

## Back in the Bush: Revisiting Susanna Moodie's *Roughing It in the Bush; or, Life in Canada*

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### [要約]

1852年に出版されたスザンナ・ムーディのオンタリオ地方の移民としての体験に基づいた自伝的小説 *Roughing It in the Bush, or Life in Canada* は、いまだにカナダ文学に大きな影響を与えている作品である。ムーディは執筆の動機を、裕福な中上流階級の移民たちが、それまで何を聞き何を信じてきたかに関わらず、未開のカナダの大自然の中ですべてを確実に失ってしまうであろうことを警告するためであると述べている。この論文ではムーディがこの目的を達成するために使っているテクニックを検証している。

この小説は当時の一般的な文学形式であるスケッチという技法を用いている。登場人物や出来事の断片的スケッチは、極端な感情や行動、はっきりした正と悪といったメロドラマ様式で描かれている。またムーディは、この本において原型的な追放と救済という、彼女の読者層が古典文学や宗教文学、特に聖書でおなじみのパターンであるロマンチックな冒険物語を構築している。批評家の中には *Roughing It in the Bush* を一貫性がなく分裂症的であると指摘する者もいるが、上記の構造から見ると、この作品は現代の読者に貴重な歴史的洞察を与えるものである。

## 1. Introduction

*Roughing It in The Bush, or Life in Canada* by Susanna Moodie (*Roughing It* hereafter) remains, over 150 years after it first appeared in 1852, a touchstone text in Canadian literature and history (Peterman, 2007, xvii); in fact it has seldom been out of print in Canada since its first publication. Part autobiography and part travel sketch, Moodie wrote *Roughing It* as a warning to the unknowing upper middle class English prospective emigrant, describing Canada as a place far more likely to leave one broken and destitute than happy and prosperous. The Moodie family itself experienced years of poverty, hunger and other deprivations during their seven and a half year exile in the wilderness. The Moodies showed enormous strength of character and perseverance, and unlike many of their emigrant social equals, were able to adapt, survive and eventually thrive in the colony. For Susanna Moodie in particular, it was vital to not only survive, but to preserve her value system in the face of constant challenges.

This article will examine the prevailing ideologies in *Roughing It* and the relationship between those ideologies and the text structure and mode. First the article will examine the circumstances of Susanna Moodie's formative years and how they shaped her worldview. Next, the article will explicate the connection between Moodie's ideology and *Roughing It*: the descriptions of place and character; the romantic-quest structure; the many biblical allusions; and the melodramatic mode.

## 2. Susanna Moodie's Early Life

Susanna Strickland was born into a literary family – five of the six Strickland daughters became writers – and began writing at an early age. She began publishing stories for children and adolescents, largely instructive, moralistic tales, and went on to contribute to the burgeoning field of annuals – yearly publications of the same name but differing content (Toye & Benson, 2012, 2-3). According to critic Carl Ballstadt (2007, 421), she never abandoned the tone and style she acquired when writing these religious, moral, didactic stories and the keen sense of right and wrong

she developed during this period is a constant refrain in *Roughing It*. Her first published novel, *Spartacus: A Roman Story*, was targeted at adolescent readers; Moodie's writing often featured heroic figures through which she could extol morality and virtue. In the autobiographical *Roughing It*, Moodie herself is the heroine, battling to cultivate a land and the people in it, both of which she considered rude and raw. Although Moodie had been raised as a nominal Anglican, she experienced a religious awakening in her twenties and, to the dismay of her staunchly Anglican family, converted to the more fundamentalist Congregationalist sect. Moodie's writings often featured spirituality and passionate religious feelings and these features, as we will see, are hallmarks of *Roughing It* as well. (Toye & Benson, 2012, 8-9)

Her life altered fundamentally when she met and married retired British Army Lt. John Wedderburn Dunbar Moodie in 1830. Lt. Moodie owned a farm in South Africa but as both he and his wife were strongly opposed to slavery, common to that part of the world, they felt it was not a place that could be a permanent home. After much thought and debate they made the decision to move their growing family to the British colony of Canada in the spring of 1832, eventually settling on a land grant near what is now Lakefield, Ontario in 1834. Lt. Moodie was the youngest son of a landed family in England. Like many youngest sons of the period, there was little of the family wealth left for him in the form of income or inheritance. He drew a half pay pension from the military but this was not enough to support a growing family. The British government, in an effort to encourage colonial emigration, had a scheme whereby retired officers like Moodie could receive land grants of several hundred acres in return for cultivation and long term residence (Davis, 2003). The result was part of a broad demographic shift of people out of England to the colonies known as The Great Migration. (Careless, 1994, 169) The trials associated with clearing and developing this land grant over a seven and a half year period make up what would become Susanna Moodie's most well known work, *Roughing It in the Bush; or, Life in Canada* (2007).

