

DAUGHTERS OF THE LAND:
AN ECOFEMINIST ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN FEMALE
ADOLESCENT PROTAGONISTS AND LANDSCAPE IN THREE VERSE NOVELS
FOR CHILDREN

by

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B. Arts, Queen's University, 2005

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

(Children's Literature)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

April 2007

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ABSTRACT

This thesis looks at the connection between female adolescent protagonists and their respective landscapes in the children's verse novels *Out of the Dust* and *Aleutian Sparrow*, both by Karen Hesse, and *Ann and Seamus* by Kevin Major. In each of these texts the protagonists must choose between life at home and a new life elsewhere. Drawing on ecofeminist philosophy, specifically the works of Ynestra King, Carolyn Merchant, Annette Kolodny and Judith Plant, this thesis explores the factors that led to all three protagonists choosing to stay or return home.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to my thesis supervisor, Judy Brown, and the members of my thesis committee, Alison Acheson and Judi Saltman, who have provided support and direction throughout the completion of this thesis. I would also like to thank Sue Hunt, Danielle Cossarini and Shelby Tay for their suggestions and technical support.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

“And the Tree was happy.”

This refrain, from Shel Silverstein’s much loved *The Giving Tree*, has forever haunted me. In this deceptively simple story, a female tree gives and gives to a thankless boy, who becomes a bitter old man, until she has nothing but a stump to offer him as a place of refuge. The book has been interpreted as a parable for a mother’s love for her child, but it also sparks many issues for feminists and environmentalists. *The Giving Tree* speaks volumes about gender roles and about how people treat the environment.

Growing up in a rural area of southwestern Ontario, many of my fondest childhood memories revolve around being outdoors. At every opportunity, I was outside playing hide and go seek in the cornfield or finding the perfect clearing for a fort in the woods. I can remember the excitement of the first thaw, when the air suddenly smelled like spring after months of the cold, salted smell of winter. In my reading today, I am always aware of how setting is described, how the protagonists interact with that setting. My own landscape was so important to me as a child that I look today for literary characters who are also deeply connected to their natural surroundings. It isn’t enough to visualize a setting of a particular narrative; I want to have a complete sensory experience of it.

During the summer of 2006, when I began reading about landscape in literature, feminism, and ecofeminism, I immediately thought of *The Giving Tree*, and how this text troubled me as a child. Whether or not the text is intended to be ironic or satirical, as suggested in Walter L. Strandberg and Norma J. Livo’s article “*The Giving Tree* or There

is a Sucker Born Every Minute,” it is still widely read and presents troubling assumptions about women and nature. Mary Daly calls *The Giving Tree* a story of “female rape and dismemberment”: “Here is a model of masochism for female readers of all ages, and of sadism for boys of all ages” (90). What I find most interesting in *The Giving Tree* is that the central figure is a tree described as having emotions. Anthropomorphism of animals in children’s literature is very common, but it is less common that trees, plant life, and nonhuman nature are given emotional agency, as well as other forms of agency usually reserved for human characters. *The Giving Tree* is arguably an ecocentric text, meaning that the focus is on the natural world and not the position of humans in this world. What constitutes a happy tree and a happy human in contemporary texts for children? Is there a way in which both tree and human can be happy while coexisting in a shared space? In an increasingly environmentally conscious world, how has this correlation between gender and nature changed, or has it? *The Giving Tree* is a problematic text that has led me to seek answers to these questions in the contemporary novels examined in my thesis.

Rationale for Selecting Texts

When I began thinking about my thesis, I knew I wanted to work with verse novels. Having recently discovered them, I was enthralled with their unique form. In my opinion, the verse novel is especially adept at conveying voice and emotion. I initially considered using verse novels such as Steven Herrick’s *A place like this*, Virginia Euwer Wolff’s *Make Lemonade* and *True Believer*, Robert Cormier’s *Frenchtown Summer*, and Pamela Porter’s *The Crazy Man* in my exploration of the relationship between setting and protagonist. However, because of my personal interests in the wilderness landscapes and feminism, I narrowed my focus to works that take place in an isolated, wilderness setting

featuring a female adolescent protagonist. I have also selected texts in which the protagonist is given the choice of staying in her natural environment or seeking a new life in a more comfortable setting. In my reading, three novels emerged featuring these notable relationships between the characters and the physical setting: Karen Hesse's *Out of the Dust* (1997) and *Aleutian Sparrow* (2003), and Kevin Major's *Ann and Seamus* (2003).

In all three the setting is isolated. The communities are small and rural—not modern urban centres. *Out of the Dust* is set in a small farming community in the Oklahoma panhandle between 1934-1935; *Aleutian Sparrow* takes place in and around the Aleutian Islands as well as off the coast of Alaska between 1942-1945; *Ann and Seamus* takes place on Isle aux Morts, an island off the coast of Newfoundland, in 1828. In these historical settings, communications technology is limited, a further source of isolation. This remoteness from the outside world creates a very tightly knit community. And this formation of functional communities is an important component of ecofeminism, which I intend on exploring in my thesis.

Survival is a central concern in each of these novels. The residents of all three communities live off the land, to varying extents, relying for their livelihoods on farming, fishing, or hunting. At times, nature is at odds with the human characters. The landscapes become threatening and dangerous. In each novel, at some point, characters rely on scavenging for survival. The family units are not financially secure. Unlike the traditional outdoor survival story, in which a single or small group of protagonists is temporarily lost in a wilderness setting, these communities live in that wilderness setting. Their day to day lives are deeply affected by their surroundings. For these families, there

is no “return” to a civilized setting. The characters occasionally dream of escape, yet when given the opportunity to realize this dream, the protagonists remain in their wilderness homes.

The similarities between and among the three female protagonists in the primary works I have selected also informed my decision to choose these specific texts. All three protagonists are female adolescents. Interestingly, they are all described as being born of the land. In *Out of the Dust*, Billie Jo is “born at home, on the kitchen floor” (Hesse 3), and her maturation is paralleled to the maturation of wheat: “As summer wheat came ripe / so did I” (3). The analogy between the wheat and Billie Jo is extended throughout the novel. Ann, the hero of *Ann and Seamus*, describes herself as “born to the ways of the sea,” and her first experiences as an infant have to do with her surroundings: “lungs first felt salt air / that I first laid eyes on salt water” (Major 16). Ann is born to live her life in relation with the sea.

Although nothing is stated directly about Vera’s birth in relation to the land, the first poem in *Aleutian Sparrow* opens with Vera’s guardians urging her to return home to Kashega for the summer. A few pages later, Vera describes how she came to live with her friend Albert’s more traditional Aleut family instead of her own Mother, who prefers “all things cheechako” (Hesse 12), which is a disparaging term for Americans living south of Alaska. Her mother prefers the store she works in, magazines, and all things imported, but Vera loves the old stories told by Alfred’s family. Alfred’s grandfather tells Vera that her work “is to know the ways of our people” (13), and it is clear as the novel unfolds that Vera accepts and enjoys her work. All three girls are native to their landscapes and recognize a bond between themselves and the land. This bond is

important, as it appears to tie them to the land, even when they are faced with seemingly intolerable living conditions.

A journey, or the possibility of a journey, becomes a central part of each of these novels. At some point, all three protagonists consider the possibility of escape. Billie Jo describes how restless she feels in the “little Panhandle shack we call home” (Hesse 4), and as the tragedies pile up, her refrain of longing, to get “out of the dust,” is used more frequently. Ann wonders about life “beyond the sea” (Major 26) and questions her family’s way of life: “This, the reason we are on this earth / to turn cod into dried salt cod / for the tables of the world?” (18). In *Aleutian Sparrow*, Vera goes on a number of journeys; she travels back and forth between Kashega, her home village, and Unalaska Village for schooling, and then is evacuated to Wrangell and eventually Ward Lake. Vera admits that “[m]ost of us dreamed of going Outside, hungry for a taste / of life beyond the Aleutians” (Hesse 139). It is clear that although these three young women are born of the land, they are not immune to the pull of the outside world, and the possibility that life could be bigger, grander, less filled with hardship.

In my thesis, I explore what conclusions can be drawn about the nature of home from these novels. All three protagonists make the decision to return or stay at home, despite the opportunity to venture elsewhere. I am interested in what informs their decision and whether or not it is related to ideas of femininity and the roles of women. Is the decision to stay a feminist or anti-feminist one? Is this decision indicative of a child, a young adult, or an adult?

Introduction to Primary Texts

The first time I read Karen Hesse's *Out of the Dust* I felt emotionally and physically exhausted. I was unable to put the book down, and so read it in one sitting. Never in my life had I read a story so profoundly affecting. It was the first verse novel I had ever read, and I opened the book unaware of its somewhat unusual form. Joy Alexander calls Hesse the verse novel's "foremost exponent" (275). *Out of the Dust* (1997) is the first verse novel in children's literature to receive significant attention. It is mentioned in every article I have found about the verse novel, usually as the novel that first brought recognition to the genre. Patty Campbell includes *Out of the Dust* in her definition of "good" verse novels, which "fit that dictionary definition of 'poetry,' especially in their use of condensed language, natural cadences, and metaphor" (n.pag.). According to Alexander, Hesse makes a unique contribution to the genre by anchoring the narrative in historical fact that "moves toward documentary" (276). One of the strengths of Hesse's writing, Alexander adds, is her use of imagery, particularly nature imagery: "Hesse's mastery of free verse is notably apparent in her descriptions of the natural elements of rain, snow, wind, dust" (276). As well as being the winner of the 1998 Newbery Award, *Out of the Dust* was the recipient of the Scott O'Dell Award (1998); it was named an ALA Notable Children's Book (1998), an ALA Best Book for Young Adults (1998), and A *School Library Journal* Best Book of the Year (1998), among many other accolades. Despite this widespread recognition, there is very little scholarship on the book. In terms of critical analysis, Alison Halliday's article "Place in Poetry; Poetry in its Place," is the only serious scholarship I could find that analyses *Out of the Dust*. This article is examined in my literature review.

Aleutian Sparrow (2003) is Hesse's third verse novel. It is on many best book lists and is a current Junior Library Guild Selection. Joy Alexander briefly examines *Aleutian Sparrow*, noting that "[t]he verse-novel is an appropriate genre to express the story-telling culture of the Aleuts. Hesse explicitly links her story with this oral tradition" (278). Most of the initial reviews were favourable, describing the book as "graceful" (Brabander 82), "powerful" (Oluonye 166), and "atmospheric" (Roback 104). Hesse is well noted for her historical fiction and in each review, significant attention is paid to the historical period of the novel. Jennifer Brabander also calls *Aleutian Sparrow* a story about "oppression and survival" (82). The term survival is used by reviewers in reference to all three of my texts; it is a concept I explore in chapter three and four of this thesis.

Kevin Major, author of my third primary text, *Ann and Seamus*, is a well-respected Canadian writer. He is noted for his "strong sense of place," which is established through landscape, dialect, rhythm, and vocabulary (Brown 24). Judith Saltman claims that Major captures "the essence of Newfoundland" in his books, specifically referring to "the people's hardy individualism," and "their devotion to the island" (67). In the second edition of the *International Companion to Children's Literature*, Mavis Reimer cites Major as an author who employs the traditional boys' survival story, which she defines as a "physical, spiritual, and moral testing of the young male protagonist . . . ultimately . . . meant to prepare the boys for leadership in a civilised society" (1012).

Major is also a noted experimentalist with narrative structure. Lloyd Brown gives an overview of the different narrative forms used by Major, including first person confessional, multiple narrations, and the unique snapshot structure used in *thirty-six*

exposures (24). Given Major's inclination toward experimental forms, it is not surprising that he would venture to tell the story of Ann Harvey in verse.

Unlike *Out of the Dust* and *Aleutian Sparrow*, which position fictional characters in a specific and meticulously researched historical setting, *Ann and Seamus* is based on a real historical figure. Major includes a brief historical note at the back of the novel. The note begins with the statement that "[t]he rescue by the Harvey family of 163 people shipwrecked off Newfoundland's south coast in 1828 is a true story" (108). Major lists what few facts are known about Ann Harvey, but is careful to state that "*Ann and Seamus* is in part a work of fiction" (108). Major calls the story of Ann "a symbol of the steadfastness and bravery of the early settlers of Newfoundland and Labrador" (109). Like Hesse's works, *Ann and Seamus* has been favourably received, described as "elegant and moving" (Almon 182), and "powerful and vivid" (Pantaleo n.pag.). Duncan Greenlaw gives a particularly thorough review of the book, which he refers to a "story of displacement and isolation" and "a narrative of resistance" (163). *Ann and Seamus* was a 2004 Geoffrey Bilson Award Honour Book and was shortlisted for the 2003 Governor-General's literary award for English language children's literature.

In my literature review, I begin by looking at how children and nature have been closely associated in children's poetry, and how this tradition continues in the contemporary poetic form of the verse novel. In my critical reading it became apparent that the wilderness is a major component of both poetry and the outdoor survival story, also referred to as the boys' adventure story, and so included is an analysis of wilderness traditions in the outdoor adventure story. My survey of the critical work done on the outdoor survival story raises further questions about girl heroes and gender in the genre,

such as what roles have girls taken on in wilderness settings? Considering the historical nature of the outdoor survival story as well as my primary texts, I also delve into issues of gender in historical fiction. Finally, the strong presence of the environment in *Out of the Dust*, *Ann and Seamus* and *Aleutian Sparrow* led me to ecocriticism. I examine the critical work on ecocriticism and children's literature, eventually narrowing my focus to ecofeminist readings of children's texts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Nature in Poetry for Children

It would be difficult to analyse the verse novel without exploring the traditions in children's poetry that have influenced this new and exciting genre. I have doggedly searched for and read twenty-three verse novels since first reading *Out of the Dust*. I believe the greatest strength of the genre is the intricate relationship between form and content. Poems have the ability to convey emotion in a way that prose cannot. Patty Campbell also recognizes this quality when she comments: "emotion is what the verse novel—and poetry—is all about" (n. pag.). Myra Cohn Livingston, a recognized and applauded children's poet, also lauds the special ability of poetry to reach readers on an emotional level: "Speak to us of our emotions, our experience, in a way only poetry can!" (7). And in her Newbery Award acceptance speech for *Out of the Dust*, Hesse said that she

never attempted to write this book any other way than in free verse. The frugality of life, the hypnotically hard work of farming, the grimness of conditions during the dust bowl demanded an economy of words. Daddy and Ma and Billie Jo's rawboned life translated into poetry, and bless Scholastic for honoring that translation and producing *Out of the Dust* with the spare understatement I sought when writing it. (422)

Forms of expression are also a point of interest for feminists. In her introduction to *Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her*, Susan Griffin says that "[i]n the process of writing I found that I could best discover my insights about the logic of civilized man by going underneath logic, that is by writing associatively, and thus enlisting my intuition, or

uncivilized self. Thus my prose in this book is like poetry, and like poetry always begins with feeling” (xv). It is significant that in a book exploring the domination of both women and nature by men, Griffin felt that prose, especially formal academic prose, was an inadequate means by which to discover insight. Instead, she chose a writing style that allowed her to write “with feeling” (xv).

The relationship between poetry, nature, and emotion has been a recurring theme in my reading for this project. In her article “Of Epiphanies and Poets: Gene Stratton-Porter’s Domestic Transcendentalism,” Anne K. Phillips explores the philosophy of Transcendentalism, as defined by Ralph Waldo Emerson, in the work of Gene Stratton-Porter. Transcendentalism occurs when a poet’s encounter with nature leads to an epiphany, or heightened perception of the world, which is then translated into a poem for others to read and ideally to have the same experience of epiphany as the writer. Significantly, Stratton-Porter’s work features both female and male protagonist/poets, suggesting that the role of poet is not restricted to one gender. Both Emerson and Stratton-Porter demonstrate how the poet is “the most able member of society to translate nature/spirit into comprehensible truths” (155), suggesting first that there are truths to be learned from the natural world, and second, that there is a quality in poetry that allows these truths to become evident to the reader.

According to Morag Styles, “[t]he most consistent feature in poetry for children over 300 years is the centrality of nature as a theme” (*From the Garden* 64). Much of Styles’ comprehensive and analytical book, *From the Garden to the Street: An Introduction to 300 Years of Poetry for Children*, is dedicated to tracing themes and motifs through the history of English language poetry for children. Styles cites the

Romantics as the major influence in describing the relationship between children and the natural world, noting William Blake as “one of the first poets to emphasize the strong connection between nature and childhood, a ‘naturalness’ most earlier writers sought to curb” (47). She is not alone in this association, as most of the scholars and critics I have examined point to the Romantics as those who popularized the concept of children’s special closeness to the natural world. This closeness to nature was also considered by the Romantics to be a closeness to God. Styles identifies the three major aspects of Romanticism as nature, childhood, and religion (60). The Romantic writers were instrumental in creating an elemental rather than ornamental treatment of nature, setting the stage for interaction with rather than observation of the natural world: “Their praise was much more passionate, vivid, charged with feeling, both sensual and intellectual, and based on genuine familiarity and experience” (Styles 54).

The nature poetry of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was rural and often idyllic. In particular, “[t]he ‘garden’ motif became predominant during the nineteenth century” (Styles, *From the Garden* xx). These depictions of rural nature glorified a pastoral vision of the countryside in a time period when most of the population of England lived in the polluted, overpopulated and heavily industrialized urban centres. Styles references Raymond Williams’ examination of the pastoral and the urban in *The Country and the City*, adopting his construction of the country as “a natural way of life: of peace, of innocence, and simple virtue” (qtd. in Styles xx).

Greg Garrard discusses perceptions of the country as seen through a pastoral lens in *Ecocriticism*. He recognizes that the depiction of nature as pastoral has become “deeply entrenched” in Western literature and is “problematic” for environmentalists and

ecocritics (33). Despite the Romantics' attention to detail and their focus on the lived experience of nature, the tone of nature poetry for children was one of exultation, and did not acknowledge the harsh, violent, or unpredictable realities of the natural world (Garrard 33).

Interestingly, in Morag Styles' chapter devoted to nature poetry for children, a majority of the writers she mentions are female. In her introduction, she comments that one of the most fascinating aspects of her research was discovering a wealth of female poets who have otherwise received little or no critical attention (*From the Garden* xvii). Clearly there is a tradition in children's literature of female authors writing about nature. My primary texts fit into this tradition because the narratives are presented in first person, in the poetic voice of a female protagonist; it is important to distinguish that it is the protagonists that reflect this tradition, not the authors, as Major is male. I am interested in exploring how these three young women reconstruct their landscapes through poetry, and what insights my findings provide about the relationship between women and nature.

