UNIVERSIDADE DE LISBOA
Faculdade de Letras

From Displacement to Emplacement: Nature, Imagination and Language in Lorna Goodison's *From Harvey River*, Michael Ondaatje's *Running in the Family* and Eva Hoffman's *Lost in Translation*

Mary Caroline Fowke

Orientadoras: Prof. Doutora Maria Teresa Correia Casal
Prof. Doutora Isabel Maria Fernandes Alves

Tese especialmente elaborada para obtenção do grau de Doutor em Estudos de Literatura e de Cultura na especialidade de Estudos Americanos

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English Abstract

This thesis undertakes to examine the sensorial underpinnings and poetics of three literary memoirs: Lorna Goodison's *From Harvey River* (2007), Michael Ondaatje's *Running in the Family* (1982) and Eva Hoffman's *Lost in Translation* (1989) in their relationship with the geographical dislocation and expatriation of the works' protagonists and authors. The authors were born and raised on different continents: Goodison in the Caribbean (Jamaica); Ondaatje in Asia (Ceylon/Sri Lanka); and Hoffman in Europe (Poland) and they either live, or have at one time lived, in Canada. This commonality, while not foregrounded in the memoirs – their subject is primarily countries and cultures of origin and personal losses associated with them – constitutes part of this thesis's study of displacement. I explore the ways in which selfhood is disrupted by intra and international displacement, and exilic experiences therein, but I also demonstrate the ways in which it is rebuilt through language, arguing that the memoirs not only assert relational selfhood but also selfhood as multifaceted, mutable and plural.

Goodison, Ondaatje and Hoffman were born in the 1940's, during, or in the immediate aftermath of, World War II, and raised at a time of decolonization (Goodison and Ondaatje) or within the sphere of Soviet influence (Hoffman). Taking into consideration these geographical, historical and political factors, while focusing on the humanistic and psychological elements of the works, my thesis parses and seeks to understand attachments to places of origin that are formed during childhood, sustained over time through memory and the imagination, and later go on to inform the memoirs, creatively and constructively. It does so first by presenting the concept of the ecological self and its development during childhood; second through an examination of displacement related to home of origin, attachments and belonging; third in an exploration of the writing process as a transformative act of emplacement. In so doing, my thesis poses, and

responds to, questions of situated knowledges that span local and global parameters, the conditions that contribute to them, and their expression through writing. It ultimately points to the deep influence of childhood experiences upon memory, the imagination and language, and demonstrates the capacities of writing to re-emplace displaced selfhood.

Keywords: memoir, memory, displacement, dislocation, attachments, selfhood, childhood, imagination, Lorna Goodison, Michael Ondaatje, Eva Hoffman

Portuguese Abstract

Esta tese analisa os fundamentos sensoriais e poéticos de três memórias literárias: *From Harvey River* (2007) de Lorna Goodison, *Running in the Family* (1982) de Michael Ondaatje, e *Lost in Translation* (1989) de Eva Hoffman, explorando o afastamento geográfico e expatriação vivenciada pelos autores e protagonistas destas obras. Os autores nasceram e cresceram em vários continentes: Goodison na América do Norte (Jamaica); Ondaatje na Ásia (Ceilão/Sri Lanka); e Hoffman na Europa (Polónia), e todos vivem ou viveram, em dado momento, no Canadá. Este último ponto, embora não proeminente nas memórias, que tratam sobretudo das perdas associadas a países e culturas de origem, constitui uma parte desta tese sobre afastamento geográfico, expatriação e exílio. Neste trabalho, exploro o modo como o "eu" surge desestabilizado por mudanças pessoais e geográficas e por experiências de exílio, mostrando, também, o modo como esse 'eu' se reconstrói através do uso da linguagem. Proponho que as memórias não só afirmam a individualidade relacional do "eu", mas também a sua identidade multifacetada, mutável e plural.

Goodison, Ondaatje e Hoffman nasceram nos anos 40, durante ou no rescaldo imediato da Segunda Guerra Mundial, e cresceram numa época de descolonização (Goodison e Ondaatje) ou dentro da esfera de influência soviética (Hoffman). Este estudo tem em consideração os contextos históricos, políticos e geográficos, mas privilegia sobretudo os elementos humanísticos e psicológicos das obras. Nesse sentido, examina e procura entender os vínculos aos lugares de origem, formados durante a infância e sustentados ao longo do tempo através da recordação e da imaginação, e o modo como vêm mais tarde a informar/constituir as memórias de modo criativo e construtivo. O estudo apresenta, em primeiro lugar, o conceito do "eu ecológico" e do seu

desenvolvimento na infância; seguidamente, examina a deslocação geográfica em relação ao lugar de origem, vínculos de pertença; e, por fim, explora o processo de escrita como um ato transformativo de enraizamento. Ao fazê-lo, esta tese coloca e responde a questões acerca do conhecimento situado que atravessam parâmetros locais e globais, das condições que contribuíram para tal e da sua expressão através da escrita. Finalmente, a tese salienta a profunda influência das experiências de infância na memória, imaginação e linguagem, demonstrando a capacidade da escrita para enraizar o "eu" deslocado e desenraizado.

Palavras-chaves: memória, afastamento geográfico, expatriação, exílio, identidade, imaginação, Lorna Goodison, Michael Ondaatje, Eva Hoffman

Abbreviations

Running in the Family: Running

Lost in Translation: Lost

The Ecology of Imagination in Childhood (book): Ecology

“The Ecology of Imagination in Childhood (essay): “Ecology”

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Introduction

This thesis is an investigation of sensorial, nature-based memory as a source of poetics in three literary memoirs: Lorna Goodison's *From Harvey River* (2007), Michael Ondaatje's *Running in the Family* (1982), and Eva Hoffman's *Lost in Translation* (1989). It seeks to understand the interplay of memory and poetics within the works through an examination of three key vertices: the formative years of childhood, the effects of expatriate experience and other forms of geographical dislocation[1], and the transformative capacities of language and writing. My investigation of these vertices is guided by, and responds to, the following research questions: (1) what bearing do sensorially based experiences in the natural world during the authors' childhoods have on the memoirs' poetics? (2) how does the geographical displacement of exilic, expatriate experience during childhood or early adulthood inform the memoirs? (3) how do the writers emplace their displaced selves through writing and the poetics of home of origin-based imagery that they draw from? As this final question indicates, my thesis concerns itself with matters of selfhood, and an assertion of its plurality; at the same time, it examines the ways in which the writers gather together and assemble this plurality through writing.

By choosing three vertices, along with the three texts, I am invoking the dynamic of the "triptych" with its plasticity of movement and circulation of elements that enables a flow, or conversation, within my thesis. This plasticity is important to the organic nature of the thesis in allowing for the emergence of material from within the memoirs and, consequently, for the subsequent interrelationality stimulated by the questioning and conversation that takes place

[1] The terms displacement and dislocation are vital to this thesis and appear with frequency. Although similar, displacement is generally considered to be the removal of something from its customary place or position while dislocation is a state in which the usual organization or something is disturbed and does not continue to work in the same way.

among them. Given the diversity within the memoirs, mine is not only an inter-relational but a multidisciplinary approach in which I draw from environmental, psychological and psychoanalytical, as well as philosophical, sources along with literary ones.

An additional aspect of interrelationality asserted by this thesis is that of myself as researcher, reader and writer in response to the memoirs. This thesis has to some degree stemmed from my affective, emotional response to, and engagement with, each of them which exists alongside my intellectual curiosity. It began with my choice of memoirs, with which I felt an affinity in respect to affective bonds. As such, my position has been that which Rita Felski conceptualizes as an honouring of one's "implication and involvement in the works we read" (*Uses* 20). Likewise, as Gaston Bachelard writes in *The Poetics of Space*, "every reader who rereads a work that he likes, knows that its pages *concern* him" (xxvi). In my acknowledgement of an emotional involvement with the works – by being "moved" by them emotionally as well as intellectually – I also draw from the findings of the neuroscientist António Damásio, whereby emotions and feelings are considered "just as cognitive as any other perceptual image" (*Descartes' Error* 159). I am predominantly interested in how these operate within the memoirs while occasionally, when pertinent, taking into account my own involvement. This psychological dimension of my thesis is furthermore informed by my work as a psychotherapist. Much of my practice involves an expatriate population that has experienced the geographical displacement articulated in the memoirs. The influence of my psychotherapy practice is an aspect of the organic nature of this thesis and, furthermore, of its interdisciplinary nature.

One of the precepts of Gestalt Psychotherapy is the perceptual tendency to construct organized wholes from parts; this is sometimes summarized as "the whole is more than the sum of its parts." In Gestalt Psychotherapy the individual is considered to be involved in a constant,

fluid, construction of gestalts, organizing and reorganizing experience, searching for patterns and a feeling of wholeness. As I will demonstrate, the trope of wholeness is keenly present in the memoirs, in regard to childhood perceptual experience, memory, and the memoir writing process itself. The fluidity of gestalts further relates to this thesis's understanding of the self in relationship in that Gestalt conceives of the self as created in contact, with the Gestalt self being an "organ" of her environment (Perls et al. 229). This organic, connected, conceptualization of the self is one I relate to environmental and home of origin questions within the works. As I will elucidate, a commonly held characteristic of all three memoirs is that, in their assertions of relational and inter-relational positionings, they dismantle the myth of the autonomous self, and foreground instead the relational self.