### 3. Ideology in *Roughing It*

Simpson (1993, 17-18) defines ideology as “the value systems and sets of beliefs which reside in texts.” Throughout *Roughing It* Moodie displays an unwavering loyalty to her genteel English upper middle class upbringing and its concomitant values despite the stark contrast to her new social milieu in colonial Canada. It is this clash of values that drives many of the character sketches in *Roughing It*.

Unjustly forced by economics to leave a home she dearly loved, Moodie portrays herself as victim, martyr and ultimately a heroine fighting for civilization in what is from her point of view a decidedly uncivilized world. Following from the archetype Frye describes in *Anatomy of Criticism*, Mr. Moodie is typological Christ figure, “the perfectly innocent victim excluded from society (42).” It is from this psychological perspective – or point of view, according to Paul Simpson (1993) – that Moodie relates her story. This narrative point of view, Simpson says, is “the very essence of a story’s style, what gives it its ‘feel’ and ‘color’ (17).” Although Moodie’s ideology is for the most part intentionally uncomplicated – she is clear that her purpose in writing the text is for instruction- for the stylistic explication that follows I owe a large debt to both Mick Short (1996) and Paul Simpson (1993). In order to uncover the psychological foundation underneath the text, we will examine a few interactions between Mrs. Moodie and her neighbors as described in *Roughing It*. The conflicts in these interactions reveal differences in the respective character’s assumptions, schema and presuppositions and, following Short (1996), it is there we will focus our attention.

#### 3.1 The Satan Family

Moodie’s word choice in her descriptions can often be described as what Short calls “overt value-laden expressions” that carry specific ideological assumptions (1996, 279). In the first sketches in particular she describes neighbours she labels *Canadian Yankees*. Moodie likely employed the term *Yankee* derogatorily. *Yankees* are people of American origin who immigrated to Canada. Britain and the US had fought two recent wars, the US War of Independence from 1767-1783 (or colonial rebellion

from the British perspective) and the Anglo-Canadian/US War of 1812-1814 in which US forces attempted to invade Canada. Moodie's English readership would likely share her negative feelings towards the American-born Canadians. Within a month or two of arriving in Canada the Moodies find themselves as tenants of one of the aforementioned Canadian Yankees. The fall from grace is total and abrupt: the Moodies from English gentry to tenants under people who had previously rebelled against the English government. The Moodies move into their homestead and Susanna describes their first visitor, the daughter of their new landlord, who, we later learn, carries the nickname 'Old Satan', a play on his surname Seaton. Moodie writes: "the door was suddenly pushed open, and the apparition of a woman squeezed itself into the crowded room (2007, 62)."

Mrs. Moodie despises above all else bad manners as we see ample evidence of. When visiting a home for the first time she would never push a door open but, rather, knock and wait for it to be opened. The visitor doesn't even appear to be fully alive in the narrator's view; she is ghost-like. Proper conduct is evidence of full humanity and lack of it indication of something less. Moodie and this creature are socially and existentially remote. The use of *apparition* allows the writer to employ the third person pronoun *itself* rather than *herself*. A more detailed description follows: "Her whole appearance was so extraordinary that I felt quite at a loss how to address her (Moodie, 2007, 62)."

The subject is now afforded humanity – the girl warrants the feminine third person pronoun this time– but the social remoteness becomes more acute. Moodie has been put in a position where she must follow social custom and speak, but she cannot determine the appropriate greeting from her surprise guests' attire; something, it is implied, that she could do at a glance were this meeting to occur in the country of her birth. The reader is now asked to:

Imagine a girl of seventeen or eighteen years of age, with sharp, knowing-looking features, a forward, impudent carriage, and a pert, flippant voice, standing upon one of the trunks, and surveying all our proceedings in the most impertinent manner. (Moodie, 2007, 62)

The words *impudent*, *flippant*, *impertinent* all carry the sense of lack of proper respect, a cardinal sin in Moodie's world view; this is a *girl* after all, not an adult. In addition, rather than approaching as a humble guest, the girl stands a conqueror, masculine, as if master over all she surveys.

