ecologically-oriented writing, ecocritics must “learn the language, the other languages of science,” and he observes that “a poetics of ecocriticism demands a ‘scientific’ understanding of the subject” (6).⁸ Literary critics need to learn “geography, biology, genetics and anthropology” in order to understand

specific area of concern that he labels “true” nature writing. It might be noted that very few American writers do either.

⁸ Some writers have even suggested that nature writing as a genre can no longer exist because of the pervasive degradation of the global climate. Two Canadian women have carried on this debate in the last few years: in an essay entitled “The Death of Nature Writing” (1993), Moira Farr outlines the various commonly cited fantasies of escape, return to nature, and plentiful wilderness that have informed early nature writers, and seems to suggest that it is not possible (or desirable), to write positively about the “nature” that we have polluted. Her faint concluding message that we should listen to Native peoples and reconnect with a piece of land seems slightly ironic and out-of-tune coming after the hopelessness that imbues her earlier commentary. And in that hopelessness, and her sense of being cheated out of the illusion (and the reality) that there are places of untouched wilderness to be explored, she creates an article that, while it lambastes humans for their mistakes, offers little hope or guidance for how writing, literature, or any cultural or social activity at all could be productively used to change the “structure of feeling” that shapes our behaviour (Bowerbank 446). Peri McQuay, in responding to Farr’s article, suggests that regardless of the fear and hopelessness that comes with the realization of the full extent of modern ecological crisis and change, the sense of “faith” and experience of “grace” that “happens when we act with others on behalf of our world” can be offered as ways of beginning to create hope and positive change. McQuay writes: “I know that grace happens when a person looks deeply and appreciatively at part of the web and then passes it on” (217) —in other words, nature writing is not, and should not be, dead. Farr chose to read nature writing as a narrative catalogue of loss; others, such as Grady, suggest that nature essays should not be understood “as a record of what we have lost but as a series of signposts toward what we have to gain” (10).

precisely how nature writers revitalize scientific terms, turning taxonomic descriptions, for example, into “expression[s] of the creative imagination” (Ricou 6, Grady 7). However, in an article entitled “Voicing the World: Nature Writing as a Critique of the Scientific Method” (1991), Rebecca Raglon writes that, “while science is an influence on nature writing, the effort to link nature writing with science more closely in terms of a ‘partnership’ obscures some of the genre’s real strengths” and points out that in such definitions, nature writing becomes “less ‘scientific’ than science and less ‘literary’ than literature” (27). Traill’s botanical work has certainly been caught in this middle ground between the two disciplines. So, although it is important to recognize that Studies of Plant Life in Canada is both a work of scientific and observational acuity *and* a work of the creative--and political--imagination, it is also equally necessary to recognize that nature writers are often “extremely wary of the scientific vision,” and to investigate the way that Traill mediates between these two often disparate ways of perceiving and knowing the natural world (Raglon 27). To this end, the next chapter will examine Traill’s “amateur” position within the development of science in Canada; subsequent chapters will look more closely at the methods she uses to present her literary responses to the Canadian landscape within her most overtly scientific book.

Chapter Two

“Vegetable Treasures”: Placing Traill within the History of Canadian Science

The early history of science in Canada was, of course, influenced by Canada’s relationship with Britain. The British interest in natural history reached its height in the early to mid-nineteenth century, and Canada’s position as a vast, but largely unknown store-house of natural resources, shaped the progress of science as an educational and commercial tool for exploring, understanding and exploiting the Canadian landscape. The conventions associated with the history of popular natural history writing are particularly evident in Traill’s botanical texts, but her debt to the inventory-tradition of scholarly and exploratory scientific thought is more subtle, and thus easier to overlook. Her approach to scientific writing was also influenced by women’s participation in popular science writing throughout the late eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries. Examining how these various botanical and scientific discourses intermingle within Traill’s text provides a context for understanding the structure and thematic concerns of Studies of Plant Life in Canada.

Emigrants from Britain during the nineteenth-century, particularly those of Traill’s class and social standing, had grown up with the assumption that a “familiarity with natural science and a sensitivity to scenery formed part of the intellectual equipment of every educated person” (Berger 9). Although the early efforts of Canadian naturalists were at best fragile, the framework of beliefs that supported natural history through the mid-nineteenth century remained influential in the growth of regulated and government-supported scientific activity both before and after Confederation. Natural history allowed a very utilitarian Victorian culture on both sides of the Atlantic to explore a sense of wonder and mystery in Nature through the rational and useful procedures of collecting, classifying, describing and preserving

specimens and seeking new “facts.” As a psychological and spiritual exercise, it promised “useful instruction or moral uplift” by encouraging people to affirm the existence of the Creator through identifying God’s “Design” in Nature (Barber 23-25). Natural theology--the idea that a “closer knowledge of God” could be obtained through observation of the natural world--was the framework within which the “facts” collected by natural historians were interpreted, and William Paley’s Natural Theology (1802) provided the religious and scientific framework of arguments and rhetoric that were frequently used to explain how the complexity of the natural world was evidence of a divine intelligence or creator. Traill’s comment in Studies of Plant Life in Canada that the structure of the “Large Blue Flag” is “so suitable for the preservation of the fructifying organs of the flower, that we cannot fail to behold in it the wisdom of the great Creator” is a typical example of her proclivity for finding evidence of the “beneficent nature of that Great Creator” in the intricate and “deliberate” structure of the natural world around her, and illustrates her debt to Paley (44, 151).

In The Heyday of Natural History 1820-1870 (1980), Lynn Barber presents the natural history tradition in Britain as a popular movement that was directed at alleviating the boredom of the upper classes, preventing moral degeneracy in the lower classes, and offering individuals the chance to contribute to science through the discovery of a new species. She points out that until the middle of the nineteenth century, the religious impetus behind the popularity of scientific inquiry meant that data that contradicted the Genesis account of creation were often ignored or left uninterpreted. And although the acquisition of useful, well-rounded knowledge was one of the justifications for the pursuit of a natural history hobby (such as fern collecting, or aquarium building), popular texts published during this period focused primarily on “fascinating facts, bizarre, curious and extraordinary anecdotes, sentimental interludes, long quotations from ‘the Poets’ (usually Crabbe, Cowper,

Montgomery, Milton, Mrs. Hemans and the writers themselves), personal reminiscence [and] pious homilies” (Barber 19). While Barber does not make the distinction explicit, her example of this fantastic compendium describes the type of botanical texts that eventually became associated with the amateur, field naturalist tradition. Studies of Plant Life in Canada is generously laced with anecdotes, religious interjections, and poetic excerpts from writers such as Shakespeare, William Cullen Bryant, Herrick, Hemans, Milton, Agnes Strickland and Traill herself, and this places Traill’s work within the sentimental and less scientifically rigorous genre of “popular” science writing such as Charlotte M. Yonge’s The Herb of the Field (1854) or Charles Kingsley’s Glaucus: or the Wonders of the Shore (1855).

Nevertheless, it is important to note that Traill was working on her manuscript during the time period in which Canada was just beginning to develop a scientific community. The distinction between amateur and professional was not firmly established until the end of the nineteenth century and at the time Traill was writing there were still opportunities, both in England and in Canada, for enthusiasts of different levels of technical ability to share information and to play a meaningful role in investigating local flora and fauna. During the first half of the nineteenth century, Canadian specimens were being sent across the ocean and to the United States for classification and analysis, and amateurs were instrumental in collecting these samples. During the second half of the century, Canada began to establish and professionalize its own scientific culture. Thus Traill sent specimens to Edinburgh University, and later had her manuscripts for Studies of Plant Life in Canada corrected and approved by John Macoun, a member of the Geological Survey of Canada, and James Fletcher, the first entomologist and botanist for the Central Experimental Farm in Ottawa (Ainley 28; Peterman 175). She also had contact with the other leading Canadian botanists: the original manuscript from which Canadian Wildflowers was

excerpted had the approval of Rev. William Hincks, who had taken the new chair in natural history at the University of Toronto in 1852, and Dr. George Lawson, who worked at Queen's University and founded the Botanical Society of Canada in 1860 (Zeller 208, 230).

Natural theology maintained a stranglehold on scientific thought in Canada throughout the century, with only a "restrained and muted" response to Darwin's theories of evolution and natural selection (Berger 70). Canadian science was still trying to establish its legitimacy within the country, and natural theology demonstrated the "piety" of scientific activity to a population that continued to harbour suspicions about the efficacy and morality of scientific activity well into the final decades of the century (71). Unlike the situation in Britain, where large portions of the population seemed to have absorbed a mania for hobbies and activities related to natural history early on in the century, in Canada, the interest in science was slower to spread throughout all levels of society. Although groups focusing on natural history--such as the Quebec Literary and Historical Society (1824)--were established early in the century by members of the "British upper and middle classes" located in urban centres, by the end of the century, botanical study was still being publicly promoted by professors such as Lawson and Wesley Mills (Ainley 27). Many large "amateur" groups such as the Ottawa Field Naturalists Club (1879) were not initiated until well after debates about evolution had begun to affect popular support of science in England (Berger 71).

As Carl Berger notes in Science, God and Nature in Victorian Canada (1983), it was not in the interests of the few naturalists who had obtained positions in Canadian universities and research institutions to promote openly or introduce Darwin's theories of evolution into popular scientific debate. Darwin's research was primarily referred to in the proceedings of various Canadian clubs and societies in

terms of the answers it posed for concrete problems, and the acceptance of the “Darwinian point of view” was marked more by the gradual depletion of references to God and creation than by outright support and discussion. Indeed, while scientists such as Lawson and Mills increasingly began to make tacit references to Darwin’s thought in the assumptions with which they undertook their investigations, Canada was also known in the mid-to-late Victorian period for its active opposition to Darwin’s theories in the writing of Sir John William Dawson, an “untypical” figure in his vehement disgust with Darwin’s thought and his public defenses of natural history and theology. Dawson objected to the negation of a spiritual element in nature by the evolutionists who followed Darwin’s ideas, suggesting that “the evolutionist reasoning of our day contents itself altogether with the physical or visible universe, and leaves entirely out of sight the powers of the unseen and the spiritual” (Berger 60). Dawson and other Canadian critics of Darwin also objected to his use of hypothetical postulations and speculations, and his failure to follow accepted scientific procedure, which concentrated on the accumulation of hard data and facts; as Berger notes, the disparate methods indicated “the distance between the old natural history and the new biology” (58). While less vocal than Dawson and more willing to agree with and build upon parts of Darwin’s research, other naturalists and scientists, such as Macoun, were able to retain confidence in their faith while pursuing their scientific inquiries and careers.¹ Moreover, textbooks promoting religious interpretations of

¹ Berger writes that “John Macoun merely referred to his reading of Hugh Miller and to the congruence between geology and the six periods of creation and added: ‘Since then I never doubted the authenticity of the Bible...After this time I could never see how a naturalist could doubt the existence of God.’” (69). So in Macoun, Traill found a sympathetic “believer,” as she did in James Fletcher, who commended her for her style, stating that “it is very charming to me to see such love for our beneficent creation & reverence for his perfect works” (*UBless You* 136). Although most examples come from before the publication of Darwin’s *Origin of Species*, Canadian philosophers also had a strong history of attempting to “accommodate the findings of science with theology”; accordingly, John Watson and John Clark Murray both sought a “rational theology” that would ameliorate difficulties posed by scientific thought, and in 1850, James Beaven reformulated the “argument from design” to prove the

nature were published in Canada as late as 1887 (70). It was not until after the turn of the century, when the decline of natural history was being “registered by the fragmentation of the Victorian amalgam of science and religion, of fact and feeling, and of that sense of intellectual progress and popular participation” that Canadian biologists began to state openly that “all problems with evolution had been cleared away” (Berger 77,75).² So although Berger writes that the natural theology in Traill’s texts belonged to “a time of her youth,” the idea that God was to be found through the study of nature, and that religion and science could somehow be combined, was still current and acceptable until the time Traill died, although it was rapidly waning within scientific circles.³

Although most post-Confederation Canadian scientists were aware of Darwin’s theories and the ways in which they were modified in the decades subsequent to their publication, the continuing focus on finding, classifying and generating inventories of the natural resources in the Dominion meant that researchers were not required to engage with the evolutionary debate in order to fulfill their specifically Canadian

existence of a Creator using scientific principles (Trott 47; Armour 83).

² It is on the basis of Traill’s exclusion from a paper entitled “A Review of Canadian Botany from 1800 to 1895” that was published in 1897 as part of the Proceedings and Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada that Peterman bases his discussion of Traill’s relative unimportance as an amateur botanist. However, as Peterman himself points out, Penhallow seemed to have a professional bias against both amateurs and women scientists. Penhallow’s comments, expressed at the end of the century as science was becoming almost completely professionalized, gives an incomplete picture of the attitude towards amateurs throughout the rest of the century. Peterman discusses Traill’s interaction with other professional botanists over the course of the second half of the nineteenth century, and it is their comments that provide the basis for Peterman’s assessment of the worth of her writing.

³ It is interesting that Traill and Dawson both died in 1899, particularly in light of Berger’s comments about the outright acceptance of evolution arriving after the turn of the century. Traill was publishing her botanical texts throughout a time period when theological and scientific explanations for natural phenomena were still being vigorously defended by Dawson, and tacitly accepted by other scientists. Perhaps where Traill’s theology was “out of date” was in her “blind” faith in God as creator, whereas individuals like Dawson were able to draw on considerable geological expertise and research to engage actively with Darwin’s theories.

mandate. In the rhetoric of both general natural history texts and scientific endeavours, a sense of nationalism and patriotism was associated with an increase in knowledge about the “natural productions of the country” (Traill, *Studies* i).⁴ While Berger suggests that the acceptance of a rationally based science was tenuous among some sections of the Canadian population during the nineteenth century, Zeller maintains that science, with its distinctly utilitarian applications, was fundamental in the development of Canada as a transcontinental country. Linking the drive for Confederation directly to the “challenges of industrialization,” she writes that “the idea of creating a nationality out of several colonial peoples dispersed over a vast territory began to appear feasible only in the light of the scientific progress of the age,” which would allow disparate social groups to join in exploiting the wealth of the country (9, 8). While Zeller may be overly strenuous in her evaluation of the importance of science in the movement towards Confederation, generating inventories of the mineral and vegetable contents of the wilderness was indeed perceived as an essential component in the development of the industries that would both unify and provide wealth for Canadian settlers. Geological surveys were undertaken in Newfoundland

⁴ Traill’s phrase “the natural productions of the country” seems to resonate with Thomas Jefferson’s lists of “Productions Mineral, Vegetable and Animal” in his *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1781, English edition published 1787). This popular book combines descriptions of the geography, industry, social organization and history of Virginia (which was then comprised of almost a third of America’s current landmass) with Jefferson’s own philosophical, political and scientific observations and hypotheses. If Traill’s use of the phrase “natural productions of the country” does have some debt to the popularity of Jefferson’s text, then her use of it in reference to a discussion of the patriotic effect of a knowledge of Canadian plants is interesting and even ironic: Jefferson’s book was written in response to the desire of the French government for more information about the American states, “with whose fortunes the French were becoming increasingly involved at a time when the outcome of the American Revolution appeared extremely dubious” (Peden xi). Jefferson’s lists of the native plants in Virginia are arranged without descriptive or explanatory information under the following classifications: “1. Medicinal, 2. Esculent, 3. Ornamental, or 4. Useful for fabrication,” all of which were classifications that Traill also employed in describing and contextualizing her discussions of Canadian plants. Although very different from each other, *Notes on the State of Virginia* and *Studies of Plant Life in Canada* are similar in the combination of scientific and factual descriptions and assessments of both local geography and human interaction with it, and social, historical, and “literary” subject matter.

and New Brunswick in the 1830s, and further institutionalized in the establishment of the Geological Survey of Canada in 1847 (4). Despite the efforts of many Canadian botanists to secure funding for researching and publishing a Canadian flora, there was no national institutional centre or focus for a botanical survey of Canada until 1877, when the Geological Survey began to include natural history (184). In the meantime, these local botanical inventories began to offer imperial and Canadian botanists information about the agricultural capabilities of the Canadian soil and climate. It is important to note that while practitioners of other inventory sciences such as geomagnetists and meteorologists had solid theoretical foundations for their work by the middle of the nineteenth century, botany was much later in its development as a modern science with a common classification system and theoretical framework (185).⁵ Even so, by the 1860s botany was fully established as one of the inventory sciences that were helping to document the potential of the country, even though Canadian botanists such as Lawson were continually frustrated in their attempts to gather funding for an official Canadian botanical inventory (Zeller 239). This means that during the time period when Traill was writing her botanical guidebooks, there was not a unified scientific mode of presenting and arranging botanical information on which she could model her work, but there was a widespread use of agricultural and botanical symbols that were lending support to the idea of a unified and transcontinental nation.

⁵ Zeller discusses the conflicting methodologies being used by various Canadian botanists during the mid-to-late nineteenth century. For example, Rev. William Hincks at the University of Toronto was using the Lindleyan system of classification and organization for his botanical work. Others, such as Abbe Louis-Ovide Brunet, were employing the de Candolle system (Zeller 239). While this thesis is not the place for a detailed comparison of the value of each system, these examples are included to illustrate the point that at the time Traill began her manuscript, an official flora had not yet been published, and a common framework for presenting and evaluating research was not yet established.