This thesis begins with a foundational chapter "Memoir and Memory" in which I examine memoir as a genre and explore its relationship with memory. It is followed by three individual chapters that introduce the memoirs themselves and are intended to serve as a close reading of them as distinct entities. Lastly, the thematically and theoretically informed chapters engage with the three vertices articulated above. In these thematic chapters I examine: the bearing of time spent in nature during childhood on the writers' imaginations (the concept of nature as a source of poetics); the effects of different forms of migration and displacement on emotional affect as evidenced in the texts; and how poetics serve as transformative structures in the writing process, emplacing displaced selves. So, the three theoretically informed chapters serve as lenses through which to support and evidence my main argument that nature-based memory, which has its roots in early childhood experience, serves as a vital, creative font for new forms of emplacement that develop within each work. This argument is an assertion of the

integral role geographical context plays in human identity within a consideration of identity as fluid, multifaceted and mutable.

Chapter I, "Memoir and Memory" begins with memoir as a genre through an historical lens, identifying its defining characteristics and the distinctions between memoir and autobiography, drawing from the work of the literary theorist Philippe Lejeune whose *Autobiographical Pact* (1974) addresses the relationship between writer and reader and the implicit pact of understanding between them. I also introduce the contemporary concept of "life writing," that broadly encompasses the recording of memories, personal experiences, and observations and offers an expansive framework generically. I then go on to articulate contemporary conceptualizations of plural and hybrid selfhood and of the narrative self. In "Memoir and Memory" I undertake to examine in particular the intricacies and interstices of the relationships between the imagined and constructed aspects of memory rooted in childhood experiences of nature as they intersect with temporal and spatial distance, including that which is present in writing from a position of "hindsight". Hindsight in this regard is conceptualized in Mark Freeman's sense as being a regenerative source of insight, understanding, and self-knowledge rather than, as is commonly held, one of negative biases and distortions (*Hindsight*). As such, it has the capacity to generate fresh perspectives from stances of kindness and compassion, as evidenced in the works.

Chapters II, III and IV comprise the first triptych ordering of this thesis wherein I present the three memoirs as individual entities. In these chapters I familiarize the reader with each memoir and I foreground key characteristics. Most of these are particular to each work while some are held in common. Specific to Goodison is her emotional engagement with her subject – her mother – which I explore through Iris Murdoch's concept of the loving gaze and Sara

Ahmed's concept of emotional bonding or *stickiness.* Specific to Ondaatje is a high degree of fragmentation which I explore through Arthur W. Frank's concepts of restitution, chaos, and quest narratives, all keenly present in Ondaatje's memoir. Hoffman, the most analytical, and only psychoanalytical, of the three writers prompts me to draw from psychoanalytically based attachment theory as well as post memory theory which concerns itself with the generational transmission of emotional affect. Questions of the fragmented self, raised by Goodison in regard to her mother's experience of living in two different places at once, and present aesthetically in Ondaatje's fragmented writing style, are keenly present in Hoffman's memoir and lead me to explore questions of selfhood through linguistic parameters.

The logic of my ordering, beginning with Goodison, does not have a singular rationale but stems from several considerations. Firstly, Goodison's memoir is the most plainspoken and straightforward of the three and its clarity makes an appropriate starting point. Ondaatje's is the most aesthetically informed and, given the significance of poetics in this thesis, forms the central triptych "panel" aesthetically. While in a religious triptych the central section is often larger than the other two, in this thesis each memoir is given roughly the same amount of consideration. Hoffman's memoir, as the most intellectual and psychoanalytically dense, is a contrasting bookend to Goodison's limpidity and simpler writing style. In being heavier, it is fitting in its end place.

The three memoirs are, to greater or lesser degrees, "literary" as defined by Northrop Frye; using the imagination through metaphor to express analogies and affinities between the human and the natural world. That which is literary is closely entwined with poetics and the poetic use of language. I also use as a working hypothesis Iris Murdoch's definition of literature as "the art form which uses words" (*Sovereignty* 6) and I concur with her statement that

“[l]iterature, to be literature at all, must move one emotionally” (*Sovereignty* 7), which is supported by Damásio’s linking of the emotional and cognitive. I also conceptualize the three memoirs as belonging to a literature, and an ethics, of place, one that is, furthermore, transnational in its spanning of local, home of origin experience with the double, or multiple, consciousness of expatriate experience. As such, they assert knowledges that are inextricably local and global. These are knowledges wherein, as the environmental writer Rob Nixon explains, because of their double consciousness arising from an awareness of the losses that places have layered within them (such as those of the indigenous Arawak population in Jamaica referenced by Goodison), “place is displacement” (Nixon 202). In other words, there is an acknowledgement of losses, including historical and racial ones, inherent to the places written about. Furthermore, in the case of both Goodison and Ondaatje, geographical context can also be considered from a postcolonial perspective in that iterations of geographical and environmental displacement in their writing to some extent reflect geopolitical shifts in former colonies of the British Empire.

The three writers included in my thesis share the experience of having been born during, or in the immediate aftermath of, World War II and living, either temporarily or permanently, in Canada. My exploration of this historical and geographical context is humanistic in that my focus is primarily on the personal; however, broader, less personal, and political, questions are also relevant insofar as how they affect individual lives.The loss of livelihoods due to war, and resultant geographical displacement, is, for instance, present in all of the memoirs and a feature of this study. Mine is therefore a position that asserts the enmeshing of the personal and the political, as well as of the local and transnational or global. Each writer was born and raised on a different continent – Lorna Goodison in Jamaica, Michael Ondaatje in Ceylon (present day Sri

Lanka), and Eva Hoffman in Poland – and all left their countries of origin either during the middle years of childhood or in early adulthood, thereby sharing a diasporic, migratory, and also politically entangled, experience.

Goodison and Ondaatje were born in countries that were British colonies at the time, and which gained independence in the decades that followed; Hoffman was born in a country that was under the orbit of influence of the Soviet Union until she was an adult living in the United States. In common with Goodison and Ondaatje, I was raised in a country that was one time a part of the British Empire while my experience of Canada is as somewhere I have migrated *from* rather than *to.* My own experience of migration is peripheral to this thesis, while being a subject I address in the Canadian section of chapter VI. Moreover, Canada, as a site of immigration for the writers, is of less significance in my study than their homes of origin; my focus is emigration, specifically, with its dynamic of departure and return through the constructive, imaginative capacities of memory and language.

The three thematically informed chapters, Chapters V, VI and VII, in bringing together and cross referencing the memoirs, assert their commonalities and create a conversational dynamic among them. In the first, "Childhood and the Ecological Self," I examine the memoirs through the lens of nature and home of origin, specifically the influence of time spent in contact with the natural world during childhood on the development of the creative and poetic sensibilities of the three writers. The chapter begins with a presentation of the work of Edith Cobb (1895-1977) whose *The Ecology of Imagination in Childhood* investigates the development of the imagination during childhood. The chapter goes on to encompass the contemporary revisiting of Cobb's work by the environmental academic Louise Chawla. It proceeds by relating the memoirs to pertinent contemporary conceptualizations of the ecological

self. Finally, it further articulates a psychological understanding of childhood through a presentation of psychoanalytically-based attachment theory, formulated by the English psychiatrists John Bowlby and Donald Winnicott, Mary Ainsworth and others during the WWII context of young children being separated from their parents. The WWII context has an obvious pertinence to the memoirs given not only that it was the time period in which the writers were born but through the impacts of the war on their lives, as I detail in this thesis.

Edith Cobb wrote that "[m]an needs to sense a bicultural continuity with nature in order to tap the sources of energy that motivate his own power of creative synthesis" (*Ecology* 80), and argued that returning to childhood memories of nature renews the power and impulse to create. She identified a crucial period of development in the middle years of childhood as a time when relationships with nature are forged and when children engage in a process of "world making" that shapes the imagination and the mind. While Freud identified this period as one of latency, Cobb considered it formative and creative, despite being largely inchoate. It is my assertion that the three memoirs validate and elucidate Cobb's findings in that all three writers spent time in nature during the formative period identified by Cobb and draw from it, poetically, in their writing.

Louise Chawla, in revisiting Cobb's mid-twentieth century research on childhood and nature from a contemporary, early twenty-first century perspective, underlines the importance of how we relate to nature in her exploration of childhood "world making," stating, "Young children may know fear, but they avoid meaninglessness and chaos by creating intentional worlds" (*First Country* 145). In Chapter V (and onwards through the thematically informed chapters), I examine the interplay between the creation of meaning during childhood and its further understanding through writing undertaken in adulthood. Intentional worlds are significant

in that they involve agency and empowerment through the creative act of play. The importance of play was underlined by the English psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott, from whose work on play I draw together with his work on early childhood attachments. I further explore questions of agency and empowerment in Chapters VI and VII when I relate it to the age at which a person experiences geographical displacement and to writing as an act of personal agency.

Critical to the arguments developed in Chapter V is the idea that the process of using the imagination through metaphor is a form of positive, health-bearing identification related to nature as an animating *source.* I conceptualize source not as fixed but as a dynamic principle that is transmissive in its ongoing weaving of elements from past to present to future, and that moves back and forth between them. The emphasis on nature as a source is not to place the memoirs within nature writing as a categorizing genre, but to acknowledge that they draw from nature as both the external, surrounding environment, and in the sense of animus and the force of a life-affirming, internalized past. It is within this subjective landscape of the life-affirming, internalized past, in alignment with the present-based act of writing, that alternative selves are created within the works. An understanding of this process is developed throughout this thesis, beginning with my exploration of memory and memoir in Chapter I, continuing with Chapter V's developmental perspective centring on childhood, and concluding with Chapter VII's articulation of the self as transformed by language and writing.