The creature was dressed in a ragged, dirty purple stuff gown, cut very low in the neck...her uncombed, tangled locks falling over her thin, inquisitive face, in a state of perfect nature. Her legs and feet were bare, and, in her coarse, dirty red hands, she swung to and fro an empty glass decanter. (Moodie, 2007, 62)

Lack of personal hygiene, immodesty (the gown is *cut very low*) and, although Moodie does grant the girl a kind of raw animal intelligence she portrays her visitor as ignorant of even the most basic tenets of grooming and attire. Mrs. Moodie finds herself at a loss and she and the girl, both bringing substantially different cultural expectations to the encounter, descend into what Short terms a "presuppositional clash" (1996, 236). Moodie assumes the girl is looking for work as a servant – that is after all what poorly attired, dirty and ill mannered girls do - and when she informs the girl that the family already has domestic help, the girl is indignant that she has been pigeonholed as a social inferior when she is in fact the landlord's daughter. The girl has brought a decanter at the behest of her father in order to have it filled with the Moodie's whiskey. People of her type – local residents – presuppose that newcomers are there to provide them with whatever goods might be in short supply at the moment. These sorts of schematic differences between the genteel Moodies and the established local populace make up the bulk of the interpersonal conflicts outlined in the sketches in *Roughing It*.

### 3.2 The Little Stumpy Man

The Moodies are presented with a paradox in the person of Mr. Malcolm, a previous acquaintance of Mr. Moody who, one day out of the blue, appears on their doorstep. He is in serious debt and in order to escape his creditors he asks to stay on the Moody farm for an undetermined period. Unlike many of the characters so far encountered, Malcolm comes from a genteel family ("He was the son of an officer

in the navy, who had...attained a very high rank in the service" (2007, 249)) and should by this fact alone qualify as the right kind of person. However, he proves to be "naturally indolent...a constitutional grumbler...selfish and unprincipled in the highest degree" (Moodie, 2007, 249). Mrs. Moodie comes to dislike him almost immediately and he seems unable to get along with anyone in the household, even quarrelling with the servants, which apparently is something that people of his station should not do:

I remonstrated with him on the impropriety of bandying words with our servants. "You see," I said, "the disrespect with which they treat you; and if they presume upon your familiarity, to speak to our guests in this contemptuous manner, they will soon extend the same conduct to us." (Moodie, 2007, 250)

In this exchange with yet another person who fails to uphold the moral code (and this is a man who by his station should know better) Moodie highlights the importance of appropriate social boundaries in her world view. It isn't enough to have servants who are paid to obey; it is equally important to continually reinforce the relationship by remaining socially aloof. Failure to adhere will not mean mere equality, but disrespect. We learn from this exchange that Moodie expects people from her own social station to uphold the unwritten law: the hired help must be held in place through the language of power.

Mr. Malcolm rebuts Moodie in this fashion, countering that her standards are inappropriate for their current situation:

Ah, you are such a prude – so methodistical – you make no allowances for circumstances! Surely, in the woods we may dispense with the hypocritical, conventional forms of society, and speak and act as we please.

So you seem to think; but you see the result. (Moodie, 2007, 250)

Moodie will not be moved. Whether in the Canadian woods or England, maintaining the correct relationship between superiors-inferiors is vital to social harmony; in its absence there can be only chaos and social lawlessness.

While not exhaustive, I hope these examples illustrate that Susanna Moodie

places a high value on propriety and due respect and conversely,condemnswhen social expectations are flouted.

### 3.3 Other Characters

In contrast to her portrayal of the Canadian Yankee Seaton and the wayward naval officer Malcolm, Mrs. Moodie reserves praise for those characters that conform to her world view. She speaks highly of a “worthy English farmer” (Moodie, 2007, 62) Other inhabitants portrayed as respectful, kind, helpful, industrious and, of utmost importance to Mrs. Moodie, those who know their place and keep it. She describes a poor Scottish farmer in glowing terms (Moodie, 2007, 230). Her faithful servants Jenny and Johan – poor, uneducated but respectful and obedient – also earn her praise throughout the book. In keeping with her Manichean universe, the locals seem to fall into one category or the other.