Humphrey Carpenter gives many examples of idyllic pastoral settings in his exploration of sacred places in *Secret Gardens: The Golden Age of Children's Literature, From Alice in Wonderland to Winnie the Pooh*. Carpenter's argument is that many children's authors have created sacred places or "arcadias" to replace tired or "stagnant" Judaeo-Christian concepts of Eden (13). He equates growing up with the loss of Paradise, which is in keeping with the Romantic perception of children being closer to nature, and therefore closer to God, than adults (9). Many of the "Edens" he discovers are located in the natural world, such as the garden in Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* and the world of the River in Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows*.

But how is nature presented in contemporary poetry for children? Styles describes late twentieth century poetry for children as “suburban, urban, multi-ethnic, and cosmopolitan” (*From the Garden* xxi). This move from the garden to the street does not mean that nature has been excluded from contemporary children’s poetry. Street poetry, also known as urban poetry, is often described as gritty and realistic, and according to Styles these two features have affected traditionally soft, pastoral nature poetry for children. Nature in contemporary poetry has been redefined by the gritty and realistic sensibilities of urban poetry. It is now more earthy, wild and realistic. Styles notes that the best poetry “reflects the everyday life” and has “bite and relevance” (xxi).

While nature is still a common theme in children’s poetry, the representation of the aesthetic of the natural world has changed. In the most recent edition of *The International Companion Encyclopedia of Children’s Literature*, nature, weather, and the sea are listed among the most popular, enduring themes in children’s poetry (Styles, “Poetry” 397). Ted Hughes is recognized by many critics and scholars as the modern nature poet for children. Styles explains that today “Nature may still be central, but it is more likely to come in the shape of muscular poetry about animals by poets like Hughes” (“Poetry” 398). In *From the Garden to the Street*, Styles says that Hughes brings a “toughness and honesty to the subject matter of animals and landscapes which owes little to nature poetry of the past . . . he respects young readers enough to write the truth—even when it is disturbing. Nature poetry for children has come of age” (79). Sheila Egoff and Judith Saltman also recognize Hughes as a major figure in the re-visioning of nature in children’s poetry, describing the new perspective as “transformed from gentle observation of the wind and the rain to a starker vision” (*New Republic* 292).

The poetry of Karen Hesse and Kevin Major, while clearly rooted in the traditions of nature writing for children, fits Styles' conception of contemporary poetry that reflects everyday life even when it is disturbing. Like the work of Ted Hughes, Hesse's and Major's work depicts landscapes just as terrifying as they are beautiful. So while examples of pastoral imagery appear in my primary texts, they are by no means the dominant form of nature imagery found in any of *Out of the Dust*, *Aleutian Sparrow*, or *Ann and Seamus*. In fact, it can be said that both Hesse and Major have moved away from an idyllic or pastoral portrayal of nature in favour of realistic observations or honest encounters with the natural world.

In her article "Place in Poetry, Poetry in its Place," Alison Halliday discusses the dilemma of contemporary poetry in Australia. Halliday is concerned that in Australia, children's poetry seems to be headed for obscurity. She worries that children's poems are becoming inaccessible, and have been "relegated to somewhere separate where they are remembered and treasured. They are special rather than an ordinary part of everyday life" (219). Through the examination of the success of Australian poet Steven Herrick, Halliday comes to the conclusion that the verse novel is a solution to this problem—an effective way to reintegrate poetry into mainstream reading. "Herrick's poetry," she writes, "may also be modern in its use of the verse novel, a form that has had a recent resurgence in poetry" (220). Halliday argues effectively that poetry for children has been modernized by the form of the verse novel. For my part, I am interested in what role, if any, the traditional connection between children and nature plays in this modern form of poetry.

The Verse Novel

The verse novel is a relatively new literary form in children's literature. Joy Alexander refers to the website of Sonya Sones, an author who has penned three verse novels of her own, which lists forty verse novels, and notes that "almost two-thirds of them have been published since 2000" (269). Most of these novels were published in the United States. The earliest examples are Brenda Seabrooke's *Judy Scuppernong* and Cynthia Rylant's *Soda Jerk*, both published in 1990 (269). Halliday traces the origins of the verse novel to medieval romance, lyric ballads, and finally to the verse narratives of the late 19th century and observes: "It is arguable whether this trend should be seen as a reworking of an old tradition or whether it is something new in poetry" (224).

Little scholarship has been published on this form. I discovered this scarcity of secondary sources while writing an article for *The Looking Glass*. Much of the material available is limited to individual reviews, and to a few notable article-length discussions on the form. Much of this material is sceptical and dismissive, brushing off the genre as a passing trend (VanSickle n. pag.). The most notable introduction to the verse novel is Joy Alexander's article "The Verse-novel: A New Genre." Alexander describes her stance as "that of a surveyor making a first sweep over new terrain, mapping out some parameters" (271). The article is an important introduction to the genre as a whole. She includes analysis of a few notable American and Australian verse novels. *Out of the Dust* and *Aleutian Sparrow* are included in her examination. Alexander describes the verse novel as a "modern means of rendering soliloquy or dramatic monologue" (271), and notes that the form lends itself both to audio books and dramatization and is an ideal medium because of the "immediacy and reality" of the language for "portraying a teenage

character experiencing the angst of adolescence” (271). Ed Sullivan calls the verse novel an appealing and accessible form that is “a shorter and faster read” than the traditional novel, which makes it ideal for a reluctant reader (44). Alison Halliday recognizes the complexities of structure in the verse novel, and how it invites active reading strategies: “When the verse novel is made up of a series of lyrics, there is not only the density of meaning within each poem, but the juxtaposition of each lyric allows for meaning to lie between (or across) the poems” (225).

One of the recurring praises of the verse novel is the exceptional use of voice. In reference to Virginia Euwer Wolff’s *Make Lemonade* series, Ed Sullivan says, “It is hard to imagine the powerful, real voices of these characters coming through as well in prose” (44). Similarly, Joy Alexander states, “the most prominent feature of the verse-novel is *voice*” (original emphasis 282).

In every article I have read on the verse novel, the question of genre and classification arises. I have attempted to tackle this issue by looking at the verse novel as a postmodern genre challenging to classify and evaluate. In “Subcategories Within the Emerging Genre of the Verse Novel,” I evaluated the term “verse novel” and identified a variety of subcategories that exist within the genre. These subcategories are influenced by poetry, various forms of drama, and orality: “The verse novel is a complex literary genre that draws on other contemporary trends, such as ethnotheatre, to create a truly hybrid form” (VanSickle n.pag.). Joy Alexander also links the verse novel with experimental works, a result of “loosening of styles and a blurring of genres” (271).

Although there is much to be explored about the form of the verse novel and how this form is suited to nature imagery, I do not intend to do so in my thesis. I am instead

interested in the use of landscape in these novels, and the relationship between it and the protagonists. I do think it is important that the natural environment is so significant in this form, which is understandable considering the long-standing tradition of nature in poetry for children and also considering Transcendentalism and the relationship between experience of nature, poetry, and epiphany. The primary texts in this paper are a contemporary incarnation of the tradition of nature in poetry for children, in which both the representation of nature and the poetry itself are contemporary.

Integral Settings in the Verse Novel

In *A Critical Handbook of Children's Literature*, Rebecca Lukens offers a standard definition of setting as time and place, citing mood and atmosphere as by-products of a particular setting (153). She then describes two fundamental types of setting. A backdrop setting is universal; in it, the particulars of time and place are fairly inconsequential and have little effect on the story (154). An integral setting is essential to the story and influences plot, character, and conflict (155). Katherine Paterson recognises the importance of integral settings, and describes the intricate relationship between setting and character: "Setting for me is not a background against which the story is played out, but the very stuff with which the story will be woven. The characters will not determine the setting, but the setting to a great extent will determine both what they will be like and how they will act" (qtd. in Townsend 183).

Many verse novels have integral settings. Alison Halliday's "Place in Poetry; Poetry in its Place" examines and compares the function of place in the verse novels *Out of the Dust* and Steven Herrick's *A place like this*. Halliday claims that especially in poetry, "place has a dual function: it is both realistic and metaphoric" (31). The realistic

function of place provides the obstacles and source of conflict necessary for the plot to advance. The metaphoric function allows the reader to make connections between the land and the characters, and to determine how they affect one another. Through this dual function the “texts create and reflect upon ideologies of place in which the reality of both places imposes upon the people but also enables them to achieve a greater understanding of themselves and their relationship with their place” (Halliday 34). It is this relationship with place that most interests me. In her analysis of *A place like this*, Halliday talks briefly about the multiple perspectives of the apple farm, which is the central setting of the novel. Each character has a unique perspective on the orchard, which is informed by personal needs and desires. Halliday does not, however, explore how gender influences these needs and desires. In my analysis I am interested in how gender affects relationship with place. Ultimately, Halliday comes to the conclusion that “through the interaction with something natural it is possible to come to an understanding of oneself” (37). In this thesis, I am also interested in how the protagonists’ interaction with their landscapes affects their notions of self.

Diane Hebley’s survey of New Zealand children’s fiction, *The Power of Place: Landscape in New Zealand Children’s Fiction, 1970-1989*, approaches New Zealand’s children’s literature from a geographic standpoint. Hebley divides the New Zealand landscape into distinct physical features and notes commonalities among the texts set in these places. For example, stories that feature mountains often deal with awe, terror, and other emotions related to the notion of the sublime (77). Hebley also examines the relationship between inner and outer landscapes. Her book is wide-ranging in scope and offers a solid analysis of how landscapes have affected the psyche of New Zealanders.

The Power of Place is important in my study because it analyzes the effect of landscape on characterization and conflict. While she does not include any verse novels in her survey, Hebley makes connections between physical landscapes and aspects of character and plot that will inform my examination of my primary texts. In her examination, she discovers that features of the landscape that are “inherently dangerous” will lead to fiction “that draws on the possibility of danger” (9). This is true in my primary texts, which I demonstrate in Chapter Four of my thesis.

Home in Children’s Literature

The concept of home in children’s literature is examined in Perry Nodelman and Mavis Reimer’s *The Pleasures of Children’s Literature*. In the standard pattern, home is a “safe but boring” environment, and the contrasting away setting is “exciting but dangerous” (201). Nodelman explains that the function of the pattern is “to learn the value of home by losing it and finding it again” (197). This pattern is the basis for many children’s stories, especially fantasy and adventure literature. Although the home/away/home pattern is common, it has many variations. Christopher Clausen expands on the concept to differentiate among stories for children, adolescents, and adults:

When home is a privileged place, exempt from the most serious problems of life and civilization—when home is where we ought, on the whole, to stay—we are probably dealing with a story for children. When home is the chief place from which we must escape, either to grow up . . . or to remain innocent, then we are involved in a story for adolescents or adults.
(qtd. in Nodelman 198)

Virginia L Wolf also looks at the construction of home in adult versus children's literature. In the article "From the Myth to the Wake of Home: Literary Houses," Wolf argues that in adult literature, home is an unattainable myth, but "most children's literature celebrates home and affirms belief in myth" (54). She cites Roger Sales' examples of "snug and cozy places" found throughout children's literature and worries that "they deny too much of reality" (66). In books for children approaching their teen years, Wolf recognizes a shift in the focus of the books from the idealization of home "to the need to protect, make, find, or recover a home" (56). This statement brings to mind Nodelman's clarification of the home/away/home pattern, which he reiterates as "home/away/new home," or "a move away from the familial experiences of home and through new experiences that lead on to a new and better understanding of what both home and oneself should be" (198).

Mavis Reimer revisits the concept of home in children's literature with Anne Rusnak in a survey of award-winning Canadian books published between 1975 and 1995, entitled "The Representation of Home in Canadian Children's Literature." This article provides many insightful observations about the notion of home in Canadian children's literature. Reimer and Rusnak discover that 'home' is not always safe but boring, and the child protagonist often seeks safety, order, calm, control, and constraint elsewhere—these are qualities that are typically associated with concepts of away, not home (19). Reimer and Rusnak also identify a subgroup of novels in which the home setting is invaded by 'away' in "various guises," such as "illness, death, mysterious strangers, unplanned pregnancy, ghosts, or supernatural powers" (19). With this particular subset of novels identified in the study, it is noted that to function in this new home/away space, the

protagonists must “shape themselves to fit the world as it is, even while they acknowledge that they can never know that world fully” (20). This statement coincides with Wolf’s and Clausen’s definition of an adolescent novel, in which the concept of home is exposed as a myth, and the protagonist learns to accept the reality of a situation and work within its parameters to build a satisfying living environment.

What I find interesting and most relevant in this article is how survival is related to isolation and community. The protagonist’s initial survival response is described as the cultivation of “an indifference to one’s environment and to hold oneself aloof from other people” (23). The away place only becomes home once the child chooses to view it as home by making “a decision against solitude” and then “answers the call of the community” (23). Reimer and Rusnak stress that this choice is not easy, but “potent and anguished” (26). This pattern of isolation, making a difficult choice, and ultimately choosing to integrate oneself into the community, describes the action of all three of my primary texts. One notable difference is that in my texts the community is located in the native home of the protagonist, not the new home as described by Reimer and Rusnak.

In the beginning of their study, Reimer and Rusnak single out boys’ adventure stories as a genre in Canadian fiction that typically employs the traditional home/away/home pattern: “Boys’ adventure stories, in which the central child figure escapes from an unsatisfying home into the Canadian wilderness and returns—or is about to return—to civilization at the conclusion of his story” (18). “The boys’ adventure story” and the term “wilderness” are two concepts I will explore further to inform my analysis of the relationship between female characters and wilderness spaces.

Definitions of Wilderness in Literature

The term wilderness, as defined by Greg Garrard in *Ecocriticism*, refers to “nature in a state uncontaminated by civilization” (59). In this definition it is important to note the implications of the word ‘uncontaminated,’ which suggests that nature is pure and that civilization is a destructive, unnatural contagion of man. This sort of binary thinking is what ecofeminists believe is at the root of hierarchical patriarchal culture, a concept that will be explored later in this proposal. Garrard goes on to state that the concept of wilderness is related to the “primal mind” (61), suggesting that underneath layers of acculturation, humans are connected to the land. The relationship between the wilderness and the primal mind is also explored in Rosalie Vermette’s essay, “Terrae Incantatae: Symbolic Geography of 12th Century Arthurian Romance,” in which the author identifies wilderness as a state of mind, related to the unconscious or unknown part of oneself (Vermette 152).

Judaeo-Christian tradition has created two distinct perspectives on the wilderness in literature: a place of purity, “for reinvigoration of those tired of the moral and material pollution of the city” (Garrard 59), and a hellish wasteland full of dangers and associated with Satan (61). Margaret Atwood’s conceptualization of a particularly foreboding wilderness in Canadian literature bears many resemblances to the Hellish wasteland described by Garrard. In the Canadian survival story, Atwood claims that there is no rescue or return to a safe place in the end: “The survivor has no triumph or victory but the fact of his survival; he has little after his ordeal . . . except gratitude for having escaped with his life” (33). Atwood describes an “ever present feeling of menace” in the tone or atmosphere of Canadian literature (30). One of Atwood’s most interesting observations is

the “death by nature” phenomenon, in which an individual is murdered by something in the natural environment (54). In each of my primary texts there are characters that die in a manner that could be described as “death by nature.” I examine this perception of nature as murderer in my thesis, and also look for perceptions of nature as creator.

As demonstrated by Garrard, wilderness in literature can be a place of both redemption and damnation. Both perspectives recall aspects of Edmund Burke’s sublime, in which a rugged landscape creates feelings of awe or terror humbling for the witness, much as the presence of God or Satan would do. In my primary texts the protagonists have ambivalent feelings about their landscapes; they also have nature experiences that are both redemptive and harrowing.

I have adapted my definition of wilderness from Garrard’s. For the purposes of my study, wilderness is an isolated landscape perceived by its inhabitants as potentially threatening, in which physical survival is a concern. In each of my texts, a community has been established, which means that the wilderness has been, to some extent, tamed or civilised. According to Garrard, the wilderness is frequently designated as apart from or opposed to human culture and its practices such as agriculture (61); therefore his definition of wilderness would not include the wilderness spaces in my primary texts. Yet the communities in these texts still rely on the land, animals, and weather conditions for survival.

In *Ann and Seamus*, Ann’s family is forced to go deep into the woods in the winter to escape the bitter ice and cold. They are forever at the mercy of the sea. They rely on the sea to provide fish, not only for their own sustenance, but as a commodity to

be traded for other goods. While it could be said that the Harveys are in the process of civilizing the land, it would be inaccurate to refer to Isle aux Morts as tamed or civilized.

In *Aleutian Sparrow*, Hesse portrays both a traditional Aleutian way of life and the Euro-American way of life. In *Kashega*, Vera describes the traditional Aleutian life, which includes the seal hunt, fishing, gathering of certain wild grasses and herbs, weaving of grass rugs, and the making of clothing and boats from seal gut. At the time the novel is set in, the Aleutian culture is a *mélange* of Russian Orthodox and Native Unangan values and practices. I would argue that these traditional activities relate more to the land, and living off the land, than the “Euro-American” way of life, in which the average person is quite removed from the land. In *Kashega*, and more so in *Unalaska Village* and *Ketchikan*, there are elements of both traditional Aleutian life and urban Western urbanization. In the novel, the Western world is represented by stores, catalogues, magazines, and movie theatres—common agents of capitalism, consumerism and conformity. Vera’s resistance to all things “Americanchin” or “Cheechako” is very clear; she thinks they are destructive and unnatural. Her attitudes toward Western civilization and progress are similar to some ecofeminist critiques of the destructive and domineering aspects of Western civilization that alienate humans from nature. According to ecofeminism, in separating self from nature, humankind identifies nature as “other,” ultimately leading to the domination of nature. Ecofeminists believe that this separation is encouraged by patriarchal Western culture—an idea that is analysed in relation to the male characters of my texts in Chapter Two of this thesis.

The Oklahoma panhandle of *Out of the Dust* is the most cultivated of the landscapes discussed in this paper. In fact, over-cultivation has precipitated the drought

that has such a severe effect on the land and its farming community. In "The Path of Our Sorrow," Miss Freeland teaches her students that overgrazing, over-ploughing and overuse of the land are the reasons the soil has turned to dust. What makes this landscape a wilderness landscape, for the purposes of this paper, is the weather. Leonard Lutwack recognizes the capacity of natural events to turn civilized places into wilderness:

"Uncontrollable natural events, such as storms, earthquakes, and floods, transform civilised functioning environments into places full of chaos and horror" (Lutwack 53).

The weather in *Out of the Dust* is unpredictable and violent; it has devastating effects on the livestock, crops, homes, and lives of the people in the community. They are unable to successfully combat the dust storms and are therefore at the mercy of their natural environment.

The Outdoor Survival Story

Leonard Lutwack's indispensable book, *The Role of Place in Literature*, singles out survivor stories as a narrative genre especially concerned with the relationship between people and the land: "survival narratives, in which the exclusive interest is the desperate contest of people against places . . . are place-saturated books and measure their success by the close accommodation of human behavior to physical environment of the most demanding kind" (18). There is a strong literary tradition of survival stories, also known as adventure stories, outdoor survival stories, or wilderness survival stories, for children.