The revisiting of childhood is often associated with Romanticism and the idealization of a particular time of life, an association I consider important to address in relation to the memoirs. Romanticism is a laden term, yet in its derivation from the world of immediate "sensory apprehension" – in other words, the *world of individual experience* – as the basis of meaning-making (Hunt and Sampson 116) it has validity with regard to humanistic values. Chawla refers

to the Romantic notion that "children experience a special sense of wholeness with nature and [that] this wholeness leaves a lasting adult impression" (*First Country* xvi). This notion, I believe, holds some truth, and the concept of wholeness is one I explore in detail. However, the post-war perspective from which the three memoirs were written, and the twenty-first century context in which I am presently writing, contain other elements to be considered. None of the memoirs can be classified as "Romantic" works; both *Running in the Family* and *Lost in Translation* can be viewed as postmodern while *From Harvey River* blends elements of magic realism with realism and does not exhibit the same postmodern characteristics of the others, such as an overtly skeptical stance towards an idea of truth and the fragmentation of subjectivity. Furthermore, while childhood-based sensorial memory, and whatever relationship it may have to wholeness, serves as a creative source, my investigation centres around its emplacement through the imagination and language as it is used when writing in later life. This emplacement is in part a response to displacement, which I explore in Chapter VI, and as I also explain in Chapter VII, with its focus on language and writing.

Chapter VI "Displacement in the Three Memoirs," begins with conceptualizations of displacement related to home of origin and exilic experiences of different kinds. It investigates questions of belonging, broadening the subject of attachments introduced in Chapter V. In so doing, and particularly as concerns the psychological dimensions of third culture experience[2] (especially that of children uprooted from their homes of origin, as was the case with both Ondaatje and Hoffman), it addresses emotional affect, including that which Adriana Margareta Dancus calls diasporic feeling. Along with forms of diasporic feeling, such as nostalgia, it addresses immigration related trauma, acutely present in *Lost in Translation*.

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[2] The term third culture is associated with a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside their parents' culture, as I explain in Chapter VI.

Chapter VI builds on the relational understanding of selfhood developed in Chapter V in its examination of geographical displacement in the memoirs. While Chapter V concerns itself with childhood emplacements in nature and parent/care-giver-child relationships, Chapter VI extends to encompass the ways in which the strong attachments to homes of origin present in the works are affected by the act of geographical displacement, both domestic and intra-national, and by the time of life at which dislocation takes place. All three writers detail nuanced relationships with home of origin that encompass not only experiences of living in countries other than the ones in which they were raised, but also experiences of both rural and urban environments within their countries of origin, and a range of different cultures and dialects. Theirs are not, inherently, experiences of binary polarities involving one country and another but more complex experiences of place and language existing along a spectrum of contrasts. Lorna Goodison was born in the Jamaican capital, Kingston, but, from the age of seven, spent summers in the rural community of Harvey River, the seat of the maternal branch of her family. In *From Harvey River,* she writes about these places from an expatriate point of view, living in the United States and Canada, focusing on her mother's experience of domestic displacement from rural Harvey River to the larger community of Malvern and onwards to urban Kingston. Michael Ondaatje was born in Colombo, then the capital of Ceylon, now Sri Lanka, and spent much of his childhood on country tea estates. After spending his teenage years in London, he has made Canada his permanent home. Eva Hoffman was born in urban Kraków,[3] Poland and, like Goodison, spent her summer holidays in the countryside. She lived in Vancouver as a teenager but her academic and writing life has taken place in the United States and in London. Each writer thus has a multifaceted relationship with both national and international environments.

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[3] While Hoffman uses the spelling Crakow in *Lost in Translation,* I have chosen to employ the contemporary Kraków, which she uses in later works.

While Chapter VI addresses questions of what the academic Sarah Jilani calls "inner dépaysement", or internalized foreignness, related to geographical displacement, Chapter VII looks specifically at this internalized foreignness through language. Drawing from Julia Kristeva's concept of "strangers to ourselves," I examine the way the writing subject engages with internal foreignness through language itself and the "fire of tongues" that is poetic language and metaphor in particular. As stated, fundamental to my selection of memoirs by Goodison, Ondaatje and Hoffman is that they are literary works in which the use of language, and poetic language, are prominent features. Language, as it appears in the memoirs, is not exclusively functional but attends to what the philosopher Yuriko Saito calls the "sensuous surface of the object" (22). In my thesis I reveal the ways in which this sensorial apprehension is inclusive of emotional affect (for instance, the state of wonder, especially prominent in childhood and diasporic feeling as articulated by Dancus). This relates to Damásio's findings about the cognitive aspects of emotion and feeling that I introduce in Chapter I.

The primary language used by all three writers is English, which is the first language of Goodison and Ondaatje, while Hoffman's second language. Goodison and Ondaatje were both born and raised in countries in which English was an official language, one spoken in their homes and that of their schooling. They both reference English literature, and the classics of English literature, as a formative part of their formal education in British schools. Growing up in Jamaica, Goodison was also surrounded by Creole, which she employs extensively. Ondaatje, who spent the first ten years of his life in Ceylon, where languages other than English were spoken (namely Sinhalese) only fleetingly employs, or references, languages other than English and always within an aestheticized context, such as when he includes Sinhalese letters and comments on their beauty. His childhood experience was within a colonial environment in which

English was the dominant language. Hoffman, on the other hand, having been born and raised speaking Polish, was confronted with English when she emigrated to Canada with her family, aged thirteen, and it became the language of her education, though never that of her childhood home. Emigration for Hoffman was a severing from both language and culture of origin and this factor contributed to her experience being exilic. *Lost in Translation* has been identified as ground-breaking, as a "language memoir" in which language itself is a key feature.

Crucial to this thesis is an understanding of the capacity of sensorial, nature-based writing to turn, as Sarah Jilani asserts, "displaced selves into articulated and thus inhabited ones" (1). In other words, to create new homes in words and, as such, achieve greater sovereignty over past experiences, especially those in which, mainly because of age, but also circumstance, the self lacked agency. It is in Chapter VII, my final chapter, that I articulate the ways in which writing as a process serves as a means of achieving this emplacement. Beginning with a presentation of writing and naming as linguistic becoming or "birthing," the chapter proceeds with a study of linguistic world making by means of giving form to that which has been subconscious, inchoate and chaotic (poiesis). Chapter VII concludes with a full articulation and understanding of linguistic emplacement in the three memoirs.

As this introduction has explained, in all three memoirs the self[4] and selfhood are represented as inherently relational. In *From Harvey River* and *Running in the Family,* the relational pertains particularly to parents – a mother in the former and a father in the latter – while also encompassing family as a whole. In *Lost in Translation* with its focus on the self and language, as well as culture as experienced personally and subjectively through emigration, the

[4] While the term self is frequently capitalized, I have chosen to use lower case throughout this thesis to not add heightened emphasis, except in instances where it is contrasted with the capitalized word Other and alterity is highlighted.

relational is more psychoanalytically, and self-reflexively, informed. The "Other" is not the mother or father (as in *From Harvey River* and *Running in the Family),* but, rather, it is the self that is "Other." This connects to Kristeva's concept of "strangers to ourselves" referenced earlier and discussed in Chapter VII. As Kathrin Leimig asserts, Hoffman overcomes the exilic state of emigration by liberating her creative voice as a writer and using the friction of self-division as a catalyst to invent a world of her own (5). Her writing contains a high degree of "double-voicing" in the sense used by Mikhail Bakhtin as being reflexive and dialogic (Hunt). In this way, the self as a part, or fragment, is foregrounded. This multi-dimensional, fragmented notion of the self constitutes an important part of the arguments I develop in Chapter VII.

Throughout this thesis, and in my examination of the highly relational conceptualizations of the self and selfhood in the memoirs, my approach, as I have stated, is multidisciplinary. In Chapter V, I look at the concept of the "ecological self" whereby the self is considered in relation to its surroundings, other people and objects in the environment, as well as the concept of "unselfing". I present a model of "beholding" connected with wonderment and an appreciation of external beauty, such as that articulated by Iris Murdoch who writes, "The most obvious thing in our surroundings which is an occasion for 'unselfing' is what is popularly called beauty" (*Sovereignty* 82). As in Romanticism, the concept of beauty is often associated with idealization and beauty has become a controversial word. In the context of "unselfing" it is its interface with Otherness that is relevant, rather than beauty as an ideal of perfection to be achieved. In other words, it is within a framework of acknowledged dependence and relationship that it features in my exploration of the self in the memoirs. This framework aligns with the environmental writer Neil Evernden's articulation of "fields of self," in which the self is inter-relational and intersubjective; a field, rather than a discrete entity. It is my assertion that the beholding of

beauty in Otherness, and as "unselfing," takes place textually in both *From Harvey River* and *Running in the Family* in their valourizing and honouring of daughter-mother and son-father relations, respectively. Unselfing and matters of attention-giving raise moral and ethical questions, such as when attention-giving involves caregiving, a value especially present in Goodison's work. In my thesis I connect "unselfing" in the memoirs with that which the literary theorist Charles Taylor calls the "moral idea of the significance of ordinary life" (394), also articulated by Murdoch in *The Sovereignty of Good*, whereby the self is seen to exist in a space of moral issues and a sense of selfhood is achieved among other selves.

In my final chapter I bring together the aforementioned multifaceted notions of the self with the concept of world building through narrative and the construction of a narrative self. The conceptualization of a narrative self that is formed in being told (Shafer qtd. in Frank 55) is crucial to my argument about emplacement in language in that a narrative identity is derived not only from chronological continuity but from a shaping of our life stories through language. It is through this shaping – the creative, imaginative, and transformative act of linguistic world making (which has parallels with the intentional "world making" of childhood as articulated by Cobb and Chawla) – that the writers respond to displacement by creating new forms of meaning and new relationships with themselves. In drawing from home of origin informed poetics to achieve this, they embody that which the philosopher Luca Valera refers to as "the idea of the environment as an integral part of the constitution of human meaning". "Nature," as Valera states, "always implies subjectivity" (668). An elucidation of this intertwining, through the threads of sensorial based memory woven through the memoirs, is at the heart of my exploration and of the thesis that follows.