Therefore, it is not surprising that Traill's writing in Studies of Plant Life in Canada reformulates some of the conventions associated with natural history texts to reflect the discourses generated in a national inventory science programme. The very structure of Traill's text displays these dual points of reference: while the Table of Contents is divided into sections on specific flowers, ferns, trees and shrubs, thus promising a descriptive inventory of Canadian Plants, within a section on the Fox Grape the reader will find a plea for greater care to be given to "the neglected children of our poorest classes" (Studies 126). Similarly, the section on the False Fox-Glove contains a paragraph reminding readers about the privations suffered by pioneers in the country, and Traill's writing about the Swamp Blueberry contains an extended anecdote about the loss of a child in the wilderness in July of 1837 (122). Traill has literally taken the familiar "narrative" style associated with early flora and natural history texts and "poured" it into a structure associated with impersonal classification.⁶ Unlike the popular writers who tended to emphasize the "most strange and exotic aspects of their subject," though, Traill combined the generic elements of this popular tradition with a serious attempt to include both common and rare plants in a comprehensive study (Barber 19). Moreover, Traill's text is imbued with the same interest in economic development that fueled the rise of inventory sciences in Canada: her reasons for writing are premised on the supposition that learning about Canadian plants will generate a "desire to acquire more knowledge of [Canada's] resources," a

⁶ This literally happens when, on occasion, her text "runs" over to include the title of the next section. For example, Traill writes:

The members of the Pyrola family are, for the most part, found in rich woods, some in low, wet ground, but a few prefer the drier soil of forests; one of these is the exquisitely beautiful evergreen plant known by Canadian settlers as

PRINCE'S PINE - *Chimaphila umbellata* (Nutt),

From root to summit this plant is altogether lovely (Studies 48).

desire that Traill has tried to fulfill in her text by offering detailed accounts of how, for example, the wood, bark and ash of the White Oak tree are used in industries as varied as the construction of “casks, spokes, naves of waggon wheels, railways ties, beams...tanning” and as a source of potash (*Studies* i, 175). Defending the value of botanical knowledge, and praising those who have “made known by their industrious researches, the riches that have been so long unnoticed in our forests, rocks and our waters,” she observes:

To a certain class of minds these things appear trivial and of no value; they do not see that the power of a nation does not consist only in trade and what arises from its commerce alone, but in the intelligence of its people, and in the natural productions of the soil, which, being sought out and made known, are--through the mechanical skill and inventive genius of others--the source of the nation's wealth and greatness. (245)

Situating Traill herself as one of the individuals who is, even in a small way, “seeking out and making known” the vegetable “contents” of the country, this passage justifies her interest in promoting botanical education by referring to both the industrial wealth a systematic knowledge of the country affords and the patriotic “greatness” that making efficient use of “natural productions” ensures. Thus, the industrial resources that botany makes available to Canadians are also a cultural resource, creating a sense of nationhood out of a perceived common interest in exploiting the wealth of the land.⁷ Moreover, Traill's statement that “certain classes of minds” find “these things trivial” points back to her earlier comments that botanical inquiry “should be encouraged among our rising population of *all* classes,” and that “such knowledge is good and

⁷ This idea comes from Suzanne Zeller's book, in which she writes that the need for Confederation was expressed in terms of the interdependence of the various parts of Canada in generating industrial wealth. For example, Nova Scotia was important to the new Province of Canada because of its supply of coal, which was imperative for the industrial wealth of the area as a whole. Using such examples, Zeller writes that “the proponents of Confederation” thought they were creating a “new nationality” based upon “common interests rather than common culture” (8).

innocent, purifying the mind, enlarging it and leading it upwards from grosser thoughts and lower tendencies” (222). Her comments on the social rectitude that could be expected from students of botany mimic the ubiquitous references to personal improvement promised by the natural history texts of the nineteenth century. In Britain, natural history, although more accessible to members of a leisure class, was open to all classes and particularly encouraged among the lower classes; for Traill, the moral benefits botany offered to the lower classes were also social benefits for the country as a whole. Canada, it seems, would only become prosperous when all “classes of minds” (for indeed, as she repeatedly mentions in The Backwoods of Canada “it is education and manners that must distinguish the gentleman in this country” [1836: 73]) accept the benefits of botanical study and inventory as fundamental to the growth of the nation.

Studies of Plant Life in Canada participates explicitly in this project to improve Canada’ citizens and promote a greater sense of patriotism in children, for Traill lists education as one of her primary goals in publishing the book.⁸ Stating that it “is not a book for the learned,” Traill notes that her work is directed towards the “general reader, and especially to the young” (i). It was her hope that in showing readers the “real pleasure that may be obtained from a habit of observing,” she would encourage students to desire more than “the mere name” of plants, and “go on to seek for higher knowledge” (i). “Higher knowledge” refers both to more detailed scientific knowledge, and to the divine lessons that are “still taught by the flowers of the field” (ii). Traill, who was a firm believer in the benefits of home education in helping

⁸ This was an on-going interest of hers; five years after the publication of Studies of Plant Life in Canada she was approached by a magazine entitled the *Young Canadian*, which was established in Montreal to develop “a national sentiment among the young” (I Bless You, 266, 340).

children learn to use the information they learned in school with common sense and social responsibility,⁹ directly addresses women in her preface:

Mothers of Canada, teach your children to know and love the wild flowers springing in their path, to love the soil in which God's hand has planted them, and in all their after wanderings through the world their hearts will turn back with loving reverence to the land of their birth: to that dear country endeared to them by the remembrance of the wild flowers which they plucked in the happy days of childhood. (ii)

“Mothers of Canada” are the only group of Traill’s readership that she overtly acknowledges and encourages in her introductory comments, a fact that indicates the importance in which Traill held their contributions to Canada’s culture, and her expectation that even if they did not make up the majority of her readership, women would be responsible for how the text was used to increase a sense of nationhood in Canada’s youngsters. This focus on nationalism also points to the shift that had occurred in Traill’s writing: while early texts, such as The Backwoods of Canada , and even Canadian Crusoes were aimed at British audiences, with the publication of Traill’s botanical works her audience became explicitly Canadian. In part, this shift occurred with the greater participation of Traill’s niece, Agnes Fitzgibbon (later Agnes Chamberlin) in providing illustrations for Traill’s writing, and in helping to make arrangements with domestic publishers. Fitzgibbon’s help was particularly welcome with the lessening ability of Traill’s older sisters to advocate on Traill’s behalf with British publishers in the years leading up to their deaths. As a result, Canadian Wildflowers (1868) was the first large coffee-table style publication that was wholly

⁹ Speaking of her grandchild, Walter, Traill writes: “Give me the boy who has an eye for what he sees--and an ear for what he hears and can reason upon them, with a good memory--that boy will make a clever man--far beyond in practical results the studious book worm who works only with other men’s brains--The fault of the present education is that there is no home education. The boys and girls learn but do not think such are my old fashioned ideas on the subject and I am sure but that I am not far wrong...(I Bless You 219).

produced in Canada (I Bless You 135), and both Canadian Wildflowers and Studies of Plant Life in Canada were intended for Canadian audiences. In encouraging mothers to assist their children in becoming “endeared” to the country of their birth, Traill was not only acknowledging the ties to Britain that her youthful delight in British flowers had fostered; she was also establishing the importance that affective ties to homeplaces could have in generating a healthy and vibrant society.

Traill’s emphasis on the importance of mothers in providing a botanical education for their children, and her decision to write her text in a “familiar” style to provide greater access to the text for all readers, indicates that her text was also drawing on some of the conventions associated with one of the sub-genres of the natural history movement in Britain, a sub-genre in which women were particularly prominent. In Cultivating Women. Cultivating Science: Flora’s Daughters and Botany in England 1760 to 1860 (1996), Ann Shteir traces the changing relationship of women to botanical study as the natural history movement gave way to a more professionalized scientific discourse and community in the mid to late nineteenth century. After noting that botany was “part of the parcel of normative activities for girls and women” (7), Shteir traces the tensions surrounding the introduction of the Linnean system of plant classification in England. This system, which gave botany in England a “special boost” by “making botany accessible to different groups and levels of enthusiasts,” classified plants based on their reproductive organs (13). In an era when botanical books were increasingly written “with female readers in mind,” this element of the Linnean system made botany a “highly charged area for writers, teachers, parents, translators, and publishers” (21). Although attempts were made to find appropriate, and de-sexualized, vernacular terms to “naturalize” the Latin ones, thereby making the classification system even more accessible, by the beginning of the nineteenth century the Latin nomenclature system was well-established. By the 1820s,

though, the Linnean system and the popular texts in which it was predominantly used were coming under attack from both Post-Romantic writers who demanded a more emotionally intense and holistic experience of the natural world, and from the early scientific communities (31). As Shteir notes, the Linnean method was increasingly viewed as “the gateway, or the lower rung of the ladder of botanical knowledge, associated with children, beginners, and women” (31). Shteir argues that it was with the split between popular and academic scientific discourses that women in England became disenfranchised from rigorous participation in scientific concerns. In her discussion of the vast numbers of female botanical writers active during this period, she does point out the ways in which women were able to make the connection between women and botany work to their own advantage as writers and educators.

Already associated with women in the popular imagination, botany was, by extension, also connected with the ideals of “home, or piety, or health” (35). As the male-dominated scientific botanical community began to try to distance themselves from these associations, women writers became active as popularizers whose authority rested in their maternal--and therefore nurturing--presence within the texts as educators. By couching their interest in science in the domestic sphere, these women also neutralized a common fear that women might become “too learned” (and therefore “pedantic, masculine, unmarriageable, and unmaternal”) (56). Knowledge gained and circulated for the purposes of educating children could only make women into better mothers, and as a result the “narrative voice of the maternal educator” became one of the primary strategies used by women writers to legitimize their botanical writing during a period when the ‘mother’ was increasingly becoming a symbol of purity and social rectitude (62). Traill’s persona in her writing is maternal, and her focus on “Mothers of Canada” indicates her continuing interest in offering women a way to be productively--and legitimately--involved in botanical study while

maintaining their domestic duties.¹⁰ Shteir also notes that “there is a striking tradition of women writing textbooks in the form of letters and conversations” (61), teaching about both botanical knowledge and proper family relationships by showing mothers and children discussing various aspects of botany. Although Studies of Plant Life in Canada does not, like The Backwoods of Canada, draw on an epistolary format, Traill’s decision to write in a “familiar” style allowed her to include conversations and to quote dialogues that allowed the voices of women from the lower classes of emigrants, as well as Native women, to be heard within the text--something that would not have been possible had Traill followed a strictly professional discursive model within the text. Although Studies of Plant Life in Canada was begun at the end of the period of time that Shteir discusses, Traill’s strong maternal presence in the text, and her advocacy of the positive effect that botanical study would have on the health of the nation and its citizens, place her work not only within the natural history genre, but also within a series of conventions widely used by female botanical writers.

Throughout Studies of Plant Life in Canada (and, indeed, throughout all of Traill’s later nature writing), Traill maintains her readers’ focus on the maternal elements of the landscape, finding examples of parental benevolence in the way that the plants interact with each other. For example, she observes that the structure of the *Hepatica* suggests that “nature kindly provided for the warmth and protection of these early flowers with parental care” (10). At other points she refers to rock-ferns as Nature’s “nurslings” (220), and indicates that “Nature displays a great variety of

¹⁰ In a 1852 letter to the Editor of the Genesee Farmer, Traill rues the lack of “any Canadian flora devoted entirely to the vegetable productions of Upper and Lower Canada,” and suggests that “there are doubtless many young and accomplished females who have been transplanted to America--many, too, among the natives of the U.S. and British America who would be glad to exercise this delightful talent amidst the solitude of the backwoods” (I Bless You 75-76). Her comments indicate that women would be amply equipped, despite their amateur status, to help develop the “valuable” Canadian Flora that was not to be officially funded by the government or crown for another twenty-five years.

methods to ensure the safety of her children” (219). The presence of a nurturing feminine “Nature” within the text is frequently presented as evidence of a caring divinity, as when Traill follows her description of the reproductive process of the Royal Flowering Fern--*Osmunda regalis* with these comments:

What wondrous care, what consummate wisdom is here displayed by the Creator in the protection of the life-containing germ of a simple fern. It is as if a sort of maternal instinct had been imparted to the parent plant to shield the embryo from every possible injury and to insure its safety through all the mysteries of the infant state, till the time should come for it to be launched forth to find a home and nourishment in the bosom of the earth. (254)

In presenting the plants as capable of maternal impulses, and in persistently referring to any reproductive action of the plants using a vocabulary of nurturing parental concern for the offsprings’ welfare, Traill avoids the problems encountered by earlier popular science writers using the Linnean method of categorizing plants according to their sexual and reproductive parts. Her tendency to present “Nature” as a caring “Mother” on those occasions when she does provide a gendered identity for the landscape (this is not often) contrasts sharply with the practice among early colonial explorers and writers of referring to the New World as a sexually enticing and fecund virgin, waiting for cultivation and “husbandry.”¹¹ Although the practice of referring to the land as female is problematic whether the chosen metaphor is the “Earth as mother” or the “land as available maiden who lavishes her treasures/pleasures on willing men,” in Traill’s text, finding evidence of “maternal impulses” in Nature emphasizes that botanical activity and learning are appropriate behaviours for women,

¹¹ See Annette Kolodny’s *The Lay of the Land: Metaphor as Experience and History in American Life and Letters* (1975) for a discussion of the practice of referring to the colonial landscape as a sexually-available woman. There is a wide and varied body of ecofeminist and feminist literature investigating the links between the devaluation of “female” and “nature,” and how the linking together of these categories has allowed the oppression and exploitation of both women and the natural landscape.

and contribute to the health and education of their children. As will be seen in subsequent chapters, promoting this sense of active female involvement in the landscape was important to create within the text the context for describing women's diminishing involvement in herbally-based medicine and domestic economies.

This brief outline of the history of inventory science in Canada, and of natural history within England and Canada has been offered, not to try to reclaim for Traill a position as a ground-breaking amateur botanist whose scientific abilities have been misunderstood and under-recognized, but, rather, to indicate that although Traill was removed from centres of botanical research, the stylistic qualities and beliefs that she expressed in works such as Studies of Plant Life in Canada were consonant with developments in scientific thought in Canada during this period. Moreover, when Traill began work on the manuscript more than twenty years before its publication, she was doing so in part to help address the lack of a Canadian flora that would help settlers and emigrants learn about the economic potential of the country.

Understanding how the scientific rhetoric surrounding nation-building influences her texts provides a foundation for examining the discursive methods that she uses to welcome a Canadian future based on the material wealth of the nation, while simultaneously memorializing the destruction of the forests and the settler past. The inventory principle provides a broad structural framework, and appears in its more patriotic incarnations in her comments about the value of botanical study to the development of the Dominion. Yet the actual text of Studies of Plant Life in Canada functions more as an inventory of the history of the country, than as a strict listing of the plants of the country and their economic uses. Indeed, despite Traill's repeated statements of deferral to the "higher knowledge" found in scientific "works in a class far above what the writer of the present book can aspire to offer to the reader" (Traill, Studies i), and her expressions of admiration for both the men who helped her with her

manuscript, and more renowned figures such as Linnaeus, she is also skeptical of the progress of modern science. She expresses this scepticism explicitly when she suggests that modern medical drugs “carry our young people to an early grave,” or criticizes the use of Latin names in scientific classification (114). Her lack of apology for widespread references to the rich body of knowledge about Canada’s plants that is found in the lore of the early settlers and natives also provides, in its presentation of alternative ways of knowing the Canadian landscape, an implicit challenge to the “scientific viewpoint” (Raglon 31), a challenge that is facilitated by her use of the familiar format associated with earlier botanical textbooks by women. And, while she continually refers to her hopes for the Dominion, her use of the language associated with economic inventories of the nation’s wealth is tempered by her statements that studying plants also provides her with emotional and spiritual “resources,” and her repeated emphasis on knowledge of local environments. It might be wise to read Traill both for the ways that her botanical work supports and attempts to participate in the scientific developments of her era, and for the ways in which she brings the scientific rhetoric and values of imperial nation building into juxtaposition with other ways of experiencing and knowing the Canadian landscape. To this end, I suggest that reading Studies of Plant Life in Canada as a piece of nature writing that draws on, but is not limited to, a scientific viewpoint, will allow contemporary readers to investigate the mixture of discourses within Traill’s text, rather than focusing on where it does not meet contemporary expectations of professional scientific discourse.

Chapter Three

“For it is a thing of the past”: Memory, Language and a Sense of Place in Studies of Plant Life in Canada

To “only look at” nature is extremely peculiar behaviour. Experiencing of an environment happens by doing something in it, by living in it, meditating and acting. --*Arne Naess, Ecology, Community, and Lifestyle* (1989) (63)

In The Backwoods of Canada, Traill relates a conversation that she had with an “elderly gentleman” who was a fellow traveller on her trip from Cobourg towards Peterborough. She recalls that when she had finished speaking about the picturesque home that she and her husband were going to build, the gentleman settler corrected her naive appraisal of the difficulties of clearing the backwoods forest and building a farm, saying “Look on those interminable forests, through which the eye can only penetrate a few yards, and tell me how those vast timbers are to be removed” (56). Traill later repeats this idea that the forest is impervious to human perception, and writes in language that almost exactly replicates the warnings uttered by the gentleman settler when she relates the mental relief that a clearing in the forest brings: she describes the “thick wall of trees, through the interminable shades of which the eye vainly endeavours to penetrate in search of other objects and other scenes; but so dense is the growth of timber, that all beyond the immediate clearing is wrapped in profound obscurity” (161). Her tendency, in looking for “the outline of the country,” to view the immediate trees and foliage as a barrier to perception indicates that although she was already beginning to describe her interest in the wildflowers and birds of the area, she was still very much a “traveller” (55).¹ Her statements that the “eye cannot

¹ In Sketches of Upper Canada (1821), John Howison used similar language to refer to the barriers to perception posed by the indigenous foliage: “the thick recesses of the shade around, were impenetrable to the eye, the limited prospect being closed by a rich green obscurity” (12). There are many similarities between Traill’s early work in The Backwoods of Canada, and Howison’s Sketches: both

penetrate” beyond the edge of the trees seems to suggest that the body from which the vision originates is also prevented from entering the forest (and instead, must cut it down). This contrasts with her later essays in which she displays her familiarity with all forms of life in the forest by either describing her walks in the backwoods, or placing her readers (“you”) in the midst of the forest and directing their line of vision as her narrative unfolds.

Traill’s progression from perceiving only “profound obscurity” in the uncleared forest, to her declaration years later that “every plant, flower, and tree has a simple history of its own” shows her movement from being a traveller and newly-arrived emigrant to developing for herself an identity as a resident of a particular geographical region, an identity that was based in a particular and detailed observation and knowledge of all species around her, and a concern for their welfare.² Neil Evernden offers an intelligent description of the difference between how travellers and residents perceive the landscape:

The tourist can grasp only the superficialities of a landscape, whereas a resident reacts to what has occurred. He sees a landscape not only as a collection of physical forms, but as the evidence of what has occurred there. To the tourist, the landscape is merely a facade, but to the

writers complain about the lack of picturesque manipulation of the cleared landscape, the absence of “regularity of form” in the layout of the fields, the ugliness of the fences, and the need for reliable information for British emigrants. In fact, Howison could easily be the model for the elderly gentleman settler that Traill meets when travelling to her new home in the Backwoods. However, it is important to remember that while Howison returned to his native country with his evaluation of the Canadian landscape remaining unchallenged, Traill, in the process of settling into the landscape, did allow her previous perceptions of the impenetrable forest to be challenged and altered by her experiences on the land.