In his informative chapter on nineteenth century adventure stories, John Rowe Townsend begins his examination by making note of the strict gender divisions between reading materials for boys and girls, a reflection of gender roles in the Victorian era. Girls

were expected to read domestic dramas that extolled “feminine” virtues such as “piety,” “domesticity,” “sexual submission and repression,” and “[f]or boys there was the life of action on land and at sea: the world of the boys’ adventure story” (39). In her essay on Canadian children’s literature in the *International Companion Encyclopedia to Children’s Literature*, Mavis Reimer includes “encounters with treacherous landscape,” “unpredictable weather,” and “the centrality of endurance” as a value among the characteristics of the Canadian or British boys’ wilderness adventure stories (1012). *Robinson Crusoe* and the historical novels of Sir Walter Scott are widely credited as the forerunners of the boys’ adventure story. The term “Robinsonnades” was created to refer to the plethora of works derived from *Robinson Crusoe*. Margery Fisher offers the most succinct definition of the term:

In essence, the Robinsonnade . . . turns on the sudden, unexpected juxtaposition of a person (or persons) and a place; the events that follow will depend in varying degrees on how the character or characters adapt to or make use of a particular place . . . that is, a place isolated from the rest of the world and presenting an unfamiliar aspect to the person thus unexpectedly thrown upon it. (308)

There are clear parallels between the Robinsonnade and the verse novels examined in my thesis, such as the juxtaposition of people and place, adaptation to and use of that place, and the hardships of existence in an isolated setting.

Scholarship in Canadian children’s literature about the survival story is considerable. Sheila Egoff roots the survival story in realistic fiction, and recognises the ability of the genre to “offer a genuine ‘feel’ for the physical environment, an affecting

depiction of friendship, and a dramatic unfolding of plot, laced with exciting yet plausible events" (*Thursday's Child* 35). In *The New Republic of Childhood*, Sheila Egoff and Judith Saltman observe that "the outdoor survival story still holds a firm position in Canadian children's literature" (22). In both the traditional and contemporary outdoor survival story, they continue, the landscape is described as "a participating force in the events" of the novel (22). However a change in focus has occurred: "The survival story has come to concentrate, as has most realistic fiction, on character development and the personal problems of the chief protagonist, rather than on adventure" (22). In *Thursday's Child*, Egoff divides the protagonists of realistic fiction into safe and dangerous survivors. In the traditional survival story or Robinsonnade, Egoff sees the protagonists as "safe" survivors, meaning that they return home at the end relatively unaffected: "Whatever the degree of suspense, the reader could be wholly certain the hero or heroine would safely survive all perils . . . not only did the protagonists survive but they did so unscathed and unaltered" (34). Contemporary heroes and heroines are more likely to be what Egoff has termed 'dangerous' survivors: "Open and vulnerable, they must struggle to survive and cope on their own, often in the face of disaster. And in the process, they change. They may gain a courageous independence, a self-reliance and resourcefulness, but they also suffer the loneliness of isolation and the heavy insecurity and responsibilities of that independence" (35). Although both *Thursday's Child* and *The New Republic of Childhood* offer a few examples of female survivors, Egoff and Saltman note that "there is still a preponderance of teen-aged males who face physical and moral problems that bring them to maturity" (33).

In addition to aspects of the outdoor adventure story, shades of the domestic drama surface in my primary texts. The domestic drama was the major genre for girls in the 19th and early 20th century, and included writers such as Charlotte Yonge, Louisa May Alcott, Susan Coolidge, and L.M. Montgomery. The domestic drama typically featured a feisty tomboy protagonist who, after a series of adventures, ultimately conformed to the role of dutiful wife and mother. Townsend says that “[t]he trouble with these promising heroines of the 1860s and 1870s is that there isn’t anywhere for them to go or anything for them to become, except perhaps writers” (58). This may be true of the girl heroes of the mid 19th century, but what about those of the 1930s? Ann Harvey makes the decision to stay at home and fulfil her familial obligations in 1828, but why do Vera and Billie Jo choose to stay home in the face of hardship when given an opportunity to flee? I address these questions in Chapter Five of my thesis. As in the domestic drama, much of the action of my texts takes place in the home. Yet the home itself is situated in a wilderness landscape, and the protagonists are often required to act in a manner that is more befitting the heroes of the outdoor survival story than the heroines of the domestic drama.

Historical Fiction and Female Heroes

In my research, it has become clear that survival stories, adventure stories, boys’ stories and historical fiction are all closely related. It appears that children’s literature has long been interested in the romance of bygone eras. Sheila Egoff recognizes that in the past, “childhood reading” was “almost synonymous with historical romance” (*Thursday’s Child* 159). The *Oxford Companion to Children’s Literature* notes that historical fiction was born of the adventure story (249). In fact, many of the early authors of historical fiction are the same authors mentioned in the section on adventure stories: R. M.

Ballantyne, G.A. Henty, Robert Louis Stevenson and Captain Marryat. According to Egoff, “[t]hese nineteenth-century novels set the guidelines for the historical novel” (*Thursday’s Child* 161). What distinguishes the historical novel from the adventure novel is that it is written in an era that is not the same as the novel’s setting, and also that the novel is written with some level of “historical intent” (Bator 265). Leland B. Jacobs gives an important definition of historical fiction in *Signposts to Criticism of Children’s Literature*: “[Historical fiction] reconstructs the life of an age, period, or a moment other than the present generation. It recaptures realistically the spirit, atmosphere, and feelings of such an age, as that time was experienced” (269).

The accuracy of the historical novel is at times challenged, though, when the central character is female rather than male. With respect to female protagonists, Jacobs argues that in order to appeal to a contemporary audience, the heroine must “possess much of that spirit and independence which characterizes the girl of today” (272). One way around this problem is to disguise the female as a boy, a device that according to Jacobs is used repeatedly in historical fiction (272). Margery Fisher comments on the differences between heroes and heroines in *The Bright Face of Danger*: “Can a heroine qualify as such (in an adventure story, that is) if she behaves like a hero?” (228). This question suggests that hero and heroine have distinct and separate qualities.

Fisher praises Bessie Merchant’s novels, because she does “not disguise her heroines as heroes. Their courage, their resourcefulness, their energies, above all their *concern*, belong to their sex” (original emphasis 231). This is a troubling statement. Fisher suggests that courage, resources and concerns are gendered, but is this a natural distinction or a result of the heavy social conditioning of the Victorian era? How are

these attributes manifested in the male and female characters in my primary texts? Do Hesse and Major work strictly within the gender limitations of their historical settings, or do they paint their female protagonists with a contemporary brush? These questions are addressed in Chapters Three and Five of my analysis.

Fisher also recognises the girl-in-disguise-as-boy device, and suggests that it is the only way in which authors of the nineteenth century adventure story were comfortable with a female protagonist: "We can detect a note of relief in the author once he gets his heroine into masculine costume. He can now allow her to become a hero" (229). If this is so, then what constitutes a heroine in a historical book? Fisher suggests that there are two kinds: the surrogate boy and those for whom "responsibility acts as a brake on her natural sense of adventure" (233). I am interested in this balance between responsibility and a sense of adventure. Fisher suggests that the heroine's responsibility is not natural, but learned, unlike her sense of adventure, which is instinctive. This suggests that both boys and girls have an innate aptitude for adventure and that it is merely social conditioning that has curbed this aptitude in girls. In my thesis I examine the social expectations of women in relation to the dreams of women. I do so by examining the mother figures in Chapter Three in terms of work and social roles and compare this to what is expected of the young female protagonists and whether this social expectation clashes with what the girls want for themselves in Chapters Four and Five.

A Possible Means of Analysis: Ecocriticism

My initial questions about landscape and literature have led me to ecocriticism as a means of analysis. Ecocriticism, as defined by Cheryll Glotfelty is "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (qtd. in Garrard 3).

Glotfelty expands on this definition to state that “[e]cocriticism takes an earth-centred approach to literary studies” (qtd. in Garrard 3). Numerous texts have been instrumental in illuminating this field of criticism for me. Greg Garrard’s *Ecocriticism*, which has come up previously, *The Ecocriticism Reader*, edited by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Frumm, and *Writing the Environment: Ecocriticism and Literature*, edited by Richard Kerridge and Neil Sammells are three major texts that provide a critical context for my analysis. *Ecocriticism* is a thorough overview of the tropes, themes, and concerns of ecocriticism. Garrard discusses four stances in ecocriticism. The stance that I will be focusing on is ecofeminism.

Ecocriticism has developed as a response to environmental awareness and other related movements that have gained momentum since the 1960s. It is a literary arm of a political movement, and thus Garrard describes it as “an avowedly political mode of analysis” (3). In the introduction to *Writing the Environment*, Kerridge says:

The ecocritic wants to track environmental ideas and representations wherever they appear, to see more clearly a debate which seems to be taking place, often part-concealed, in a great many cultural spaces. Most of all, ecocriticism seeks to evaluate texts and ideas in terms of their coherence and usefulness as responses to environmental crisis. (5)

Ecocriticism is thus an interdisciplinary field that requires cultural as well as scientific analysis because of “the interaction between ecological knowledge of nature and its cultural inflection” (Garrard 14). Early ecocritical analyses focused on Romantic poetry, wilderness narrative and nature writing (Garrard 4). My primary texts share similarities

with all three of these genres; therefore it is logical to apply ecocriticism to my analysis of the relationship between adolescents and landscape throughout this thesis.

Ecocriticism and Children's Literature

Considering the Romantic tradition arguing for children's closeness with nature, it makes sense that contemporary authors would take this association one step further and appeal to children's connection with nature to develop an awareness of the destruction of the environment. There are many overtly 'green' books for children. Patti K. Sinclair's *E for Environment: An Annotated Bibliography of Children's Books with Environmental Themes* contains 517 titles, with a focus on those published between 1982-1991. The book is organized under the following chapter headings: "Planting the Seeds of Environmental Awareness: Introducing Young Children to Nature"; "The Web of Life: At Issue"; "People and Nature; It's Your Turn"; "Activities, Explorations, and Activism." The book also includes an appendix of environmental classics.

Many of the books and articles written under the banner of ecocriticism and children's literature or green literature for children deal with conservation, protection and taking action. In *Now Upon a Time: A Contemporary View of Children's Literature*, Myra Pollack Sadker and David Miller Sadker explore ecology in children's literature prior to 1977, recognizing that ecological awareness in children's books is not a new phenomenon: "The concept of humanity in balance with the environment is not in itself new; rather, it is newly revived" (272). The Sadkers mention *Robinson Crusoe* as one of the earliest books to portray the lure of nature and a simple environment without all the trappings of society. There is a brief section in the Sadkers' book about women and nature, and about how women typically "watch from the safety of their homes as men

leave on journeys, and they observe from their windows the activity of the outside world” (254). They recognize a turn in this trend, and mention Scott O’ Dell’s *Island of the Blue Dolphins* (1961) and Jean Craighead George’s *Julie of the Wolves* (1973) as two important texts that challenge traditional assumptions of women and girls as domestic and less capable than men and boys of survival in the wilderness (255).

In addition to the escape to nature theme, the Sadkers mention conservation fiction as another form of environmental literature. Some have expressed concern that the conservation angle is too severe and borders on didactic. In August of 1992, *The New York Times* published Janet Maslin’s review of children’s environmental literature. Maslin’s central argument is that environmental books substitute wonder with fear, and that we are scaring children “in the name of science” (n. pag.). Betty Greenway responds to Maslin’s argument in her introduction to a special issue of *Children’s Literature Association Quarterly*, titled “Ecology and the Child”: “But surely it is sometimes necessary to upset readers in order to help them to sympathize with the characters? Moreover, ‘scary,’ ‘upsetting,’ and ‘gloomy’ are not absolutes, as Maslin’s review suggests, but terms on a continuum” (146). In this special issue of *CLAQ*, published in 1994-1995, Betty Greenway has gathered essays that “address the question of what messages writers for children deliver and how effectively they deliver them. They also consider how the natural environment appears in children’s literature, when it began to appear, and what a study of it reveals about the beliefs of writers and readers of children’s literature” (147).

Among these essays, Carolyn Sigler’s “Wonderland to Wasteland: Toward Historicizing Environmental Activism in Children’s Literature” stands out by unearthing

key historical authors and texts that have contributed to the "greening" of children's literature (148). Sigler presents the history of ecology in children's literature as a move from pastoralism, or an anthropocentric view of nature, to an ecocritical view. Sigler uses protest novels or ecological mysteries as examples of ecocentric texts. This evolution is political, suggesting that ecocritical texts are first and foremost political. In fact many of the texts examined from an ecocritical perspective have explicit political messages. This is in keeping with Garrard's statement that ecocriticism is "an avowedly political mode of analysis" in which cultural analyses are usually tied to an "explicitly green moral and political agenda" (3). While I do not believe that my texts are explicitly political, they do have in them elements of conservationism and environmental advocacy. In Chapters Two and Three I examine these elements in relation to the characters that represent them and ask the question, "is it female or male characters who speak up for the environment?"

In the works of Gene Stratton-Porter, it is often female children who speak up for the environment. Anne K. Phillips' essay "Of Epiphanies and Poets: Gene Stratton-Porter's Domestic Transcendentalism," also found in the *CLAQ* special issue "Ecology and the Child," demonstrates how Stratton-Porter adapts Emerson's Transcendentalism in a manner which "emphasizes social, rather than individual, awareness as well as a dedication to environmentalism that is absent in traditional Transcendentalism" (153). In particular, Stratton-Porter uses two features of Emerson's Transcendentalism: The epiphanic moment and the concept of the poet. The concept of the poet as a suitable interpreter of nature has previously been discussed, but I would like to use this section to explore the concept of epiphany and how it relates to nature. Both Emerson and Stratton-Porter view nature as a reflection of "the soul and affirmation of God" (154). Epiphany is

reached through an experience with nature. Emerson's epiphany is a spiritual revelation that is distancing from humanity, whereas Stratton-Porter's epiphany gives her characters "better understanding of how they fit into a human society and a clearer concept of their responsibility to that society" (154). Phillips' reading of Stratton-Porter's epiphany has strong feminist undertones, particularly in her attribution of communal awareness as a result of epiphany.

In 1995, *The Lion and the Unicorn* also published a special issue on ecology, entitled "Green Worlds: Nature and Ecology." Suzanne Rahn's introduction shares many of the perspectives of Carolyn Sigler's historical evolution of green literature for children, "Wonderland to Wasteland." Rahn roots literary environmentalism in Romanticism and Transcendentalism (151), and includes the traditional boys' adventure story as a major genre in the history of the green novel for children (158). The essays in this special issue are grouped under the headings "The Forest," "Wild Creatures," and "The River and the Sea." Two of the three headings are locations, again demonstrating the significance of location or place in any discussion of nature for children. The articles of particular interest to me in this issue are Jane Darcy's "The Representation of Nature in *The Wind in the Willows* and *The Secret Garden*" and "The River is Eternal: Nature Mysticism and Vedanta Philosophy in Ruskin Bonds' *Angry River*" by Meena G. Khorana.

In "The Representation of Nature in *The Wind in the Willows* and *The Secret Garden*," Darcy explores the so-called arcadias of these novels and demonstrates that they are more than an "idealized projection of lost childhood by adults" (213). Both books remind the reader of the "dark side of nature" as well as its more idyllic aspects

(215). Darcy proves how nature can be at once frightening and comforting, threatening and life affirming. This duality of nature is important to my examination of Hesse's and Major's books. Darcy creates a parallel between her primary texts in their celebration of "a life close to nature" and the author's investment of "the natural world with moral significance and with a quasi-religious mysticism" (214).

The perception of nature imbued with mysticism is the key point in Khorana's exploration of Ruskin Bond's *Angry River*. According to Khorana, "Bond explores his protagonist's changing relationship with the river, from a deep love and gratitude for its many boons, to an awareness of its duality, to an understanding of its mystical nature" (254). Khorana grounds the evolution of this relationship between child and nature in "the philosophical concepts of Hindu scriptures and metaphysical thought" (254). In order to achieve peace and contentment, Bond's protagonist must accept the duality of the river: "This acceptance of the duality of nature—a theme that Bond explores repeatedly in his novels—leads Sita to live in harmony with her changed circumstances" (262). This acknowledgment and acceptance of nature's duality in both Darcy's and Khorana's analyses is an ecocritical perspective, although neither author uses the term ecocriticism in her essay. The protagonists learn to view nature as a whole, active being, capable of good and bad actions, instead of as a backdrop or a collection of resources to be exploited.

Writing the Environment, edited by Richard Kerridge and Neil Sammells, includes a section on children's literature and the environment written by Karin Lesnik-Oberstein. This essay is mostly concerned with how the concepts of child and nature have been constructed, and examines the similarities between and among these constructions.

Lesnik-Oberstein notes that “gender is one of the most important factors which further differentiates the ‘child’ in its relationships to nature and the environment” (215), but does not investigate this statement within the parameters of her piece.

Wild Things: Children’s Culture and Ecocriticism is an invaluable source of insightful ecocritical analyses of children’s texts. These texts include books, music, television, and film. The book as a whole is full of interesting pieces that have enriched my understanding of how ecocriticism can be applied to children’s literature, but Marion W. Copeland’s essay “The Wild and Wild Animal Characters in the Ecofeminist Novels of Beatrix Potter and Gene Stratton-Porter” in particular relates very closely to my interest in an ecofeminist examination. Before turning to this essay, I would first like to explore briefly the parameters of ecofeminism.

Critical Framework: Ecofeminism

I have decided to look at my texts through an ecofeminist lens. Ecofeminism is built upon the fundamental assumption that “[w]omen have been associated with nature, the material, the emotional, and the particular, while men have been associated with culture, the non-material, the rational and the abstract” (Garrard 23). Noël Sturgeon’s book *Ecofeminist Natures: Race, Gender, Feminist Theory, and Political Action* is a meticulously detailed historical account of the various ecofeminist movements in the United States, with a few references to movements elsewhere in the world, such as France and India. This book is useful in gaining an understanding of how ecofeminism functions politically. In my analysis, I draw on the works of Annette Kolodny, Judith Plant, and Ynestra King, and to a lesser extent, Carolyn Merchant and Patrick D. Murphy.

All forms of ecofeminism, despite their differences, agree that both women and nature are dominated by patriarchal culture. Karen J. Warren describes patriarchal society as a “constructed conceptual framework” (6). According to her theory of the logic of domination, patriarchal culture “justifies the subordination of one group to another by positing a difference between two groups and associating one with moral inferiority” (qtd. in Cuomo 351). Within this framework, concepts are paired in oppositional rather than complementary positions. A hierarchy is established that values one concept over another. Warren describes this as ranking diversity, a result of “up/down thinking” (Warren 6). She demonstrates how in Western society culture is ranked above nature and men above women. (Cuomo 351). Thus, according to the logic of domination, both women and nature are considered morally inferior to men.