Chapter I: Memoir and Memory: Historical and Theoretical Perspectives

Incomplete and dim memories of the past are a great incentive to the artist, for he is free to fill in the gaps according to the behests of his imagination.

–Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*

Really, universally, relations stop nowhere and the exquisite problem of the artist is eternally but to draw, by a geometry of his own, the circle within which they shall happily APPEAR to do so.

–Henry James, preface to the New York edition of *Roderick Hudson*

The feel of the tiniest latch has remained in our hands.

–Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*

Introduction: Towards a Theoretical Framework

One of my principal aims in this thesis is to examine the relationship between the imagined and constructed aspects of memory that are rooted in childhood experiences of nature, and the temporal and spatial distance of Goodison, Ondaatje and Hoffman when writing about these experiences. In all three cases, the act of writing takes place from a position of hindsight spanning decades and significant, intercontinental geographical distance. As Hoffman states, "In exile, the impulse to memorialize is magnified" ("New Nomads" 51). While Goodison, Ondaatje and Hoffman can in no way be collectively classified as exiles, there are exilic elements that have a bearing upon their individual memorializing.

In this chapter, my focus will be on memory as it functions in the memoirs as a fluid and malleable source, but also as an authentic one. Memory is furthermore the defining feature of the genre in which they are all classified. Yet, while all can be loosely classified as memoirs, *Lost in Translation* is substantially more autobiographical than the others and *Running in the Family* has the characteristic of consciously playing with fact and subverting generic conventions. As a means of fully articulating these and other distinctions in light of memory's primacy in the works, I will begin this chapter by providing a brief historical overview of autobiography and memoir as genres. This will be followed by a contemporary framing of the works within these genres, including an overview of how they can be viewed through the wider lenses of genre, and academic and science-based memory theory.

Section I: Memoir as a Genre

The link between memory and memoir is evidenced linguistically and historically in the derivation of the term "memoir" from the French word for memory: "la mémoire" is the word for memory itself and "un memoir" a text with memory as its subject. The earliest memoirs took the form of objective, recorded descriptions of historical events and were usually written by people in prominent social positions, namely politicians, courtiers, or famed military figures. They mainly dealt with public matters rather than more personal or emotional recollections.

Julius Caesar's *Commentari de Bello Gallico* (58-49 BC), translated as *Commentaries on the Gallic Wars*, is such an example. Later examples include St Augustine's *Confessions* (AD 397), and medieval and Renaissance texts by French nobility and Italian merchants, such as those of Madame de Stael, Gluckel of Hameln and Montaigne's *Essays,* along with Julian of Norwich's (1342/1343-after 1416) *Revelations of Divine Love,* which is generally considered the

first autobiography in English. St Augustine's *Confessions* is of particular relevance to this thesis as an object of contemporary research that has provided examples of different types of memory as they function within a single work. An exposition of these different forms of memory will form part of the latter section of this chapter, in which I delve into contemporary, memory-based research and theory.

Despite its long history, memoir as a genre is generally considered to date back 200 years, coinciding, not by chance as Thomas Couser in his study of memoir observes, with the American and French Revolutions and the age of Romanticism, and developing in the west in tandem with the novel (*Memoir* 109). At that time there was a growing tendency for a wider range of people to write autobiography and memoir and for it to increasingly include emotion and feeling. Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions* (edited between 1765 and 1770, posthumously published in 1782 and 1789), and *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* (1791), are characteristic of this evolution.

The term "memoir" precedes that of "autobiography" by at least a century in the English language. Yet, historically, in most critical analyses of autobiography, memoir is treated as a secondary development, including in Philippe Lejeune's seminal *The Autobiographical Pact* (1975) where it is categorized as a sub-genre. This is largely due to its being considered to have a narrower focus than autobiography. While an autobiography, and likewise a biography, tells the story of "a life," that is to say, of a perceived whole, a memoir often tells a story "from a life" – a more limited or partial context – related to the author or to another. In general, memoir tends to focus more on others than the self. For this reason, *From Harvey River* and *Running in the Family*, which both focus on the writers' parents and their families, exemplify the genre more

categorically than *Lost in Translation*, in which Hoffman's focus is largely on herself, her experiences, and her inner life.

Memoir is generally defined as a work of sustained narrative prose in which an individual writes about moments or events, both public or private, that took place in the subject's life. As well as being sustained narrative prose, it can also be fragmentary; part of what distinguishes it from autobiography and biography, as stated previously, is that it does not present a whole life but parts of one. *Lost in Translation* adheres to the genre in this regard, in that it addresses only a certain period of Hoffman's life, roughly up until the end of her thirties and the fulfillment of her academic studies; it does not address her working life in New York during the 1980's, concurrent to the writing of what was to be her first published book. Likewise, *Running in the Family* in no way presents a whole life; on the contrary, it presents partial fragments of various lives. *From Harvey River,* while more comprehensively "a life," explores Doris Harvey's life in a highly relational – inter-relational and intergenerational – context and does not solely concern the whole and singular life of an individual.

Lejeune's *The Autobiographical Pact* is considered the first scientific delineation of the characteristics that define autobiography and memoir and, as such, is a foundational, landmark text. It begins with Lejeune situating himself, circa 1975, "in the place of the reader of today who attempts to distinguish some sort of order within a mass of published texts, whose common subject is that they recount someone's life" (*Autobiography* 3). Additional to the defining characteristic of autobiography and, within the genre, memoir, being that it is retrospective narrative in prose, Lejeune's main argument is that a further, crucial, feature of autobiographical writing, be it autobiography, biography or memoir, is the relationship of trust between writer and reader surrounding authenticity and veracity. This is "the pact". As Lejeune states:

"Autobiography is not a guessing game; in fact, it is exactly the opposite" (13). This is due to the "autobiographical contract" between writer and reader, which is "the affirmation in the text of this identity, referring in the last resort to the name of the author on the cover" (14). The identity or non-identity between narrator and protagonist is decisive in distinguishing between autobiography and biography, while the question of the grammatical person used (first, second, or third) is used to distinguish between different sorts of biography and autobiography, including memoir.

As a logical counterpart to the autobiographical contract wherein there is veracity of identity, Lejeune poses the fictional contract, which has two aspects: an overt practice of non-identity between author and protagonist, and an attestation of fictivity, as expressed through the subtitle "novel," for instance, leaving no ambiguity of genre for the reader. Hence, even if the reader of a text has "all the reasons in the world" to think that the story lived by the character or narrator is the story lived by the author, unless the "name attributed to the fictional person within the book" matches the "signature" of the author as it appears as his name on the cover of the book, then the text cannot be an autobiography" (Lejeune, *Autobiography* 12). If the author has "chosen to deny this identity, or at least not affirm it," then the text is not an autobiography but an "autobiographical novel […] a fictional text in which the reader has reason to suspect, from the resemblances that he thinks he sees, that there is identity of author and protagonist" (13).

All three works of my study fulfill Lejeune's criteria of veracity of identity in that there is an overt confirmation of identity between the author and narrator. While the narrator of *Lost in Translation* is also the protagonist, so rendering the work autobiographical, in *From Harvey River* the narrator is the protagonist's daughter and in *Running in the Family,* which is less straightforward and more multi-relational, a family member. Regarding "signature," there is no

question of veracity in *Running in the Family*; however, Ondaatje plays with narration in the sense that in the opening scene he uses third-person narration while in the remainder of the memoir the narration is first person. Furthermore, he overtly acknowledges fictivity, attesting to fictionalizing family stories – his own and those of other family members. While in *From Harvey River* first person narration is used throughout, it is used with detachment in the sense that Goodison largely absents herself from the narrative. In *Lost in Translation* the narrative is entirely recounted in the first-person, from the protagonist's point of view.

Overall, *Running in the Family* is the most complex of the three memoirs in relation to Lejeune's classification of the genre. While it fulfills the fundamental criteria of autobiography/memoir in being written in prose, its centre section, or core, consists of a selection of poems. Furthermore, while there is unquestionable veracity of signature between author and narrator, sections of the book contain excerpts of dialogue attributed to a range of family members, with no narration. However, these aspects of Ondaatje's writing do not contradict Lejeune's classification which is inclusive of addressing more than just an individual life and including sections that deviate from retrospective prose narration.

From Harvey River fulfills Lejeune's fundamental criteria of autobiography, being written entirely in prose and having an author and narrator who are identical presenting the life story of an individual (Goodison's mother). It is not autobiography but a sub-genre in that the narrator and principal character are not identical (the narrator is Goodison, the principal character is her mother). Furthermore, it does not merely present the life story of a discrete individual but, as I have stated, of a collective, i.e. a family. This is highlighted by its subtitle: *A Memoir of my Mother and her Island* (or, in one edition, the more colloquial *A Memoir of my Mother and her People*).

It is significant that Goodison presents her mother in the context of being part of a whole or a collective: her family and generations of that family as belonging to a particular location in Jamaica. In this respect, *From Harvey River* is eminently relational (similar, in this respect, to *Running in the Family*). As I will explain in the second section of this chapter, this is one of its elements that can be considered postmodern – its contextualizing of a life not as merely an individual entity but as inter-relational both in regard to other people and to an ecological context of nature and place. Goodison uses language, and metaphor in particular, to conceptualize people as *embedded* in nature (that of a specific island community). Furthermore, her memoir relates her mother's life to a conceived afterlife – this being especially the case in the prologue and epilogue which frame the principal narratives – and thus to her perception of nature's non-material/spiritual dimensions. While *From Harvey River* is the least postmodern of the memoirs in its form, it is the most ecologically informed in its conceptualizations of interrelationality between the human and other than human and *animus,* and is, therefore, postmodern in its questioning of boundaries and rationalism.