² Her attention to the “outline of the country” can be contrasted with this observation in *Studies of Plant Life in Canada*: “What a world of wonders does the magnifying glass reveal to our eyes if we examine the fruit dots through it....Even the fine transparent pointed hairs that terminate the toothed divisions of the pinnules are most beautiful to look upon; the fine veinings and the scales that clothe the root and tip of the frond, are worth our attention and admiration” (239).

resident it is 'the outcome of how it got there and the outside of what goes on inside.' (99)

Traill's recognition that flexibility of perception and expectation are necessary for emigrants to lead a tolerable life in the backwoods is prefigured in her statements that "youth, however, is the best season for coming to this country; the mind soon bends itself to its situation, and becomes not only reconciled, but in time pleased with the change of life" (Backwoods 228). Not only, then, do emigrants to Canada shape the land in their attempts to make it feel and function like the English landscape that they have left, but they must also be willing to allow the land to shape their outlook in order to become residents. Studies of Plant Life in Canada shows the extent to which Traill was able to "fit" her mind to the Canadian landscape, and become a resident rather than remaining an uncomfortable, and permanently displaced "tourist."³

This sense of "residency," as defined by Neil Evernden has been variously referred to as a "sense of place," or as "belonging in/with" a particular area of land, and has been extensively discussed by literary critics, post-colonial theorists, environmental thinkers and philosophers, and nature writers. Each of these groups, though, tends to have a different understanding of the word "place," as well as its linguistic and political implications. Modern environmentalists, particularly supporters of the bioregionalist movement such as Gary Snyder, Wendell Berry and Neil Evernden, promote an ethics of "reinhabitation," in which a person's sense of being "at home" in a particular landscape is developed through "mindful" and responsible behaviour towards the other species in a given ecological area, a long-term commitment to nurturing the community that has grown in the bioregion,

³ In "Breaking the 'Cake of Custom': The Atlantic Crossing as a Rubicon for Female Emigrants to Canada?," D.M.R. Bentley discusses the prominent place given to "accommodation" in women emigrants' accounts of arriving in Canada, both in physical housing structures and mental attitude (112). Bentley draws different examples from Traill's work than those used here to support his discussion of how emigrant women handled the disappointment of their preconceptions of the human and natural landscape they expected or hoped to find in Canada.

and a knowledge of the geographical and biological “facts” about an area, as well as the stories and ideas about the region that have been passed down over time. This sense of renewed rootedness in a particular bioregion requires a re-orientation of aesthetic principles: drawing on the work of Edith Cobb and John Dewey, Evernden suggests that we must understand the “aesthetic experience” as lying not in “a subject-object relationship in which the observer parades before a supposedly beautiful view,” but rather, in “a process, an interaction between the viewer and the viewed” (97). This aesthetic sense of relationship and connection between “self and setting” promotes a consciousness of the interrelatedness between all forms of life, and generates an awareness of ethical responsibility towards the landscape by revealing the “structure of feeling” that underlies our decisions about how we value our environment (101; Naess 67). The environmental artist thus provides readers and viewers with a “portrait” of a particular place, an understanding of the area that would only be possible after years of residence and interaction--much like Traill's “portrait” of the land and communities around Peterborough and Lakefield (Evernden 99). This bioregionalist approach understands the development of a grounded and local “sense of place” as fundamental and vital to any change in the politics of how humans treat the rest of the biosphere. It is important to recognize that Traill’s reasons for writing Studies of Plant Life in Canada as a book promoting a sense of local and national “place” are not articulated within or motivated by the same rhetoric used by modern environmental thinkers. However, using these ideas does provide a vocabulary for investigating Traill’s attitude towards the surrounding landscape. Her book exhibits the positive and desirable qualities of “place-sense” esteemed by thinkers such as Snyder and Berry, yet was written at the time period when the human behaviours towards the natural landscape were becoming increasingly exploitive, and is openly supportive of some of these practices (and critical of others). As well, it turns

backwards towards the “fading” attitudes of positive interaction with the landscape that modern environmentalists, over a century later, are trying to recapture and reinvigorate in their focus on ecological models of community. Using the bioregionalist approach to “place” to explore the range of Traill’s attitudes towards the landscape thus permits an examination of the manner in which her text can contribute to our understanding of how current discourses surrounding “wise” land-use have developed, and encourages an investigation of the many different discourses that must be included in any historically-accurate discussion of “place.”

Post-Colonial theorists such as Helen Tiffin, Gareth Griffiths and Bill Ashcroft discuss “place” within the human history of nineteenth-century imperialism, colonization and settlement. The “displacement” caused both by the invasion of indigenous communities by the colonizers, and by the emigrants’ dislocation from the “centre” is described as “eroding” and “destroying” cultural and individual identities, and any attempt to establish a new sense of “place” in colonial literatures is seen to be frustrated by the “lack of fit” between the imported official language and the new environment (Empire Writes 9; Postcolonial Reader 391). These theorists suggest that the process of developing a regional dialect to describe the specific cultural and geographical formations of the country to which English language and culture has been imported allows the possibility of “interrogating and subverting the imperial cultural formations” while also attempting to heal the “alienation of vision and the crisis in self-image” experienced by both the settler and native residents of a colonized territory. The post-colonial definition of place is strong in its recognition that “‘place’ in post-colonial societies is a complex interaction of language, history and environment,” but there is an implicit tendency to focus more on the history of human conflict in invaded geographies, rather than to include a full discussion of the ways in which the landscape provides more than the backdrop against which the settlers’

language is found insufficient and inappropriate for description and labelling (391). For example, in "Naming Place" (1995) Paul Carter cites a passage from an early Australian writer in English, who concluded that the geography of the continent did not suit itself to poetry, and then states that "[the writer's] real subject in this passage is not nature at all. It is language, and the impossibility of distinguishing the language of feeling from the language of description" (404). While Carter's second comment is astute, his willingness--an inclination shared by other post-colonial critics--to address only the linguistic problems posed by the landscape rather than the possible perceptual changes and experiences that the settlers had when exploring new geographies automatically limits the scope of his exploration of "place" to a human "construction." Similarly, the tendency of Canadian post-modern, post-colonial language theorists such as Robert Kroetsch to explore only the "gaps" between the English of the colonizers and the geography that they were attempting to describe limits their ability to be responsive to those early emigrant writers who, while recognizing the inadequacy of their language, vigorously attempted to find ways of interacting and developing a positive relationship with the land to which they had moved. Indeed, there is little room in post-colonial definitions of "place" for the possibility that settlers might have responded to the landscape with a "sense of wonder" rather than just (or only) alienation.

The difference between these two definitions of "place" is one more of emphasis than opposition: deep ecologists and bioregionalists focus on fostering a renewed sense of connection while also recognizing the context of human and ecological exploitation that has contributed to modern disrespect for wild areas; conversely, post-colonialist theorists, who use their definition of "place" as a critical tool rather than as a conceptual and moral framework and way of life, emphasize human political history while also recognizing the importance of language in the

process of creating a “sense of place.” Both of these theories of “place” offer approaches for understanding Traill’s work in Studies of Plant Life in Canada, a text in which Traill is concerned with the relationship between the literature of Britain and her experiences in the Canadian landscape, with the appropriate naming of “native” plants, and with investigating the relationship between moral human behaviour and the exploitation of the Canadian landscape.

In The Environmental Imagination (1996), Lawrence Buell urges literary theorists and nature writers to guard against “idealiz[ing] the sense of place as a panacea for the disaffections of modern uprootedness,” and to be alert to the point at which the comfort of feeling “at home” in a “humanized space” poses “as great a risk of cultural narcissism as when we accept the myth of place-free objective inquiry” (253). Pointing out that living closely with the land does not necessarily result in ecologically sensitive practices, and is certainly not a pre-requisite for a healthy and environmentally sound set of beliefs, Buell writes that:

What we require, then, is neither disparagement nor celebration of place-sense but an account of those specific conditions under which it significantly furthers what Relph calls environmental humility, an awakened place-awareness that is also mindful of its limitations and respectful that place molds us as well as vice-versa. (253)

This chapter will draw on various definitions of “place” to present an “account of those specific conditions”—linguistic, biographical and geographical—that contributed to Traill’s presentation of her sense of place in Studies of Plant Life in Canada, and to investigate the extent to which Traill’s place-sense promotes or denies environmental humility. It will be seen that the mixture of “ideas about how to live in a place” presented in her text contains several different attitudes towards human activity in the landscape.

Traill was writing during the period of time in which the most dramatic changes were made to the land around Peterborough as the forests were turned into “fruitful fields.” It would be unreasonable to expect a woman who arrived in Canada with the express purpose of participating in the agricultural colonization of the landscape to have overtly denounced this practice and the environmental and human consequences for the indigenous residents of the area, whether human, animal or plant population. For her to have stated such a position would have been to deny her right to be in Upper Canada, as well as the privilege and prestige that her position as an English gentlewoman afforded her--in essence, to undermine the foundation of her identity. Traill’s upbringing, like that of other members of the white community of British descent in Canada, made such a critique almost impossible. However, while Traill supported the technological, agricultural and political progress of her new nation, her keen and often expressed regret for the destruction of the native flora, her religious and aesthetic delight in studying the natural world, and her recognition of the hardship suffered by Native populations as a result of the “progressive” impulse of the colonists suggests that her natural explorations and emotional response to the landscape were equally important in her concept of local community and personal citizenship. While clearing the land was the precondition for her survival as a settler, her dependence on the beauty of the land for her mental well-being is registered in her statement, in the “Introductory Pages” of Studies of Plant Life in Canada, that “but for the Canadian forest flowers, and trees and shrubs, and the lovely ferns and mosses, I think I should not have been as contented as I have been, away from dear old England” (Studies 3). It is, therefore, counterproductive to select one paradigm or the other as Traill’s “true” or “primary” attitude towards the Canadian landscape, or to fault her for not displaying the sort of environmental activism we would expect from more modern nature writers. Rather, a more fitting approach is to examine the interplay between

two perspectives that could be understood as “opposite”--her recognition of her dependence on the native plants and her concurrent acceptance of the land-use practices that destroy wild (or even marginally accessible) areas where these plants might be found--and to investigate how her presentation of a sense of place relies on the creative tension generated as the two attitudes towards the land meet and diverge throughout the text. The development and maintenance of place-sense is a process rather than a finished state, and Traill’s exploration of what it means to be a emigrant-resident of a different natural environment and social community is registered in a continual awareness and discussion of the changes made to the landscape by the settlers, and, at a more subtle level, of the alterations that a different form of literacy and linguistic use were making in the relationship that emigrants, and, by extension, the Native residents, could have with the other species around them. The often odd oscillation between two different ways of knowing and valuing the land--one aesthetic, spiritual and filled with wonder, the other profit-oriented and supported by the inventory-rhetoric used in scientific circles of the time--can be understood, therefore, not as creating an untenable split in an immature text, but as evidence of Traill’s exploration of the processes of nation building and attitudes towards the land that Canadians were struggling to resolve both in her day and our own.

II

Traill’s inability to sustain a serious and overt questioning of the agricultural practices of the settlers is registered in Studies of Plant Life in Canada by a sense of the inevitability of the destruction of some Canadian flora. Describing the Blood-Root, she writes “it is a pity that, with the march of civilization, we shall soon lose its fair pure blossoms” (Studies 11). This comment is typical of her predictions about

ecological changes that “will” and “must” result from the colonization of the land, and, while it indicates a sense of loss that is, at other moments in the text, expressed more keenly, there is no indication in Traill’s work that it would be possible to alter the wholesale destruction of native plants, or redirect the “march of civilization.” Instead, she calls repeatedly for the creation of a national botanical garden, and for parks in which the various species of plant could be preserved and made available to those who have an “interest” (142). She justifies her call for national parks with economic and patriotic pleas, asking “is it not a fact that our resources as respects the natural productions of the land, have not as yet been fully recognized?” and observing that “men from other lands carry home treasures for the greenhouse, the uncared-for products of our plains, our forests and swamps” (213). Her use of profit-oriented terminology to justify her statements about the necessity for environmental protection prefigures modern environmentalists’ attempts to present convincing pleas for the preservation of various ecosystems in the “cost-benefit” language of the businessmen and politicians who make the decisions about how the land will be developed.⁴ Yet the sense of loss that she associates with the destruction of the wild plants is more often explored within social and emotional rather than economic terms, indicating that although she did not suggest alternatives to the agricultural practices that were

⁴ Tracing the change in environmentalists’ tactics from sentimental pleas for the preservation of endangered species and ecosystems to numerical analyses which establish the “value” of a particular area, Neil Evernden argues that this emphasis on inventories and cost-benefit analysis in determining the worth of an area is problematic, because even if the numerical analysis suggests that more is to be gained from preserving the area in question for the time being, “nothing has really changed....The basic attitude towards the non-human has not even been challenged in the rush to embrace utilitarian conservation. By basing all arguments on enlightened self-interest the environmentalists have ensured their own failure whenever self-interest can be perceived as lying elsewhere” (10). It is doubtful that Traill was as self-conscious as modern activists in appropriating the cost-benefit language. However, it might register an unconscious perception, on her part, that articulating her pleas for preservation in a resource-based vocabulary would in some way further her more sentimental statements about the necessity of preserving “wild” spaces.

significantly altering her local ecosystem, she was attempting to explore the human and environmental consequences of the settlement of the area. Indeed, Traill's surprising acceptance of the inevitability of ecological alterations--even those that she recognizes to be potentially damaging--can be partially explained by the way in which visible alterations to the landscape provided a foundation for a series of contrasts between "then" and "now," and a series of memories that eventually became the basis for sense of local history and "home."

Kevin Walsh, who looks in The Representation of the Past: Museums and Heritage in the Post-Modern World (1992) at representations of the past within museum contexts, insists that a "sense of place is reliant on that place possessing characteristics which reveal temporal depth" (84), a quality that must be registered in both human and natural areas. If, as Walsh suggests, museums should facilitate a sense of place for local inhabitants by generating an understanding of the ways in which the history of a region informs its present, then Traill's text could be metaphorically described as a museological workbook, a literary collection of information about both the land and its human history. The focus on change--which is almost as large a theme within the book as its topic, plants--is indicated by her reminiscences on the first page of the Introduction, in which she writes that the country around the Otonabee was an "unbroken wilderness" when she first arrived in 1832, but by the time the text was published in 1885, a railway had been constructed to connect "the flourishing village" with "Peterboro'," an urban area that had been superimposed on the land "where once the writer wandered among the forest pines" (Studies 1-2). By situating readers within her personal history and relationship to the Canadian landscape, Traill prepares them for the blend of social memories and botanical data proffered in the text and invites them to compare their own experiences of the landscape with what she has recorded. Her comments indicate that she is proud

of the development of “Peterboro’,” and that she was also attached to the forest that was cleared to permit the growth of the town. By welding together a social and environmental history, Traill implicitly indicates that the two are, in fact, interdependent, and that the story of human history on the land cannot be told without appropriate recognition of ecological alterations that accompanied development.

According to theorists such as Alfred Crosby, the success of the colonial enterprise in “reclaim[ing] the swamps and bogs, and [turning] the waste places into a fruitful field” was directly related to the ability of European immigrants to alter the indigenous biota to accommodate European agricultural methods and lifestyles. In Ecological Imperialism (1986), Crosby writes that the geographical regions in which European colonization was particularly profitable tended to be areas with climates in which “European flora and fauna, including humans, [could] thrive...if the competition [was] not too fierce” (7). His thesis is that the “triumph” of European imperialism had an ecological component, that “the success of the portmanteau biota and of its dominant member, the European human, was a team effort by organisms that had evolved in conflict and cooperation over a long time” (293). By “portmanteau biota,” he is referring to the European grain crops, livestock, viruses, weeds, varmints, pests, and humans that collectively altered the indigenous ecosystems of the Neo-European countries and continents in which they arrived, creating conditions in which the ecosystems that had supported native species, including Native communities, were significantly disrupted. The “Europeanization” of “colonial environments” was effected, for example, through the upheaval of the land for agricultural purposes, which allowed the more resilient “Old World” weeds to move into the newly broken land, “literally crowding out native plants” as they stabilized the “newly bared topsoil from water and wind erosion,” and provided feed for the European livestock (155). In Traill’s day, British botanists such as Joseph Dalton

Hooker, who was involved in studying plant distribution across the globe (and attempting to explain how plants of the same species could exist, indigenously, in very different regions with only minor variations) suggested that many of the local plants in Neo-European areas “will ultimately disappear, owing to the usurping tendencies of the emigrant plants of the northern hemisphere” (quoted in Crosby, 165).

Although Hooker’s suggestion was directed towards southern colonized environments, his statement, together with Crosby’s discussion of the effect of European agricultural methods on the indigenous biota of Canada, help to explain Traill’s firm sense of inevitability when discussing plants that were disappearing. Her observations about the process by which the flora she studied was being altered reveal her awareness of the struggle between native and emigrant plants. She comments that:

Our Bell worts and Trilliums, Smilacinas and Orchids are among our most interesting and attractive native forest flowers, but as the woods are levelled and the soil changed, by exposure to the influence of the elements and the introduction of foreign plants, our native vegetation disappears, and soon the eye that saw and marked their lovely forms and colours will see them no more. (Studies 40)

In this passage, Traill indicates her awareness of the effect that agriculture and foreign plants had on the Canadian soil; and, although she reiterates in a later passage that “it must be so,” the elegiac mood of her final statement that “the eye that saw...will see them no more” not only predicts changes to the visual appearance of the landscape, but also foreshadows the disappearance of the people who viewed the plants, and the method of perception by which they were rendered “interesting and attractive.” The tension between the aesthetic and agricultural appears again when Traill writes of the Lupin that “the progress of civilization sweeps these fair ornaments from the soil. What the lover of the country loses of the beautiful, is gained by the farmer in the increase of the useful...nevertheless, we mourn for the beautiful things...” (49). In mourning the loss of “beautiful things,” Traill was also grieving for the diminished

importance of aesthetic experiences of the landscape in the progress of the new country.

Even so, she was at the same time very practical in her own participation in, and suggestions for, an improved ecological colonization of the country. What she objected to was not necessarily the substitution of the native forests and flowers by foreign agricultural ecosystems; her primary concern was for the preservation of the various species, both for aesthetic and economic purposes, and for the proper management of the relationship between the "original" landscape and the imported agrarian practices. Traill's discussion of the Tamarac in Studies of Plant Life in Canada is particularly revealing in this regard. She observes that, while the Tamarac swamp was formerly "regarded as utterly worthless," at the time she was writing her book it was being harvested, drained and reclaimed for agricultural land as the country was "denuded" (165). Traill writes that "when these reservoirs are cut down and destroyed much of the fertility of the land will be lost. People are only now beginning to learn the uses and value of the trees that they destroy" (165). However, in the next section, in which she discusses the Cedar swamps that also provided water for the fields, and which were also regarded as a "useless waste of land" in the early days of settlement, she contradicts her earlier call for more ecological responsibility and forethought by writing that "when cleared, ...Cedar Swamps make good meadow land," the wood also being quite valuable for cedar rail fences (168).⁵ Her interest in the economic success that could be gained by a Canadian industry in agricultural research is suggested in her statement that "plants that are indigenous to a country,

⁵ This reversal in Traill's commentary might be related to her own "interest" in the draining of the swamps: in a letter to her son William in 1870, she writes that "Walter has got good employment as engineer and surveyor for government jobs--One of which is surveying and draining Buckley's Lake....The government are going to drain all the marshes and small lakes and swamps and survey all unclaimed lots--so you see there will be work enough for some persons" (Bless You 182).

could, by due care, be brought to a state of higher perfection than when under a foreign sun and soil," a comment aimed at discouraging the practice of buying indigenous varieties that had been "perfected" elsewhere and sold back to Canada for a higher price. Her assertion that flowers and fruits might be "rendered equal to the imported kinds by our own culture" also contains hints that the correct and fruitful manipulation of native species was necessary for the progress of the increasingly "naturalized" Canadian "culture" (126). Viewing cultivation as necessary both for the progress of the nation, and its development as an autonomous country, she writes with approval of the transplantation of native trees and plants from "the site where Nature had placed them" to new locations where they can be preserved as "ornaments, planted by the hand of taste in the gardens, and as shade-trees on the streets of the towns and cities" commenting that "this is good, it speaks of taste and culture" (162).