### 3.4 Spirituality

Evidence of a spiritual or religious underpinning to Moodie’s ideology is plentiful in *Roughing It* and critics have drawn attention to a consistent “religious enthusiasm” (Ballstadt, 2007, 421) in many of her works. This religious point of view would be one shared by many of her Victorian-era English readership; comforting and familiar, such an ideology would immediately create sympathy for the narrator in the reader. Specifically, Moodie’s brand of Christianity parallels her ideology of people in their proper places. The Christian religion is after all a religion of rules, duty and obedience: slaves to masters, children to parents, wives to husbands, the individual to god. Moodie is eager to be perceived as a dutiful and obedient wife and she expects others to know their place in the scheme of things. And perhaps more than any other philosophy or world view, religion gives a meaning to suffering and disappointment by transferring impossible hopes to a future time, be it in this world or an imaginary future one. One of Moodie’s major tenets is that for the genteel English emigrant, pioneer life in Canada is one of hardship and suffering, a life to which most of that class were singularly unsuited. Success, if it came at all, would

only be achieved after a long, arduous road. Such a bleak thesis found many parallels in the Christian religion.

Sentiments like these appear like regular signposts throughout the text: "Still, with all these misfortunes, Providence watched over us in a signal manner. We were never left entirely without food." (Moodie, 2007, 270) Reassurance in times of extreme suffering; if nothing else, there is something to eat. Moodie often takes time out to 'count her blessings': "I was truly grateful to God for the continued mildness of the weather." (Moodie, 2007, 275)

What Moodie never does is curse god when the weather – or anything else – goes horribly awry as it often does. These chastisements, although unwarranted, are for spiritual improvement. In fact, they may be the only way to perfection:

You must become poor yourself before you can fully appreciate the good qualities of the poor – before you can sympathise with them, and fully recognize them as your brethren in the flesh. Their benevolence to each other, exercised amidst want and privation, as far surpasses the munificence of the rich towards them, as the exalted philanthropy of Christ and his disciples does the Christianity of the present day. (Moodie, 2007, 285)

Linking poverty, behavior and Christ is as old as the religion itself. Not all poor obviously, only the ones who behave in the appropriate manner – like, although it goes unsaid, her. The blessed people here are not simply the poor but the *benevolent* poor; that is, the poor who behave in genteel fashion, like the author herself. The poor who do not accept their station beatifically would not earn Moodie's praise.

Lt. Moodie served in the militia to put down the rebellion that occurred in Canada in 1836-7. The steady wage earned there allowed the Moodies to pay off some of the debt they had incurred in building their new life in Canada. Mrs. Moodie writes a letter to the governor petitioning for a full time job for her husband, attributing the idea as an answer to prayer. Regardless of the explanation, the letter – along with her husband's faithful and capable service during the rebellion – started a series of events that led to full time work as a sheriff, allowing the Moodies to leave the woods and live in the town of Belleville. Loyalty, courage, obedience –

Moodie's core virtues – are finally rewarded and her dream is realized: redemption from exile in the wilderness: "a gift sent from heaven to remove us from the sorrows and poverty with which we were surrounded in the woods." (Moodie, 2007, 321)

While these value-laden judgments may strike the modern reader as excessive, they are in fact regular features in literature of the period and it is to them we will next direct our attention.

#### 4. Melodrama and Its Features

*Roughing It* connects with its readership in several important ways, some of which, as we have seen, are ideological. Susanna Moodie uses evaluative language to draw sympathy to herself as the suffering heroine. Moodie's deprivations were real enough and we can trace their causes to issues in English society, namely the profound socio-economic impact of the Industrial Revolution. A victim of its own success, the Industrial Revolution displaced countless people and, much as the French Revolution did, completely overturned reality for an entire nation. One of the cultural responses to these upheavals was melodrama. Melodrama emerged out of the cultural tumult following the French Revolution. The word *melodrama* is a fusion of *melos* – music – and drama; literally then we have drama that is set to music, which points to melodrama's origin on the French stage in the late eighteenth century. The late 18th and early 19th centuries was an age in which the old sacred agricultural order and its attendant values broke down and a new capitalist, urban paradigm emerged. Martha Vicinus writes, "melodrama was the working out in popular culture of the conflict between the family and its values and the economic and social assault of industrialization (1981, 128)." In his book *The Melodramatic Imagination*, Peter Brooks says, "Melodrama starts from and expresses the anxiety brought by a frightening new world in which the traditional patterns of moral order no longer provide the necessary social glue (1976, 20)." Brooks goes on to describe melodrama not as a discrete genre but an "imaginative mode" or a way of imagining and representing. He goes on to say, "near universal connotations of melodrama: indulgences of strong emotionalism, moral polarization, extreme states of being, situations and actions; overt villainy, persecution of the good and final reward of

virtue; inflated and extravagant expression (1976, 11).” Mercer and Shingler (2004, 12) claim melodramas often describe the tensions in the middle class family “confronted by economic and social forces” to remain loyal, dutiful and productive. Singer (2001, 40) says that melodramas “are designed to create a nervous charge in the spectator, a kind of sensory excess” and allow us to “feel sympathy for the virtues of beset victims,” accomplishing “a retrieval and staging of virtue through adversity and suffering (6).” Melodrama was a reflex reaction against the removal of the home as the main stage of life and the family as its main protagonists; melodrama, particularly domestic melodrama, sought to reunite the home and the family against the onslaught of capitalism. Victorian novelist Charles Dickens was a master of the melodramatic mode, using it to give voice to victims of the emerging capitalist oligarchy of early industrial England.