One of the major issues in ecofeminism is whether or not women should affirm or reject this perceived association with nature. Radical ecofeminism, which is closely linked to radical feminism, “embraces intuition, an ethic of caring, and weblike human/nature relationships” (Merchant, “Feminist” 101). Carolyn Merchant identifies the radical feminist as someone who believes that “[w]omen’s biology and nature should . . . be celebrated as sources of female power” (102). The issue is that “in emphasizing the female, body, and nature components of the dualities male/female, mind/body, and culture/nature, radical ecofeminism runs the risk of perpetuating the very hierarchies it seeks to overthrow” (Merchant 102). While radical feminists celebrate their connection to nature, they also recognize that this connection has contributed to their oppression. Instead of rejecting the connection to nature, radical ecofeminist philosophy wants

women to embrace this connection and find power in it as a means of resistance to patriarchal culture.

King relates the building of "Western industrialized civilization" to the oppression of women, based on the belief that women are closer to nature (qtd. in Bryson 222).

Ynestra King identifies "[t]he task of an ecological feminism [as] the organic forging of a genuinely antidualistic, or dialectical, theory and practice" (King, "Healing" 116). She recognises that while these dualities may be constructed, they exist and are at the core of Western civilization. King posits that our perception of dualities has been warped by hierarchical thinking. Instead of viewing man/woman or culture/nature as opposites in which one has more intrinsic value than another, ecofeminism seeks to reintegrate these concepts as complementary and of equal value. King thus says that we must maintain diversity by recognizing life on earth as "an interconnected web" and a "balanced ecosystem of human and nonhuman life" (qtd. in Bryson 222).

Bioregionalism occupies an interesting space in the works of some ecofeminists. Judith Plant combines ecofeminist and bioregionalist philosophies. She asks the question "What kind of society could live in harmony with its environment?" (Plant 157). She further defines bioregionalism as "learning to become native to place, fitting ourselves to a particular place, not fitting a place to our predetermined tastes" (158). One of the key ideas of bioregionalism is the decentralization of power: "moving further and further toward self-governing forms of social organization" (Plant 160). The decentralization of power would dismantle hierarchies and reinstate the communal, web-like organizations sought by ecofeminists. In Chapter Five, I demonstrate how centralized power is

destructive to small communities and how bioregionalism is offered as an alternative that benefits both human and nonhuman forms of life.

Ecofeminism and Literary Theory

A variety of works examine the perspectives of the female settler in the new world and offer useful information for my own analysis. Annette Kolodny examines the experience of early female settlers in America in her books *The Lay of the Land* and *The Land Before Her: Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontiers*. Central to her analysis is the male perception of the land as female. In *The Lay of the Land*, Kolodny recognizes that the greatest American fantasy is “a daily reality of harmony between man and nature based on an experience of the land as essentially feminine—that is, not simply the land as mother, but the land as woman, the total female principle of gratification—enclosing the individual in an environment of receptivity, repose, and painless and integral satisfaction” (4). Kolodny concludes that by achieving mastery over the landscape, men have separated themselves from it both emotionally and psychologically, which leads to the exploitation and destruction of the environment (28).

In her second book, *The Land Before Her*, Kolodny focuses on the myths of the American frontier. Adapting the myth of Eden, in which the male settler is Adam and the landscape is Eve, Kolodny claims that women soon became redundant and were therefore “captive in a garden of someone else’s imagination” (6). To survive, women transformed metaphorical Eden into a “social Eden” of people “bound together by a common interest, by sameness of purpose and hopes” (103). In this concept, community is the true reward (103). Randall Roorda’s insightful essay, “Wilderness Wives: Domestic Economy and Women’s Participation in Nature,” found in the compilation *This Elusive Land: Women*

and the Canadian Environment, discusses the depiction of the twentieth century wilderness wife in Canadian literature. Roorda constructs the concept of “rugged interdependence,” which posits life in the wilderness as a communal or relational existence instead of the myth of the sole, individualistic survivor (51). Again, the focus on communities and on how women build networks in an otherwise isolating setting relates to the efforts of ecofeminism and informs the analysis of my primary texts.

Gretchen T. Legler maps out the possibilities for ecofeminist literary analysis in her essay “Ecofeminist Literary Criticism.” For Legler, in order to view the environment differently, we must first investigate the way in which we perceive gender, race, and class: “Ecofeminists argue that unmasking the metaphorical, conceptual links between gender, race, class, and representations of nature in literature is an important part of forming a more viable environmental ethic” (Legler 228). Legler challenges the canon of nature writing, which includes such “fathers” of the genre as Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson and John Muir, whose writing “reflects masculinist values and assumptions about the natural world”: “Many canonical authors refine and entrench the notion of nature as a sacred place where only solitary, single, and chaste men go to cleanse their spirits and be one with God” (229). Legler provides seven examples of “emancipatory strategies” that could be used to re-envision the relationship between humans and nature. Those of most relevance to my analysis are the “re-mything” of nature as a “speaking, bodied subject,” the “erasing or blurring of boundaries between inner (emotional, psychological, personal) and outer (geographic) landscapes,” the development of a “care-ethic,” or “ethic of friendship,” as the basis of human

relationships with nature, and the importance of bioregions and the “locatedness of human subjects” (230-231).

Returning specifically to children’s literature, in *Wild Things*, editors Dobrin and Kidd have included an ecofeminist analysis by Marion W. Copeland entitled “The Wild and Wild Animal Characters in the Ecofeminist Novels of Beatrix Potter and Gene Stratton-Porter.” Copeland describes both writers as early ecofeminists who wrote about the magic of the natural wilderness. Without wild spaces, the magic of the natural world is lost for people: “the loss of the ‘wild’ drains the magic from the worlds of both human and nonhuman animals, much as logging and agriculture drain Stratton-Porter’s great swamp”:

It is that magic that both of these early and influential ecofeminists sought to retain through their art as they watched the wild places of their worlds being absorbed by the same patriarchal powers that were, then as now, severing wild and domestic animals and humans from the community of the wild. (73)

Copeland adopts Ronnie Zoe Hawkins’ belief that the goal of ecofeminism is the establishment of a community ecology: “the establishment of a ‘community ecology’ that would restore the ‘continuity of human with nonhuman life’ by deconstructing the ‘mutually exclusive oppressor and oppressed identities’ that persist in patriarchal thought” (qtd. in Copeland 80). This statement has a tone of bioregionalism. Both Potter and Stratton-Porter use anthropomorphism as a means to give otherwise silenced animals a voice. One of the effects of anthropomorphism in children’s literature is the young reader develops respect for animals and sympathy for their plight. In the novels under

study here there are no instances of anthropomorphism with animals, but the landscape is often personified to an extent and purpose that feels similar to those of anthropomorphism. The protagonists, and presumably the reader, develop a deep sense of empathy with the landscape. However the essence or intentions of nature are quite ambiguous. I explore the personification of nature with a particular focus on gender in Chapter Two of my thesis.

Copeland's essay explores themes similar to those examined in Cornelia Hoogland's *Canadian Children's Literature* article, "The Trees in Emily Carr's Forest: *The Book of Small* as Aesthetic and Environmental Text." Hoogland explores the idea that the child and the artist are more adept at perceiving the world aesthetically and as a community of human and non-human life. She makes a statement about the magic of the natural world that Copeland would agree with: "For the child Carr, the mystery of the non-human world lies in the intersection between the biological and the cosmological. Magic is concrete rather than abstract. Sensory experience is a force or power" (36). Although Hoogland never uses the term "ecofeminist," it could easily apply to Emily Carr's *The Book of Small*, in which "a sense of growing community and continuity with nature is possible" (36). Finally, Hoogland concludes that "*The Book of Small* reminds us that the physical world is more than a setting or backdrop to human affairs. Carr's text shatters habitual modes of perception and stirs her readers to attention and awareness of the world around them" (43). Like *The Book of Small*, *Out of the Dust*, *Ann and Seamus* and *Aleutian Sparrow* also present the physical world as a dynamic organism of which humans are only a small part. Hoogland's concept of a community that includes non-

human nature is something I look for and examine in my primary texts throughout this thesis.

CHAPTER TWO: RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN MALE CHARACTERS AND THE LANDSCAPE

Ecofeminists believe that people's relationships with nature should be interactive rather than hierarchical; we should be, as Judith Plant says, living within the "limits and gifts" of an environment, rather than imposing ourselves and our preferences upon it ("Searching" 158). Vera L. Norwood argues that in literature men and women's experiences with nature are different. Male experience is patterned after the traditional hero's journey, involving a series of challenges, a display of virility, and the eventual dominance of man over the environment (344). Simply put, men have a hierarchical relationship with nature in which they are dominant. In children's literature this pattern is found in the boys' outdoor adventure story, in which the wilderness is both a place to define one's masculinity and also to exert dominance. According to Norwood, women's experience involves an immersion in nature, resulting in a sense of humility. The woman "forfeits [her] individual voice so that nature can speak" (344). Christine Cuomo quotes psychoanalyst Nancy Chodorow in an article on ecofeminism, echoing this concept, stating that the "boundaries" of the female ego are "more permeable and flexible" than those of the male ego, and that women "lack a sense of separateness from the world" (355). These statements suggest that women have a more interactive relationship with nature, yet the forfeiting of individual voice indicates that this is also a form of hierarchical relationship in which nature dominates women. In other words, men are separated from and dominant over the land and women become part of, and are perhaps dominated by, nature.

Annette Kolodny defines the pastoral impulse and frontierism as two means by which men have separated themselves from nature in American literature. The pastoral impulse derives from the "yearning to know and to respond to the landscape as feminine" (*Lay of the Land* 8), a desire that eventually led to the intense agrarianism of the new world (26). According to Kolodny, "the range of pastoral expression . . . extend[s] from a healthy sense of intimacy and reciprocity to the most unbridled and seemingly gratuitous destruction" of the landscape (27). She defines frontierism as a paradox, or the "impulse to freedom versus the need for social organization" (90). The new world promised settlers freedom and independence, ideals that were propagated through American fiction featuring "the lone male in the wilderness" (147). Yet realistically settlers were unable to curb the instinct or the need to form communities. Once a community had been established there was a desire to move onwards, towards a "virgin" landscape, where the process of mastering the land and establishing a community was repeated: "Each new frontier repeatedly promised and then denied the gratifications" the settlers expected, causing men to continually move westward to a new frontier. (137).

Margery Fisher discusses the frontier adventure story, comparing it to the castaway adventure story in terms of the mastery of a landscape: "Frontier tales in which a place is explored and brought under domestic rule are also castaway-tales in the sense that the characters must act on their own initiative and, at least partly, without the benefits of civilisation" (293). Kolodny describes the issue of gender and landscape in American literature in this way:

Our continuing fascination with the lone male in the wilderness, and our literary heritage of essentially adolescent, presexual pastoral heroes,

suggest that we have yet to come up with a satisfying model for mature masculinity . . . while the images of abuse that have come to dominate the pastoral vocabulary suggest that we have been no more successful in our response to the feminine qualities of nature than we have to the human feminine. (*Lay of the Land* 147).

In *Out of the Dust*, *Ann and Seamus*, and *Aleutian Sparrow* some male characters have a relationship with the land that can be described as traditional and hierarchical. However, other male characters have an interactive or ecofeminist relationship with the land. Some characters, Pa in *Out of the Dust* for example, transition from a hierarchical relationship to an interactive one. In an interactive relationship, the men respect and learn from their environment by recognizing nature as something larger than they are. This interaction results in a sense of humility, which is consistent with Norwood's description of the female experience of nature, suggesting that this is no longer only a female experience, but perhaps an ecofeminist experience. In my analysis of *Out of the Dust*, *Ann and Seamus*, and *Aleutian Sparrow* it becomes clear that ecofeminism can be and is inclusive. Men as well as women participate in and benefit from an ecofeminist approach to life.

At the beginning of *Out of the Dust*, Pa is caught in the pastoral fantasy as described by Kolodny; he expects bounty from the land over which he is dominant but does not receive it. Although he may have been connected to the landscape at some point, he is now in conflict with it. Pa's occupation of farmer defines the relationship. Polly, Billie Jo's mother, explains to Billie Jo that no matter how little rain they get, "your daddy would have to believe. / It's coming on spring, / and he's a farmer" (Hesse 27).

Even in the worst of times, he never gives up hope that the rain will come eventually, and then the wheat will grow:

My father will stay, no matter what,

he's stubborn as the sod.

He and the land have a hold on each other. (75)

The parallel between Pa and the sod is extended throughout the novel:

My father was more like the sod.

Steady, silent, and deep.

Holding onto life, with reserves underneath

to sustain him, and me,

and anyone else who came near.

My father

stayed rooted, even with my tests and my temper,

even with the double sorrow of

his grief and my own. (202)

This is a significant comparison because it suggests that like the sod, Pa is native to the environment; he is part of the ecosystem. Maybe he is in conflict with the land, but because he is part of the ecosystem, there is hope that he will reintegrate himself in a less domineering manner.

Pa's stubborn nature makes him reluctant to try new things. He refuses to put in a pond or attempt to grow other crops because "[i]t has to be wheat. / I've grown it before. / I'll grow it again" (Hesse 40). His response to his wife's farming suggestions is to ignore them. He complains that her apple trees need more water than any other crop on their

farm (40). In the poem "Give Up on Wheat," the question of what belongs in the landscape arises. Polly suggests that perhaps wheat wasn't meant to grow in these conditions, to which Pa responds that it is her apple trees that are out of place on the farm.

Pa and Polly approach the tending of their crops very differently. Pa does not seem to have any love for his work. He is always tired and defeated when he returns from the fields, "so beat/ he barely knows his own name" (25). Polly is described as nursing the trees, and as Billie Jo marvels, "In spite of the dust, / In spite of the drought, /because of Ma's stubborn care," the trees blossom and yield fruit (43

Later, after Polly's death, Pa starts to dig a hole for a pond and is described as "nursing along the wheat" (111). The choice of the verb "nursing" indicates that Pa has adopted a more feminine method of tending to the wheat. He nurses the wheat as his wife nursed the apple trees. This method was successful for Polly and it proves to be successful for Pa. The loss of his wife has made him aware of the fragility of life. In his grief he reconsiders her suggestions. Not only does he create a pond, but he also decides to grow cotton, sorghum, and prairie grasses, "admitting as how there might be something / to this notion of diversification" (226). Diversity and biological interdependence are touchstones in ecofeminist theory. Ynestra King identifies the maintenance of diversity in a balanced ecosystem of human and nonhuman nature as one of the pillars of ecofeminism (qtd. in Bryson 222). Pa's decision to diversify his crops indicates that he is considering the well-being of the earth as well as his crops. This further indicates that Pa's relationship with the land is evolving from hierarchical to integrated.

At the end of the novel, Pa decides not to plant more wheat but to “go with what we’ve got right now” (225). He chooses sustainability over mass production. The tractor has been destroyed by the dust, and Pa is left to work the land on his own, with the assistance of a mule. Billie Jo sees this as positive. She recognises that the tractor separated her father from the land. A farmer works with the land, but somewhere along the line Pa had stopped working with the land and become its exploiter:

Maybe the tractor lifted him above the land,
 maybe the fields didn’t know him anymore,
 didn’t remember the touch of his feet,
 or the stroke of his hand,
 or the bones of his knees,
 and why should wheat grow for a stranger? (226)

This stanza suggests that there needs to be a level of respect between the farmer and the land. Technology separates farmer from soil, which creates a space between the two that allows the farmer to exploit the land. In *Out of the Dust*, because Pa is alienated from the land, he is unable to see when he has gone too far. This is an example of a phenomenon described by Annette Kolodny: “Man might . . . win mastery over the landscape, but only at the cost of emotional and psychological separation from it” (*Lay of the Land* 28). Pa was separated from the land, yet he is able to reconnect with it by heeding his dead wife’s suggestions. Polly’s farming suggestions regarding diversity and sustainability are ecofeminist concepts. At the end of the novel Pa has developed a new consciousness regarding the land and has undergone an ecofeminist transformation.

In *Ann and Seamus*, George Harvey, Ann's father, and Seamus Ryan, her lover, represent interactive and hierarchical attitudes toward the land, respectively. George describes the sea as his family's "lot in life" (Major 16). He has chosen to integrate himself and his family into the landscape. Instead of dwelling on the hardships that life on Isle aux Morts has dealt him, as Ann does, George acknowledges the hardships and moves beyond them:

No time for discontent, Ann, me young maid.

There be lots worse off, me love,
lots worse off than we. (29)

George's domain is the sea. It is where he is most comfortable and happy. This is demonstrated by his singing. Ann observes that as he works he sings:

My father George
will sing to his heart's content
floating over the fishing grounds. (25)

His song is large and bright, described as "filling the ocean" (25), indicating that he gets joy from his work. In this same poem, the physical description of the seascape is serene and peaceful, suggesting that there can be a harmonious co-existence of man and ocean:

the sun flickering on the water
and seagulls sailing high
above an ocean never ending. (25)

Later, rowing a boat full of survivors, Ann observes him singing yet again: "Father bravely sings, / his voice stronger than / the day should ever warrant" (95). Even in dire

times, when the sea is dangerous and responsible for the deaths of many, he is still able to sing.

George and the sea are connected. His actions are therefore dictated by his environment. First, his mood and demeanour are affected by the sea. When the sea is calm, he sings brightly: "a calm sea is made for singing" (25). When the sea is treacherous, the danger of the storm is reflected in George's expression: "his look as severe as the sea" (33). Second, although he rescues the shipwrecked survivors from the reef, George's struggle is never described in terms of man dominating nature. Instead, he works with nature. He watches the sea for signs and uses the storm to his advantage. Before he makes a decision, George "stares out to sea," as if he can read the swells and waves (78). He never assumes that he can defeat the power of the storm. Seamus refers to George's plan as "a scheme / sired from a lifetime on these seas" (74). He is able to rescue the shipwrecked passengers because of the knowledge he has gleamed from living in his environment. He is described as "a fellow / who knows this coast / better than anyone alive" (78). When it comes time to choose a rescue crew, George decides on his young son and daughter rather than any of the rescued ship-hands. He chooses people who are familiar with the sea. Although Ann and Tom are young and presumably weaker, their firsthand knowledge of the environment is more valuable to him than the age and physical ability of the sailors. They are wary of it; they respect it.

Unlike George, who lives his life in relation to the sea and within the limitations of his environment, Seamus Ryan leaves his home in Ireland with the intention of making his "way in a new world" (46). He is leaving behind the oppression of the English "for a better life" in America (49). Seduced by the idea of the new world as the land of freedom,

equality, and opportunity, like so many of the literary figures discussed in Kolodny's *The Lay of the Land*, his language is aggressive and passionate. He describes himself as "one of the rebels" who has been "stoked in the fires of freedom" (46). The landlord is "damnable" (45); the English are "vile" (45) and "bloody scoundrels" (46). Seamus' personality and motivation are neatly summed up in the following stanza:

I am the eldest son sent ahead
because I am the strongest
and at the hedge school
we built behind their English backs
the priest taught me to read.