As previously stated, Hoffman's *Lost in Translation* is entirely a retrospective narrative in prose and the author and narrator are identical, as are the narrator and principal character. Indeed, it is infused from beginning to end with Hoffman herself and her story, whilst only dealing with a part of her life. A case can be made for categorizing it as autobiography rather than memoir. However, it is my position that, rather than adhere to unnecessary absolutes, it is circumspect to consider *Lost in Translation* a work that straddles the two genre classifications. Conceptualizations of the autobiographical self are bound to questions of memory and it is the self *through memory* that Hoffman explores and inscribes. Memory is as dominant a characteristic as the "life story" aspect of autobiography.

In conclusion, all three works exemplify the criteria of autobiography, and within this category, of memoir, as set out by Lejeune, in a variety of ways and to greater or lesser degrees. At the same time, the works also highlight the limitations of absolute classification, particularly in the case of Ondaatje who deliberately subverts genre conventions, but also in the case of Hoffman, whose work spans memoir and autobiography. As an additional consideration is genre itself which, when examined through a theoretical lens, can be considered, as Carolyn Miller explains, a "social construct and… a response to a specific and recurrent social situation, providing the writer with a socially recognizable way to make his or her intentions known" (157-158). Genre theory thus offers a way of thinking about how language, and the writer's choice of form, depends on context. On the one hand, there is the writer's choice to combine genres or use form as a means of expression or exploration, as Ondaatje does with his intentional interspersing of diverse forms of prose with other forms, such as poetry. On the other hand, there is the societal aspect of how different genres are received by publishers, surrounding culture and society. For instance, in its 1982 edition, *Running in the Family* was described on its back cover as "biography," though it has been subsequently classified as autobiography and memoir. Moreover, original terminology such as Linda Hutcheon's "historiographic metafiction" has been used as a means of genre classification of this work (*Poetics*). It is important, therefore, to take into account that genre classification is ultimately malleable on the part of the writer and of the societies in which the writer's work is received. Moreover, as underlined by Hutcheon, "it is always the reader who determines a book's genre" (*Poetics* 303).

Section II: Contemporary Conceptualizations of Plural and Hybrid Selfhood

In the decade following the 1975 publication of *The Autobiographical Pact,* a new term, "life writing," which had in fact already been recorded in the 18th century (Jolly ix), began to gain prominence as what Thomas Couser calls an umbrella term used to refer to all nonfiction representations of identity (*Memoir* 24), evidencing the malleability to which I have referred. As Marlene Kadar elaborates, life writing is capable of subsuming all kinds of "autologous texts: diaries, journals, notebooks, letters, travel books, epistolary narratives, autobiography" (20). It further encompasses a range of very recent contemporary forms, some of them blurring the boundaries of nonfiction and fiction to the degree that life writing itself has become inclusive of representations of identity that cannot be categorized strictly as nonfiction. These forms include the aforementioned "historiographic metafiction" as well as "autotheory" and "autofiction," and "scriptotherapy," among other terms.

In *Reading Autobiography,* Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson explain that a growing number of postmodern and post-colonial theorists contend that the term autobiography is inadequate to describe the extensive historical range and the diverse genres and practices of life narratives in the West and around the globe. Additionally, they argue that autobiography has been defined against many coexisting forms of life narrative which are considered lesser. The term autobiography, they explain, privileges the autonomous individual and universalizing life story as the definitive achievement of life writing. Early twentieth-century theorists installed this master narrative of the "sovereign self" as an institution of literature and culture. Life writing is then a more inclusive term than autobiography and, as Couser puts it, "does not deny generic distinctions but reflects an impulse toward catholicity and toward reconsideration of traditional definitions and distinctions" ("Genre Matters" 126).

The concept of the sovereign, individual self is keenly relevant to the memoirs of my study in that all three, in radically different ways, put it into question. Fundamentally, all three writers were raised in cultures – Caribbean, Asian, and Eastern[5] European – whose underpinnings are more relational than those of the Anglo-Saxon cultures in which they are situated as published writers. Their writing inherently embodies the self in relationship as opposed to the primacy of the individual. The academic Qi Wang articulates a divide between the East, where relatedness is valued, and the West, where the individual is valued, which equally applies to the three Caribbean, Asian, and Eastern European, influenced works. When commenting in her study of the autobiographical self in time in culture, and on the lack of autobiography in China, Wang writes that, whereas in the West there is importance given to the individual, in the East it is relatedness and social harmony that is valued, explaining of China: "In this cultural context, the self is largely defined by an individual's place within his or her network of relationships" (8).

Goodison and Ondaatje's works, in their presentation of generations and families, are, as I have mentioned, representative of this relational positioning of the self. Goodison's mother, Doris, is presented in relation to her parents, grandparents, and siblings, and to Jamaican society as a whole, as well as her African and British ancestry. Ondaatje's memoir is relational to an arguably even greater extent in its focus on his Ceylonese family, with his focus on his father being less foregrounded than Goodison's focus on her mother. While Hoffman's work is overtly less relational in its focus on her own experience, it is inherently relational in its cultural and linguistic considerations of the self and of splintered or fragmented selves as opposed to a singular, unified, whole self.

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[5] I use here Eastern as opposed to Post-communist Poland's preference for Central European because the Poland of Hoffman's upbringing was in the orbit of the Soviet Union and more Eastern in its influences than it is now. Hoffman herself uses Eastern European in her 2020 essay "Complex Histories, Contested Memories".

Hoffman herself acknowledges this cultural aspect of the individual in relationship, and of the narration of our lives on our own terms, when she writes: “The very concept of having ‘a life’ – that is, an individual biography, whose trajectory over time we follow and worry about – may not be universal, and may require a certain idea of separate individuality… in certain traditional cultures, it is the group’s history, rather than any individual ‘story’ that matters; and that each life is understood to reflect the broader narrative or pattern” (*Time* 124). Hoffman’s reference to “traditional cultures” is especially pertinent to Goodison whose contextualization of her mother and family is within the larger collective of Jamaican culture and society rooted, in turn, in wider African traditions.

While Goodison, Ondaatje, and Hoffman were all raised in cultures more relational than individualistic, their writing lives and the publishing of their works all took place within the individual-based societies of Canada and the United States. Hoffman explicitly delves into, and acknowledges, the influence of American individualism and identity politics in the latter section of *Lost in Translation,* contrasting it with the Polish culture in which she was raised during the 1940’s and 50’s. She cites her Polish friends asking why a person would go to a psychiatrist rather than speak with friends, inferring that it is a form of self-indulgence connected with American wealth, and goes on to explain that when Americans are unhappy, they blame it on themselves rather than on circumstances, as the Polish would do. In elaborating on American individualism she uses the language of psychoanalysis she has undertaken through going to a “shrink”[6] (she uses the colloquial American term), writing of America, “there are so many individual egos trying to

[6] The term shrink for psychiatrist purportedly dates back to the 1950’s when a suspicion of psychiatrists led to a comparison with tribal witch doctors in heads of patients being metaphorically shrunk. As well as considering psychiatry, and psychoanalysis, from the perspective of individualism, as Hoffman does, it is worth pointing out that shrinks can, to some extent, be seen as taking on the roles of, if not witch doctors, then priests or other spiritual leaders, in post-religious societies.

outdo each other and enlarge themselves" (*Lost* 262), and "I live in an individualistic society, in which people blend less easily with each other, in which 'That's your problem' is a phrase of daily combat and self-defence" (270).

Not only, then, does relationality inform the memoirs in regard to relationships with others and the self, but also in regard to the more collective-based local cultures of homes of origin. Through the writers' articulating, and recapturing, connections with these original environments, there is a topographical and ecological dimension to their writing (especially strong, as I have referenced, in Goodison but very present in Ondaatje and, to a lesser degree, in Hoffman). Moreover, as all three live outside of the countries in which they were born and raised, there is a particular diasporic dynamic of displacement and re-emplacement through memory. This dynamic spans both spatial and temporal dimensions and, furthermore, as underlined by Hoffman, emigration and other forms of migration tend to heighten and make more acute the divide between the time prior and time subsequent to the act of leaving: "Dislocation exacerbates the consciousness of time. For me, emigration constituted a great interruption, putting paid to the idea that time necessarily unfolds in a continuous, linear way. The past was all of a sudden on the other side of a great divide, preserved in memory but severed from the present" (Hoffman, *Time* 4). Hoffman elsewhere refers to immigration as the formative experience of her life, with its great sense of rupture "something like a cultural trauma" ("Conversations"). Concerning dislocation and displacement, and the diasporic experience of cultural and ethnic difference and diversity shared by all three writers, the memoirs are representative of a trend within America from the mid-twentieth century onwards towards the publishing of writers from backgrounds other than the dominant anglophone ones. Goodison, Ondaatje and Hoffman write from positions of ethnic minorities and the post-colonial diaspora

within the dominant Anglo-Saxon cultures of North America. *Running In The Family* and *From Harvey River* are representative of a specific trend within Canada, identified by Stephen Henighan (*When Words Deny the World: The Reshaping of Canadian Writing*) towards the publishing of writers outside of Canada's dominant Anglo-Scottish and Francophone cultural heritages and literary establishments. In the case of *Lost in Translation*, not only is Hoffman from an ethnic minority, she writes in a language that is not her mother tongue. As Danuta Fjellestad states, *Lost in Translation* is, "to the best of my knowledge, the first 'postmodern' autobiography written in English by an emigré from a European communist country" ("Insertion of the Self" 136). Marginality is thus a facet of the works in their emplacement outside of the traditional frameworks of the societies in which they were published.