The following list is adapted from Singer (2001, 44-47) who has identified five features of melodrama: (1) Pathos, or the evocation of powerful feelings of pity as when someone suffers unjustly. Moodie’s ideology is partially based on the idea that she is undeserved of both her exile and the unfair treatment at the hands of her neighbors. (2) Overwrought emotion, or intense, excessive emotional displays, used in an attempt to resonate with readers. The next section describes examples of this characteristic. (3) Moral absolutism. Right and wrong are clear: heroes wear white, villains black. I showed evidence of this in the section on ideology. (4) Nonclassical narrative structure. *Roughing It* is a collection of sketches, rather than a linear, logical narrative. (5) Sensationalism, or “an aesthetic of astonishment”. In a sense the whole of *Roughing It* is sensationalistic. Who of us today can imagine a forced exile into an untamed country where neighbors try to cheat you out of almost everything you own? Where the land is frozen six months of the year and the other six are spent in a mad scramble to grow enough to eat? Fires, tornadoes, wild animals, outbreaks of disease, the list goes on. If we didn’t know it was autobiographical we might think it a fiction.

#### **4.1 Melodrama in *Roughing It***

It would be difficult not to be sympathetic with the sufferings of the Moodie family

as written in *Roughing It*, even as a jaded modern urbanite bombarded by stimuli at every turn. Such is testament to its longevity. Singer writes that successful melodrama enables us to empathize with the virtues of the victims in the narrative (2001, 6). In a kind of psychological swap we can leave our sufferings with the heroine as she suffers and receive edification from her virtues as they are brought out through conflict. Although melodrama offers us a Manichean black and white moral universe and we ultimately sympathize with the heroine and rejoice in her eventual victory, we can at the same time “savor the sensuality and corruption” of the villain as he is brought to destruction (Vicus, 1981, 132). Moodie portrays Emily Seaton not as evil but uncultured and unlearned and we do take pleasure in her iconoclasm and raw power. Mrs. Moodie is repelled by Mr. Malcolm’s indolence and yet writes that she could listen to his tales of travel for hours and hours (Moodie, 2007, 249). He does have a roguish charm.

#### 4.2 Melodrama and Excess

‘Weepies’ ...are addressed to women in their traditional status under patriarchy – as wives, mothers, abandoned lovers – or in their traditional status as bodily hysteria or excess, as in the frequent case of the woman “afflicted” with a deadly or debilitating disease. (Williams, 2012, 161)

Pertinent features of ‘bodily excess’ – the spectacle of a body caught in the grips of intense sensation or emotion. In melodrama the body spectacle is featured most sensationally in weeping. Williams goes on to describe melodrama has having a focus on ecstasy, in the sense of a rapturous, cathartic excess, most often expressed as sobs of anguish. She claims the success of melodrama seems to be measured by the degree to which the audience sensation – or reader in our case - mimics what is portrayed in art. Moodie’s tears are features of her initial ego death in the first part of *Roughing It* as she simultaneously tries to let go of her beloved England and survive in the Canadian bush. A group of fellow emigrants is celebrating a letter from home but Moodie can only weep at the memory of England (2007, 32). She again finds herself crying for joy when she dreams she is back home and then produces real tears upon waking to find she has not left Canada (Moodie, 2007, 60).

Joy or sorrow, tears are the answer. Of course whether or not the reader sympathizes with Moodie to the point of crying is subjective but the author certainly makes liberal use of scenes of intense weeping in the text.

Moodie is also driven to tears by the spectacle of nature (2007, 18, 25) and at the thought of leaving the wilderness that had brought her so much sorrow and grief (Moodie, 2007, 324). In a particularly emotive scene where Mrs. Moodie and a party trek some twenty miles through the wilderness in the dead of winter to bring food to a starving family all the females involved end up weeping as the goods are handed over (Moodie, 2007, 311).