I will make way for the others. (47)

The source of Seamus' pride is his physical strength and his ability to read; in 19th Century Ireland these were solely masculine pursuits. He is proud of his rebellion against the English and envisions himself as a leader. He is going to a new world to create a new life for his family. This passage demonstrates that Seamus is cast in the mould of a traditional male hero.

Seamus is unprepared for the physical realities of the new world he has been dreaming of: "Our first taste of the new world is ice" (50). The new world, as first represented by "a monstrous slab of ice," is cold, impenetrable and unfriendly (50). His language indicates that Seamus was prepared for a more fertile, promising and accommodating landscape, such as the feminine landscapes Kolodny describes.

Good Lord, she's a rugged isle

more rocky than our own.

Why would anyone

ever settle in such a place? (Major 53)

He refers to the isle as “she,” which is consistent with Kolodny’s thesis that European settlers perceived of the new world as feminine. However, he is surprised at how rocky and rugged the landscape is. Rugged is a term associated with masculinity. Finally, he is unable to understand the appeal of such a landscape, the implied parallel being that a rugged landscape is as unappealing as a rugged woman. Any positive aspects are only temporary: “The charms of the sea / do not last the hour” (54). The use of the word “charm” suggests that there is something deceptive about the sea. Women more often than men are described as having the ability to charm people, with the connotation that there is something magical or spell-like about a woman’s charms that conceals her true nature. Likewise, the true violent nature of the sea is hidden, though temporarily, by its charms.

The majority of the poems in Seamus’ section are descriptions of the storm and the resulting shipwreck. These are less introspective than the previous poems, and focus on the action of the storm. They are full of religious diction, in which the sea and the storm are aligned with the devil and hell. The sea is referred to as “savage,” a “monstrous swell,” and a “blustering devil” (55). The storm is called an “ungodly tempest” (55) and “a demon of a storm” (57). This storm passage reads like a boys’ outdoor adventure story. Seamus, a young man, is tested by the wilderness, in this case a storm at sea, and becomes a heroic figure who battles the odds and returns to civilization. Unlike George Harvey, who is wary and respectful of the sea, Seamus tries to dominate it when he

swears to “stare it down, be it more wicked / more ungodly cruel / than anything I’ve ever known” (58). Upon the death of the captain, Seamus becomes “a leader of men” (72) who leads a group of men back out to sea to secure a lifeline between the reef and the shore so that more people can be saved. Seamus is described as a leader of men, whereas George is a man of the sea.

Upon reaching the shore, Seamus wonders whether survival is bittersweet: “saved . . . from a watery hell / to starve in hell on earth?” (72). He has reached the new world but it is not the land of opportunity that he expected. Disappointed in this “hell on earth,” Seamus is continuing toward America. Like Kolodny’s settlers, Seamus is searching for “an environment of receptivity, repose, and painless and integral satisfaction” (*Lay of the Land* 4). He does not find this environment in Newfoundland. Seamus tries to convince Ann to come with him to America, where they would “make a new world” (92). He appeals to her desire for more, asking her, “do you not gaze out to sea / and yearn for what is beyond?” (105). Although he loves Ann, and wants to be with her, his desire for a different landscape, and the presumably easier life such a landscape would bring, is stronger. He cannot impose his values on Isle aux Morts. If Ann will not accompany him, he will continue alone. Ann describes Seamus as “sweetly brazen” (79), “bold as brass” (91) and possessing “idle pride” (80). These qualities are consistent with his instinct to dominate his environment, or if that is not possible, to continue to search for an environment that he can dominate.

In *Aleutian Sparrow*, very few individual male characters are discussed. Instead, Vera refers to the Aleutian men collectively. These men have an integrated relationship with their landscape. They are described as coexisting with nonhuman nature. The

heritage of the Aleutian men is proud and rooted in their environment. One of the elders reminds the men that “we were once / unparalleled hunters, men of the sea. / We were the elders of the world” (59). When they are separated from their homeland and sent to relocation camps, they suffer in a new environment, but still attempt to work within the ecosystem. In their exile, they are constantly building or looking for work as labourers. In Wrangell, “[a]ll the men from the different villages are told to build a barge” by the government that will take them to Ward Lake (33). Once they arrive at Ward Lake, Vera reports that “[o]ur Aleut men begin immediately to saw and hammer and / shape the planks we towed behind us one hundred / miles on a barge from Wrangell to Ward Lake” (48). The Aleutian men yearn to return to their homeland, to the point at which they are willing to leave their families behind in the relocation camp: “The longing to return to the Aleutians brings our men / To the front of the line, volunteers for the Pribilof seal kill” (133).

Alfred emerges as the sole male character described individually. He is a close friend of Vera's. She lived with his family as a child. Alfred and his family have shaped Vera's perception of the world and her culture. They are a traditional Aleutian family. Their house is described as a place “where the old ways steep like tea in a cup of hours” (13). They fill her with “their stories” of their Aleutian ancestors and the history of their culture (13). It is Alfred who first teaches Vera “to fish / and to row a skiff” (13). By the end of the novel he has become Vera's love interest.

Alfred is closely associated with nature, both at home in Kashega and in the relocation camps. This association is a major aspect of traditional Aleutian culture. Nonhuman nature is described with respect and reverence. Freya Mathews notes that

ecofeminists “tend to portray the natural world as a community of beings, related, in the manner of a family, but nevertheless distinct” (235). This is true of the traditional Aleutian characters in the novel, especially Vera and Alfred. Vera’s friend Pari says that Alfred “likes the old ways too much” (Hesse 112). She is relieved that Alfred is interested in Vera and not her because Pari is not as interested in the old ways as Vera is. In the relocation camps, Alfred leads people into the forest for explorations; first leading a group of children to a baby chickadee (70), and then leading Vera and Pari to an abandoned grouse nest with an egg (76). His discoveries are always of natural phenomena. There are many descriptions in *Aleutian Sparrow* that demonstrate how the Aleutians fit into the cycle of natural life. In Ward Lake, a group of Aleutians decide to go fishing for themselves, fed up with the kind of food provided by the government. One fish is described as slapping Alfred on the back, as if it were congratulating him on successfully catching fish for the camp:

We carry home two freshly caught fish, and one, in the
throes of death, slaps Alfred on the back, three times
with its strong tail. (68)

This suggests that although Alfred has caught the fish, and is responsible for its impending death, the fish is willing, perhaps even honoured, to give its life to a respectful, honourable person such as Alfred. Even the story Alfred shares with others involves the integration of man with the landscape. In the poem “Survival,” Alfred describes how his grandfather, “stranded and hungry . . . cut a flap in the sod and, peeling it back, / slipped beneath, pulling the clammy earth up around / his chin like a blanket” (78). Under the earth, his grandfather hid until birds landed on top of him, “[t]hen, quick,

he'd reach out and snap their necks" (78). In this story, Alfred's grandfather relied on the earth for survival, and nature provided for him. This story encapsulates Alfred's outlook on life.

Alfred's and Vera's memories about life in Kashega are always nature-based. They laugh at how Vera and Pari called blue lupine blossoms "bumblebee houses" (92) and reminisce about fish camp, where "the salmon splashed water diamonds into the air" (69). Even their version of baseball, a structured sport that is synonymous with American popular culture; is naturalized; it is played with "a rock and a piece of driftwood" and bases "mark[ed] off . . . in the sand" (30). Alfred chooses to return to Unalaska village with Vera, though his family has resettled in Akutan (143). The government will not allow the citizens of Kashega to return because "[t]oo much is broken" and there are "[t]oo few Kashega / people left to fix it" (143). They make an exception for Vera and Alfred. There, despite the damage, they pledge to rebuild their community: "And as Aleuts have always done, / We find the will to begin again" (153). Alfred is as connected to the land as Vera is, and has returned to help the landscape heal.

Out of the Dust, *Ann and Seamus*, and *Aleutian Sparrow* portray a range of relationships between men and the landscape. Seamus is the traditional male hero who survives in the wilds of a storm at sea, and his bravery and conduct during the storm earn him the title of "leader of men" (Major 72). Discouraged at the impenetrable landscape of Newfoundland, Seamus continues onward towards a more feminine landscape where he can fulfil his dreams of independence, leadership and domination. His relationship with the natural world is hierarchical. In contrast, George Harvey and Albert live a sustainable life within their environments, relying on the gifts of nature to survive. They respect and

do not attempt to master the land. Neither George nor Albert uses the landscape to display virility or dominance. Pa, who is described as part of the ecosystem, has forgotten what it means to be a farmer. He works the land instead of working with it. Eventually, through the loss of his wife and by heeding her suggestions, he reconnects with the land. He is concerned with sustaining what he has instead of planting more the instant that the weather changes for the better, as well as diversifying his crops. These decisions will positively affect the land, although they do nothing to alleviate Pa's current financial distress. The decision to put the preservation of the land ahead of his own financial concerns marks a change in Pa's perspective. He, like George and Alfred, has entered an integrated relationship with the land.

CHAPTER THREE: RESPONSES OF ADULT FEMALE CHARACTERS TO THE LAND

Radical ecofeminists believe that women are more sensitive to the earth than men. There are two reasons for this. One is biological: These ecofeminists believe that natural processes such as menstruation and pregnancy connect women with the cycles of the earth. Second, that the woman/nature connection is also a cultural construction. Women have been aligned with nature for so long that they have become more sensitive to it; that is, women have been dominated in the same manner that the earth has been dominated, and therefore, they can empathize with nature. Susan Griffin says in the introduction to *Woman and Nature*, "woman speaks with nature . . . she hears voices from under the earth . . . wind blows in her ears and trees whisper to her" (1). Women thus become advocates for the natural world. As discussed in Chapter Two, Vera Norwood believes that in literature, women speak for nature. Her theory suggests that women are dominated by the environment; women "forfeit their individual voices so that nature can speak" (344). Thus it seems that it is not the environment but social institutions that dominates women. These institutions alienate women from the landscape, trapping them in domestic duties, which results in fear of their environments and unhappiness.

All factions of ecofeminism believe that happiness and fulfilment are the result of an integrated relationship between human and nonhuman nature. In this chapter I explore the nature of the relationship between the mother figures and their respective landscapes, with a focus on their work. The focus on adult women is a necessary prerequisite to my study of girls and their relationship with landscape. A girl's mother is her primary female role model. To understand the context of the protagonists' relationships to their

landscapes, I believe it is important to explore their mothers' relationship with nature.

According to Mary Daly, "daughters feel rage at their mothers' powerlessness against the patriarchal rule. Yet the pull toward the mother is always there" (346). The ideologies of capitalist patriarchy, social feminism, liberal feminism, and radical ecofeminism inform my discussion.

As with male characters in *Out of the Dust*, *Ann and Seamus*, and *Aleutian Sparrow*, the mother figures are deeply and variously affected by the societal frameworks and social expectations of their respective eras. However, in all three novels under study in my thesis it appears that women suffer under a capitalist patriarchal system that denies them access to the natural world. Karen Hesse offers glimpses of how ecofeminist philosophy can begin to heal the wounds inflicted by capitalist patriarchy, while Kevin Major's portrayal of Jane demonstrates how capitalist patriarchy isolates women and alienates them from their environment.

In *Out of the Dust*, the older female characters—Polly, Billie Jo's mother, and Miss Freeland, Billie Jo's teacher--demonstrate sensitivity to plants, animals, and other nonhuman life, as well as a tendency to think of community before self. Polly is a conventional 1930's American farmer's wife. Her work, centred on homemaking, is unpaid. She is often found in the kitchen: "Ma is busy in the kitchen, / or scrubbing. / or doing the wash," (Hesse 12) says Billie Jo. While her domain is primarily domestic, she also helps in the fields and in the barn. Although she participates in what can be considered her husband's work—farming--she is not treated like a partner in this work. Her husband scoffs at her suggestions to build a well and grow a variety of crops, and dismisses her with the statement "who pays the bills?" (40-41). His attitude indicates that

because she does not bring in any income, her opinion does not count. According to socialist feminism, this attitude is the result of living in a capitalist patriarchal society.

Carolyn Merchant explains that the "rise of capitalism eroded the subsistence-based farm and city workshop in which production was oriented toward use values and men and women were economic partners. The result was a capitalist economy dominated by men and a domestic sphere in which women's labor in the home was unpaid and subordinate to men's labor in the marketplace" ("Feminist" 103). Socialist ecofeminists have pointed out that under capitalist patriarchy, the earth, like women's labour, is exploited for the purpose of economic growth (103). Capitalist patriarchy allows men to dismiss the ideas of women. Their work is unpaid therefore it is inferior. It follows, using Karen J. Warren's logic of domination, that if women's work is inferior, then women as a sex are seen as inferior. When Polly voices an opinion about farming, her husband ignores it because he is a farmer and she is a housewife. Her work is of less value, and therefore her opinion is of less value.

Polly's own daughter is unaware of the extent of her work. It is not until after her death, when the housework falls to her, that Billie Jo realizes the magnitude of her mother's work. Billie Jo comes to realize how much she had taken her mother's work for granted. The under-valuing of women's work is evident in all three novels, but especially in *Out of the Dust*. Billie Jo reflects on her mother

who would've washed clothes,
beaten furniture,
aired rugs,
scrubbed floors,

down on her knees,
 brush in hand,
 breaking that mud
 like the farmers break sod,
 always watching over her shoulder
 for the next duster to roll in. (109).

It is significant that Billie Jo compares her mother's work to farmers breaking the sod, indicating her realization that women's work is just as difficult and necessary as men's. Billie Jo adds, "she'd be doing it all / with my brother Franklin to tend to," which impresses upon the reader the enormity of women's work. Not only did Polly during her married lifetime care for the house and help her husband in the fields, but she did so while simultaneously raising children.

As she is presented before her death, Polly seems trapped in her domesticity. Billie Jo says that they buried her "on the rise Ma loved / the one she gazed at from the kitchen window" (70). "Loved" is a strong word. These two lines create an image of Polly, trapped inside looking longingly out at the land, as if her great desire was to be outside.

Although there is no indication that Polly loved her housework, she did love tending the apple trees. Of all the work Polly does, nurturing the trees is the only chore that is described by Billie Jo with any sense of joy or love. Polly planted the trees when she first moved out to the farm, in hopes "that she and they might bring forth fruit / into our home, / together" (43). To her daughter, the trees are a kind of miracle, "thick with blossoms, / delicate and / pinky white" in an otherwise dry and barren landscape (43).

The trees grow in spite of the harsh conditions because of Polly's "stubborn care," which is also described as "nursing" (43). The trees are an extension of Polly's character. They are devoured by grasshoppers on the very day that Polly dies (68).

Hesse draws other parallels between Polly and the landscape. Polly "aches for rain" (55), and when it arrives, she stands naked in the field:

raindrops
sliding down her skin,
leaving traces of mud on her face and her long back,
trickling dark and light paths,
slow tracks of wet dust down the bulge of her belly. (56)

Polly's body itself is described as a landscape with "dark and light paths" and "tracks" (56). While most women crave food during their pregnancies, Polly, like the parched earth, craves rain. Her needs and desires parallel the needs of the land on which she lives.

Both Polly and Miss Freeland are community builders. Although Polly never leaves the farm, she is community-minded. Despite the financial strain on her family, and despite being "whittled down to the bone," she gives to those in need: "when the committee came asking, / Ma donated" (16). After her mother's death, Billie Jo goes to her father for information about the townsfolk-- information he is unable to provide. When he is unable to tell her about the origin of Mad Dog's name, her first thought is "Ma could have told me" (93). This demonstrates one of the major societal tendencies recognized by ecofeminists; that men work alone and in competition with each other, while women build communities.

The poem "Family School" describes how Miss Freeland facilitates community building in her classroom when she invites a homeless family to live in her school indefinitely (120). Miss Freeland, the family and the school children create a community and care for each other. The children bring in toys, clothes, and "fixings for soup" (121). At lunch, they use the soup ingredients to make a meal and "share it with [their] guests" (121). In return, the man "helps out around the school, / fixing windows and doors, / and the bad spots on the steps" and the grandmother "takes care of the children" so that they do not disturb Miss Freeland's lessons or their pregnant mother, who is resting (121-122). In this poem, Hesse depicts a community in which everyone participates and shares in the benefits.

After Polly's death, Miss Freeland becomes a mother figure for Billie Jo: "Miss Freeland / was my ma / at the school / Christmas dinner" (100). Even before Polly's death, she is mentioned with respect. Miss Freeland is, in effect, an ecofeminist role model. Early on in the novel, she teaches her students how the actions of humans are affecting the wildlife population of the region. In the poem "Rabbit Battles," Billie Jo describes how two local men "pledged revenge on the rabbit population" for damaging their crops (6). Miss Freeland asks her students: "if we keep / plowing under the stuff they ought to be eating / what are they supposed to do?" (6). Billie Jo, like Miss Freeland, sympathizes with the rabbits: "I know rabbits eat what they shouldn't, / especially this time of year when they could hop / halfway to Liberal / and still not find food" (6), but the idea of "[g]rown men clubbing bunnies to death" makes her feel "sick to [her] stomach" (6). The female characters in this poem, Miss Freeland and Billie Jo, recognize

that it is not the rabbits, but humans who are at fault for destroying their habitat, a fact that goes unnoticed by the men doing the killing.

In "The Path of Our Sorrow," Miss Freeland explains the connection between the First World War, agriculture, and the current drought in Oklahoma. She begins with the statement "[d]uring the Great War we fed the world," and explains:

The price the world paid for our wheat
was so high
it swelled our wallets
and our heads,
and we bought bigger tractors,
more acres,
until we had mortgages
and rent
and bills
beyond reason. (83)

However, once the war ended and Europe was able to grow its own wheat, the farmers needed to sell more bushels for less money to make what they had previously earned:

We squeezed more cattle,
more sheep,
onto less land
and they grazed down the stubble
til they reached root. (83-84)

Without the sod, the water reserves under the surface dried up, and "the soil turned to dust. / Until the wind took it, / lifting it up and carrying it away" (84). In this poem Miss Freeland demonstrates how economics and greed are destroying the farmland. Again, the culprit here is the exploitive structure of capitalist patriarchy.

Both "Rabbit Battles" and "The Path of Our Sorrow" deal with war and masculinity. In "Rabbit Battles" Mr. Noble and Mr. Romney are at war with the rabbit population as well as each other. They have waged a bet to see who can kill more rabbits. "The Path of Our Sorrow" is explicitly about war and economic growth. The crimes in this poem are also perpetrated by men; the men responsible are the men leading the country into war and into economic depression.