As concerns ethnicity, the memoirs are part of what Couser refers to as a "democratizing" trend within memoir. He explains: "[C]ontemporary memoir has become a threshold genre in which some previously silent populations have been given voice for the first time. These include ethnic minority groups or those writing about illness, trauma or abuse, for example. These latter are sometimes labelled 'pathography' or more colloquially, 'misery memoirs[7]'" (*Memoir* 12). None of the memoirs of my study feature elements related to mental or physical illness. While Hoffman addresses her own psychoanalysis this is not within a framework of illness but of cultural adaptation:

> For me, therapy is partly translation therapy, the talking-cure a second-language cure. My going to a shrink is, among other things, a rite of initiation: initiation into the language of the subculture within which I happen to live, into a way of explaining myself to myself. But gradually, it becomes a project of translating backward. The way to jump over my

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[7] In "Genre Matters: Form, Force and Filiation" Couser addresses his creation of the neologism "autopathography", writing "I have come to regret that particular coinage" (127).

> Great Divide is to crawl back over it in English. It's only when I retell my whole story, back to the beginning, and from the beginning onward, in one language, that I can reconcile the voices within me with each other; it is only then that the person who judges the voices and tells the stories begins to emerge. (*Lost* 272)

Unlike Hoffman, Ondaatje very much abstains from analysis, and also consciously subverts pathography labels as a subject by, for example, aestheticizing his grandmother's death rather than, as Ed Jewinski observes, referring to the facts of her death by alcohol poisoning, which Jewinski considers the "brutal truth" (20). Likewise, Ondaatje uses the more aesthetic, or romantic (and erudite, unintelligible to the common reader) term "dipsomania" rather than the colloquial "binge drinking" in reference to his father's alcoholism. As Nicole Brossard writes, *Running in the Family*'s "magic holds at an equal distance both the true and the false" (181). This "magic" is a conscious prioritizing of aesthetics and literary "play" over hard facts and is connected with Ondaatje's overarching literary-aesthetic framework.

Alongside Couser's formulation of democratization, related to ethnicities and narratives of mental and physical health, a further facet of democratization in contemporary memoir is that of not being written from socially elevated positions of power, as in the early examples of the genre. None of the three writers composed their memoirs as public figures. In fact, the publishing of *Lost in Translation* was a turning point in Hoffman *becoming* a public figure. She had not published substantially prior to its release and it was her first book. She has explained that her public self is the most American part of her, and that this self has developed through her published writing. Goodison, on the other hand, had published numerous volumes of poetry at the time of her memoir's publication, though she was not a prominent figure in the sense of early subjects of memoir. Michael Ondaatje had, likewise, already published poetry and several novels

prior to publishing *Running in The Family.* Of the three, he is the closest to writing from a socially elevated position in that he was born and raised in a privileged colonial family in Ceylon, somewhat like Vladimir Nabokov whose aristocratic Russian privilege Hoffman references. Ondaatje is similar to Nabokov in his focus on the aesthetic rather than the political and has been criticized for his choice to largely refrain from addressing the political and colonial aspects of his Ceylonese background. Hoffman explicitly compares and contrasts herself to Nabokov insofar as Nabokov's aristocratic privilege provided him with opportunities she did not have. Hoffman describes these as enabling Nabokov to focus on "telling detail," rather than broader, deeply affecting, socio-political issues that have formed her very being and from which she has not been able to detach herself, namely her experience as the child of Holocaust survivors.

Along with relational, democratic considerations of the self in contemporary memoir, are further postmodern conceptualizations of plural and hybrid selfhood. As Arthur W. Frank explains: "[T]he postmodern memoirist writes to discover what other selves were operating, unseen, in a story that is the writer's own but that the writer is several selves" (70). Frank echoes modernists such as Virginia Woolf who writes, in *Orlando,* of the many selves we have – "not just six or seven but as many thousand" (226) and Paul Valéry who writes that he "is made up of many different persons and a principal witness who watches all these puppets bobbing" (14). As Hoffman summarizes: "It is in the modernist fictions of Virginia Woolf, or Proust, or James Joyce – works written during the heroic era of exploration of the internal worlds – that we can find the fullest representations of, and reflections on, subjective temporality" (*Time* 114).

Postmodern writers of memoir, such as Hoffman, influenced by these modernist representations of subjective experience, do not aim to represent a final, irreducible, essential self

but rather to explore through prose narrative the complexity and plurality of self-experience. It is frequently through hybridity of form that the representation of plural selfhood is expressed in postmodern life writing and memoir. Of the three memoirs, it is *Running in the Family* that most formally and overtly engages with hybridity and does so to the degree, as previously mentioned, of questioning the generic limitations of autobiographical writing that focuses on individual lives as discrete entities. As Gillian Massel explains, Ondaatje's deliberate flirtation with genre raises questions about the assumptions we make when discussing autobiographical texts: "In other words, if Lejeune's pact would have readers and critics believe that autobiography offers an unmediated account of a historically verifiable past and a conclusive definition of stable personality or 'self,' then *Running in the Family* attempts to demonstrate not only that it is not only a fictional autobiography, but rather that all autobiography is fiction" (10). Not only does Ondaatje overtly dismantle the conception of a singular, autonomous self through writing about himself in the fictive third person as well as the first, and by, at a crucial point in the narrative, merging himself with his father, but hybridity is inherent structurally through the inclusion of different varieties and styles of prose as well as poetry and in the collage-like inclusion of a plurality of voices.

The questions Ondaatje raises about autobiography as fiction do not have any structural parallels in the realm of genre with either Goodison or Hoffman, whose works are both structurally conventional, each being divided into three parts that follow a linear chronology and entirely written in retrospective prose that adheres to a fundamental "pact" of fact. Neither uses hybridity of form to express plural selfhood, with the exception of Hoffman briefly presenting internal dialogues between conflicting inner selves. In relation to Goodison, postmodernity is not an evident descriptor. However, it is present, as previously mentioned, in the positing of selves that are relational in their generational and cultural contextualizations, as well as in Goodison's

presentation of the self as an ethereal, spiritual entity in the depiction of her deceased mother as a communicating presence from the afterlife. The self in Goodison is thus plural in being more than material and embodied but it is not textually hybrid.

Unique to *Lost in Translation* is that, while not reflected in the formal aspects of the writing, hybridity of self is directly addressed and, importantly, intricately *analyzed,* as a subject. It is primarily the duality of Hoffman's Polish and American language and cultural selves that is addressed, but in the intricacy of her analysis there are also distinctions between her emotional and rational selves and her private and public selves, among others. In the "New World" section (*Lost in Translation* is comprised of three parts: "Paradise," "Exile" and "The New World"; *From Harvey River* likewise has a tripartite structure), Hoffman highlights the conflicts between her Polish and American selves through transcribed dialogues in which deep issues surrounding major life decisions and meaning are thrashed out. In the first, it is love and marriage wherein the American self ultimately silences the Polish one. The second surrounds the question of pursuing a career as a pianist, an aspiration of her Polish self that is eventually put to rest by her American one. In another it is politics, relationships, language, and the use of swear words, which are presented as a dialogue between Hoffman and "M.A.F." – "My American Friend" – in which the American Friend ultimately has the final, decisive, and dismissive word. The final dialogue is a transcribed inner conflict centring around the question of divorce where, once again, the American voice is victorious: "I don't have to listen to you any longer. I am as real as you now. I'm the real one." (Hoffman, *Lost* 231). It is in the transcriptions of these inner dialogues that Hoffman presents hybridity of self on a formal, textual level, the only equivalent to Ondaatje's much more substantial textual representations of plural selfhood.

Hoffman's textual self-analysis has led Anita Jarczok to associate it with Suzette Henke's positing of life narratives as a form of scriptotherapy, as when Jarzcok references Hoffman's statement that her Polish and American voices merge during therapy (Jarczok, "Reconstructing the Self" 31). Hoffman's identity is thus negotiated through language in a way that can be considered psychotherapeutic, since the achievement of wholeness through the merging of disparate voices is an aspect of fulfillment in the therapeutic process. As the psychologist Louis Cozolino explains, "the question for psychotherapists has always been how to reconnect dissociated memory systems which, as a result of trauma, can fragment from each other" (207), a statement coincident with the holistic precepts of Gestalt Psychology, referenced in the introduction. The merging Hoffman describes exemplifies the achievement of this reconnection. However, it is merging that takes place within the psychoanalysis she undergoes and is therefore through speaking, not writing, another form of narrativizing. Additionally, Hoffman is careful to distinguish any merging of selves she achieves from forms of wholeness associated with Edenic ideals of childhood plenitude: "There's no returning to the point of origin, no regaining of childhood unity… The wholeness of childhood truths is intermingled with the divisiveness of adult doubt" (*Lost* 273). Thus, while there is a merging of disparate voices and selves that Hoffman attests to in the psychoanalytical process, and while, as Sarah Jilani asserts, *Lost in Translation* is ultimately "ontologically cohesive" (14), attesting to wholeness achieved through writing as well, Hoffman herself does not adhere to a concept of wholeness as an achievable state. For Hoffman, the self or subject must be recognized as divided, dispersed and contradictory rather than unified. In this regard hers is a Nietzschean conceptualization of selfhood, similar to that articulated by Paul Jay as a "constructed not a unified, natural whole but

a historically constituted set of ideas and assumptions whose referents are complexly dispersed within the very language we must use to think the self into being" (*Self-Representation* 28).

In her concluding pages Hoffman addresses the question of subjective unity or wholeness as an objective in writing, explaining that in writing she has been searching for a "true voice," but that, while this voice develops, in the end, it "always returns to its point of departure, to ground zero." (*Lost* 276). Yet this tempered, and somewhat nihilistic, position is not in itself absolute because, shortly afterwards, Hoffman posits it as a new starting point; "it's only coming from the ground up that I can hit the tenor of my own sensibility, hit home" (*Lost* 276). Her conceptualization of a return to a ground zero state and a subsequent rising up echoes the psychological concept of gestalt pattern formations, whereby the experience of wholeness is one of fleetingness, change, and fluidity. Patterns or wholes are achieved and then released. As such, there can be temporary experiences of wholeness through language, image, and consciousness. Hoffman herself describes this when she writes: "the force of feeling, or of thought compresses language into metaphor, or an image, in which words and consciousness are magically fused" (*Lost* 276). Selves, as conceived within this conceptualization of fluidity, are not fixed or absolute, nor is there an upheld ideal of childhood wholeness or of wholeness as a permanent state of any kind. While memory enables returns and, through this, fusions of past and present, it is ever changing and any sense of wholeness it may result in is therefore temporary.