These emotional excesses are cathartic for character and reader. Particularly in melodrama, tears may be the only way a suffering female character can relieve the stress of maintaining her virtue in a world that would see her brought to ruin. In those situations: "Tears are the best balm that can be applied to the anguish of the heart...tears contribute largely both to soften and to heal the wounds from whence they flow (Moodie, 2007, 40)."

Williams writes, "Feminists have described spectacles of intense suffering and loss as masochistic (2012, 167)." Masochism defined here as "gratification from pain imposed on one's self." As described in the earlier section on the spiritual aspect of Moodie's ideology, Moodie's obedience and loyalty to her Victorian values often results in long periods of suffering and conflict with those around her. Why bother, we might ask? It may be a modern judgment to say she is a masochist – with our aversion to even the least bit of avoidable discomfort – but Moodie's suffering is proof of her right path and, while pleasure might be too strong a word, there is comfort in that suffering for her. And if her suffering rings true to the reader then the melodrama has served its purpose because as Singer says, "Melodrama is so moving because it hits home (2001, 158)."

As we will see in the following section, extremes are not the sole domain of melodrama. Certain archetypal structures also employ black and white moral poles as a way to deliver their unequivocal message.

## 5. *Roughing It* as Quest-Romance

The bible provided Moodie with not only spiritual ideology and many rhetorical allusions but also a structural basis. As we have seen in multiple instances, Moodie makes no qualms about her desire to return to her origins, her beloved England. In this sense, there is a large strain of wish-fulfillment influencing her actions and writings during her life in Canada. According to Canadian literary critic Northrop Frye (1957, 186), of all literary forms the romance most closely resembles the wish-fulfillment dream. The key feature of the romance is an adventure, or quest, which leads up to some climactic event. As we have seen Susanna Moodie's dream is to return home although Moodie's quest doesn't ultimately lead her back to England; however, England, through the local colonial government, does reclaim Moodie at the end of the story by employing her husband as a sheriff and thereby leads her out of the wilderness and back into civilization. Frye goes on to divide the hero's quest into four main stages, summarized in Table 1. Details of the parallels in *Roughing It* follow.

TABLE 1: Stages of the Hero's Quest in *Roughing It in the Bush*

	STAGE OF HERO'S QUEST	IN <i>ROUGHING IT</i>
1	Conflict or <i>agon</i>	Battle to maintain virtues
2	Death-struggle or <i>pathos</i>	Loss of homeland, genteel lifestyle
3	Hero's disappearance or <i>sparagmos</i>	Accelerated aging, physical changes
4	Hero's exaltation or <i>anagnorisis</i>	Moodie emerges from wilderness

In stage one the hero/heroine moves from conflict to conflict, leading up to the final showdown with the nemesis. As we have shown, in order to maintain her world view Moodie is in constant conflict with both the inhabitants and the land. Stage two is the death-struggle, wherein the nemesis, and often the hero, dies (Frye, 1957, 192). Moodie's death is a spiritual one, as she has to give up her comfortable existence and beloved homeland. Stage three is characterized by the hero's disappearance, distribution throughout the natural world, or disfigurement. Moodie

emerges from her seven years of wilderness exile physically and emotionally scarred: "my person had been rendered coarse by hard work and exposure to the weather. I looked double the age I really way, and my hair was already thickly sprinkled with grey (321-2)."

Referring to herself in the third person gives Moodie psychological distance from her pioneer self. The image in the mirror brooks no evasion; she cannot deny what her eyes tell her. This brief description would likely draw a lot of sympathy from female readers, appealing as it does to basic feminine vanities: the body, the face, and the hair. Such are the costs of redemptive suffering. Moodie has grown spiritually in the process. She claims to now prefer her own company, having achieved a self-reliance in the wilderness that she would not give up:

I clung to my solitude. I did not like to be dragged from in to mingle in gay scenes, in a busy town, and with gaily-dressed people. I was no longer fit for the world; I had lost all relish for the pursuits and pleasures which are so essential to its votaries. (Moodie, 2007, 322)

The fourth and final stage is the reappearance, recognition and exaltation of the hero, or *anagnorisis* (Frye, 1957, 186). Moodie does not allow the quest to go this far in *Roughing It*. Her exaltation would wait until the second part of her story that would appear in *Life in the Clearings*, the next installment of her experiences in Canada.

The conflict in quest-romance, like melodrama, is not complex. Frye writes that, "everything is focused on a conflict between the hero and his enemy, and all the reader's values are bound up with the hero (Frye, 2007, 187)." Moodie makes every effort to draw reader sympathy to her; characters are clearly for or against the quest. What is Moodie's quest? Clearly she has no mythological enemy but her task is almost mythological in proportion and difficulty: to cultivate the land and the people of Canada. The word cultivate in this sense carries both meanings: to make the land fertile and to develop the people. She does this in order to recreate her lost home in England and in accomplishing that, rediscover her origins and complete the mythical cycle of return.