In both poems Miss Freeland is speaking for nature. She is able to voice what nonhuman nature cannot by speaking out against the senseless killing of rabbits and over-farming. I do not believe, as Norwood fears, that it is necessary for women to forfeit their own voices to speak on behalf of nature. Miss Freeland is one example of a woman who speaks for nature and retains her own voice. She is an educated, working woman respected in her community.

The name Freeland brings to mind the American maxim, land of the free and home of the brave. This maxim encapsulates the ideals of America, which have become the ideals of capitalist patriarchy. Bravery relates to the masculine concepts of the hero, including ideas of conquest and domination. Freedom is personal freedom and the pursuit of the so-called American dream, which is often associated with financial success. But the character of Miss Freeland does not represent these ideals. In this way, her name is ironic. Hesse is juxtaposing the traditional values of America with the ecofeminist values

of Miss Freeland, who represents the possibility of a new set of American values that draw on radical ecofeminist philosophy, including the concepts of an ethic of caring and a web-like community of both human and non human life (Merchant, "Feminist" 101). Miss Freeland's vision of America is of a society that values community and responsibility.

In *Ann and Seamus*, Jane exemplifies women living within patriarchal structures in mid-nineteenth century Newfoundland. Unlike Polly or Miss Freeland, she does not have a community to reach out to. Myra Pollack Sadker and David Miller Sadker observe that in children's literature, "women are frequently found indoors. They watch from the safety of their homes as men leave on journeys, and they observe from their windows the activity of the outside world" (254). This statement implies that the outside world is unsafe for women, and therefore is solely the domain of men. Women's domain is inside, where it is safe. Again, capitalist patriarchy is the foundation on which this dichotomy is built and sustained. The image of the woman watching her husband leave the safety of home for the uncertainty of the outside world explicitly applies to Jane, who is only once described outside the home. On this occasion, she is on the wharf, watching her husband and children depart on a dangerous rescue mission: "On the wharf dear Mother stands, / infant babe in her arms, / her cheerless young clinging to her skirts" (35). In this image she is weighed down by children, literally encumbered and tied to place by her role as wife and mother.

Indeed, the first mention of Jane is in relation to her fecundity: "My mother has been giving birth / as long as I can remember" (17). She is the mother of eight children. In addition to rearing children, Jane fulfils the typical domestic duties of a homemaker:

Besides the brood of us to feed
 there's clothes to make and mend and wash
 a house to clean.
 She is forever bending, scrubbing,
 forever nursing someone back to health. (17)

The repetition of the word "forever" suggests the never-ending cycle of women's domestic work. Ann also adds the next comment, almost as an afterthought: "All that and working at the cod besides" (17). She recognizes that her mother has a heavy workload of her own, yet also works "at the cod," which is her husband's domain. This section echoes Billie Jo's revelation about the burden of her mother's work in *Out of the Dust*. Both Jane and Polly take part in their husband's work as well as their own, and their daughters marvel at the amount of work they accomplish.

The text implies that Jane is unhappy. Ann observes: "In her anxious eyes I see / someone who wishes more for her daughter / than she herself will ever know" (24). This section suggests that although Jane is resigned to her life, she is anxious for her daughter to know something better. Yet despite the drudgery of her work, Jane never complains, a fact that does not go unnoticed by her daughter: "Hers is a weary world / and she too strong a mother to complain" (17). Not only does Jane not complain, but she rarely speaks. When she does, it is often in deference to God or circumstance. Jane is a religious, God-fearing woman. She does not question God, and therefore does not question her life, or the structures that dictate her life. She scolds Ann for her wavering faith: "Praise be," utters my mother, / "don't be questioning the Lord. / Have ye no religion, my girl?" (30). Jane's God is the masculine, all-powerful Christian concept of

the deity. She does not question God, just as she does not question her husband or her circumstances in life. Feminists and ecofeminists alike have explored the oppressive and misogynistic aspects of the Christian church, recognizing it as yet another hierarchical, patriarchal system that excludes women.

Although Ann sees hope and possibility for herself in Jane's eyes, this hope is unspoken. Ann asks:

"Mother, one day shall I read books?"

Her answer is to scrub harder
at the clothes that crowd her wash tub.

She hands me the soap,
expecting me to do the same

and ask no more questions. (24)

Jane's response is entirely nonverbal. She does not vocalize hope or dissent. Instead, she buries herself in her work.

The word "buried," which is repeated in relation to Jane throughout the text, aptly describes the life that she leads. She is buried in silence and fear. She does not voice her hopes for her daughter, nor does she question God or her life. Any ambition she has for herself or her daughter is buried in silence. She is also buried in a cycle of hard labour.

She does not speak of her fear or complaints:

Mother beholds her family,
her worry buried in silence,
buried with her fear of seas
as eager to swallow any one of us

as give up any we might rescue. (34)

This passage, as well as illustrating Jane's silence, also indicates her lack of connection with the landscape. Nowhere in the text is she outside, working with the land or animals. Ecofeminist philosophy, particularly in its radical expression, believes that to be a fulfilled being, one needs to be connected to the natural environment in which she lives. If one does not interact with or learn to understand one's surroundings, they will always seem hostile. Jane lives and works indoors. Consequently she has developed a fear of the sea, and with good reason. The sea in *Ann and Seamus* is often described as violent, dangerous, and unmerciful. Yet it is also described as beautiful and glorious. Unlike her husband and children, who work with the sea and therefore have come to love it in spite of its frightening power, Jane has no sense of respect for or awe of the sea, just fear.

Just as Jane is unable to see the beauty of the sea, she is unable to find the little joys within her labour. For example, she is unable to hear the music in her work. While watching her mother, Ann, by contrast, finds that

[i]n the washing there is a rhythm
and in that rhythm a song—
a song only I can hear.
My mother Jane has too much
filling her days
to ever think
of singing. (24)

Ann's ability to hear music in the rhythm of everyday life suggests that she does not feel trapped by the work, or her surroundings. For her mother, the work has silenced the music. It should be noted here that Ann does not have the same workload as her mother does, and therefore she is unlikely to feel as burdened by it.

In the adjacent poem, Ann describes her father at work: "My father George / will sing to his heart's content, / floating over the fishing grounds" (25). George's domain is the wide open sea. It invites joyful and hopeful pastimes, as Ann muses "perhaps / a calm sea is made for singing . . . Perhaps a calm sea is made for dreaming" (25). George labours on the open ocean, in fresh air, with "the sun flickering on the water" (25) while his wife works indoors at a crowded wash tub (24). George finds joy in his work, not simply because it is enjoyable, but because his work is connected to the landscape. It is his connection to the sea that makes it enjoyable. Jane's work, and life, is confined to an indoor, domestic setting; it is no wonder she cannot hear the song in her work.

There is one form of work for which Jane seems to have a natural aptitude. As a nurse, she finds her voice and uses it to heal the shipwrecked: "She soothes their grief with tea and bread / and gentle words. / "You're safe now, me dears. / I'll nurse you back to health" (85). Her words have a powerful, transformative effect on the patients, who are comforted and revived by her care. This suggests that when Jane chooses to use her voice, it is effective. She is deeply affected by their plight: "Mother, her heart swollen / with their grief, / her weariness unspoken, / works on and on" (86). She is so compassionate that her own heart is full of others' suffering. This compassion is an example of the care-ethic discussed by many ecofeminists. Based on a series of psychological studies which found that women "value care and compassion and use it to

remedy situations” (Cuomo 353), the concept of a care-ethic is controversial. Some feminists believe that “women’s care and compassion for their oppressors” is a “cornerstone of patriarchal systems” (Cuomo 355). However, in *Ann and Seamus*, Jane’s compassion transforms her into an active, vocal person. She finds her voice and uses it to comfort the survivors. With the disaster at sea, the image of Jane changes from a silent, fearful, and weary housewife to a vocal, compassionate, and tireless healer.

Unlike *Out of the Dust*, in which Polly and Miss Freeland are quite similar, and *Ann and Seamus*, in which Jane is the solitary example of an elder female, *Aleutian Sparrow* features several contrasting female adult characters. Vera has very different female role models; her mother, who is not named, embodies the ideals of liberal feminism. Hesse sets her up as a foil for the elder females in the Aleutian community, such as Albert’s grandmother, who embody the principles of radical ecofeminism. Liberal feminism purports a “theory of human nature that views humans as individual rational agents who maximize their own self-interest and capitalism as the optimal economic structure for human progress” (Merchant 100). Women, in this model, can “transcend the social stigma of their biology” and function as men do in all aspects of society (Merchant 101). This sounds like an ideal system. Allowing men and women equal opportunities is undeniably a positive thing, but it allows them equal opportunities in a flawed system. It is the system that has to change so that equality and mutual respect will extend beyond economics and encompass nonhuman nature. In *Aleutian Sparrow*, Vera’s mother is employed and financially independent. She is able to function in capitalist society as a man would, but it is clear that this choice ignores the landscape and environment. Liberal feminism is human-centred. It does not consider the eco-community

of which humans are only one part. Vera's mother functions as an independent agent and has little or no connection to a community, especially in comparison to the elder Aleutian women, who form a community. The circle of elder Aleutian women represents an ecofeminist social structure, and is portrayed with more warmth and sympathy than Vera's mother, who is a cold, selfish figure.

At first glance, Vera's mother appears liberated and independent. She has escaped the limited, domestic sphere of work and has a job in a store, which she enjoys. Hesse indicates that this is rare in the community, as Vera mentions: "Always a white man has run the store. / But my mother took over when Zachary Soloman left. / And she likes it" (7). Vera's mother enjoys the benefits of being a working woman. She takes pride in the clothes she buys herself, refusing to wear the clothes donated to the resettlement camp. Once resettled in Ward Lake, she is desperate to find work in the city: "She walks the eight miles to Ketchikan and goes / inside every shop and asks if they need help. 'I'll do / anything,' my mother says" (61). Later, she is put in jail on the suspicion that she has been "selling favors" (100). Although this accusation is never fully explored, the mere suggestion of it emphasizes how deeply Vera's mother values money. Women turn to forms of prostitution out of financial desperation. The refugees are provided for, although very sparsely, in the camp. There is also work to be found in the camp. Vera's mother could have sought help there. Instead, it is implied that she turns to prostitution. She rejects the community in favour of being a woman of independent means, at any cost.

Although liberated in some economic sense, Vera's mother still suffers under the flawed system of capitalist patriarchy. She may have achieved some of the same rights and economic independence as some of the men in her community, but she also suffers

from the same alienation from the natural world that they do. She is indeed an equal, but now they are equal in what they lack. She is isolated from other women, her daughter, and nature. Vera's mother is not included in any of the communal scenes describing the Aleutian women singing, telling stories, or reminiscing. When the women volunteer their services in Wrangell, it is understood that Vera's mother is not among them. She has already gone looking for work in the city: "The women of all the different villages / Come from their tents / To work in the kitchen, the laundry, the bakery, / Even the ones who are sick" (35). With Vera, as well as with the other female characters both young and old, there is a pervasive sense of community and friendship. It is this companionship and communal sense that gets them through the evacuation years. By contrast, Vera's mother is always alone, at work in the store or reading magazines.

Her relationship with Vera is strained. As a child, Vera spent most of her time with other people, such as Albert's family, and Alexie and Fekla, the elderly couple she goes to live with in Unalaska village: "I grew up seeing my mother every day, but spending most/ of my time in Alfred's house" (13), she recalls. Vera learns about Aleutian culture from these surrogate families. When she returns home to Kashega to visit, her mother greets her "like a stranger, with an / *Americanchin* hug" (4). Not only is her mother unfamiliar, but the action of hugging is unfamiliar to Vera, as indicated by the term "*Americanchin*," which Hesse defines in the novel's glossary as "to become a 'white' American" (156).

In "House-Hunting in Ketchikan," Vera says:

My mother finds a room for one, "only one," she says, not
meeting my eyes. "It's well heated." She sighs and I

have never felt more forsaken. (102)

In this unsettling passage, a mother makes her own daughter feel guilty for being alive. Vera is treated as a nuisance; it is clearly implied that she is holding her mother back from achieving happiness. Although it is clear that she wants to stay in the apartment, she returns to the camp with Vera. However, her sense of responsibility toward her daughter is short-lived. Later, once the refugees are allowed to ask for permission to live in Ketchikan, Vera's mother is "one of the first to leave" (114). When the war is over, she remains in Ketchikan.

The isolation between mother and daughter is encapsulated in a moment on the cold, bare floor of a cabin in Ward Lake: "I sleep beside my mother, not quite touching. And we shiver" (46). One would imagine in a place of extreme cold, uncertainty, and fear, that a mother would comfort and embrace her daughter. This line indicates the physical disconnection between mother and daughter, which demonstrates the "fundamental lost bonding" which Mary Daly discusses in her ecofeminist book *Gyn/Ecology* (346). Indeed much of ecofeminism is rooted in the idea of reconnecting with each other. It is clear, though, that in *Aleutian Sparrow*, meaningful relationships are sometimes sacrificed in favour of economic independence and personal freedom, two tenets of capitalist patriarchy.

Hesse offers a subtle hint as to why Vera's mother has abandoned her traditional, nature-centred Aleutian upbringing. In the poem "My Mother," Vera talks about the disappearance of her father: "My mother never talks about when she was young and she / did not listen to the old ways to keep a man safe. / How she closed her ears to the Aleut tales . . . how she sent him to sea without / a seal-gut coat" (9). The poem implies that

both Vera's father and her mother are punished for not listening to the old ways, which are connected to the sea. The seal-gut coat is protective, but it is also a sign of respect for the seal and the environment.

Whether or not her actions actually led to the death of her husband is not the issue. What does matter is that Vera's mother seems to believe that they did. Or perhaps she blames the sea for the death of her husband, and severs all ties to the natural world out of distrust, rage, or grief. In the poem "Hot Spring Memory," Vera asks her mother about a hike they once took to a hot spring in Akutan. Despite Vera's prompting, she refuses to acknowledge the memory, and when asked if they can return, her response is non-committal: "Maybe," she says, never looking up, lost / in the pages of *Life*" (8). Ironically, she has chosen to immerse herself in a magazine called "Life" instead of pursuing life. She has turned her back on a culture and community that integrate the natural world in favour of the consumer-driven society promoted by *Life* magazine.

Vera describes Ketchikan disparagingly as "that city of steps and liquor" (114). The reference to steps brings to mind the masculine concept of ascension in Mary Daly's *Gyn/Ecology*. According to Daly, "[p]atriarchal society revolves around myths of processions" (36). She uses a quotation from Virginia Woolf's *Three Guineas* to illustrate the relationship between men, society, and processions:

There it is, then, before our eyes, the procession of the sons of educated men, ascending those pulpits, mounting those steps, passing in and out of those doors, preaching, teaching, administering justice, practicing medicine, making money. (qtd in Daly 35)

Whether Hesse intended to or not, by referring to Ketchikan as “that city of steps” (114), Vera is evoking the very structure of patriarchal society alluded to by Daly and Woolf. The city provides opportunity for people to mount the steps and achieve financial success. The cost of this ascension is the loss of community and the loss of the relationship to the land.

The community of elder Aleutian women offers a culture starkly contrasted with that of Vera’s mother. Her failure to make meaningful connections with people, her abandonment of her daughter, and her pursuit of money demonstrate that the solution to the problem is not in giving women the same rights and opportunities as men, as purported by liberal feminists. The solution is to change the system, which is flawed. The women of Albert’s family, and the circle of elder Aleutian women in general, embody radical ecofeminist philosophy as described by Carolyn Merchant, embracing ideas of “intuition, an ethic of caring, and weblike human/nature relationships” (“Feminist” 101).

Alfred’s house is a haven of traditional Aleutian culture, “where the old ways steep like tea in a cup of hours” (Hesse 13). Aleutian culture between 1942 and 1945 has been influenced by both Russian and American cultures. Kashega and Unalaska Village are not immune to the capitalist patriarchal values that structure American society. Vera’s mother is an example of an Aleutian woman who adheres to those values. In terms of religion, Vera’s community has embraced some of the practices of the Russian Orthodox Church, yet there still remains a belief in animism. At the root of their culture are the earth-centred values of the ancestors, the first native inhabitants of the islands. Vera’s connection to Albert’s family, whose members value the ancient earth-centred values of their people, gives her a purpose in life. Alfred’s grandfather tells Vera that her “work is

to know the ways of our people" (13). And she learns the ways of her people through interacting with this family as well as with Alexie and Fekla.

Alfred's grandmother is a respected member of the Aleutian community. She imparts history and tradition to the younger generation. Her stories are always about the connection between the Aleutian people and the landscape: "our people lived outside the concern / of white men; Aleuts were fishermen, seal hunters, / sea riders." (22) When the displaced Aleutians become sick, she offers traditional, homeopathic remedies using indigenous plants: "She says the boils on / our skin can be healed with wild geranium, with / ragwort, with all the old Aleut medicine" (92). Despite age and sickness, she passes on valuable cultural knowledge: "each day she sits up, if only for a few moments, and / teaches us to weave the baskets from raffia" (135).

Vera connects Alfred's grandmother explicitly to the landscape: "I look into Alfred's grandmother's eyes and recognize there / the Bering Sea, which is no more, no less, than an / ancient woman pacing in her dark robe" (22). In this passage human and nonhuman nature are interchangeable; an old woman is described as the sea, and the sea is described as an old woman. Likewise, upon hearing that the volcanoes near the Aleutian islands "are restless," Alfred's mother believes that "[i]t is nature / holding a mirror up to the troubles of man" (72). In the Aleutian community, people believe that human and nonhuman nature are interconnected.

Alfred's grandmother is one of a few individual female characters in *Aleutian Sparrow*. Instead of individuals, Hesse often describes groups of women. These women look out for the well-being of the community. In "Wrangell Night," they join together to lull all those who are frightened and restless to sleep:

Aleut mothers from five villages sing their children to sleep.

From twenty tents rise the good woman voices.

Dark eyes slowly shut: Hard wood floors

Become the hulls of boats floating in a sea of lullaby. (31)

The importance of women's voices is a recurring theme in all three novels. Miss Freeland uses her voice to shed light on environmental wrongs done to the land. Once Jane finds her voice, she becomes an active figure, who soothes the wounded with her words as the Aleut women's singing soothes their children. Oral story-telling and singing are central to the Aleutian community. These tasks often fall to the women. The Aleutian women sing lullabies and share stories, as Vera observes: "A group of women from two or three villages crowd together / into our cabin. / The talk turns to the old food . . . the women all nod and share stories of their own" (66).

The Aleutian women also carry out domestic tasks, such as cooking, sewing, and weaving, similar to the chores done by Polly and Jane. Yet the Aleutian women do not exhibit the same unhappiness that Jane or Polly do. They are not trapped by their responsibilities. This is because the Aleutian women are connected to the landscape through their work. The materials with which they cook, sew, and weave are usually natural items indigenous to the landscape. They often work outside, and in groups. Cooking, sewing, and weaving are not merely domestic tasks; they become cultural tasks.