Taste becomes literally connected with culture in Traill's discussion of Wild Garlic. After observing that when cows feed on the wild leek or garlic, the milk "becomes so strongly flavoured with the disagreeable odour" that only persons "indifferent" to the nature of their food can tolerate it, she then observes that this unpleasant "wild" taste "is becoming very rare" with the disappearance of the forest in which the plant was found, and "you hear no more complaints of leeky milk and butter" (37). The alteration in the taste of milk with the cultivation of the land by Europeans is juxtaposed, one page later, with an account of the questionable gastronomic habits of the Native women and children, who eat the "Bunch" or "Squaw" berry that Traill finds "sweet but insipid." Traill notes that the "taste of the Indian is so simple and uncultivated that they will eat any fruit or vegetable that is innoxious, apparently indifferent to its flavour" (38). "Taste" and "culture" therefore become symbols of the "naturalization" of the landscape that the immigrants had

“Europeanized,” and resonant with the differences between cultivated Canadian society, and the “wild” area over which the new country had been superimposed.

Traill’s focus on the transplantation of the trees as “ornaments, planted by the hand of taste and culture,” and her repeated emphasis in her descriptions of the flowers, trees, shrubs and ferns on whether or not a particular plant was “worthy of a place in the garden,” suggests that one way in which she attempted to ameliorate the lack of attention paid to the “beautiful” in her culture’s pursuit of agriculturally productive land was by encouraging settlers to plant gardens where native plants could be preserved, and where aesthetic appreciation of their physical and moral qualities might be encouraged in local residents (Studies 7). Accordingly, she indicates that plants such as the Lupin, Branching Wood Violet, Mitrewort, Twinflower and Turtle-Head are suitable for cultivation, and offers tips for the successful transplantation of native Orchid species and evergreen trees (7, 16, 49, 97, 75, 164). Whereas, in describing land-use practices she often mentions utilitarian decisions made with no thought of the aesthetic experience of people who live on the cleared land, she delights in describing native plants that are both “useful and ornamental,” such as the Blood-Root--“one of our most lovely native Spring flowers”--which was used by “Indian Squaws” as both a dye and medicine, and which was also “acknowledged by the American Eclectic School of Pharmacy as valuable in many forms of disease” (11). Her persistence in combining descriptions of the aesthetic and utilitarian potential of native plants under cultivation, and her suggestion that the plants might be saved by transplantation, are rendered problematic by her acknowledgement that most wild plants respond indifferently to being cultivated by humans. The Blood-Root, for example, “increases in size, but...does not seem to spread and multiply freely as in its native soil”; and the Branching White Wood Violet, which “takes kindly to garden culture,” does not exhibit a particular “shade of

yellow” when “under cultivation” (11, 8). Other trees, such as the Hemlock, “do not take kindly to cultivation” (162).

Trails has a curious practice of combining statements about the ease with which a plant can be cultivated with assertions about the inevitability of its extinction. In her evocative description of the Blood-Root, she writes: “It is a pity that, with the march of civilization, we shall soon lose its fair pure blossoms. It is easily cultivated...” (11). Her observation that it will disappear, regardless of the fact that under cultivation the seeds ripen “perfectly and freely” is odd; yet she makes the same comment in reference to the Lupin, which will be “swept from the soil” even though it “can readily be grown from seed, and blooms well in our garden plots, abiding with us year after year” (11, 49). This strange combination of statements might be partially explained by a tacit realization that even if the plant is “cultivated” successfully (and is therefore able to be perceived as both “useful” and “ornamental” against a backdrop of human territory), the particular set of relationships that defined the plant as “native” have been disturbed. For example, she states her preference for the appearance of plants in their original setting, writing that the Osmundas were “not less lovely because untouched by artificial culture, and fresh in all their native grace and beauty, adorning the waste places of the earth, wild and free from God’s hand” (255). She writes of the Lily that it “can hardly be seen to greater advantage than when growing wild on the open plains and prairies, under the bright skies of its native wilderness” (56). Similar statements are made about other plants, such as the Lupin, fixing the impression that once transplanted into her garden, the Lily (for example) would not be the same Lily she had seen growing on the “plains and prairies”: the context which gave resonance to its “wild” and “native” beauty would be disrupted. Although Trails may recommend transplanting the flowers and trees as a method of forestalling their inevitable disappearance, and, where possible, to further improve their features, her

“sorrow and disgust” when documenting specific changes to the local ecosystem is acute, and she continues to lament that “something has been lost” (241, 152).

What Traill’s description of the wild *Osmunda* suggests is that the “something” Traill still finds to be missing--even when plants are rendered in both their useful and aesthetic manifestations in gardens-- is related to her religious understanding of natural spaces. Grady and Lebowitz suggest that nature writing goes beyond mere description in the “sense of wonder” that it invokes, and Traill’s sense of wonder is continually registered in the language of natural theology. Traill’s evocation of God in Studies of Plant Life in Canada is complex. Although she finds evidence of his creative design in the minute structural details of the flowers and trees she studies, she celebrates “the beautiful provision[s] made by the all-wise Creator to protect [the] delicate organs” of the fern while predicting that these measures shall not, in fact, protect the plants from humanity. She explains the interdependence of plants in nourishing and protecting each other in symbiotic relationships by observing that “God’s creatures administer to one another, working out the will of their Great Creator, and obeying his laws while following the instincts of their several natures” (51). The idea that God’s creation “unconsciously and mysteriously” follows a series of laws is reconstituted in her statements that the hardwood trees surrounding an area of tableland are “fulfilling their great mission, that of preparing for man a more fertile soil” (51, 156). Yet even though she tries to present humans as fulfilling their “great mission” in clearing the land, she was also aware that, in doing so, humans were destroying the diversity not only of native species, but also of ways of reaching or understanding God.⁶ Natural

⁶ This seems to suggest that in taming the forest and “natural productions” of the country, the emigrants were also taming the divine. However, this discrepancy (also noted by Dahl) can be partially explained, perhaps, by the fact that they were also shifting the appearance of the landscape to correspond with the one in which their own perceptions of natural theology and the divine had originally been developed.

theology focuses on the mechanical intricacy of plants and geological formations as evidence of a divine, yet rational intellect, but Traill's comments about spirituality suggest that she perceives the forests to be not only "proof" of God's benevolent intelligence, but as a living, and holy manifestation of a sacred presence. This can be seen in one passage where she departs from her usual practice of seeing the divine in particular and minute details of specific plants, and locates it in the forest as a whole:

How beautiful, how grand are those old Pine woods! The deep silence that pervades them! How solemn the soul feels--as if alone with the Great Creator, whose mighty person is shadowed dimly forth in His works! There is music, too--deep, grand, solemn music--when the wind is abroad, and sweeps the tops of those mighty crested pillars above you; in softer, lower cadences, it touches those tender harp-strings, or swells with loftier sound in one grand hymn of praise.
(160)

Although the first part of this exclamation conventionally suggests that the forest is merely the "silent" vehicle through which "His works" are displayed before the "solemn" and solitary "soul," the second part of the passage seems to present the forest as animate, living, and, above all, *voiced*. The forest and wind may be offering their "deep, grand solemn" music as one "grand hymn of praise," but in many ways the forest, in becoming a cathedral of "crested pillars," begins to become a holy place of its own accord, rather than functioning merely as a dim shadow of God. The immediacy of experience offered to the readers by situating them in the sensory tumult of the singing trees functions as a sharp contrast to the oblique reference to an unnamed (and unclaimed) soul who is suspended in the "deep silence" of the first description of the forest. This passage contains, perhaps, a key to understanding the "something" that Traill suggests will be lost, even if native plants are successfully transplanted to cultivated soil: as the forest is destroyed there will be fewer opportunities for the trees to sing, to offer "hymns of praise," and as these opportunities disappear, there will be fewer people who perceive the forest as capable

of divine utterance. Traill's rapid shift between understanding the forest as both silent and capable of song suggests that she herself was exploring the possibility that non-humans could be communicative, that the forest, in its wildness and age, was speaking to those who had the perceptual and aesthetic ability to understand. It is interesting that when Traill describes the music of the wind, she does not offer a religious interpretation of this phenomenon until the closing of her account, indicating that in the absence of another vocabulary to explain these perceptions, she relies on the metaphorical explanation offered by the terminology of her Christian beliefs. But in the moment that the reader is invited to stand beneath the sweeping wind and resonate with the "softer, lower cadences," there is the possibility that the music should not be understood as primarily metaphorical, and that Traill is asking the reader to imagine the possibility of a literal, sensory conversation with the trees.

Traill's recognition of and participation in the progression of Canada from wilderness to an agriculturally productive economy occurred within the context of her personal love of the forest and her conviction that Canada's culture could only be strengthened by--and indeed requires--an aesthetic and wonder-filled relationship with the forest. Her focus on the changes that "will" and "must" occur, and her sadness at the inevitability of the alterations are directly related to her decision to write Studies of Plant Life in Canada as a way of preserving a sense of the importance of botanical study and knowledge of outdoor areas in fostering a strong Canadian culture. As the next section will discuss, her vacillation between attitudes--and the importance of each in her process of creating both a personal and textual "sense of place"--is reflected in the language that she uses in describing the flowers, ferns, trees and shrubs.

III

In a portion of Studies of Plant Life in Canada that is typical of those in which she discusses the changes to the local landscape, Traill writes:

in a few more years our noble Pines will be utterly eradicated, and the names of many of our loveliest wild flowers, and native flowering shrubs, will be their only memorials to say that they once existed on the face of the earth. (212)

Studies of Plant Life in Canada, which is organized by dual listings of the vernacular and scientific Latin names of the plants (such as “Creeping Snow-Berry--*Chiogenes hispidula*”), functions as a series of descriptive “memorials” for the species that she expects to be “eradicated” (while at the same time introducing and documenting the adaptations of the “portmanteau biota” to their new environment). Traill directly links her project in writing the guidebook to her calls for ecological preservation when she writes that “it seemed a pity that no record of their beauties and uses should be preserved” and claims that, in the absence of a national botanical garden “where our native plants might be cultivated and rescued from oblivion, any addition to the natural history of the country that supplies this want is therefore not without its value to the literature and advancement of the country” (ii). Language therefore becomes a substitute garden in which Traill re-plants the names and physical characteristics of Canadian flora. The links between language and nature are predicated, and her linguistic “botanical garden” prepared, by her opening phrase:

Every plant, flower, and tree has a simple history of its own, not without its interest if we would read it aright. It forms a page in the great volume of Nature which lies open before us, and without it there would be a blank, --in nature there is no space left unoccupied. (1)

This richly nuanced, yet very conventional reference to the “Book of Nature” introduces the idea that Nature can be “read” and understood as a work of literature—that its metaphorical containment within a “volume” could be translated

into a literal containment within the physical pages held by the reader. Traill also describes memory as “a book, the leaves of which can be turned over from childhood to old age” (2). Her statement that each plant “forms a page,” and her observation that “without it there would be a blank” suggests that the disappearance of the native flowers and plants with colonization is creating “gaps” in Nature’s text, “blank” pages that are then “re-written” with the foreign agricultural plants so that “no space is left unoccupied.” When placed within the context of human subjugation of the land, her statement that “no space is left unoccupied” is rendered ominous: it predicts the complete re-authoring--and authorizing--of Nature. In writing Studies of Plant Life in Canada, Traill is preserving a specific “edition” of the volume--one that records the shape and contents of the book of Nature in the years between the early settlement of the country and the push for industrial modernization at the end of the century, when the “revised” version that Traill anticipates will be issued.

If, then, the actual pages of Plant Life can be metaphorically understood as representing the soil into which the plants are linguistically transplanted in an effort to preserve them, and if this written “garden” is to contribute to Canadian literature and collective memory, then it is important to examine the vocabulary that Traill uses to both preserve and enliven her subjects. The efficacy of the transplantation rests on the non-fictional, and “real” or mimetic nature of her language, and in her faith in the ability of rational vocabularies of classification and measurement not only to “refer” to a plant and encourage recognition in the field, but also to function as a “re-placement” or substitute for that plant in Canada’s cultural memory. Her use of inventory-language to describe plants can be seen in this excerpt from her description of the White Cedar:

Gray gives the average height of the White Cedar as from 20 to 50 feet, but it sometimes exceeds that height. The stem is tall, straight and tapering upwards to a narrow point....The leaves are closely appressed,

or imbricated, lapping over each other in four rows on the sharply, two edged branchlets, which are flat and horizontally placed. The scales of the cones are soft and blunt; the seeds winged all round; the flowers are of two kinds, borne on different branchlets. (168)

This passage demonstrates the precision of Traill's botanical language, her use of fine detail in order to render the plant as accurately as possible, and her use of quotations from other authorities to support her own observations. Equally striking, however, is the way in which her language often combines the "useful and the ornamental," such as when she precedes a very scientific description of the Round-Leaved Sundew by observing that "the beauty of this little plant consists in the hairy fringes of the leaves which exude drops of a clear dew-like fluid; each little leaf seems adorned with a row of liquid gems, beautiful as pearls, and glistening in the sunlight like miniature diamonds" (52). Her blend of technical terms such as "palmate," "foliate," "leafy involucre" and "umbrel" with descriptive adjectives and comparisons renders her presentations of the plants vibrant and accurate, allowing her to present a vivid living "memorial" to her readers. This style demands of readers linguistic and technical proficiency--as well as imaginative dexterity--in envisioning and inscribing the plants she depicts in their own volumes of memory. Her use of two vocabularies, one of imaginative engagement with the plant, and the other a scientific vocabulary of measurement is not, then, an unbalanced alternation between disparate and opposing modes of description, for what Traill's text repeatedly demonstrates is that the plants that she fears will disappear can only adequately come alive in the interplay between aesthetic, religious and scientific discourses. In an age that was increasingly relying on scientific modes of quantifying and labelling the environment for true knowledge about the worth of an ecosystem, Traill's insistence that poetic and scientific vocabularies be used concurrently suggests that she was, at some level, aware that scientific modes of perception and description were not sufficient in themselves for

developing a “sense of wonder” about the “natural productions of the country” in her audience.⁷

Trail’s method of using two descriptive vocabularies to keep a sense of wonder alive while at the same time recounting her experiences in the forest predicts the contemporary focus on combining various methods of knowing and linguistically exploring various landscapes. In Ecology, Community and Lifestyle, Naess posits the need for a philosophical system that would encourage readers to examine their own method of perceiving the world around them, and allow positive and wonder-filled experiences of landscapes not only to occur, but also to be treated as valuable in any discussion of the future of particular geographical areas. To this end, Naess uses gestalt theory to suggest that “many different, distinct, yet mutually acceptable interpretations [of philosophical positions, words, and landscapes, for example] are possible and compatible,” and that this diversity is both necessary and desirable for a “reorientation in thinking” to be effected (10). He emphasizes the importance of subjective experiences of nature being of equal value as scientifically derived facts, and asks “is not the value-laden, spontaneous and emotional realm of experience as genuine a source of knowledge of reality as mathematical physics?” (32). Naess then points out that direct experience of nature is not reflected in mathematical viewpoints and quantifications, and that when these viewpoints are positioned as the only source of “true” or “unbiased” knowledge, “human reality is severed from nature proper”

⁷ Although it is unlikely that Trail would identify herself as an “ecologist,” even if the word had been in common usage in Canada at that time, her use of two vocabularies of description in keeping a sense of wonder alive in recounting her experiences in the forest predicts the contemporary focus on combining various methods of knowing and linguistically exploring various landscapes. This is explored in further detail in the Conclusion.

(53). Tracing the hierarchy that has developed between primary and secondary qualities in scientific discourse,⁸ he argues that

viewpoints hostile to nature and the environment are commonly presented as descriptions of the factual/objective conditions, while the opposing points of view are referred to...as manifestations of more or less incidental subjective evaluations, 'mere' feelings and sentiments.
(53)

In this context, it is interesting that Traill has been faulted by contemporary literary critics for her “sentimental” presentation of plant and animal life. Although she was scrupulous in her pursuit of scientific accuracy, her decision to include subjective and emotional forms of knowing the landscape indicates that this mixing is necessary to her conceptualization of a past place, and her project of rendering Canadian plants as life-like as possible.

This can be seen in her attitude towards the names used for Canadian plants. She carefully delineates both the scientific and vernacular names for every plant that she introduces, and in this way ensures that each plant is known according to both its scientific classification, as well as its local name. In doing so, she implicitly indicates that there is more than one context in which the plants can be simultaneously perceived.⁹ Although expressing respect for the scientists who are endeavouring to

⁸ Naess writes that the categorization of qualities became “generally accepted among scientists” in the seventeenth century. Primary qualities refer to “geometric-mechanical” characteristics amenable to measurement, such as “size, shape, movement.” These were thought to reside in the physical constitution of the actual objects. Secondary qualities, such as “colour, warmth, [and] taste,” on the other hand, were non-objective, and while they appear to human perception to be “out there” they are, in reality, “within consciousness,” and were projected onto nature. While the distinction between primary and secondary qualities has been questioned in the centuries since they first became powerful forces in scientific discourse, Naess suggests that we must begin to “give up the belief that our rich world of sense is a projection created by humans,” and engage in alternative ways of understanding and valuing our perceptual connection with the world around us (54).

⁹ Traill documents her efforts to learn both the botanical and “common” names in the introduction of Studies of Plant Life in Canada, including the fact that with the lack of information about plant life in North America, her only guide was a book written in Latin (2). Traill was, therefore, engaged in representing the plants in a living language, even as she was anticipating their extinction.

provide a systematic inventory of the country's resources, she persistently questions whether or not a particular label is appropriate based on its reflection of human experiences with that plant, rather than whether it adequately labels that plant for inclusion in a particular taxonomy. For example, she explains the origin of the vernacular name for the *Sanguinaria Canadensis* by directing the reader to "break the thick fleshy tuberous root," predicting that "a red fluid drops from every wounded pore, whence its local name, "Blood-root" (11). She is also careful in delineating all of the possible names by which a plant has become known in the backwoods, writing that the Indian Pipe--*Monotropa uniflora* "has many names, such as Wood Snow-drop, Corpse-plant, and Indian Pipe" (97).

In addition, Traill corrects wrongly assigned names, writing that "the popular name by which this shrub is known among Canadians--Sweet-Fern--is improperly applied and leads to the erroneous impression that the plant is a species of Fern," and then proceeds to offer the appropriate classification for this member of the Sweet-gale family. Yet, while in this case she ends up relying on scientific classification information to correct the mis-perception of "casual observers," she can also be highly critical of the efficacy of scientific names to adequately refer to the plants (47). In discussing the Enchanter's Night-shade--*Circaea alpina* she expresses doubts about the motivation of modern botanists in naming "so inoffensive a little flower" after "a horrible old enchantress," and then asserts that:

We often wonder at the Greek names given to plants which are indigenous to other climes than Greece, and are retained even where the significance is so obscure as to be questioned by our botanical writers. It is these hard classical names that frighten young students, especially young ladies, who are only too glad when they can meet with names of flowers that given them an insight into the appearance and qualities of the plants, by which they can be easily recognized.