## 5.1 Quest-romance setting

In the quest-romance, the hero does battle with evil in the forsaken places of the world. Theseus had to wind his way through the dark labyrinth to meet the Minotaur (Hamilton, 1942, 212). In the Old Testament, Jonah spent three nights in the belly of a whale. Writing in the Victorian era to a faithful readership, Moodie drew heavily on the quest-romance myths in the bible. Frye (1957, 191) describes two ‘concentric quest-myths’ present in the bible, both typologically identical. The first is what he terms ‘Genesis-apocalypse’, in which Adam/humanity is cast out of Eden, loses the tree of life and wanders in the labyrinth of history until redemption. The second he calls ‘Exodus-millennium.’ The nation of Israel is cast out of its inheritance and wanders in the labyrinths of Egypt and Babylonian captivity until redeemed and restored to their original state of grace in the Promised Land. Typologically speaking, Moodie’s quest in *Roughing It* is identical to these. She is cast out of her idyllic English paradise and into the forsaken wilderness for seven and a half years until redeemed by the same government that had forced her exile.

Frye breaks down the quest-romance into what he terms ‘six isolatable phases’ (1957, 198). The hero is born or enters into the world via water, flood or boat. *Roughing It* begins with an account of arrival in Upper Canada (Quebec) by ship from England. Upon arrival, the heroine enters into the idyllic, pastoral phase. Adam and Eve’s short existence in the Garden of Eden is the corresponding archetype. Moodie writes of being in a daydream as she contemplates, “the surpassing grandeur of the scene that rose majestically before me...a thrill of wonder and delight pervaded my mind...struck...by the sublime views...the view down the St. Lawrence...is the finest of all, scarcely surpassed by anything in the world (2007, 17-18).” These first descriptions of Canada would be at home in any compendium of period Romantic literature.

As Moodie continues her voyage down the St. Lawrence, so too do her mythical parallels as she draws on the *ex nihilo* creation account recorded in Genesis: “Cradled in the arms of the St. Lawrence, and basking in the bright rays of the morning sun, the island and its sister group looked like a second Eden just

emerged from the waters of chaos (2007, 24).” Like Adam and Eve in the Garden, Mrs. Moodie’s sojourn in paradise didn’t last long.

The third phase is the quest itself that has been dealt with in earlier sections. To summarize, the quest involves the heroine’s struggle to maintain her virtues in the face of those who would see her fall.

The Moodies arrived at Montreal in the middle of a devastating cholera epidemic raging in Canadian and European ports that would go on to claim thousands of lives: death awaits all in the fallen world outside of paradise. Along with death, hunger; the Moodies’ ship had run out of provisions two weeks earlier (2007, 17) and the bread and butter promised the passengers upon arrival was delayed. Charmed by the beauty of the new land, Mrs. Moodie was eager to explore: “I long to see the lovely island. It looks a perfect paradise at this distance,” to which the experienced captain replies, “Don’t be too sanguine, Mrs. Moodie; many things look well at a distance which are bad enough when near (2007, 19).” Although it looked like Eden from afar, far from an Eden it was.

Moodie begins her battle/quest almost immediately upon arriving in her description of the inhabitants of Grosse Isle, the customs island/quarantine facility near Montreal. They, “were running to and fro, screaming and scolding in no measured terms. The confusion of Babel was among them.” Babel is a biblical allusion from Genesis to people who had been cursed by god. Apparently these people had been cursed too. They are “uncouth...vicious, uneducated barbarians...perfectly destitute of shame, or even a sense of common decency.” Some of her fellow passengers, “chiefly honest Scotch laborers...who while on board ship had conducted themselves with the greatest propriety...no sooner set foot upon the island than they became infected by the same spirit of insubordination and misrule, and were just as insolent and noisy as the rest (2007, 20).” As we have seen, these strongly evaluative statements set the template for the characterizations that followed in *Roughing It*. In both quest and melodrama, people are good or evil, for or against the heroine in her quest to cultivate and civilize.

Although Moodie attempts rhetorical understatement in the following

quotation, she clearly communicates her disapproval and, hence, highlights her heroic struggle:

I was not a little amused at the extravagant expectations entertained by some of our steerage passengers. The sight of the Canadian shores had changed them into persons of great consequence. The poorest and the worst-dressed, the least-deserving and the most repulsive in mind and morals, exhibited the most disgusting traits of self-importance. Vanity and presumption seemed to possess them altogether (2007, 27).