Section III: The Narrative Self and Memory

Alongside the aforementioned textual articulations of selves within the three memoirs, as hybrid, plural, and fluid, and particularly emphasized and analyzed by Hoffman, whose writing is self-reflexive and theoretical in ways that Goodison's and Ondaatje's are not, are meta-textual

conceptualizations of the self that I consider relevant to a broad understanding of the works. Especially pertinent to this thesis is the work of Paul Ricoeur who theorizes that the hermeneutical, human subject emerges essentially through narrative; its emergence connects with the transformative aspects of writing I explore in Chapter VII. Within such conceptualizations, narrative is viewed as a constituent part of the self, connected with consciousness and memory. This conceptualization of a narrative self has been further explored and examined by scientists such as Antonio Damásio who theorizes that consciousness and self are divided into core consciousness and core self, and extended consciousness and autobiographical self. The extended consciousness is created by time, and our memory of time passing creates the autobiographical self. As Paul John Eakin explains, the premise of Damásio's theory of self is the idea that a sense of self is a part of the conscious mind and that, as a result, "[w]hen it comes to our identities, narrative is not merely about self, but is rather in some profound way a constituent part of self" (*Living Autobiographically* 139).

Various terms have been used to articulate the concept of a narrative, autobiographical and extended self, such as the psychologist Ulric Neisser's use of "the remembered self." He explains that the memories that contribute to this self can be those of unique and specific events taking place at a particular time and place in the past, often termed episodic or specific memory, or of repeated events that occur on multiple occasions, or over an extended period of time, often termed general, or generic, memory[8]. As described by Neisser, an accumulation of such memories makes up our autobiographical self, which takes the form of a life narrative. It is continually extended as our experiences grow, and it is reconstructed to reflect our current

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[8] In *Elements of Episodic Memory* (1983) Endel Tulving makes important distinctions between implicit memory (that needed to function properly: to speak, to walk, etc.) and explicit memory, divided into semantic and episodic memory.

beliefs, concerns, and theories about ourselves, contributing to a sense of self that transcends the present moment, creating the narrative identity referred to (Neisser and Fivush, xi).

Relating these theorizations of narrative identity to Hoffman, Florence Sutton-Manders explains that the act of writing, and setting memory down in signs and symbols, gives Hoffman a narrative identity (echoing Jilani's statement about *Lost in Translation*'s ontological cohesion). Hoffman's understanding of identity is created through the interlacing of stories about herself with the stories of surrounding others, with the result that her identity is "entangled in stories" (Sutton-Manders 6). As Sutton-Manders explains:

> We see Hoffman's work as an autobiographical documentation of exilic experience that in turn feeds into a collective, cultural narrative of exile. The written memory becomes a physical document, and signifies a severance from the ephemerality of memory, which is often tainted by overriding emotions and forgetting. In writing the memory, Hoffman has transformed an unstable, impermanent entity into a static, unchanging document. (7)

In other words, while, for Hoffman, memory is not in itself a means of achieving fixity or wholeness because of its ephemerality, the act of writing contributes to a narrative identity, which can be broadly read as a narrative that, while personal, is also a collective and cultural one of exile.

Alongside this narrative conceptualization of memory, which is expansive in its outwardness from experiences of the self and selves to that of a broad exilic community, is that which James Olney calls the "archaeological model of memory," also referenced by Freud, and by Hoffman herself. In his study of memory in St Augustine's *Confessions*, Olney distinguishes two models of memory at work: the archaeological and the processual. While the processual is that of narrative, as outlined above, but also imagined lyrically by Olney as, "a process of

weaving that makes new forms and strands that are also in process" (*Autobiography* 20-21), the archaeological, spatial model is one of a timeless, topographical inner space that consists of layers of deposits, a site where "the writer can dig down through layer after layer of deposits to recover what he seeks" (*Autobiography* 19). Olney describes memories so recovered as, "unchanged, if decaying, over time" (*Autobiography* 19).

Hoffman interprets and articulates this archaeological model from a psychoanalytical perspective, writing, "it is a psychoanalytical insight that, within the inner world, all scales and layers of time can exist simultaneously. Freud frequently used archaeological metaphors for psychic structure, and the psychoanalytic excavations of its hidden strata" (Hoffman, *Time* 110), elaborating later that, "if we want to make sense of our own affective experience, we also need to dip inwards and travel through our subjectivity, to 'work through' the content of our feelings and let them sift through the strata of the self" (173). Hoffman thus advocates actively working with the affective aspects of archaeological memory and her call to let feelings sift through the strata of the self implies a trust in emotions as agents of change.

In his essay *Imaginary Homelands,* Salman Rushdie similarly invokes the archaeological/spatial in writing about memory:

> The shards of memory acquired greater status, greater resonance, because they were *remains*; fragmentation made trivial things seem like symbols and the mundane acquired numinous qualities. There is an obvious parallel here with archaeology. The broken pots of antiquity, from which the past can sometimes, but always provisionally, be reconstructed, are exciting to discover, even if they are pieces of the most quotidian objects. (12)

Rushdie underlines the vestige aspect of archaeological memory, highlighting the pleasure in accessing memory but also acknowledging an ongoing process of reconstructing it. For Rushdie, as for Hoffman, memory is an enabling source that is worthwhile and rewarding to work with, even when its substance can, at first glance, be considered mundane and even trivial.

Thus, even within the spatial, archaeological model of memory, contemporary theory and research, supported by the experience of writers such as Rushdie, it is not suggested that memory is merely stored and preserved intact, but rather that it decays, as Olney puts it, or is reconstructed, as described by Rushdie. Similarly, as Paul John Eakin observes, drawing from scientific research, "the latest developments in brain science today confirm the extent to which memory, the would-be anchor of selves and lives, constructs the materials from the past that an earlier, more innocent view would have us believe it merely stored" (*How Our Lives* 106). In other words, psychological or neurological research does not support the assumption that memory preserves the past intact, allowing the original experience to be repeated in present consciousness, but suggests that memory is, in fact, dynamic.

Eakin quotes research by Rosenfield that concludes, "every context will alter the nature of what is recalled" (*How Our Lives* 106). Eakin himself then concludes, "our representations of reality – literary, psychological, neurological – are dynamic and constructed rather than static and mimetic in nature" (*How Our Lives* 107), ultimately demonstrating that autobiography cannot offer "a faithful and unmediated reconstruction of a historically verifiable past" (*How Our Lives* 106). Instead, Eakin calls for critics and readers of autobiography to recognize that autobiography "expresses the play of the autobiographical act itself, in which the materials of the past are shaped by memory and imagination to serve the needs of a present consciousness" (*Fictions* 5). Indeed, as much as autobiography purports to "tell all" about a life lived, it is

nevertheless a constructed presentation of that life; a series of significant moments carefully selected from memory to summarize an entire existence.

Research on the visual aspects of memory indicates that images are generally considered to be the main content of our thoughts, and it also confirms the constructed nature of memory. According to Damásio, there is direct evidence that, whenever we recall a given object, or face, or scene, we do not get an exact reproduction but rather an interpretation, a newly reconstructed version of the original. In addition, as our age and experience change, versions of the same thing evolve. None of this, Damásio writes, is "compatible with rigid, facsimile representation, as the British psychologist Frederic Bartlett noted several decades ago, when he first proposed that memory is essentially reconstructive" (*Descartes' Error* 100). Damásio also points out that the denial that permanent pictures of anything can exist in the brain must be reconciled with the sensation that we can conjure up, in our mind's eye, approximations of images we previously experienced. That these approximations are not accurate or are less vivid than the images they are meant to reproduce, does not, in Damasio's nuanced articulation, contradict this fact (*Descartes' Error* 100).

Visual memory, as it features in memoir, has often been compared to photography. William Zinnser, for example, writes: "Memoir isn't the summary of a life; it's a window into a life, very much like a photograph in its selective composition" (135). Elaborating more fully on this comparison, Salman Rushdie writes about his striving, in his autobiographically-based novel *Midnight's Children,* to "restore the past to myself, not in the faded greys of old family-album snapshots, but whole, in CinemaScope and glorious Technicolour" (10). Paul Jay, in his examination of the importance of visual memory, explains that memory frequently evolves out of an image, or series of images, rather than following a temporally-ordered narrative progression

and that the reading of images from the past – be they fixed in a photograph or fluid in the mind's eye – can often be integral to the construction of identity in autobiographical works ("Posing" 191-202). What is required in the autobiographical act, he explains, is "to retrospectively read the significance" of visual images, "to read into this image a meaning and an identity" (Massel 26).

Massel, in her study of the creative and aestheticizing aspects of memory in *Running in the Family,* underlines Ondaatje's interest in photography, painting and tableaux, referencing his poem "Light" in which he foregrounds the relationship between memory and photography: "'Light' suggests that memory is photographic; the eye, like a camera lens, registers light and records an action, events, object, or person in the brain, preserving experience in a series of snapshots" (Massel 1).[9] As a poet, Ondaatje's writing is highly imagistic and *Running in the Family* features many snapshots, some of them derived from memories, others from remembered dreams, and yet others entirely from the imagination, as when he imagines his grandmother dying in the arms of a jacaranda tree, a scene which he not only did not witness but that exists entirely in his imagination.