Nursing, once again, appears as women's work. In each novel it is a job that the women succeed at and seem to enjoy. Polly does the impossible; her nursing allows the trees to bear fruit in a barren landscape. Jane finds her voice and is able to heal

shipwrecked victims in the position of nurse. And in *Aleutian Sparrow*, nursing is described as an ancient skill that women possess:

We girls and women do our best to bandage the cuts
of our men, we do our best to mend their bruised
bodies, but
We have few medical supplies, no healing fox oil. Only our
ancient skills, our Aleut resourcefulness. (48)

Again, this skill is related to cultural knowledge, as indicated by the term “ancient skills,” and natural, homeopathic remedies.

According to Ynestra King, the “promise of ecological feminism” is “rational re-enchantment that brings together spiritual and material, being and knowing” (“Revolt” 202). The Aleutian community lives out radical ecofeminist philosophy and is able to survive displacement and loss. They define themselves in relation to their landscape. In a particularly poignant poem, Vera recalls the night that she and Pari slept “in the ancient dwelling place . . . dug into the hillside” where

[t]he ghosts of our Aleutian grandmothers
whispered stories to us there” (129).

In this poem, women are connected to other women through a connection to the landscape.

In the next chapter, the protagonist’s perceptions of home and away landscapes will be contrasted.

CHAPTER FOUR: PERCEPTIONS OF HOME AND AWAY

To contextualize the protagonists' decision to stay or return home, it is necessary to examine how each girl perceives of her home landscape and those landscapes which are away. In the introduction to *Geography and Literature*, Mallory and Simpson-Housley discuss the relationship between cultural and natural landscapes: "There is always a cultural landscape imposed on the natural landscape— a cultural landscape that reveals something about the collective needs, tastes, predilections, values and attitudes of people" (15). In this chapter, I will also consider the social and cultural aspects of the community in addition to physical features of the landscape.

From the very first poem, Billie Jo indicates that she is bored in her surroundings: "From the earliest I can remember / I've been restless in this / little Panhandle shack we call home" (4). Feeling bored or restless at home is consistent with Perry Nodelman's home/away/home pattern, in which home is a "safe but boring" environment (201). Even before the accident, Billie Jo talks about wanting to get "out of the dust." This refrain appears throughout the novel. One of the benefits of living somewhere "out of the dust" is access to culture and art. In "What I Don't Know," Billie Jo is embarrassed about not knowing about the opera *Madame Butterfly*. She wonders, "how much more is out there / most everyone else has heard of / except me?" (42). After visiting a traveling art exhibit, Billie Jo says, "I feel such a hunger / to see such things. / And such an anger / because I can't" (95). She feels that cultural exhibits and events happen outside of her farm, somewhere else.

Though Billie Jo is bored in Oklahoma, her surroundings are anything but safe. The community lives at the mercy of destructive dust storms. They tear up wheat, bury

buildings and farm equipment in dunes of sand, and cause “dust pneumonia,” a sickness that kills Pete Guymon (140). In the poem “Kilauea,” Billie Jo compares the devastation of a volcanic eruption to that of a dust storm. Her physical descriptions of the landscape include death imagery. She describes the land as “empty, but with a few withered stalks / like the tufts of an old man’s head” (73). The image of the old man creates a sense of impending death. There is “barely a blade of grass swaying in the stinging wind,” and “there’s a greasy smell to the air / carcasses of jackrabbits, small birds, field mice” (73). The word carcass is also an explicit reference to death.

In the poem “World War,” the destruction of the First World War is compared to the destruction of a dust storm. Billie Jo’s father tells her of the red poppies that “bloomed in the trail of fighting,” a symbol of hope and beauty in the midst of war and ugliness (44). Billie Jo wishes she could find something similar in her own landscape: “I wish I could see poppies / growing out of the dust” (44). The hopelessness with which she views her surroundings, and the comparison to the devastation of volcanoes and war, indicate that Billie Jo is not happy in her native landscape.

The refrain “out of the dust” appears for the first time on page 9, referring to Billie Jo’s friend Livie, who has moved westward to California with her family: “Now Livie’s gone west / out of the dust/ on her way to California, / where the wind takes a rest sometimes” (9). The west, particularly California, is associated with Billie Jo’s concept of away. In “Wild Boy of The Road,” she describes California as a place “where rain comes, and the color green doesn’t seem like such a miracle, / and hope rises daily, like sap in a stem” (59). She decides: “[s]ome day I’ll leave behind the wind, and the dust, / and walk my way West / and make myself to home in that distant place / of green vines

and promise" (59). Billie Jo's concept of hope is related to plant life and greenery. She wishes for the opposite of the dry conditions she currently lives in. Her dreams of another life include a milder, greener landscape.

But going away is more than escaping a harsh climate. Billie Jo is looking for a community, a place where she is wanted. Before the accident, Billie Jo escapes the drudgery of her life by touring with Arley Wanderdale and the Black Mesa Boys. They do not travel far, but this is Billie Jo's first taste of life away from home. She says, "When I'm with Arley's boys we forget the dust. / We are flying down the road in Arley's car, / singing" (50). Interestingly, it is not the new places that appeal most to Billie Jo, but the sense of community created among the musicians. She does mention the places being "new and interesting" (51), but she does not describe these places. Instead, she describes how the musicians jam together in Arley's car:

We are flying down the road in Arley's car
singing,
laying our voices on top of the
beat Miller Rice plays on the back of Arley's seat,
and sometimes, Vera, up front, chirps crazy notes with
no words
and the sounds she makes seem just about amazing. (50)

Billie Jo concludes that "[i]t's being part of all that, / being part of Arley's crowd I like so much" (50-51). Thus, the best part about her time away from home is feeling part of a group. This is consistent with the findings of Mavis Reimer and Anne Rusnak, who have found that to accept a place as home the protagonist has to make the choice to integrate

herself into the community (23). Billie Jo has a community, but in her grief and anger she separates herself from them. It is only by making “a decision against solitude” (Reimer and Rusnak 23) that eventually she is able to reconcile her issues with her father and the land, as discussed in Chapter Five.

Like Billie Jo, Ann dreams of a life that includes something beyond the daily struggle to survive. She asks her brother, “Tom, do you ever think of what’s beyond that sea?” (26). He responds: “more sea and more fish” (26). Ann dreams “of books / of reading and writing” (22) much as Billie Jo dreams of music and art. Neither of her parents read, nor do they express any interest in learning. They tell her that “[w]hat’s learning here is fish,” (22) implying that she is better off learning about cod than about reading or writing. Ann laments: “This, the reason we are on this earth— / to turn cod into dried salt cod / for the tables of the world?” (20). She is aware that her family’s lack of education separates them from the merchants. The merchant tells her family, “The goods on my store shelves / are all you’ll ever need . . . You have no need to count money” (23). Ann observes that it is the merchant who “knows his numbers / and sets the price of fish” (23). She is wary of him for he has a lot of power over her family. She wishes for a better life, but is unable to conceive of such a life without further education.

In *Isle aux Morts* the threat of death is ever present. Like Billie Jo, Ann is restless at home, though in no way could her home be described as a safe place. Ann has few positive words for *Isle aux Morts*. Upon observing the shipwreck, she comments: “[n]ever was this home of ours better named” (41). The island is constantly described as cold, barren, and rocky. It is a place where “there are no trees / nor soil deep enough for a vegetable to take root” (11). Just off the shore are jagged rocks, referred to as Sunkers, or

“Bad Neighbors” (12). Ann does not mention the nearest human neighbours. Referring to a group of treacherous rocks as neighbours emphasizes the isolated life of the Harvey family. In the winter, the Harvey family moves inland to a home in the woods, away from the “fierce freezing winds” and the “ice glazing the shore” (27). They are not the only family to do so. This is the first mention of a community among families who “visit in the evenings / to talk around the fire” (27).

Ann imagines that the world outside of Isle aux Morts is more beautiful and the people there more educated. In the first poem, she compares the name of her home, which translates to Island of the Dead, with the more appealing names of Rose Blanche, Harbour Grace, and Iles de la Madeleine (11). These names are soft and feminine— more welcoming than Island of the Dead. Ann perceives of “away” as a safe place of refined beauty and of “home” as a dangerous untamed space. Though she dislikes much about Isle aux Morts, Ann also recognizes its wild splendour. Her feelings toward home and away can be categorized as those that accompany the experience of the beautiful and the sublime, as defined by Edmund Burke. In *Ecocriticism*, Greg Garrard discusses Edmund Burke’s concepts, in which beauty is that quality that arouses pleasure and the sublime arouses astonishment (63).

Christine L. Oravec describes the sublime experience in three stages. The first is “apprehension, in which the individual subject encounters an object larger and greater than the self.” This leads to a feeling of “awe, oppression, or even depression— in some versions fear or potential fear— in which the individual recognizes the relative greatness of the object and the relative weakness or limits of the self.” Finally, the experience of the sublime culminates in “exaltation, in which the individual is conceptually or psychically

[sic] enlarged as the greatness of the object is realized and the individual identifies with that greatness" (qtd in Rozelle 3). The landscape of Isle aux Morts is full of sublime objects; physical features that inspire awe, oppression, and fear: "the sea smashes against the jagged rocks / whipping, churning / into the devil's froth" (12). Further inland, Ann marvels at "trees tall enough / their branches hold clouds of snow" (27). Though she fears her landscape, and often speaks critically of it, she has moments of reverence:

Yet in the fall the scrub that fills the crevices
turns a scarlet red—
red so pure it makes your heart swell
with the beauty of God's hand. (11)

The rugged and dangerous splendour of Newfoundland is sharply contrasted with the cultivated and benign beauty of "away." Ann dreams of a world full of beauty because she lives in a landscape that is a constant source of astonishment. Her conception of beauty is refined and domestic. Her only glimpses of life outside of Isle aux Morts are in the items that wash upon the shore after a shipwreck and the goods and stories brought back from America by the merchant:

he talks of gardens
where young ladies stroll with parasols
and gently touch their lips with lace handkerchiefs
and speak of gentlemen suitors and weddings.
He talks of dances
where young ladies in silks and satins
sweep down staircases

to dance the quadrille with young gentlemen. (28)

Strolling in the garden, gossiping, and dancing, are all leisure activities.¹ They suggest a carefree life of ease and luxury. Parasols, lace handkerchiefs, and dresses of silk and satin are ornamental and beautiful, but very impractical for the life Ann leads. The only mention of a physical landscape is a garden. In *Ecocriticism*, Garrard uses the garden as an example of pastoral landscape (35). A garden is thus a cultivated and contained space that is maintained by careful planning. Although comprised of natural elements, the garden is constructed and is therefore unnatural. It is nature that has been overwritten with "civilised poetic artifice" (35). This type of beauty is cultivated, refined, and non-threatening. According to Patrick D. Murphy, the pastoral in literature "tends to be based on an idealization of nature rather than a genuine encounter with it" (*Literature, Nature and Other* 25). Ann's perception of away is an idealized fantasy of the pastoral life.

The home/away/home pattern in *Aleutian Sparrow* differs significantly from both *Out of the Dust* and *Ann and Seamus*. Most of *Aleutian Sparrow* is narrated from away, and is full of longing to return home. In the other novels, the protagonists narrate from home, and long to go away. In *Aleutian Sparrow*, the reader's conception of home is created by Vera's memories, which are of both Kashaga, her childhood home, and Unalaska Village, where she has been living with Alexia and Fekla. Home for Vera is safer than away, and is never described as boring. Unlike Billie Jo or Ann, who dream of the opportunity to escape, Vera dreams of returning home. It is important to consider that the circumstances under which she leaves home are not the same as those for Billie Jo or Ann, who choose to leave, or not leave, respectively. Vera is not given the choice.

Vera's perception of home is positive, despite harsh climate conditions. She recognises the harsh reality of the landscape, but does so with an appreciation that comes from a sublime experience. Yes, the landscape is harsh, but the Aleuts recognize themselves as part of that landscape. This is indicated by the interaction of human and nonhuman elements; one is not dominated by the other. In the poem, "Who We Were," Vera describes her native landscape:

in every direction the sea surrounded us. Fierce
winds boxed with us, like prizefighters spring from
four corners.

The fog carried us through the treeless hills in her fat arms,
our faces pressed against her damp skin. (25)

The line "[f]ierce / winds boxed with us" indicates that the Aleutian people interact with nonhuman nature, rather than being acted upon (25). At times, these nonhuman elements are violent: "waves crashed against the rocks and the spume / rose like raging sea lions" (86). The weather is also unpredictable: "When the snow turned to sleet, the sleet to rain, the rain to / hail, the hail back to snow again" (86). Yet in these descriptions there is a sense of respect and reverence. For example, in the following quotation, the wind is again described as fierce and powerful, yet it is controlling the grass as if it was a group of "green violins," suggesting that the wind and the grasses together create something beautiful: "fierce wind played the / grass like a tempest of green violins" (86).

In the poem "Promise," the children point out that they have been kept away from home, unlike the salmon and the seal, which are able to return (106). This poem suggests that people are just as native and connected to a landscape as animals. Lee Rozelle

Unlike Billie Jo and Ann, who dream of gardens and green landscapes, Vera feels suffocated by the green forests of Wrangell and Ward Lake. Trees and the colour green are associated with rotting:

Around our crowded camp, everywhere we turn, green life
rubs its moss skin against us.

The air steams green, and always the sound of dripping,
Always the smell of rot. Always green curtains smothering us.

On the Aleutians there are no trees. (54).

The first description of Wrangell mentions that the camp is “surrounded by trees” (24). The army leaves them “abandoned in the dark suffocation of the / forest,” (45) where “the air is fur thick, damp and green” (130). Not only does Vera feel suffocated by the trees, but the scent of flowers and fruit is cloying. In the poem “Too Sweet,” Vera is overwhelmed by the scent of “ripening fruit” and flowers: “The fragrance is too sweet. It makes a throbbing behind / my eye” (53). For Vera, who spent her time in Kashega gathering plants and flowers, weaving grass rugs, and exploring hot springs, it is hard to adjust to unfamiliar vegetation. Vera’s life in Kashega and Unalaska Village revolves around interaction with the plant life. Because she was so close to her own ecosystem, it is difficult for her to adjust to a new one.

The Aleuts become sick in their new environment. They develop boils, which are dismissed by a doctor as a result of the adjustment process: “When he finally arrives, he tells us we are not ill, only / ‘adjusting’ ” (91). In the poem “Wet,” Vera describes how the constant moisture is making them ill: “Our skin never dries, our clothes / cling, our

feet are damp, we are always coughing" (95). The children have grown "pale from breathing unripe air" (71). There are "[s]o many ill. Fevered, with TB, with pneumonia . . . In our nightmares Death rows through the thick trees to the / shore of our camp" (122). The Aleut people know how to live off the land, but Ward Lake is not their native environment. Billie Jo and Ann do not experience life away from home to the same extent that Vera does. Any idealization of life away from home Vera may have had is shattered by her experiences in the resettlement camps.

All three protagonists have ambiguous feelings toward home. Their home landscapes can be quite threatening, yet they also offer beauty and splendour. Billie Jo and Ann feel limited by their surroundings and yearn for the opportunities they perceive of existing elsewhere. But their perceptions of away are idealized, and will never live up to their expectations. Vera misses the daily struggle of life on the Aleutian Islands. More so than the other girls, she is at peace with the challenges of living within her home environment. As she is the only character who spends a significant amount of time away from home, she is the only one who truly comes to realize the value of what she has lost.

CHAPTER FIVE: BIOREGIONALISM, IDENTITY AND BELONGING

When given the opportunity to seek out a new and perhaps less trying life, all three protagonists decide to rebuild or improve the quality of living within their previously established homes. I believe the impetus to do so comes from their sense of belonging to their landscape; their identities are dependent upon place. This concept has been well examined in adult literature by many critical theorists, including Paul Shepard, Leonard Lutwack and Lee Rozelle, but it is Neil Evernden who words it best: "There is no such thing as an individual, only an individual-in-context, individual as a component of place, defined by place" (Evernden 103).

The sense of belonging to a biotic community, and the responsibilities such a relationship entails, is explored in bioregionalism. In "Searching for Common Ground," Judith Plant defines the process of achieving bioregionalism as "fitting ourselves to a particular place, not fitting a place to our predetermined tastes. It is living within the limits and gifts provided by a place" (158). She also calls it the process of rebuilding the "human and natural community" (160). According to Peter Berg and Raymond Dasmann, bioregionalism "involves becoming native to a place through becoming aware of the particular ecological relationships that operate within and around it . . . Simply stated it involves becoming fully alive in and with a place. It involves applying for membership in a biotic community and ceasing to be its exploiter" (qtd. in Plant, "Searching" 158).

Politically speaking, a bioregion is "an ecopolitical unit that respects the boundaries of pre-existing indigenous societies as well as the natural boundaries and constituencies of mountain range and watershed, ecosystem and biome" (Garrard 118). Bioregionalists promote the decentralisation of the economy and strive for regional

diversification and self sufficiency (Garrard 118). Simply put, bioregionalism means learning to live locally. Plant believes that by dismantling centralized power structures, the progression towards "self-governing forms of social organization" will move us closer to "what has traditionally been thought of as 'woman's sphere'—that is, home and its close surroundings" ("Searching" 160). Plant's vision of home is "the place where we can learn the values of caring for and nurturing each other and our environments" (160). This is the context in which "[w]omen's values, centred around life-giving" will be "re-valued, elevated from their once subordinate role" (160).

There are many parallels between bioregionalism and the ecofeminist concept of community. Plant suggests bioregionalism as a means to establish communities and a healthy concept of home: "One of the strategies of bioregional organising is to turn our attention toward home and community" ("Learning" 32). Other scholars have identified the role of ecofeminism in redefining home. Freya Mathews recognizes that ecofeminists "tend to portray the natural world as a community of beings, related, in the manner of a family, but nevertheless distinct" (235). This suggests that the ecofeminist community is inclusive but not homogenising and interdependent but not co-dependent. It consists of both human and nonhuman members. Patrick D. Murphy also talks about the role of ecofeminism in redefining the concept of family. He believes that ecofeminist philosophy provides a "sophisticated reconsideration of the concept of family and the structures of interpersonal relationships in which the criteria for evaluating healthy ecosystems are applied" (55). Therefore a healthy family functions in the same manner as a healthy ecosystem, encompassing a diversity of organisms.

In *Out of the Dust*, Billie Jo leaves home because she has lost her sense of community and belonging. She is driven away from her home by bitterness and loneliness: "I am so filled with bitterness, / it comes from the dust, it comes / from the silence of my father, it comes / from the absence of Ma" (195). She feels that "[m]ostly [she's] alone" (195). Both the natural elements of her landscape and her lack of community factor in her decision to leave. Billie Jo is seeking a greener, gentler landscape, but also a community to belong to.