“Men, *in Canada* (italics mine), may call one another rogues and miscreants ... through the medium of the newspapers (Moodie, 2007, 56).” The implication of course that in England, fount of all civilization and culture, men never conduct themselves in such fashion; in particular, they do not use the press for, “abusing their betters with impunity.” (56). People must always know their own station and those of the people around them.

The fourth phase are the glimpses of the pre-fall/redeemed society that occasionally appear throughout the story. The purpose of this, according to Frye, is to show that the heroine’s integrity is faithfully maintained throughout the conflict, thereby giving hope to the reader that all will end well. Moodie maintains this with her humble humor and unshakable faith in British manners and culture. Additionally the reader is ‘in the know’ because of the foreshadowing in the introduction to the book. We already know how it will turn out, we just don’t know the gory details. Moody opines: “Canada! thou art a noble, free, and rising country – the great fostering mother of the orphans of civilization. The offspring of Britain, thou must be great, and I will and do love thee, land of my adoption, and of my children’s birth” (2007, 49) Perhaps Moodie herself embodies this phase.

The fifth phase is a somewhat distant, reflective, idyllic view of the experienced conflict, similar in tone to phase two. The sixth and final phase is the breakup of society into smaller units, much as the Fellowship of the Rings part ways, older and wiser, at the end of Tolkien’s modern myth *The Lord of the Rings*. *Roughing It* has neither phase five nor six; those belong the second of Moodie’s two

books on emigrant life in Canada. If the reader wishes to know the end of the story, he will have to move on to *Life in The Clearing* as *Roughing It* ends abruptly, leaving the reader if not unsatisfied, certainly eager to learn of life in the city and if it would turn out better than life in the bush.

## 6. Discussion

*Roughing It in the Bush* is not a work of art. The narrative ends just short of heaven's gate; Mrs. Moodie and her husband are redeemed out of exile but we do not get a view of their new circumstances in Belleville. Seeing the light shine from heaven obliquely is not as satisfying as beholding the source directly. Some critics have accused Moodie of being inconsistent in tone and narrative, even schizophrenic (Atwood, 1972). And numerous other questions related to authenticity arise. Were the characters really that bad? Did Mr. Seaton deserve to be called Satan? Susanna Moodie relied on her writing for income and personal validation. How much did the need to be successful color her writing in both tone and content? While Manichaeism makes for good melodrama and a compelling quest narrative, real people are complex and rarely fall into neat, distinct categories.

These questions aside, Moodie has provided a valuable and insightful document into early Canadian immigrant life that still remains a compelling narrative today. In addition, by reading her account as a quest-romance employing a melodramatic mode, we can refute those claims by recognizing its internal emotional and thematic consistency. Canada is still a nation of immigrants and we would do well to remember that uprooting ones self from home and hearth and moving across an ocean to rebuild a life in a new country is one of life's great struggles. While Susanna Moodie had the advantage of a common language with many of her new neighbors, analysis presented in this paper showed that it was not linguistic differences that caused misunderstandings, but sociological and schematic ones. How much more difficult it must be for the immigrant who has the additional burden of a language different from his or her new neighbor. Susanna Moodie,

backwoods saint, has done us a service then by skillfully weaving a series of sketches of suffering, patience and redemption, patterning them on timeless archetypes, inviting the reader to share in her pathos, which people continue to do to the present day.

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(Summary)

First published in 1852, *Roughing It in the Bush, or Life in Canada*, Susanna Moodie's autobiographical account of her experiences immigrating to rural Ontario, continues to be an influential work in Canadian literature. Mrs. Moodie's stated purpose for writing the book is to warn prospective upper middle class immigrants that their background and expectations made them almost sure to lose everything to the raw Canadian wilderness, despite what they may have been told or had chosen to believe. This paper examines the techniques she uses to meet her goal.

*Roughing It* takes the form of the sketch, a popular literary form of the period. These 'snapshots' of character, people and events are described in a melodramatic mode, characterized by extremes of emotions, situations, actions, and right and wrong. Mrs. Moodie structures the book as a romantic quest following archetypal exile-redemption cycles, a pattern often used in classical and spiritual literature and most familiar to her readership through the bible. Although some critics have characterized *Roughing It* as non-linear and even schizophrenic, viewed through the described frameworks, the book continues to offer valuable historical insight to the contemporary reader.