Imagination loves to get a glimpse at the poetical in the names of flowers, giving a charm to what is dry and uninteresting in our botanical books; something that gives us an insight into the history of the flower we study, beyond the mere structure and definition of its parts. (70)

Even though Traill was scrupulous in providing the Greek and Latin names, she was also highly committed to the idea that the names of plants should both reflect their appearance and uses, and, more significantly, that names for plants should be directly related to their geographic location, and assigned in the local language so that they would be accessible to all residents of the area--particularly, in this case, "budding" female botanists. As can be seen in her directions to the reader to "break" the root of the plant, the vernacular names evoke and encourage direct physical interaction with local plants in a way that Latin and Greek names do not. Even so, she is appreciative of those scientific names that have their base in an imaginative set of associative links to old Anglo-Saxon legends (these are, it is to be supposed, more "local" than the "horrible" Greek myth of Circe), writing that although the story of Osmunda "may only be a pretty fanciful romance," engaging in a bit of "poetical fiction...in regard to the names of our pet plants" can produce names that "sound better than such Latinized or Greekified names as we find in our Botanical catalogues" (253). Imaginative and poetical language must, therefore, inform scientific naming practices for the plant to become present within the text. Traill often links the "history of the flower" with the history of human interaction with that particular plant (specifically, in showing the way that the name given to a particular plant indicates its medicinal qualities and uses), and lauds the "Indian" labels for specific plants, which are "descriptive of natural objects or events" (146). She provides the Native names wherever possible; for example, when describing the Indian Tobacco plant, she observes that Natives "also call the plant Kinnikinik, which I suppose means good to smoke, as the word is also applied to one of the Cornels" (97). In the case of the Wood Anemone, she

writes that “the Indian name I have not yet obtained; it would, I am sure, be descriptive of some natural quality of the plant--its growth or habits” (19).

While her effort to list various names representing many cultural and social groups (specifically the settlers, Natives and scientists) does provide a sense that Traill appreciates a mixture of several ways of knowing and referring to the “natural productions” of the colony, her statement that she has not yet “obtained” the Indian name is revealing: rather than “learning” it, as she does with the Indian Tobacco, this comment shows how knowing Native words can be quickly appropriated by a possessive attitude among the settlers. While she suggests that the name given to a particular plant must be locally relevant and situated in the community’s language (rather than just Greek or Latin), the “native” language in which Canada’s plants are named is almost always English; even when applauding Native labels, she often translates them without providing the original.¹⁰ This possessive attitude towards the plants is also in evidence when Traill discusses the practice of naming newly “discovered” and catalogued species after the individual who first “sighted” it: critical of the results of this practice, she recognizes that the botanical name for the *Pyrola elliptica* (which is listed as Shin-Leaf--Sweet Wintergreen--*Pyrola elliptica*) is obscure, but suggests that it is “far better than many a one that has been bestowed upon our showy wild flowers, in compliment to the person who first brought them into notice” (46). Even so, less than forty pages later she indicates that “many an un-named flower exists, no doubt, in unfrequented spots, where as yet the foot of man

¹⁰ The most noticeable cluster of names resented in the original Native language occurred in a list of “poetical” Indian names: “Thus we find ‘Opechee’ (robin), ‘Omernee’ (wild pigeon), ‘Snowstorm,’ ‘Red Cloud,’ ‘Westwind,’ ‘Murmuring Waters’.. It is interesting that after the first two words were translated, she abandoned the practice of including the Indian word altogether (146). “Kinnikinik” is the only name for a plant presented in the original Native language within Studies of Plant Life in Canada.

has never trod,” and anticipates the day when it will be “gazed on with admiring eyes by the fortunate naturalist whose reward may possibly be to have his name conferred upon the newly discovered floral treasure” (88). Traill herself was such a fortunate person: a species that she discovered was “given the name *Traillae* in compliment to the finder” by Professor Lawson (241). Her fantasy about “untrodden” places occupied only by wild animals such as the “Wolf,” “Bear” and “Wild-cat” is strange, given her own recognition that the wild spaces were quickly disappearing, and her indicators that the “Indians” knew much more about the native plant species and landscape than did the settlers.

Naming in Traill’s text is therefore implicated in the linguistic occupation and re-authoring of the landscape as “English,” but it also frequently provides a way of negotiating and creating a balance between scientific categories and inventories and local and experiential forms of knowledge. Post-colonial language theorists such as Lee and Kroetsch have made much of the alienation resulting from the violent yoking together of “English” and the foreign and new landscape that it occupied, and suggested that because of its lack of “fit” and the jarring resonances of words and associations that are not appropriate to the new cultural and geographical landscape, language must be “unlearned,” and that the borrowed vocabulary must, somehow, be “rooted” in the new soil (Kroetsch 394). In Traill’s case, it could be argued by modern readers that she did not do enough to overtly question the way that the English language was re-shaping the landscape, and that her text as a result participates in the colonization of the indigenous life of the new country. However, a more productive approach might be to recognize Traill’s lack of alienation, not as a less sophisticated and psychologically aware response to her new surroundings, but as fundamentally related to her desire to explore the backwoods using all of the available forms of knowledge and vocabularies open to her. Traill’s predisposition to use translations of

Native names, and her efforts to name plants for which she was unable to discover an indigenous label,¹¹ suggests that naming, and comparing the disparate names that various groups gave to the same plant, was an integral component of her efforts to establish a “sense of place” based on the interplay between these dynamics and her own experiences of the land.

Traill’s understanding of Nature as a “book,” and her intention to memorialize plants by transplanting them into her botanical text suggests, at first, that the perceptual relationship between humans and the surrounding landscape can be adequately reproduced within the closed circuit of the printed page and human reader, and that this can provide an acceptable substitute for interactions in the physical geography of the world as those landscapes are irretrievably altered. It is because the plants will disappear that Traill translates them into written form, and their ability to “live” linguistically is, therefore, continuously linked to their physical extinction. The persistent repetition of this association suggests that it is only when the plants are perceived as “dead”—as inanimate resources to be inventoried and exploited—that they can be “written” and “re-membered.” However, Traill consistently attempts to make these plant memorials live, and to invest the “flat, featureless terrain” of the printed page with the same vibrancy as the landscape in which she lived. To do this, she employs both poetic and scientific modes of description. Moreover, she continually encourages readers to imagine themselves physically interacting with the flowers and ferns she describes, and intends her book to be put to practical use in educating young Canadians about their countryside. By the end of Studies of Plant Life in Canada, the

¹¹ As Neil Evernden notes, “the act of naming may itself be a part of the process of establishing a sense of place. This is fairly easy to understand in a personal sense, that is, giving personal names to special components of a place, but it also may apply in the case of generic names” (101). Traill moves from being unable to discover any name for many of the local wildflowers in The Backwoods of Canada, to being able, on occasion, to offer as many as four or five names used for any particular plant in Studies of Plant Life in Canada.

transplanation almost seems to operate in two directions: the text “speaks” a version of the rapidly-changing landscape, but the flowers, trees and shrubs also function as physical, living metaphors for bits of information about local history. After perusing Traill’s book, local residents would be able to “read” the history of the landscape “printed” on it in the language of living flowers, trees, and ferns--but only if those plants still existed. This explains Traill’s sense of urgency in encouraging politicians and wealthy citizens to set aside national gardens: with the disappearance of the native plants, a historical vocabulary also disappears. As will be discussed in the next chapter, Traill’s inclusion of orally-based anecdotes and experiential examples of knowing and perceiving the landscape suggests that although she was almost completely dependent for her livelihood on the economy of written literacy, she was also suspicious of its ability to reproduce fully and adequately the experiences she had on the land. Traill’s sense of place is, therefore, informed by this tension between different ways of perceiving the landscape and using language to express that relationship, and it is, paradoxically, only through recognizing the strengths of the early settler and Native cultures of the backwoods that she can--through print-- render timeless the threatened landscape.

Chapter Four

Where is this Place? Human relationships with the Land

The right to place, to know where one is from, is a right that is difficult to argue with the tools of the scientist --*Neil Evernden*, "Beyond Ecology: Self, Place and the Pathetic Fallacy." (1996) (100)

Having explored the ways in which Traill's botanical inventory of plants in Canada is informed and shaped by her interest in understanding the local landscape using both with poetic and scientific vocabularies, and how the link she creates between human history and changes in the local landscape is one of her main strategies in the on-going process of trying to establish a local and "settled" sense of place, a natural reaction might be to ask where this "place" that she describes is located. What are its geographical co-ordinates? Where does it appear on a map? Which name most appropriately encapsulates the area in which she situates her narrative of the plants? The title of the text, Studies of Plant Life in Canada, suggests that the nation is the primary "place" that the reader is expected to identify. Indeed, this is only to be expected since the book was published less than two decades after Confederation, and Traill had long shown loyalty and affection for the young nation in her writing. Yet throughout the botanical guidebook, Traill presents a portrait of a fairly small geographical region within the nation, an area confined mostly to southern Ontario, and more specifically to the land around Lakefield and Peterborough, and the forests adjacent to her houses. Unlike the botanical guidebooks of today, in which the catalogue is intended to provide information on any plant which might reasonably be expected to appear within the geographical range indicated by the title (such as the National Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Trees--Eastern Region), Traill's book seems to offer readers a series of places set within places, the information becoming less complete the further away from Traill's home territory that the plant is characteristically found. Although the scientific accuracy of the

descriptions of plants that Traill has not herself grown or known well is maintained (in part, perhaps, through the proof-reading efforts of the various experts in botany whom she credits in her introduction), the energy of the descriptions is considerably reduced, with little or no historical or personal information provided.

Indeed, Traill often refers to specific plants growing in her landscape, rather than assuming, as do many modern guidebooks, that a generic description of the general characteristics of the species will be enough. Her musings on a particular Elm tree located “near the Orphan’s Home” in Toronto occurs within the context of her statement that “there are (or were, for I am not sure that they still remain) several remarkable Elm trees in the suburbs of Toronto, that well deserve the special notice of the lover of forest trees” (183). Her recognition that specific configurations of the local landscape change year to year continues when she writes that “during the heat of the Summer of 1864, large beds of [Rock Polypody] were seen dropping and fading on the rocky soil” (222). These historically specific references to individual plants are found throughout the text, as when Traill writes that “on the flowery Rice Lake plains, I have seen this lovely flower,” or that she “found the *Linnaea borealis* [Twin-flower] growing beneath the shade of Hemlock trees among long Sphagnous mosses, on the rock banks of the Otonabee” (72, 51). She also indicates that “a most perfect specimen of the English White Thorn may be seen at Port Hope on the lawn at the residence of C. Kirkhoffer, Esq.” (129). Her practice not only of describing a plant in meticulous detail, but also providing a sense of the other plants growing near it (such as her decision to set the Twin-Flower in a specific location under Hemlock trees, among Sphagnous mosses) is also found in her description of the “flowering Gentian” which “may be seen among the red leaves of Huckleberry and Dwarf Willows, on our dry plains, above Rice Lake, and farther Northward” (99). This practice of combining historically specific knowledge of personally-known plant locations with descriptions

that situate the particular species under discussion within a wider ecological context suggests that Traill's sense of place is informed by her awareness of the relationships between different plant species, and her own relationship to the many plants that she had observed in her various homes around Rice Lake and the Otonabee river.

Traill explores this focus on relationships explicitly in her description of the Twin-Flower-*Linnaea borealis*, in which she suggests that the plant has a sense of loyalty to a specific spot when she observes that "our charming Twin-flower is very constant in its habits, being found year after year in the same locality, as long as it enjoys the advantages of shade and moisture" (51). After recounting how she saw it years earlier among the hemlocks and "spagnous mosses," she tells about returning to the same spot and finding the few remaining plants struggling to survive because "the evergreens that had sheltered them at their roots were all gone." She then offers an evocative description of forest ecology:

There seems to be a law of mutual dependence among the vegetable tribes, each one ministering to the wants of the other. Thus the shelter afforded by the larger trees to the smaller shrubs and herbs, is repaid again to them by the nourishment that the decaying leaves and stems of these latter afford, and the warmth that they yield to their roots by covering the ground from the winter cold, and thus protecting them from injury. Further than this, it is very probable that they appropriate to their own use qualities, in the soil or in the air, that might prove injurious to the healthy growth of the larger vegetables. That which is taken up by one race of plants is often rejected by others. Yet so beautiful is the arrangement of God's economy in the vegetable world that something gathers up all fragments and nothing is lost--nay, not the minutest particle runs to waste. (51)

Although Traill was not, presumably, familiar with the term "ecology" (which was coined in 1869 by Ernst Haeckel), her awareness of the "law of mutual dependence" is seen in operation throughout her text as she continually attempts to provide some sense of the connections binding various plants together. And, while she suggests that

“the student of botany will not be content merely with my superficial desultory way of acquiring a more intimate acquaintance with the productions of the forest and the field,” it is her “intimate acquaintance” and knowledge, through experienced observation, of the relationships existing in the natural world that adds vibrancy to her description. She is quick to point out the rare occasions when the accuracy of her information has not been supported by personal observation, writing in the case of Puslane--*Portulaca oleracea* that “I merely mention this about the use made of this plant as a dye weed, but have no experience of my own to verify its accuracy” (90). Traill’s description of her on-going interactions with the plants around her provides a sharp contrast with the growing practice at that time among the professionalizing botanists of conducting their studies of plants solely within the laboratory or scientifically controlled experimental field.

Evernden suggests that if the ecological postulation of interdependence is taken seriously, then “there is no such thing as an individual, only an individual-in-context, individual as a compound of place, defined by place” (103). Although Traill might be discomfited by the implications of an wholesale belief in ecological interrelatedness--she did, obviously, perceive humans as very different from the rest of the natural world--her writing continually displays a fundamental understanding that plants could not be described without detailed references to their “contexts.” This belief is also evident in her presentation of the human community. Her references to other people are set within the context of the different relationships that each element of Upper Canadian society has with the land, and Studies of Plant Life in Canada, as a result, contains a wide range of human voices--human voices that are only relevant or meaningful within the text in their relationships with the natural world.

In warning against the possible over- or mis-use of the concept of “place” in environmental thought, Buell argues that “place [is] by definition perceived or felt

space, space humanized, rather than the material world taken on its own terms” (253). However, writers such as Evernden and Snyder would refute the idea that the material world can or should be taken “on its own terms,” and suggest that “we are all composite beings,” made up a “a network of relationships” (Snyder 189, Evernden, The Natural Alien 43). Rather than trying to distance humans from the subjectively generated idea of “place” in evaluating, studying or making decisions about geographical “spaces,” these writers suggest that if humans are to make ecologically responsible decisions, we must recognize, nurture and explore the relations--intrahuman and intraspecies--that create the framework within which we understand ourselves as human subjects. Buell’s observation implies that there is a fundamental problem with modern environmentalist thinkers’ emphasis on “place” because it “humanizes” spaces that have distinctly different “terms” than those that could be perceived from a human standpoint. The underlying suggestion is that “humanizing” “space” into “place” is a negative process that involves imposing human imaginations, emotions and expectations on a passive “material world,” and that to avoid this we must either accept that as humans, we are incapable of understanding the material world “on its own terms,” or that, in order to do so, we must assume an “objective” viewpoint which, ostensibly, will allow us to perceive only “spaces.” Instead of understanding “human” as something that has developed within the confines of one species, language and culture--a series of qualities and characteristics by which humans are then constrained in any attempt to understand other species--David Abrams suggests in The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-than-Human World (1996) that “we still need that which is other than ourselves and our own creations...we are human only in contact, and conviviality, with what is not human” (ix). It is only through the process of interacting with many other humans, species, and centres of experience that we can come to understand our

human modes of perception, and conceptions of time and space as one way, among many, of understanding and interacting with the world.¹ Indeed, Evernden suggests that assuming a “place” in the concrete world of sensory participation is necessary for children to achieve an abstract sense of “space,” and asserts that “it is misleading to speak of an isolated self surveying a world, for the person is from the start *in* the world, and consciousness is always *of* the world” (81, 89). Within this context, the “place” that Trail’s text describes could be understood as existing not only in the physical boundaries and topography of the land on which she lived, but also in the less tangible and visible relationships that she traces between various elements of Upper Canadian society and the landscape in which they live.

Evernden postulates that “one does not really experience the boundary of the self as the epidermis of the body, but rather as a gradient of involvement in the world,” and suggests that humans exist and are defined in the “field of care” that shapes the meaning that they find in the world around them (63-4). Observing that “being in a field means more than being a body; it means being-in-the-world, and it also implies a different sense of environment,” Evernden postulates that understanding our ties to the world, and our sense of humanity, as defined through our affective relationships with the surrounding world means that we would not be able to understand the “material world” solely as a series of neutral and passive objects that are valued only to the extent that they can be measured, quantified, and used. Rather, perceiving ourselves

¹I realize that the use of more familiar pronouns such as “we” and “us” in this paragraph might appear to be a sudden shift in tone. It has been difficult to avoid these usages (although I have tried), particularly since the theorists being discussed use inclusive and familiar methods of phrasing their statements about how humans perceive other species. It seemed odd, if not inappropriate given the ideas being examined, to refer to humans or to humanity as “they,” and so I have continued to use “we” throughout this paragraph. It is almost conventional, among most environmental thinkers, to employ pronouns and rhetoric that encourage the reader’s personal identification with the issues under discussion; however, in literary studies, where critics usually maintain a more “objective” distance, the critical vocabulary to be used in discussing an author’s presentation of the “subjective” relationship between humans and other species has yet to be fully (or comfortably) established.

as existing in “fields of care” reaffirms the “existence of value in nature,” a value that includes aspects of nature that enthrall, terrify and delight (73). Although Traill would probably not endorse Evernden’s more modern vocabulary to describe her sense of connection with the landscape (she might be horrified at the permeability of bodily borders suggested in the quotation from Evernden at the beginning of this paragraph), this concept of human selfhood as based in ecological understandings of interrelatedness and ‘care’ provides a fruitful framework for approaching her presentation of herself and the human and biotic communities in Studies of Plant Life in Canada. As previously discussed, Traill’s text is modeled on the scientifically-based objective understanding of the material world as an array of resource wealth available for the development and progress of the new country. At the same time, though, Traill continually presents these “plant resources” as individual flowers, trees and shrubs, each with a specific history and worth, and offers her floral biographies within the context of her own relationships and feelings. What becomes clear is that rather than offering an inventory of a neutral “space,” Traill’s text provides a map of her own “field of care,” and an indication of her “gradient of involvement in the world.” This helps to explain the diminished vibrancy of descriptions of plants the further they are customarily found from her home: although the information provided is still detailed and accurate, the sense of engagement with the plant is reduced the further a plant exists from the geographical sphere in which Traill is able to interact with, learn from and care for it. Traill’s sense of place exists as much in the range of relationships through which she perceives the natural world as it does in a defined geographical region. In focusing on both “fact” and “feeling,” Traill turns her description of the plants of Canada into a nuanced and evocative exploration of the ways in which the residents of one region of Upper Canada interact

with the land, and how both the landscape and the human community are shaped through this interaction.