When she returns, she explains to her father that she is connected to the landscape:

I tell him about getting out of the dust
and how I can't get out of something
that's inside me. (205)

Billie Jo returns home because she realizes that she belongs in her landscape. This connection is illustrated by the comparison of her father to the sod, and herself to the wheat. These metaphors convey the bioregional concept of humans as an integral part of a biotic community.

I tell him he is like the sod
and I am like the wheat,
and I can't grow everywhere,
but I can grow here
with a little rain
with a little care,
with a little luck. (205)

From the very first poem in the novel, Billie Jo is explicitly connected with the wheat. She is born as the wheat matures: "As summer wheat came ripe / so did I" (3). She has a closeness with nature that allows her to sense things. She feels changes in the atmosphere before a dust storm: "I sensed it before I knew it was coming. / I heard it, / smelled it, / tasted it. / Dust" (31). During one storm, a driver asks her how she manages to stay on the road. She replies: "I feel it with my feet . . . I walk along the edge. / One foot on the road, one on the shoulder" (142). This connection to the ground keeps her safe. She makes connections between herself and the earth, and associates the dryness of her scarred hands with the dryness of the earth: "it hurts like the parched earth with each note" (135). She belongs to her environment as much as the wheat does.

After the accident, Billie Jo directs her anger and grief toward the landscape. In doing so, she loses some of her connection to the landscape. This is demonstrated in the poem "Snow," in which she confuses snow with dust:

"Had to check/ yesterday morning / to make sure that was / snow / on the ground, / not dust" (137). Her identity is connected to the land; therefore a crisis of identity occurs when she distances herself from the elements of her landscape.

Billie Jo admits that "[g]etting away, / it wasn't any better. / Just different. / And lonely" (204). Again, the emphasis on loneliness suggests that she is seeking acceptance in a community. She tells Louise: "When I rode the train west, / I went looking for something, / but I didn't see anything wonderful. / I didn't see anything better than what I already had. Home" (217). At home, Billie Jo has her musical and school communities. Even after the accident, these two communities reach out to her, and it is Billie Jo who

turns her back on them because of grief and shame. She blames herself for her mother's death, and is ashamed of her scarred hands and her inability to play the piano.

In their study, Reimer and Rusnak found that the protagonist's survival instinct in award-winning contemporary Canadian children's literature was to cultivate "an indifference to one's environment and to hold oneself aloof from other people" (23). Hesse incorporates this pattern into Billie Jo's development. Following the accident, Billie Jo further hardens herself against the environment and those who reach out to her. But ultimately, she makes what Reimer and Rusnak term "a decision against solitude" (23) and chooses to integrate herself into the community, dust storms and all.

In the poem "Thanksgiving List," Billie Jo lists everything she is thankful for. Fifteen of thirty-one are references to natural phenomena such as "prairie birds," "the whistle of gophers," "the smell of grass," and "the sound of rain" (220-221). Once she has begun the process of forgiving herself, her father, and her environment, Billie Jo is able to reconnect with nature. She recognizes and appreciates the simple joys of her landscape. Most of all, she is thankful for "the certainty of home, the one I live in, / and the one / that lives in me" (221).

For Kevin Major's Ann, the question "who will I be" is explicitly connected to "where will I be." She "swirls free" in her dreams, with "a head full of notions / of other places / and other times" (Major 32). She is haunted by where she will end up in life and asks herself: "where will I come to rest / the question drifting about my waking hours / lurking through my nights" (32). In "Beyond Ecology," Neil Evernden explores the relationship between identity and place. He quotes Paul Shepard, who claims that "[k]nowing who you are is impossible without knowing where you are from" (qtd. in

Evernden 101). Evernden goes on to state that “[t]here is no such thing as an individual, only an individual-in-context, individual as a component of place, defined by place”

(103). Ann’s context— her place— is Isle aux Morts.

Like Billie Jo, Ann is born at home. She describes herself as “born to the ways of the sea” (16). Moments after her birth, her father introduces her to their landscape:

Father held me high
in his thick fisherman’s hands.
He threw open the door
and bellowed
There it is, Ann, me young maid.
The sea.
Our lot in life. (16)

Although the sea is often described as dangerous and unpredictable, Ann muses that “perhaps a calm sea is made for dreaming” (25). On several occasions Ann refers to herself as the dreamer in her family. Her brother Tom confirms this role. When he learns that Ann is considering leaving, he tells her “[y]ou’re needed here” (99). Ann replies that she is not needed, and that Tom is capable of helping their father with the cod. He tells her she is needed because “[y]ou’re the one for dreaming” (99). This implies that there is a need for dreamers as well as labourers in Isle aux Morts. So whether she recognizes it or not, she has an important role in her community.

Ann escapes to the seaside to consider her options: “I walk the rocks alone / and face the sea alone / and sing the songs Father taught me” (99). Interestingly, Ann feels that she has to “face the sea” when making her decision. This wording suggests that she

has to defend her choices to the landscape, and that she is in danger of disappointing or upsetting the sea. Though she worries about how her decision will affect her family and Seamus, it is only the sea that she feels she has to “face.” This is because the sea is a part of Ann, much as the dust is a part of Billie Jo. By leaving the sea Ann would be attempting to “get out of something” that is inside of her (Hesse 205). This is why she is plagued with anxiety:

The song I hear
is filled with doubt,
with an aching, heavy-hearted fear.

What of myself in days to come
without a talent to call my own?
What of myself without the sea,
unable to read or write of home?

The song I sing
is filled with pain,
with a haunting, wretched sting. (100)

In this poem, Ann clearly defines herself in terms of place. She wonders who she will be “without the sea,” and her illiteracy becomes an issue because it prevents her from remembering or honouring her home (100). This suggests that if she cannot read or record her own thoughts about home, she will forget about it, or in some manner do a disservice to her own roots.

Seamus tempts Ann with a promise of literacy and clothing: "I will teach you the ways of books, he says / to recite the wisdom of the world, / to become a wonder to behold / in dresses more dazzling than the sun" (92). Earlier in the novel, Ann laments her lack of education and dreams of reading. She also envies the "young ladies in silks and satins" with their parasols and lace handkerchiefs (28). Yet when the opportunity to realize her dreams presents itself, she hesitates. The description of the landscape in this section is appealing: "I sit in the silence of the sun / as it rises over Isle aux Morts, / calm following the storm, / light glinting off the fairest sea / a world could ever claim" (92). The juxtaposed images of the dresses "more dazzling than the sun" and the sunlight glinting off "the fairest sea / a world could ever claim" represent what the two worlds offer her. With Seamus, in the new world, she can have material comforts, such as fine clothing and books. In Newfoundland, she has the sublime beauty of the natural world. The two images are practically incomparable. It seems ridiculous to compare the beauty of a dress to the wonder of the sun.

Ann's ultimate response is "Seamus, you have nothing, / and I nothing / but the solid rock of home" (105). In this line, the connotation of rock has changed. Previously, the rocky terrain of Isle aux Morts has caused Ann much grief. The rocks are responsible for the shipwrecks; they make farming and agriculture almost impossible, and they deter people from settling on the island. Yet here, her home is described as a rock. A rock can also be read as a symbol of steadfastness, stability, and reliability. In this poem, it is clear that Ann has come to view her home as a place she can rely on. She has an important role in her community, as the dreamer, and has accepted her own connection to the sea. The

final line of the novel reiterates the image of home as a rock: "When the ship weighs anchor / I stand on shore / holding to the rock/ of Newfoundland" (107).

Very early on in *Aleutian Sparrow*, Vera is told by Alfred's grandfather that her work "is to know the ways of our people" (13). She prefers "the old ways" to the urban, capitalist way of life that her mother and Pari long for. In April 1945, Vera returns to Unalaska village against the advice of the government because of her work. She has made a commitment to the Aleutian culture and heritage. By rebuilding Unalaska village, she is honouring her ancestors and ensuring that something of the old ways will persist into the future. Even though life would be easier in Ketchikan, or even in Akutan, surrounded by Albert's family, Vera chooses to rebuild her landscape.

Vera admits that at one point she considered leaving the Aleutians: "Most of us dreamed of going Outside, hungry for a taste of / life beyond the Aleutians" (139). This is an important statement. It recognizes the desire for something different from the familiar, from home—a common sentiment in children's literature. However Vera qualifies this statement with the following quotation:

Few of us truly meant it, few of us ever really intended to
leave the fog and the wind, the sun and the rain, the
hunting and trapping and fishing, the easy welcome
of neighbors.

We never thought who we were was so dependent on where
we were. (139)

Here we have again the concept of identity rooted in place. Just as Billie Jo is unable to get "out of the dust" because it is "inside" of her (Hesse 205), and just as Ann is

uncertain about who she will be “without the sea” (Major 100), Vera comes to understand that her personal identity depends on the specific landscape of the Aleutian Islands. She belongs to the landscape as much as the sea lion, the pootchky plant, or wormwood.

When their resettlement is over, many of the displaced Aleuts opt to remain in the Southeast, with “their jobs, their steps, their Ketchikan / beaus” (143). Some choose to “start over in Akutan” (143). The government does not allow Vera to return to Kashega, her hometown, because “[t]oo much is broken” (Hesse 143). She chooses to return to Unalaska village, where she lived with Alexie and Fekla. Albert chooses to go with her. Together, in the face of great obstacles, they will re-establish the community.

To survive and rebuild the community, Vera and Albert require outside assistance and supplies: “We need everything the Red Cross warehouse holds” (150), Vera says. She describes the destruction of the village over a series of poems. In Alexie and Fekla’s house, “[t]he doors hang open” and “[a]ll the windows [are] shattered” (147). The house has been vandalised and looted, full of “books, bedding, papers, clothing strewn in / piles, ruined” (147). The landscape has also suffered:

Our fishing grounds and beaches slick with oil,

Our berry patches crushed under the weight of Quonset

huts, our churches looted.

We cannot eat the war-poisoned clams and mussels; soldiers

murdered our foxes and our sea lions. (149).

The Aleutian way of life depends on these natural resources. A destroyed beach, berry patch, or animal population is equally if not more devastating to Vera than a destroyed house. The memories of life on the Aleutians that have sustained Vera throughout the

they are survivors. And by returning to Unalaska village, Vera is living out the Aleut tradition of perseverance.

Billie Jo, Ann, and Vera “learn the value of home by losing it and finding it again,” which Perry Nodelman defines as the function of the home/away/home pattern in children’s literature (197). Billie Jo does not see the value of her home until she leaves it and discovers that life out of the dust is not better, just different: “I didn’t see anything better than what I already had. Home” (Hesse 217). Ann chooses the rock of home over the uncertainty of life in a new world with Seamus. Although she does not leave, it is the opportunity to do so that makes her reconsider her home and family and ultimately decide to stay in Isle aux Morts. In *Aleutian Sparrow*, Vera comes to value the landscape and life of home in the Aleutians when she is forced to reside in resettlement camps at Wrangell and Ward Lake. However, when she returns, it is not only Vera who has changed, but the landscape. Now, with Albert, she must learn to adjust to these changes and rebuild a social and ecological community. The experiences of all three protagonists have “led on to a new and better understanding of what both home and oneself should be” (Nodelman 198).

The girls in these verse novels are intimately connected to their landscape. Their environment has inhabited their very being; it is something inside of each of them. It is this connection that draws them to their home landscapes. With the decision to re-inhabit their home landscapes, the protagonists undertake the process of reconnecting to the natural world and also to their human community. Ecofeminist readers would say that they are redefining the concept of home by learning to live bioregionally.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

Ultimately, the protagonists of *Out of the Dust*, *Ann and Seamus*, and *Aleutian Sparrow* choose to stay or return home because their identities are connected to the landscape. This indicates that people, like animals and plant life, can be indigenous to a specific place. Though we can adapt to many settings, we thrive in our native landscapes. These include human and nonhuman communities. The revelation that identity is connected to landscape only occurs when the protagonists are given the opportunity to experience life away from home.

The protagonists do not return home because it provides a sense of security, which is a reason why a child might return. None of their homes could be described as safe. The environmental conditions are at times brutal and dangerous. The decision to choose home is then a mature choice. It indicates that the girls are going to integrate themselves into the community. They are going to bear many trials in the rebuilding of their homes and relationships. Each girl is reaching the decision of a young adult.

There is still much to learn and do once the protagonists have made a commitment to living within a biotic community. One of the strengths these novels share is that they have open endings. There is plenty of work ahead of the protagonists, with many adjustments to make and challenges to come, yet there is a feeling that the girls are now committed members of their communities. It is important to distinguish belonging to a community from achieving or enjoying a life of ease. Belonging does not mean that life will be easy. At the end of *Out of the Dust*, Billie Jo and her father are still learning how to fit themselves with the landscape. They are still learning how to live "within the limits and gifts provided by a place" (Plant, "Searching" 158). Kevin Major's Ann must deal

with the heartbreak of losing her first love and further explore the possibilities that her landscape has to offer. Hesse's Vera has a lot of rebuilding ahead of her. These three young women are on the verge of discovering their landscapes all over again. They choose home, but their perception of home has changed, and will continue to evolve as they learn to fit themselves to their ecocommunities.

The very fact that Billie Jo, Ann, and Vera have options makes their decision to stay a feminist decision. If they had not been given the chance to leave, then it could be said all three were trapped in their landscapes and in the limitations of their gender roles. Because they are given the chance to leave, or in Vera's case, the choice to stay in Ketchikan, relocate to Akutan, or return to Unalaska village, their decisions affirm their agency. Billie Jo could have gone West; Ann could have chosen to go to the New World, and Vera could have moved to Ketchikan. No doubt these journeys would have led the girls to urban centres with more opportunity for standard education and financial gain. But these would have been the selfish pursuits of a capitalist patriarchal structure. By choosing home, the girls are committed to building and participating in a human and nonhuman community, the rewards of which are deep, rich, and emotionally satisfying.

In all three novels, the capitalist patriarchal structure is revealed as unhealthy and oppressive. In *Out of the Dust* and *Ann and Seamus*, the older female generation has very little choice or opportunity, and is unhappy living in the confines of domestic work. Two major factors in the unhappiness of Polly and Jane are their isolation from a community and their separation from the landscape. Polly enjoys tending her apple trees, but this time is limited because she is constantly called upon to finish domestic tasks. Jane works within the confines of her home and is denied the pleasures of working on the open sea.

But their daughters, Billie Jo and Ann, respectively are able to enjoy the outdoors, experience the landscape, and connect with it in ways that their mothers have been unable to do. Vera's mother finds a job and pursues the consumerism so much a part of capitalist patriarchy, but at the expense of her relationship with her daughter and the other women of her community. Though she achieves a kind of economic independence, she is isolated from people and from nature.

Within each verse novel, ecofeminism emerges as an attractive, viable alternative to the alienating framework of capitalist patriarchy. Ecofeminism works because it is an inclusive philosophy that seeks to reunite both men and women with each other and the biotic community. All three novels under study here demonstrate the wide range of relationships men can and have established with the landscape, from the domineering frontierism and the pastoral impulse, as exemplified by Seamus in *Ann and Seamus*, to the integrated and reciprocal relationship demonstrated by Alfred in *Aleutian Sparrow*. In *The Lay of the Land*, Annette Kolodny calls for a new definition of "mature masculinity" (147). Perhaps this new definition is the ecofeminist male, who favours an integrated rather than hierarchical relationship with the land, and conceptualizes his community as a family of both human and nonhuman members. In the novels studied here, Albert in *Aleutian Sparrow* is the male figure who is the most ecofeminist. He is dedicated to both his human and nonhuman communities.

Miss Freeland in *Out of the Dust* and Alfred's grandmother in *Aleutian Sparrow* emerge as ecofeminist role models. Both of these women are sensitive to the needs of the earth as well as the needs of their human communities. They share a care-ethic towards both human and nonhuman nature; they are community builders. Perhaps most

significantly, both Miss Freeland and Alfred's grandmother recognize the destruction of animal populations or the environment as a direct result of human arrogance, and use this knowledge to teach younger generations to respect the nonhuman nature around them. Billie Jo and Vera learn bioregional and ecofeminist concepts from these women, and at the end of the novels, it appears that they too will emerge as ecofeminist role models.

Upon first reading my primary texts, I was surprised that the protagonists would choose to stay in an isolated community amid harsh environmental factors, with few luxuries or opportunities. I assumed that the smarter choice, or the feminist choice, would be to set out alone to discover the world and all its opportunities. I now see that this concept of "striking out on your own and making it in the city" is a deeply entrenched social concept that I have adopted. Leaving the small town and finding life, love, and financial success elsewhere is a pattern perpetuated by this culture in which we find ourselves today. It is a form of frontierism, in which one leaves the comfortable, established framework of home to create one's own home elsewhere. Like Vera's mother, I have adopted the liberal feminist opinion that women can and should succeed in all the areas that men do in society. I have never before questioned that the system itself might be flawed. Now I see that although equal opportunity is positive, equal opportunity in a system that alienates people from each other and their environment is harmful to both human and nonhuman nature.

Karen Hesse and Kevin Major eloquently demonstrate how we are damaging ourselves and our environment. Yet they also provide us with glimpses of hope. Their novels imply that if we can learn to live within the environment rather than impose our

anthropocentric ideas upon it, then we can perhaps save the environment and heal the wounds inflicted upon men and women by harmful societal frameworks.

With the environmental movement reaching critical mass all over the world, there is no better time for ecofeminist analysis of the books we read. Ecofeminism can be used as a constructive tool to reveal harmful practices toward people and the environment. As well, there is a need for more analysis of how children—the inheritors of the environments we have shaped—connect to landscape in nature. Children's literature is a microcosm of the aims and values of a society. What we teach our children is indicative of how we view the world. If we are truly concerned about the environment, now is the time to take action. There is no better way to change the future than through the proliferation of positive messages and alternative action. Instead of accepting the refrain, "and the tree was happy" (Silverstein) without question, we need to explore the implications of this so-called happiness. On the surface, *The Giving Tree* appears to normalize if not glorify the dominant position of man over both women and nature that is the foundation of capitalist patriarchy. Instead of celebrating this imbalance, we need to find literature that promotes change, and reinterpret *The Giving Tree* as an ironic statement on how society values women and the environment.

Out of the Dust, *Ann and Seamus*, and *Aleutian Sparrow* provide literary examples of strong female characters who come to realize the value of both home and a connection to landscape. There are valuable lessons to be learned in these books. One is that we need to reintegrate ourselves with our landscapes and build our communities in conjunction with, rather than in opposition to, the environment. Second, that success in life is measured in happiness and we can never be truly happy if we alienate ourselves

from each other and our environment. And the third message from these extraordinary texts is that achieving unity between human and nonhuman nature is possible and more than that, it is rewarding.

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