The applicability of the term and concept “field of care” to Traill’s work in Studies of Plant Life in Canada is readily apparent in her references to God’s involvement in creating and maintaining the world. Her presentation of the “mutual dependence” of various plant species, “each ministering to the wants of others,” uses a vocabulary indicating a sense of obligation and reciprocity that is available only to those species capable of caring for each other. In this case, it would be easy to see Traill’s use of emotion as merely a metaphor for explaining the complexity of the interactions of plants within a given ecosystem. Yet Traill’s emphasis on the importance of human emotional contact with the landscape suggests that her use of an affective vocabulary to describe how plants care for each other should not be considered as ‘only a metaphor,’ but as examples and physical manifestations of a nurturing divinity “who careth for the creatures he has called into life” (187). The “sentimentality” for which Traill has been faulted by recent literary critics can be understood differently within this concept of affective connections with the landscape--becoming emotionally tied to the landscape is presented, within the text, as a strategy for building strong and devout citizens. As was discussed in Chapter Two, Traill wanted “Mothers of Canada” to teach their children about the plants of their birth-nation, so that “their hearts will turn back with loving reverence to the land of their birth” (Studies ii). The process of learning to observe and love the “natural productions” of the country will also, Traill asserts, make people more *human* in the increase of appreciation for God’s works that will result. Her comment that “few indeed think of the lessons that may be learned even from the humblest forest flower speaking to their hearts of the loving care of the great Creator, who provideth alike for all his creatures” indicates that studying plants within a framework that includes both

scientific and religious interpretations of a plant's worth and beauty will result in an expanded sense of what it means to be a compassionate and caring human being. Although presented within the vocabulary of natural theology, and placing humans and plants within a fairly rigid natural hierarchy, Traill's continual affirmations of the lessons to be learned from the plants of the Canadian forests emphasize the need for factual education to be combined with a focus on increasing the emotional and spiritual literacy of Canada's citizens. Canadian plants become important, within this framework, not only for the economic resources that they provide, but also for the emotional and cultural benefits that result from humans studying and interacting with them.

Traill's belief in the value of botanical study as a means of improving the character of students willing to learn from the forest is evident when she observes that:

Nature seems, by the force of a secret sympathy, to draw together those that take an interest in the same pursuits and tastes, creating a kindly and generous feeling even to the unseen and unknown individual, making the Naturalist eager and willing to communicate to such, their treasures and knowledge. The Botanist and Naturalist seem to me, of all men, the most liberal and the least given to jealousy and envy; any new discovery seems to be a source of pleasure to all; they rejoice with them that do rejoice, and regard the happy finder of a new species of plant as a general and public benefactor (221).

Traill is referring, of course, to her own experiences with scientific men such as Macoun and Fletcher who were so supportive of her efforts to publish Studies of Plant Life in Canada. Her short synopsis of the "kindly and generous feeling" that the study of nature seems to bring into focus within the individual supports her on-going efforts to introduce botanical study to members of all social classes. Although Traill creates a very complimentary picture of the inclusiveness and generosity of the slowly developing Canadian scientific community in this passage, and suggests through the use of her "familiar" rhetorical style that any citizen of Canada can become a "public

benefactor” by participating in the morally uplifting practice of observing plants, she also includes portraits of individuals from classes of residents who are critical of the progress of the scientific community, and who are excluded from the warm circle of reciprocal support that she enjoyed.

For the most part, the anecdotes and quotations in Studies of Plant Life in Canada are taken from Native women and early lower-class Irish and Scottish settlers, and include sentiments that support Traill’s critical comments about Canada’s technological progress. In fact, it often seems that Traill partially displaces her most virulent criticism of the scientific community onto these figures, allowing them to speak the disapproval that she felt obliged to suppress, as a consequence of the support she had received from professional botanists in completing her text. For example, after justly criticizing the absurdity of “Latinized or Greekified” names for sedges such as “*C. Hitchcockiana*” and “*C. Wormskioldiana*,” and expressing her support for more poetical, vernacular names, Traill writes “but I am on dangerous ground, or I shall get into disgrace with my Botanical friends, who will hardly forgive my impertinence and presumption” (253). This comment concludes her criticism of scientific naming practices, and she moves on with her description of the sedges. However, she has already implanted within the text an example of an “old gardener” who exclaims:

Oh! madam, in these days they turn poor Poetry out of doors, but in the olden time it was not so, for it was the language in which god spake to man through the tongues of angels and prophets. Aye, and it was the language in which even sinful man spake in prayer to his Maker: but now they only use hard words for simple things, such as the flowers of the field and garden; or the talk is about gold, and the things that gold purchases!” (70)

Although Traill asserts that the old gardener was “by no means an ignorant man” (70), her use of him as an example of someone whose “class” is determined by education,

piety, and a devout appreciation of plant-life supports her vision of a country in which the study of trees and flowers should be accessible to members of all classes, regardless of the degree of their acquaintance with scientific terminology. The sudden admonition against material goods in the form of gold seems like a abrupt shift and incongruous ending to the anecdote, particularly within the context of Traill's support for endeavours to find the "wealth that has never been utilized in the form of medicine, dye stuffs, and materials for manufacturing paper, linen, cordage..." (213).

Nonetheless, this comment does relate to her admonitions that the "luxurious children of civilization" are too concerned with the products that can be made from forest resources, and, in this narrow focus, "lose a thousand pleasures that they never dream of, in their eager pursuit after worldly amusements" (38, 239). Although nothing could be more of-the-world than plants, these comments indicate the extent to which Traill saw the natural world around her as a source not only of monetary wealth, but of spiritual richness as well. What the "luxurious children of civilization" risk losing in their single-minded focus on technological progress, the "old gardener" finds each day in the relationship that poetic language has assisted him in developing with the plants around him, and with the nurturing God in which he and Traill both firmly believe.

As will be seen in the next section, Traill's use of these "alternative" anecdotes illustrating viewpoints that are not always compatible with the progressive impulse that supported scientific advances offer examples of many different ways of interacting with the natural landscape, and often-needed correctives to the idea that technology could improve life for all members of the colony. It is interesting, as well, that in a text so concerned with transcribing the "Book of Nature" into an easily available pocket-sized version, her extensive references to the rapidly changing lives of Native women and illiterate lower-class settlers are framed by an investigation of

the way that different forms of literacy shape the relationships that humans have with the natural world around them.

II

Traill noticed and wrote about the natural succession of trees in the Canadian forests, and the emergence of different types of plants and weeds on newly cleared areas of land in The Backwoods of Canada.² As discussed in the previous chapter, in Studies of Plant Life in Canada she broadened this investigation to include an awareness of the ways in which ecological imperialism was creating a more widespread, and somewhat disturbing “succession” in the biota of Canada. However, she further extends this devolution in plant life to include a discussion of the succession of human races. The most glaring example of this is, of course, her complacent acceptance of what she sees as the “disappearance” of the Native peoples. Using an Elm tree to offer continuity for her narrative while at the same time ensuring that it represents, in its singular position outside of the Orphans’ Home in Toronto, the vast changes that have occurred to the original forest, Traill writes:

What tales could that mute witness tell of toil and privation, among the hardy adventurous few that cleared the forest land on which this now solitary giant of the lonely wilderness stands. What strife, political and physical, had it beheld.

Beneath its leafy canopy the Red man reared his wigwam, or the early missionary from far off France held up the Cross and preached the word to the listening stolid Indian. It may be that the seed fell upon the rock and brought forth no increase.

² Traill declares that “the same plants do not grow on cleared land that formerly occupied the same spot when it was covered with forest-trees. A distinct class of vegetation makes its appearance as soon as the fire has passed over the ground,” and describes the process of natural plant succession that takes place in the forests (Backwoods 190-2).

The Indian treads the busy streets, where once the Deer stole forth from its leafy covert in the dense Cedar swamp, where now stands the lofty church or busy mart. That lofty tree alone remains a memorial of the Indian's hunting grounds, and he himself stalks along those crowded streets the shadow of a dying race. (183)

Distancing herself from the position of narrating overtly the end of the "dying race," Traill places the tree--a "mute witness"--as the only "memorial" which "speaks" to the disappearance of the "Red man": it has survived the deforestation of the land, whereas the Natives will not.³ Although every other reference to the Native peoples in Studies of Plant Life in Canada deals with the women and children, Traill's statement that "he himself stalks along those crowded streets" emphasizes the solitude of the man and his dislocation from his family or tribe, and suggests a series of connotations for "the seed" which "brought forth no increase." Not only could it refer to the Elm tree--or to the "word" preached by the missionaries--but it also suggests that with the cultivation of the forest, the Indian "seed" became less productive. The use of "lofty" to refer to both the church and the Elm aligns this "memorial" more with the Christian forces of change than with the dying race that it is meant, in this brief passage, to represent. This perceived link between the disappearance of the Natives and the botanical colonization of the land is made even more explicit when Traill writes that "the Indian race is fast fading away like many of the native plants, we shall seek them in their old haunts, but shall not find even a trace of them left" (189). Comments such as these appear frequently within Studies of Plant Life. Traill's belief in the succession of human inhabitants is reaffirmed in the language that she uses, at one point, to describe the changing flora of the land. She writes that "a new race of vegetables takes possession of the ground" after the Pines are cut down (152). "Humans" could be

³Although this tree has survived the deforestation of the land, it has become a "mute witness" once the forest has been levelled, providing a direct contrast to the portrait of the singing forest that Traill provides only twenty pages earlier.

easily substituted for “vegetables” in this passage, the European colonizers becoming the “new race” that “takes possession of the ground” as it is cleared. The link between plant and Native “species” becomes even more direct when Traill talks about the “vegetable tribes” (51). The interchangeability of the terms would be humorous if the implications were not so horrific.⁴

It is important to understand that Traill was by no means alone in her expectation that the Native population would eventually die out after the arrival of the Europeans. As Berger notes, there was “a widespread acceptance that the Indian societies were soon to fade away, just like the native plants” (a comment that could have been drawn from Traill’s works); this belief reflected the nineteenth-century debate over both the origin of the human species, and the religious and scientific theories developed to explain the existence of many different races (41). Artifacts and specimens were collected from the Natives in anticipation of the assimilation of their cultures into the European mainstream. Native communities were, therefore, “surveyed” along with the rest of the natural resources of the country. Although this practice occurred throughout the nineteenth century, it received governmental approval and funding with the creation of the Natural History branch of the Geological Survey in 1877, which was responsible for “salvaging material remnants” of the Native cultures, artifacts that eventually ended up in the National Museums. Incidentally, this

⁴ I must thank Dr. Jones for drawing my attention to the beginning of Chapter 15 of Canadian Crusoes, where Traill devotes several pages to describing the changes that the country has undergone between the time of the story and the present day. The changes Traill describes are given in ecological and economic terms, and she discusses the changes to the Native communities by focusing her attention on a lone “Indian” who visits the town, and who could very well be the same man who “stalked among the crowded streets” in the passage drawn from Studies of Plant Life in Canada. The use of similar rhetoric and the inclusion of predictions that “a new race is rising up, and the old hunter will soon become an unknown in Canada” suggests that by 1852, decades before Studies was published, Traill had already begun to establish a sense of the “depth” of Canadian history in her writing (211).

branch was also responsible for the first publicly funded attempts at developing a wide Botanical survey of Canada (Muisie 15; Zeller 184).

It should be observed, however, that the succession of humans whose disappearance Traill traces also includes the disappearance of the early nineteenth century British settlers and their way of life.

The old shanty life is a thing of the past; the carding and spinning, the rattle of the looms, even the knitting needles are not now so constantly seen in the hands of the wives and daughters as formerly. Railroads and steamboats, schools and increase of population, have wrought great changes in the lives and habits of the people. (161)

Although Traill asserts that “we do not wish *those* good old times back again!,” she does regret the potential loss of the skills and information that the old settlers and backwoodsmen and women had developed (95). And, while she is obviously not anticipating the extinction of their ethnic group in the way that she does for the Natives, the loss of their wisdom is often conflated with the loss of Native knowledge of the land. She acknowledges her debt to both groups in her “Introductory Pages,” noting that her teachers included “old settler’s wives, and choppers and [I]ndians,” and often prefaces discussion of particular plants by saying “it was from an old Canadian settler that I learned...” (3, 64). In addition, she carefully delineates the ways that the Europeans and Natives have used the plants that she discusses in her text, and one of the main uses that she foregrounds is the medicinal quality of the herbs. Of Indian Tobacco she writes “This plant is much sought after by the old settlers, and by the Indian medicine-men, who consider it to be possessed of rare virtues, infallible as a remedy in fevers, and nervous diseases” (97). In some cases, Traill goes a step further, offering advice that would normally have been passed by word of mouth: for example, she includes a detailed recipe for the remedy of “dysenterial disorders” using a preparation made from the root of the Spikenard--*Aralia racemosa* (64). While

Traill critiques the settler plant lore for any inaccuracies that she has discovered (she is doubtful that Mad-Dog Skullcap possessed the “virtues” attributed to it), she is sympathetic with the “native Herbalists” who believe that for every ailment there is a corresponding botanical cure, and with the “humble country-folk, who dread mineral medicines” (83-4). She herself is doubtful of the salubrious effects of “hot stoves and doctor’s drugs,” and frequently expresses her admiration for “the old Simplers and Herbalists” who “are a race now extinct” (114). Her depiction of the oral cultures of the early backwoods suggests a degree of beneficial interaction between the settlers and the Natives that is missing from her narrative of the solitary Native man in Toronto, and in recording their stories and knowledge about how to use particular herbs and plants to survive on the land, she is preserving a whole body of lore that would otherwise be forgotten as Canada “progressed.” Indeed, she makes it clear that certain information has already been lost: for example, when contemplating the clues to early uses for plants contained in names such as “Boneset,” she states that “we can only surmise that the powerful virtues of the plant are serviceable in cases of dislocations and fractures,” and writes of the Blue Cohosh-Pappoose Root—*Caulophyllum thalictroides* that “its virtues are of a singular and powerful nature, known only to the native Indian,” thereby acknowledging that the information will vanish with the extinction of the “dying race” (85, 25). Her comments repeatedly emphasize that a particular way of knowing the land and creating a sense of community are in decline, and her text, as a result, mixes its transplantation of the plants that are fated to disappear with vignettes recording this orally-based knowledge and the methods of survival with which it was associated.

Traill’s written record of local, experientially-based oral knowledge about the various plants is continually juxtaposed with her use of quotations from English and American poets. If her method of memorializing native species that are destined to

vanish can be understood as a form of transplantation from the ground into her text, she prepares her Canadian literary soil by composting into it British and American cultural associations surrounding species that are found on both continents. In some cases, she gives an inventory of the various ways in which particular flowers have been “immortalized by the sweet verses” of various writers (8). In her description of the Downy Yellow Violet, for example, she mixes descriptions of the plant physiology with discussions of Bryant’s verses, and goes on to remark that “the violet has ever been a favorite flower with the poets, from Shakespeare and Milton down to the present day we find mention of this lovely flower scattered through their verses” (8). She then quotes Luigi de Gonzaga, and well as Milton, and includes her own poem about violets which was written “after the manner of...Herrick” (8-9). Quotations are freely scattered throughout her more scientific descriptions, reinforcing the idea that both poetic and scientific languages are equally appropriate ways of learning about and understanding the various flowers. This technique also allows Traill to “naturalize” the cultural heritage she brought with her by symbolically planting it alongside and around the “native” variations of flowers she was familiar with in Britain. However, when contrasted with the utilitarian medical knowledge of the “elder women” who had learned about herbs “by experience, or from oral tradition” from their “ancestors, who had the knowledge from the Indian medicine-men,” the quotations and poems from Britain appear timeless, released from the shadow of amnesia in which Traill anticipates that the oral tradition will be engulfed (85). Both sources of historical information are, it seems, necessary and valuable to her project of creating temporal depth for her sense of “place,” and it is interesting that it is the more “useful,” practical knowledge about living on the land that Traill predicts will disappear over time, while the “ornamental” artistic responses will endure, because recorded in their original, written form. This is clear in the structure of the text:

although she may overtly privilege the literary forms of response to the land, her writing relies for its accuracy and vibrancy on the oral tradition which traces its history back to the Native populations, and it is from this rich mulch of native and immigrant imaginative and literary soils that a new “culture” will be generated.

In preserving the disappearing oral knowledge in print, Traill implies that there is a linear movement and genealogy that can be traced from oral to written forms of recorded history, and situates her text at the cusp of the transition between these two major eras in Canadian intellectual and cultural development. Studies of Plant Life in Canada is continuously aware of its position as a written text in which earlier oral forms of knowing and relating to the land are--inevitably--incompletely recorded. As a result, Traill explicitly investigates the “evolution” of oral and written forms of knowledge at numerous points throughout her descriptions of trees and flowers. Because this exploration is contained within the framework of a guidebook for Canadian plants, the reader is invited to notice how written and oral forms of literacy promote different ways of perceiving the landscapes that Traill recreates in her words.

Here Abram’s work is helpful in understanding the ways that various forms of literacy shape our relationships with and thinking about natural spaces, and specifically how oral and written forms of history conflict with and complement each other throughout Studies of Plant Life in Canada. Abram does not claim that the movement from an orally-based form of literacy to written language was the sole cause of “the loss of a full and differentiated sense of place,” but he does argue that investigating the way that literacy has reflected and shaped the way that humans perceive and interact with the rest of nature is an important component of any inquiry into how our relationship with the landscapes in which we are situated has changed (184). What his work suggests is that oral cultures are more likely to have a direct, experientially-based connection with the natural world around them, and to define

their cultural identity based on the relationship of their cultural group to the landscape in which they live. For print-centered cultures, on the other hand, the cultural identity begins to be defined (in varying degrees) by the collective memory contained in recorded history--an imaginative landscape of printed words, rather than the external geographical landscape of other species and land formations. Although the participation in the external landscape is not lessened with increased literacy, the type of relationship that humans have with the landscape can, he asserts, change dramatically. For example, when the surrounding landscape is no longer seen as the base for the stories that define a culture's history, it is easier to perceive of the natural world as an inanimate resource-base. This contention helps to explain, perhaps, why Traill was so interested in transcribing the disappearing plant and human species into a textual version of the surrounding local landscape: it was, perhaps, the most "natural" and culturally-viable form of preservation that she knew of, a way of integrating the type of direct connection that she saw between the landscape and the early settlers and Native people with the more "civilized" format of written history.

Traill's references to the differences between oral- and print-centred cultures reflect her awareness that she is situated in a particular historical moment in which the primacy of a print-oriented culture is reasserting itself in a new landscape. Digressing from a discussion of the Black Alder--Winter Berry--*Ilex verticillata*, Traill offers some commentary on the development of literacy within her own family:

The crest of the Strickland family is the Holly Tree, of the Gordons, the Ivy. This custom of heraldic bearings, especially the crest surmounting the coat of arms, is very ancient, and may be referred back to the time when writing was not in use, and formed a sort of pictorial history as to the origin of the family. We find it here among the Indian tribes, each tribe, and the members of it, being known by its totem, or heraldic sign. Thus we have the "Eagle Tribe," the "Crane," the "Crow," the "Snake," &c. The figure of bird, beast, tree, or reptile, being the sign adopted by the heads of the tribe, or chiefs, as the sign manual to be appended to

any deed or treaty; scratched or figured with pen, charred stick, or knife, whatever is the instrument at hand, the totem is rudely drawn, and is the superscription of the tribe, or their totem. (146)

In suggesting that the ancient custom in which the Stricklands adopted the Holly tree as their crest “formed a sort of pictorial history as to the origin of the family,” Traill illustrates how, “when writing was not in use,” her family had defined itself through its relationship with other forms of life in the landscape. The pictorial form of recorded history situated the family history within a particular geography. It is interesting that she creates a direct link between the Native totem and the English heraldic sign, indicating that the practice of adopting a sign from the surrounding landscape is common to both cultures (although different in its manifestations: the examples from English heraldic crests that she uses are both plants, while the examples from the Native cultures are animals), and perhaps suggesting that the Indian cultures are merely at an earlier stage of development, from which the English have already “progressed.” Certainly, though, her “graphic” description of the awkwardness and crudity of the Indian writing contrasts with the relative elegance and flow of her more learned prose, emphasizing her perception of the difference between the two cultures.

Traill does not, however, discuss the development of oral cultures and their perceptions of the land only in the context of the difference between the Native groups and the settlers: she is also interested in the differences among the British emigrants themselves, and this discussion of the various levels of literacy is inevitably defined through differences in class and education. She observes that

The English peasant, though far from imaginative, is credulous when once impressed, and readily accepts the marvellous, only it must have the sanction of ancient custom and oral tradition, handed down from father to son; this sanctifies and gives height to any legendary lore, however improbable. It must have been a hard trial when purer faith replaced the legends of the church with simple Gospel truths (258).

Her slight criticism of peasants who are influenced by “ancient custom and oral tradition,” and her efforts to separate herself, through “purer” religion, from the sanctification of legendary lore is odd within the context of a book which bases many of its “truths” on information learned and transmitted through an entirely oral circulation of information in the early backwoods cultures. Indeed, the conflation of the early settler cultures with the Native seems to have its foundation in both groups’ supposed lack of “learned” education in methods of writing and reading. When discussing the Lion’s-foot--*Nabalus altissimus*, Traill writes that the medicinal virtues of the plant are “not yet recognized unless by the unlearned Indian, or old herbalist of some remote backwoods settlement” who was generally “an old woman, famed more for her herb decoctions and plasters than for her wisdom in book-learning” (83). This passage suggests that it is the inability of the Native peoples and the old herbalists to participate in a written culture that ensures the disappearance of their knowledge as they are gradually replaced by immigrants of a higher, more educated class.

Yet even though Traill distances herself from the credulous British peasants, she consistently shows sympathy and admiration for the knowledge that has been gleaned about the Canadian landscape through direct knowledge and participation. This is evident not only in her distrust of technological innovations and in the compliments that she directs towards the wisdom of early settler cultures, but also in the very structure of her book. Studies of Plant Life in Canada examines the influence of oral forms of knowledge and literacy not only through the transcription of that knowledge, but also through its use of repetition, story-telling, and the inclusion of many voices other than Traill’s. Abram writes that in orally-based cultures, repetition of stories was necessary for the memory of the group to be preserved, and Traill repeats particular phrases and anecdotes throughout the text, often in very similar phrasing, a practice that is not as necessary in a written text where the pages render the

memories stable and easily located.⁵ Moreover, Abram writes that in orally-based societies whose language provided direct relationships with the land, stories provide a history of human interactions with particular spots, and are inseparable in the cultural memory from the place in which they occurred (182). The act of writing down the stories renders them separable from specific sites, and the result is that the land is no longer “the activator of the stories,” but rather, the “visible text becomes the primary mnemonic activator of the spoken stories” (183). This process can be seen when Traill includes anecdotes of a child being lost in an area of “uncultivated wilderness” on the Rice Lake Plains. This tale is told within the description of the Swamp Blueberry--*Vaccinium corymbosum*, and within the text, that plant becomes the “mnemonic activator” of that particular story, which would otherwise be lost as the Rice Lake Plains were developed and the spot in which the story was meaningful had vanished.

Although, as observed, Traill asserts that the “English peasant” is “far from imaginative” in the quotation included in the previous paragraph, there are numerous moments where she questions her own analysis of the aesthetic sensibilities of the early settlers. For example, in discussing the “old custom of dressing the house with green boughs at Christmas-tide,” Traill speculates on the symbolic significance of the “green boughs,” and suggests that “primitive Christians” could have intended “to keep Faith, Hope and charity ever green within the Church and Homestead” (82). She then asserts that “a deeper meaning often lies in the old usages of our forefathers than we

⁵ Traill’s writing style in *The Backwoods of Canada* provides some examples of how oral knowledge circulates in the Backwoods. The anecdote included at the beginning Chapter Three is one clear example of how Traill receives an oral recitation of useful and practical observations about the landscape that is in direct contradiction of the written accounts that she has received, and then presents this knowledge again as her own words later in the text, while still using almost the exact phrasing of the earlier account. In the two most noticeable cases in *The Backwoods*, she includes a conversation with a man (the “elderly gentleman” mentioned earlier, and her husband), and then later repeats this knowledge as her own.

are willing to acknowledge in this our day of cotton-spinning and gold-digging, railroads and electric telegraphs” (82). The extent to which Traill had progressed in her own understanding of the “deeper meaning” that members of the lower class found in the landscape around them is evident if similar passages in The Backwoods of Canada and Studies of Plant Life in Canada are compared with each other. In 1836 she wrote:

Now, the class of people to whom this country is so admirably adapted are formed of the unlettered and industrious labourers and artisans. They feel no regret that the land they labour on has not been celebrated by the pen of the historian or the lay of the poet. The earth yields her increase to them as freely as if it had been enriched by the blood of heroes. They would not spare the ancient oak from feelings of veneration, nor look upon it with regard for any thing but its use as timber. They have no time, even if they possessed the taste, to gaze abroad on the beauties of Nature, but their ignorance is bliss (128).

However, in 1885, she speculates:

I sometimes think, that though apparently indifferent to the beauties of nature, our labourers are not really so unobservant or apathetic as we suppose them to be; but that being unable to express themselves in suitable language, they are silent on subjects concerning which more enlarged minds can speak eloquently, having words at their command. The uneducated know little of the art of word painting, in describing the beautiful or the sublime (81).

Traill’s first statement literally suggests that uneducated labourers do not have the need for a sense of place—that they are perfectly content as long as the harvest is good, that they feel no need for a knowledge of the history of the land on which they work, and that they have no aesthetic appreciation of Nature. In the second passage, Traill indicates that the uneducated labourers do have an affective response to the landscape, but that they are not able to articulate this feeling because they have not been educated

in the “suitable language” for landscape description. Nonetheless, throughout the anecdotes in which Traill includes quotations from old settlers, she often includes their words of praise or appreciation for the natural world. For example, in describing “our beautiful Canadian Balsams with their exquisitely symmetrical spire-like forms,” Traill includes the words of an “old Irish chopper” (whose deference is demonstrated in the gesture of respect he makes by “touching his ragged napless hat as he spoke”) who observed “that even in these wild wood the Lord’s cross may be seen pointing to the sky above our heads, to remind us of the Blessed Saviour’s self” (163). At another point, Traill mentions how some uneducated emigrants retain their belief in fairies and spirits, firmly maintaining that they followed families over from the old country. What these anecdotes suggest is that, although the lower classes do not “word paint” with the vocabulary of the sublime and the beautiful, they are fully capable of expressing their sense of wonder in and connection to the landscape in which they were living.

When these instances of growing respect for the “lower class” of uneducated settlers are combined with the many examples of the knowledge of local plants that the early settlers had developed through their own experience and the teaching of Native groups, it becomes clear that Traill is describing a particular mode of relating to the landscape that was being subtly altered with the advancement of Canadian culture. She writes with regret that “as the luxuries of civilization creep in among settlers, they abandon the uses of many of the medicinal herbs that formerly supplied the place of drugs from stores” (114). With the gradual lessening of the settler’s direct reliance on the land around them for the materials needed for daily survival comes a diminished sense of connection to the landscape among “civilized” Canadians; Traill observes with concern that “scarcely any of our young people, children of the educated Canadians, know even the common local names of the plants seen by them in their

daily walks,” and speaks with obvious disapproval of the “Canadian ladies of taste” whose appetite for the “culture of ferns...has chiefly been directed towards collecting exotic specimens, rare and costly; but few appear to be aware that our own woods, and swamps, and rocks, afford many beautiful species” (217). Traill seems to have pity (and not much patience) for those people who “have little knowledge of the treasures hidden away in their own neighbouring woods” (217). She connects this lack of appreciation for the local landscape with a general disregard for the history of the early settlers, and the Native people from whom they learned how to live off of the very landscape that they were so busily trying to transform. After delineating the many ways in which the local Native peoples made use of the birch tree, Traill writes that “necessity is the mother of invention, and teaches the simple children of the forest expedients at which the white man is inclined to smile, if not scoff” (188). Yet her continual linking together of the early settlers and the Native groups makes it clear that it is only many years after the “white men” have ceased to rely upon the “expedients” for their survival that they are able to scoff at the “simple children of the forest.” Traill’s efforts to help young Canadians develop a sense of the spiritual resources available to them in the local flora (and, as a result, increase their sense of the importance of preservation) is, therefore, linked to her attempts to record as much of the local history of settlement as possible. What becomes clear from Studies of Plant Life in Canada is that even though she does not want to return to the period of time when the early emigrants suffered hardships in settling the country, she does expect Canadians to retain the close sense of connection to the landscape that the early settlers needed for their own survival, and firmly believes that the history of the region should be learned and respected.

Although Traill had progressed to the point where she was able to see that even though the uneducated labourers did not express their sentiments in the language of

the “beautiful and the sublime,” they did have aesthetic and spiritual responses to the local landscape, her investigation of the relationship between Native peoples and the natural world is more problematic. Immediately before the passage in which Traill speculates that labourers “are not really so unobservant or apathetic as we suppose them to be,” she remarks that the “Indian hunter” and the “Medicine-men” know the “medicinal and healing qualities” of various herbs, even “if they are insensible to their outward beauty” (81). Traill’s supposition that Native people were not “cultivated” enough to appreciate the beauty of the landscape in which they lived is odd, especially given her statements that they had been converted to Christianity. Presumably, as Christians, they would be able to “behold the wisdom of the great Creator” in the beauty and utility of the Canadian flowers, trees, ferns and shrubs (44).⁶ Traill displays substantial difficulty in identifying Native women as Christians within her text, and in reconciling her support for the settlement of the landscape with the suffering that she saw in the Native communities.

In fact, Traill seems much more comfortable recording information that has been learned from the Native peoples than she is in including members of this “dying race” within her text. In relating an anecdote about an “Indian woman” she interrupts herself to observe that “they do not like to be called squaws since they have become Christians” (104). Despite her own approval of the conversion of the Native peoples, though, Traill rarely uses the term “Indian-woman,” preferring instead the phrase

⁶ By the time that Traill published *Pearls and Pebbles* in 1895, she no longer believed that Native people were “insensible to [the] outward beauty” of local plants. She begins the chapter entitled “The Children of the Forest” by stating that “Judging from the natural reticence of the dusky-skinned Indian, one would not suppose him capable of conceiving one poetical idea, yet under the stolid and apparently unimaginative exterior there lies a store of imagery, drawn from the natural objects around him, which he studies more carefully than we do our most interesting books...He borrows no ideas from written books” (179). The chapter also contains detailed discussions of the Native terms for “rivers, lakes and flowers,” and Traill asserts that these terms contain a “musical ring” that is absent in the English names for the same natural places and objects (180).

“poor Indian squaw” and variations thereof. Even so, her sense of compassion for the Native women is often in evidence. In one particularly poignant passage, the extent to which the cultivation of the landscape around the Otonabee had affected the survival of the local Ojibway community is unmistakable. Traill gives a detailed set of instructions for the construction the birch-bark canoes (a task usually undertaken by women), only to follow with this paragraph:

The extensive clearing away of the forest is a cause of great regret to the Indians who have to go far back to obtain a supply of the canoe bark. We no longer see the light canoe dancing on the waters of our lakes, as formerly. I remember noticing a Squaw watching the burning of a large log-heap, and in answer to some remark made, she observed with a moody glance at the burning pile: “No canoe now--White mans burn up Birch-tree. Go Buckhorn-a-lake for bark. Got-a-none here,” and wrapping her arms in the folds of her blanket she turned away sullenly from the destroying fire, and no doubt there was anger in her heart against the settler, for the trees of the forest which were being wasted by axe and fire. Who could blame her? Now, indeed, the want of the Birch-bark is a sore loss and privation to these poor people. They cannot go into the woods to cut down a single tree, without being liable to fine for trespassing, and the game laws press hard upon them. The Indian race is fast fading away like many of the native plants, we shall seek them in their old haunts, but shall not find even a trace of them left. (189)

What becomes painfully clear is that the instructions for making birch-bark canoes will no longer be needed (and this is true of many of the other instructions and recipes Traill includes for remedies, dyes and foods made from native plants). This passage is the first time in Traill’s text that she acknowledges the anger that “no doubt” existed in the hearts of the Native groups whose subsistence was being threatened by the settlers with whom they had shared their knowledge about how to survive, and it takes on further resonance with her transcription of the actual conversation with the Native

woman.⁷ The extent to which the lives of the Native women have been altered since Traill arrived in Canada is clear when the paragraph above is compared to one from The Backwoods of Canada in which Traill is delivered home by one member of the nearby Native community. In that earlier passage, she describes how “the canoe, propelled by the Amazonian arm of the swarthy matron, flew swiftly over the waters, and I was soon landed in a little cove within a short distance from my own door” (233). There is a stark contrast between the unnamed “swarthy matron” or “Squaw” (as she is called throughout the rest of the anecdote) whose strong arms guide the canoe, and the woman, fifty years later, who cannot find enough materials to make a canoe, and whose arms pull a blanket closer around her in a protective gesture, rather than grasping a paddle. Indeed, the “blanket” takes on additional meaning, given the standard practice at the time of the government’s issue of annual allowances of blankets to the Native communities: as a concrete symbol of the government’s intervention in the lives of the Native peoples, its presence in the sketch turns the self-protective gesture into a very visible representation of the extent to which the Native woman’s freedom of movement was being undermined by the game laws and rules against trespassing. Traill is unable to reach any resolution in this passage, instead ending it with the often repeated statement that the “Indian race is fast fading away, like the native plants.”

There are moments where Traill mentions these changes in the Native people’s relationship to the landscape without acknowledging any sense of discomfort. The change in control over the landscape is painfully evident in another passage included

⁷ In the passage from Canadian Crusoes discussed in note #3 for this chapter, Traill recognizes that the Native communities have “no representative in the senate to take interest in [their] welfare, to plead in his behalf” (211). In 1852 she wrote of the Native man that “he submits patiently. Perhaps he murmurs in secret; but his voice is low, it is not heard. (211). By 1885, however, Traill has allowed that low murmuring to become vocal within her text.

in Traill's discussion of the Swamp Blueberry--*Vaccinium corymbosum* in Studies of Plant Life in Canada, when she juxtaposes one "poor Indian squaw" who "fills her baskets with the fruit and brings them to the villages to trade for flour, tea, and calico" with the "social parties of the settlers" who "used to go forth annually to gather the fruit for preserving....roaming in unrestrained freedom" (122). The numerical imbalance between the solitary Native woman and the large groups of settlers, and the obvious difference between the "poor" woman's economic situation and the "unrestrained freedom" of the settlers are presented without editorial comment on Traill's part. Nevertheless, at another point, Traill makes her most overt call for some recognition of the hardship that the local Native women were suffering with the increased restriction in their movements within the landscape. She writes that "were it not going beyond the bounds of my subject I might plead earnestly in behalf of my destitute, and too much neglected, Indian sisters and dwell upon their wants and trials; but this theme would lead me too far away from my subject" (105). Traill then swiftly draws her reader's attention to the scientific objective of her text in the next sentence by including the Latin name for Indian Grass, the "true" subject of this paragraph. Her sudden insistence upon the importance of remaining focused on her subject is troubling in a text that so freely and insistently expands upon its scientific mandate to include social commentary, poetry, religious sentiments, and local history. Yet this half-plea for her "Indian sisters" might indicate Traill's discomfort with investigating too deeply the very negative changes that the Native community experienced as she and other settlers were changing the landscape to match their own needs and desires. Indeed, only twenty-two pages later, her plea on behalf of the "neglected children of our lower classes" takes up half a page, and is neither preceded nor cut short by any reference to such a discussion being "too far away from [her] subject" (126, 105). The difference, in this case, could be that Traill saw the children

as “moral weeds” who, with transplantation into the “genial atmosphere” of the “garden of human growth” would be “made to feel that they are not despised,” and their “useful qualities brought into action” (126). On the other hand, the Native groups, who were expected to “fade away,” were being transplanted into Traill’s text using the same method that she was employing to preserve the flowers, trees, and shrubs. This raises a curious question: if the young Canadian children were expected to benefit from the methods of botanical study and observation, why would not the Native people, from who much of the Canadian plant lore was derived, already have achieved the same state of awareness and grace? This is a question that Traill never asks, or answers. Botanical study and care for children of the lower classes would help improve and strengthen the settler culture; the same hope was not available for the Native people, whom Traill believed to be dying away.

Modern readers might find it difficult to understand the strength of this belief on Traill’s part, and criticize her for not offering a more strenuous defense of the Native communities. However, her continual references to the knowledge that she and other settlers gained from the local Native community, her depiction of the Native peoples and their role in the history of the community, and her acknowledgment of the changes in the lives of the local tribes as a result of the settlement of the country show a level of compassion and understanding that is woven into the very structure of the text. Although Traill never finds a satisfactory way of acknowledging and dealing with the racist assumptions that are the tacit foundation of the descriptions and anecdotes in which she mentions Native peoples, her text insists that readers recognize the relationship of the Native people with the local landscape as part of the local history, and a valid and necessary element of any sense of place that the settlers might develop in reading her book. The cultivation of “feeling” is just as important as the accumulation of factual knowledge in Studies of Plant Life in Canada, and Traill

insists that readers begin to develop an understanding of the history of the local Native culture.

A concept that might help to explain and further explore the 'ideal' type of relationship that Traill envisioned between the Canadian settler culture and the natural landscape is "stewardship." Halfway through Studies of Plant Life in Canada, Traill makes mention of the Garden of Eden. She speculates that Eden was "most likely a large and fertile tract of country already enriched with every tree, and herb, and flower, that would prove useful for the support of life and enjoyment" (127). Continuing, she indicates that "Adam was instructed by his Maker to till the ground and dress it and keep it" (127). Whereas in Eden this activity was undertaken for "health and pleasure," in the "sin-smitten earth," humans experience "toil and weariness" in coaxing the ground into fertility. At other points in the text, Traill suggests that all creatures and plants are fulfilling a divine mission (this concept has been discussed already in Chapter Three), and her comment that Adam was "instructed" suggests that Traill felt that cultivating the landscape and caring for it was a religious and cultural responsibility. Traill was not, then, advocating a change in the agricultural mandate of the settlers--in fact, she implicitly compares the settlers' commitment to working specific acres of land with the Native community, who at one point are seen to abruptly break camp when there is "a report of deer, some miles further of the lake" (206). What she seemed concerned about was the mis-management of the natural resources of the new country--improper and irresponsible stewardship of the landscape and its peoples. Using responsible stewardship as a model allows us to understand how Traill was able to combine her fervent religious beliefs with her support for the cultivation of the natural and wild spaces that were the habitats for the flowers, shrubs and trees that provided evidence of God's divine wisdom and creative powers. For Traill, proper stewardship of the land is motivated by both patriotic feelings of

attachment to the country, and a firm and unerring belief in a nurturing Christian God, rather than by an undiluted interest in extracting wealth from the landscape. She saw botanical study as imperative for developing in Canadian children the patriotic and religious feelings that would encourage them to be responsible citizens and exploiters of the “natural productions of the country.” Traill’s text indicates that correct management of the landscape includes preservation of wild and native plants in “national parks” and “botanical gardens” (213), compassion for members of the “poorer classes” and Native communities, and an appreciation of the history of the region, including in equal measure an awareness of the history of the early settlers and the Native peoples. Traill might not advocate a return to the privations of early settler life in the backwoods, but her obvious respect for the knowledge of the landscape possessed by the original residents, both Native and European, suggests that she felt that direct and unmediated interaction with local plants needed to be maintained even as Canadian culture progressed beyond the time when this knowledge was necessary for basic survival. The need for this experiential learning can be seen in Traill’s anecdote about a “young lady” she met, who had “gone through a course of Botany at school,” and yet was unable to distinguish between “Wood Parsley” and a fern (218). The implication is that scientific book-learning is not, in itself, sufficient for proper botanical education. This suggestion is borne out by the many moments in Studies of Plant Life in Canada where Traill subtly questions the beliefs and practices of a scientific community that, overall, she respected, but viewed as offering an incomplete framework for understanding human relationships with the natural world. While performing the function of a national botanical garden into which the disappearing plants could be transplanted, Traill’s book was also intended to motivate Canadians to pay attention to the plants in their areas, and through this exercise, not only to train their powers of observation, but also to increase their appreciation for the history of

the country, and develop the nurturing compassion that would allow them to treat all members of Canadian society--including those of lesser education, or members of Native communities--with "kindness and generosity." Traill thus considers direct interaction with local plant life to be a key ingredient in equipping young Canadians to be responsible, aware and engaged citizens.

Traill provides many examples of scenarios in which development occurs without the proper sense of stewardship and responsibility. In her discussion of Maple-leaved Dockmackie--*Viburnum acerifolium*, which was used by the "Indians" for the shafts of their arrows, she observes that:

This primitive weapon (formidable it must have been) is found only on old battle-fields, or by chance the settler picks up one in turning the soil on his new burnt fallow, wonders at the curious shaped flint, and perhaps brings it home; but more likely casts it away. It is a type of the uncared-for race, whose forefathers shaped the stone with infinite care and pains. (141)

If Canadian settlers are to practice proper stewardship of the landscape, Traill indicates that they must be able to "care" for the history of the Native groups, and for the disappearing plant species while they are cultivating the land, rather than "casting [them] away."⁸ In her use of such anecdotes throughout Studies of Plant Life in Canada, Traill's sense of place is presented as both a personal relationship with the forests, and as the series of relationships that are created between various human communities and the landscape on which they live. As a result, the tensions in her conviction that the European settlers were the next stage in the succession of human

⁸ Traill was personally involved in trying to keep the local Native artifacts from being "cast away": in 1897, she donated a "collection of Indian relics" received from her "Hiawatha friends" to the Peteborough Historical Society, of which she was the honorary president. These, in turn, were not overturned in tilling the fields--they were "a free gift to me from my esteemed friend Mrs. M. Jane Loucks, of Hiawatha" (I Bless You 274). Traill used this opportunity to ask the members of the society to "contribute in aid of my Indian friend" (274).

life in Canada are subtly presented through her inclusion of references to the way that the Native peoples subsisted on the land. Instead of offering a scientifically-accurate catalogue or a map, Traill's text functions as a geography of human involvement with the landscape, a regionally-specific document in which human and botanical history become interwoven narratives, each relying on "feeling" as much as "fact" for their immediacy and accuracy.

“We must re-enter the forest”: Concluding comments

The change that Traill’s sense of history and connection to the land underwent during her lifetime in Canada can be illustrated by referring back to an often-quoted passage of The Backwoods of Canada, where she observes that:

Here there are no historical associations, no legendary tales of those that come before us. Fancy would starve for lack of marvellous food to keep her alive in the backwoods...instead of poring with mysterious awe among our curious limestone rocks...we refer them to the geologist to exercise his skill....I heard a friend exclaim, when speaking of the want of interest this country possessed, “It is the most unpoetical of all lands; there is no scope for the imagination; here all is new--the very soil seems newly formed; there is no hoary ancient grandeur in these woods; no recollections of former deeds connected with the country.” (128)

Yet less than fifty years later, Traill could refer to both the forests and the “settlement house” as “primeval” (Wildflowers 8; Pearls 148), and state that “the forced marches of civilization have wrought such wondrous and rapid changes in what used to be the backwoods of Canada forty years ago, that now it seems almost a thing of the past, to write about or to speak of such matters” (Studies 154). W. J. Keith refers to the “foreshortened quality...of Canadian and Ontarian history,” and in Traill’s Studies of Plant Life in Canada the rapid process by which the soil has become “old” is directly related to the “continuous changes” to the native biota and early settlement cultures that she documents. By planting very specific “historical associations” in her text ¹ and including “legendary tales” in the form of anecdotes, Traill generates a nuanced “past” based on “recollection” in which she places her written transplantations of native flora. Human and natural history are, therefore, inextricably linked in her creation of a specific sense of place, and although she regrets the destruction of the

¹ One example of how Traill “plants” historical associations within her text occurs when she suggests that the Canadian loyalists and Americans just over the border associate the New Jersey Tea–Red-Root--*Ceanothus Americanus* with “the old struggle waged by their grandfathers and great-grandfathers for independence,” thereby giving a sense of a long human history in the area (114).

wildflowers and ferns, she seems to accept the changes because they visibly register the “temporal depth” that is necessary for her creation of a sense of place and community with the Canadian landscape. Her sense of Canadian origin goes back only as far as the first settlers; although she recognizes that the Native groups had altered the land by burning over the Rice Lake Plains years before the Europeans ever arrived, she places those events in pre-history, since this practice had not occurred “within the memory of the oldest settler in the Township” (103). Her technique of referring to Native peoples and early settlers simultaneously, and doing so repeatedly, has the effect of conflating the depth of their histories, and naturalizing the presence of the Europeans, implicitly suggesting that they had been there, for all intents and purposes (as far as the plants were concerned) as long as the Natives had been. This tendency is somewhat ameliorated by her references to the “old country,” by her acknowledgment that Native communities have not benefited by the cultivation of the landscape to the extent that the early settlers have, and by her overt recognition of the hardships the local Ojibway peoples have suffered. Throughout the text, memory is directly linked to “place,” and Traill’s sense of inevitability in response to the changes Europeans effected on the landscape is determined by her need for the history that those changes allow her to “re-member” in her text.

Studies of Plant Life in Canada thus contains several “environmental projects.”² The first is Traill’s delineation of the “products” that the Canadian native flora offer the new settlers, her calls for ecological wisdom so that the economic resources she sees in the forest are not wasted through a lack of information on the part of the settlers, and her celebration of the wealth that the land offers the new country. This project draws on the language associated with the inventory sciences in

² I have borrowed this term from Lawrence Buell, who describes a series of Thoreau’s environmental projects in Walden in the fourth chapter of The Environmental Imagination.

Canada, and with the patriotism surrounding the recent Confederation. It can also be viewed as an early example of the thinking that has developed into the modern “resource management” approach to environmental preservation. The second, seemingly contradictory project, is her aesthetic and religious desire to see the native plants of the country preserved in their original ecosystems to encourage reflection on the power and benevolence of the “creator.” The vocabulary associated with natural history and theology contributes to her expostulations on “His wisdom and His fatherly care for all” that punctuate and contextualize her sections on flowers, shrubs, trees and ferns, and these religious sentiments, along with her use of imaginative and poetic language, suggest that she was trying to find a way of describing the “sense of wonder” raised in her by the intricacy and beauty of the landscape. Her third project attempts a reconciliation of her often conflicting desires for economic prosperity and ecological preservation by transforming the botanical and demographic changes into “useful” memories through the transplantation of the native flora into a culturally-fertilized, linguistic soil. What becomes clear is that it is only through the interplay between supposedly objective scientific “facts” and subjective responses based on experiential knowledge of the landscape that Traill is able to attempt to bring the landscape alive within her text. A less obvious, but certainly integral component, of all of Traill’s investigations is the way in which various forms of literacy shape perceptions of the landscape, and encourage different perceptions among the Native and emigrant cultures about the best way for humans to relate to the land. Using the concept of “stewardship” to understand the balance that Traill tries to draw between economic and religious needs of Canadians also helps to explain her conviction that close observation of and interaction with nature will increase young Canadians’ affective ties to the “dear country” in which they were born. Emotional connection to the landscape is expected to instill, via both the devout soul and the curious intellect, a

sense of responsibility--not only for the appropriate use of natural resources, but also to the other members of human communities, and to their history. In presenting examples of rich ladies of "taste," poor Native women, labourers, early settlers, medicine men, and members of the modern scientific community, Traill offers many different models of "relationship" with the landscape, and illustrates the tensions that exist between the various groups' perceptions of the wisest use of the "natural productions of the country."

Traill's method of preserving the landscape in print in Studies of Plant Life in Canada allows her to show the fundamental importance of the land to Canadian "culture" while celebrating the Europeanization of that landscape. Her focus on generating a series of cultural memories and vocabularies linking Canadians to a specific place encourages an examination of the process by which science and literature--which exist in an uneasy but fruitful alliance within her text--are later separated in Canadian attempts to generate literary expressions of their "sense of place." What Traill attempts, and partially succeeds in doing, is to offer readers a vision of Canada's "sons and daughters happy and honorable members of society beneath the shades of her mighty forests," a vision in which the forests that have been destroyed for the economic "health" of the country continue to exist within cultural memory as literary--and literal--"shades." In this way, Studies of Plant Life in Canada remains as a record of the plants that are disappearing, a celebration of the human history associated with the cultivation of Canada's potential, and a linguistic botanical garden in which Canadians can retrace their sense of history, and retrieve an earlier Canadian landscape, geographical terrain, and map of consciousness. If place-sense is a process rather than a finished state, then Traill's development of a sense of local history and place is generated through a continuing dialogue in her text between oral and written forms of recording knowledge, objective and imaginative vocabularies of

response, and alternate alignments with ecological and resource-based modes of interacting with the landscape. Although Traill presents her text as a scientifically-oriented and informed book, her persistent questioning of scientific objectivity through the inclusion of many other forms of talking about the land suggests that she is more interested in exploring how Canadians use language to create relationships within the landscape than in providing an objective list of the contents of the country. Buell suggests that “environmental humility” is the most important outcome of any presentation of a “sense of place,” and Traill achieves this humility in the variety of her environmental projects, her dexterity in interweaving them, and her insistence that readers acknowledge the variety of relationships possible between humans and their physical surroundings.

In recent years, there has been an increased awareness among environmentalists, teachers concerned with ecological issues, activists and outdoor educators that Canada’s environmental problems will only be effectively and permanently solved when human history is seen as intimately connected with the ecological history of an area. Efforts have been made in many communities to help residents begin to articulate their sense of place in public spaces, with the hope that in doing this, the local community will begin to establish a sense of responsibility for and pride in their environment. The eventual goal is usually to establish an on-going dialogue about the best way of consulting all cultural groups in making wise development decisions. Several projects bear mentioning. The first is the Ecomusee Initiative in Hamilton, which occurred in 1996 as part of the celebration of the founding of the city in 1846. It was conceptualized as “‘a museum without walls’ featuring as its main attractions the natural and human treasures of the Bay Area,” and was intended, through its informal structure, to encourage the exchange of stories about life in the Bay-Area among the volunteer-staff and participants (Bowerbank,

Telling Stories 32). In the article in which she describes the Ecomusee as a “potentially transformative” initiative, Bowerbank suggests that “in our society, the stories of ordinary people’s relationships to ordinary places remain largely a hidden and untapped resource for understanding the complicated, shifting connections between human behaviour and environmental conditions” (28). A different project, organized through McMaster University, called Ecowise, has attempted to create an interdisciplinary, community and place-based study of the ecology of the Burlington Bay-Area, but has struggled to find a way of combining articulations of the “deep connections between natural environments and human culture” with the traditional, scientifically-based approaches to rehabilitating ecosystems. Studies of Plant Life in Canada provides an extended and minutely detailed version of Traill’s own “ordinary story” about her connection to the landscape around Peterborough. In its use of a generic structure that combines literary and scientific observations, and includes very specific references to human behaviours and attitudes towards the landscape within an ecological history, Traill’s text also provides one model by which such interdisciplinary research could be expressed. Her attention to the stories of people who had been displaced by development in the nineteenth-century landscape also reminds contemporary readers that similar but currently unrecognized stories might exist in our own time.

Another trend that bears mentioning is the increased awareness among educators that children must experience a “sense of wonder” in nature before they can ever, as adults, care enough to feel personally responsible for and affected by what happens within the environment. As a result, there has been a remarkable explosion of cross-curricular programs at highschoools across Ontario, where students study of combination of English, biology, environmental science, geography, and physical education (the combination depends on the program and grade-level), working on

projects that require combined skills from all areas of study and spending at least half of their school time either “in the field” or in the community. Within the regular classroom structure, teachers of all age levels are beginning to combine scientific explorations of various ecosystems with literary and artistic expressions of students’ responses to their landscape, thus encouraging a combination of “fact” and “feeling” in the students’ investigations. The idea underlying these initiatives is that interacting directly with a non-human landscape will encourage in students a sense of civic and moral responsibility for the care of other species--an idea which, even without religious overtones, resonates with Traill’s consistent practice of finding “moral teachings” in the surrounding landscape. Seen in this context, Traill’s decision to employ a “familiar” style that allowed her to combine her own expressions of wonder with the observations of an astute naturalist’s eye, and to also include historical information and examples of poetic responses to various plants seems positively “modern.” Although, as contemporary readers, we would take issue with her sense that the British settlers and their descendants were entitled to be “stewards” over the Canadian landscape and its Native residents, Studies of Plant Life in Canada displays the same unresolved tensions between preservation and development we are still struggling with today. As such, it might encourage us to re-examine the roots of our current decisions about the environment. Traill’s text could contribute to contemporary educational and environmental efforts as one example of how Canadians, over time, have attempted to express their sense of home and local community in a way that recognizes the close links between ecological and human history.

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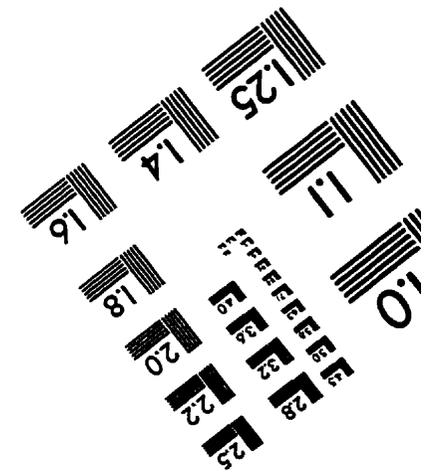
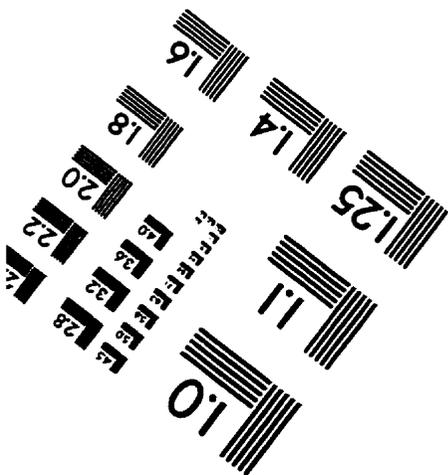
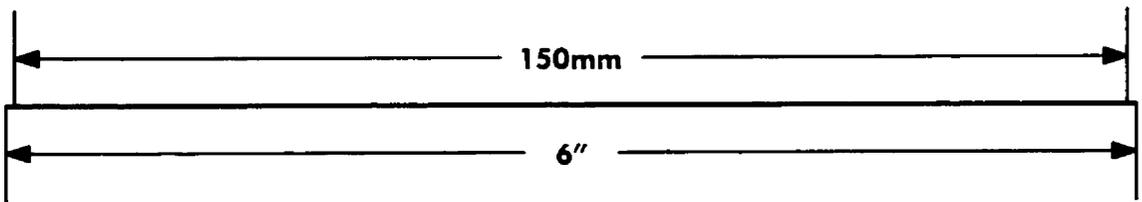
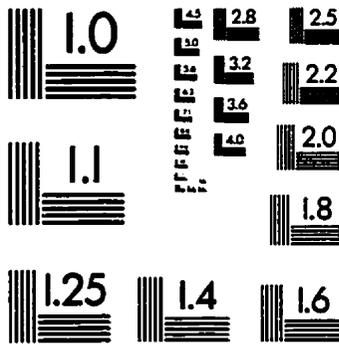
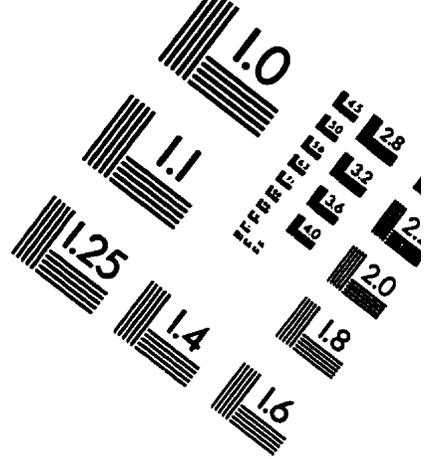
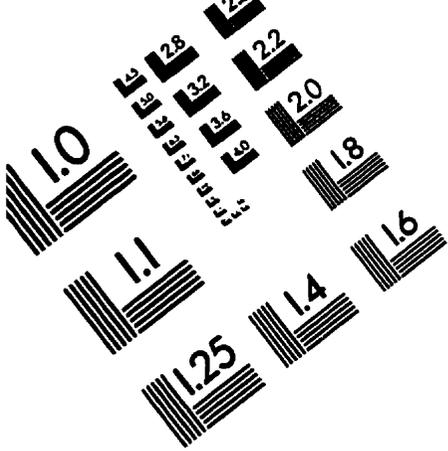
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