Goodison, like Ondaatje a poet and writer of fiction as well as a visual artist, similarly valorizes the imagistic, aesthetic, lyrical, and poetic. Furthermore, both she and Ondaatje directly acknowledge writing as a practical activity of "making." By being formed from elements that are constructed and reconstructed (namely, the fabric of memory as it is woven with language and the imagination), their works exemplify Couser's description of literary memoirs as "a form of

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[9] In his essay "Michael Ondaatje and the Production of Myth," the writer George Eliot Clarke connects *Running in the Family* with the poem "Light" writing, "'Light' a lustrous paean to family, is… prescient of *Running in the Family.* It is a photo-induced memory of things past"(Clarke pp. 1-12). Furthermore, Ondaatje references light in the title of his 2018 novel, *Warlight,* a work additionally relevant to this thesis in its portrayal of childhood during WWII.

literary art" or "artifactuality" (*Memoir* 15). This same artistic sensibility is present in Hoffman who is a trained concert pianist and novelist. Writing about the critical acclaim *Lost in Translation* has received, Danuta Fjellestad notes that it has been treated as an example of belle-lettres in a way that much writing from Eastern Europe has not been, given, she explains, that memoirs and autobiographical writing of ethnic groups have largely been scrutinized through the lens of social history rather than literary aesthetics (Fjellestad, "The insertion of the self").

The intersecting of the social and literary is also addressed by Hoffman herself in her reference to Vladimir Nabokov's aristocratic privilege, which gives him the ability to focus on "telling detail," a privilege that she, as the child of less privileged immigrants, did not have. However, it can be argued that, in writing *Lost in Translation,* she focuses, to some degree, on "telling detail" herself, as the belles-lettres descriptor evidences. This is especially the case in the first of the memoir's three sections, "Paradise," in which she describes the minutiae of her relationship with her family's maid who makes clothes for her dolls and feeds her bread dunked in coffee with milk in the morning (a detail reminiscent of Proust's madeleines). Her descriptions of nature and light in this section, as well as in the final section, when she situates herself in the beauty of an American garden, can also be considered telling detail that is visually and aesthetically informed.

The aesthetic, literary, and especially lyrical, qualities of *Lost in Translation* have been underscored by Jonathan Culler who describes the material dimension of its language, which he considers important to distinguish from its narrative dimensions: "lyric is the foregrounding of language, in its material dimension, and thus both embodies and attracts interest in language and languages – in the forms, shapes and rhythms of discourse" (205). Furthermore, "[i]f narrative is about what happens next, lyric is about what happens now – in the reader's engagement with

each line – and teachers and scholars should celebrate its singularity, its difference from narrative" (Culler 202). This "nowness" is exemplified by Hoffman's use of the present tense when she writes "I hear my own breathing" (*Lost* 17) in a recollection of her childhood self. Elizabeth Kella also highlights *Lost in Translation*'s "literary and lyrical representation of memory" (12), further attesting to the complexity of memory as transcribed aesthetically by Hoffman.

Memory, as it functions in memoir, can, through such literary and theoretical articulations, be conceived as creative. Its dynamic, selective, constructive, and imaginative capacities demand to be taken into consideration in tandem with adherences to belief in memoir's representations of historical "fact". Memory, as Jay writes in relation to Proust, needs to be considered less as a pure source of illumination than as an enabling context, a prelude to insights generated by the imagination in the present (*Self-Representation* 146), a statement echoed by Philip Roth who, in reference to his own memoir writes, "[M]emories of the past are not memories of facts but memories of your imagining of the facts" (Cline and Angier 78). Both Ondaatje and Goodison acknowledge the influence of their imaginations in their memoirs. That Hoffman does not overtly do so is not a denial of its existence but only an affirmation of her earnestness. A passage in which she describes walking home through Kraków as a young girl and savouring every moment at once attests to this earnestness *and* speaks of the imagination as it intersects with memory:

> How many moments do I have in life? I hear my own breathing: with every breath, I am closer to death... I slow down my steps: I'm not home yet, but soon I will be, now I'm that much closer, but not yet... not yet... Remember this, I command myself, as if that way I

could make some of it stay. When you're grown up, you'll remember this. And you'll remember how you told yourself to remember. (Hoffman, *Lost* 17)

On the one hand, this passage, as Florence Sutton-Manders explains, shows that Hoffman recognizes the power of memory at a young age and her understanding of memory as a means of confronting loss. Kella similarly asserts Hoffman's "acute self-consciousness, a Jamesean awareness of the historicity of the present" (12), exemplified, for instance, by her use of the present tense to bring life to the past. The passage also presents the adult Hoffman's *imagining* of her childhood self and, in employing the second person, she stages a dialogue between her past and present selves. As Hoffman acknowledges in another non-fiction work, *Time*, "[w]hat we remember overtly about our own past may correspond only partially, or not at all, to what actually happened" (97). While the aforementioned passage is in no way "fictional," it exemplifies the nuances and slipperiness of remembering and of the complexities of memoirs as "objective" representations of the past. (12).

Mark Freeman, in his study of the phenomenon of hindsight, affirms the creative capacities of memory in the act of interpreting the past from a position of temporal distance, as exemplified by the above passage from Hoffman. According to Freeman, temporal distance allows for a greater awareness of the storylines and scripts that have been internalized, resulting in fuller, broader perspectives. Hindsight is revelatory (Freeman, *Hindsight* 173) in the way that distance from moments allows us to see things that we were unable to see and "the process of my life becoming visible is contingent upon my stepping out of that moment and turning my gaze to the landscape of the past" (*Hindsight* 207). That which has been absent from consciousness thus becomes present. Hindsight, in this regard, is recuperative. It can also be considered restorative in its synthetic capacity to enable a confrontation and reckoning with loss. All three writers ultimately

deal with loss recuperatively, through memory, and through the transcribing of memory in memoir. As Hoffman, underlines, "We live forward, but we understand backwards" (*Time* 107), a notion perhaps drawn from Soren Kierkegaard's "[l]ife can only be understood backwards, but it must be lived forwards."

Chapter II: "I can turn this darkness into the river at night": Lorna Goodison's *From Harvey River*

My mother was my first country; the first place I ever lived.

–Nayyirah Waheed, "Lands"

In this chapter I will present Lorna Goodison's *From Harvey River*, highlighting aspects that are vital to my thesis as a whole, which is to say, aspects that pertain to sensual, nature-based memory as a source of poetics and that relate to emotional affect. To this purpose, the chapter is divided into four sections: 1. Sensorial Rootedness: The Primacy of Place of Origin; 2. A Loving Gaze: Goodison's Tribute to Her Mother, Doris; 3. The Spirit of the Imagination: Dreaming, Fabricating and African Based Spirituality and 4. Language and Stories. As a starting point, I will introduce Lorna Goodison and situate *From Harvey River* within her body of work, examining the context from which it arose.

Lorna Goodison was born in Kingston, Jamaica, on August 1st, 1947. This is Jamaican Independence Day, a coincidence to which she gives importance, in regard to a sense of mission around writing about Jamaican people: "I don't think it is an accident that I was born on the first of August, and I don't think it was an accident that I was given the gift of poetry, so I take that to mean that I am to write about those people and their condition, and I will carry a burden about what they endured and how they prevailed until the day I die" (Goodison, "Jamaican Poet Laureate"). As previously mentioned, Goodison, like both Ondaatje and Hoffman, is part of a generation born during, or in the immediate aftermath of, WWII. Like theirs, her family's welfare was affected by the war, far less severely than Hoffman's but arguably more so than Ondaatje's. Like Ondaatje, she was born and raised in an island country that was part of the

British Empire and is now part of the Commonwealth and English language diaspora. Like Ondaatje, but unlike Hoffman, English is her mother tongue.

Goodison is primarily a poet and has published thirteen collections of poetry to date. In May, 2017, she was appointed Jamaica's Poet Laureate, the first woman to hold this post. In 2019 she became the first Jamaican to be awarded the Queen's Gold Medal for poetry. Goodison has also published three collections of short stories and, in 2018, a collection of essays, *Redemption Ground*. She has lived and taught in Canada and the United States and is Professor Emerita at the University of Michigan.

Goodison also trained in visual art, studying when a young woman at the Jamaica School of Art and the Art Students League of New York. *From Harvey River* reflects her poetry and art in that it is highly imagistic and sensorial**.** She has said that she aims to bring the technique of chiaroscuro to her writing: "All these light images I place in relief to dark historical facts or hold them up as talismans against the sense of hopelessness and despair which can overwhelm us as human beings" ("An Interview"). Significantly, one of her most famous poems, "For My Mother (May I Inherit Half Her Strength)" – along with other poems based around her mother and her great-grandmother – contains numerous threads picked up, and elaborated on, in her memoir, as I will detail in Section II. Her prose is, therefore, not only informed by, but interwoven with, her poetry. This poetic aspect is one of the elements that renders *From Harvey River* a literary memoir and is coincident with Iris Murdoch's definition of literature as "the art form which uses words" (*Existentialists* 6). Emmanuel Levinas uses the term "scintillation" to describe the way literary writing, particularly by using obliquity or beauty, resists simple signification. As Levinas explains, "[W]hat marks out literary writing is the way in which, resisting simple 'signification' of ideas or objects – particularly by using obliquity or beauty – its language, though it makes

sense, 'relinquishes' its claims on those ideas and objects. He calls this oscillation between language's appropriative practices and this kind of self-staging 'scintillation'. It is a sign like a 'star' which, because it's situated *beyond* what a particular text claims to be telling, is an introduction to the Other into that text" (Levinas qtd. in Hunt and Sampson 140).

From Harvey River is Goodison's first work of nonfiction. Yet, while unquestionably a memoir due to its focus on memory and the life of her mother and her mother's people, to some degree it also pushes the boundaries of the genre. That which is imagined, dreamed, or fabricated is at times given precedence over the purely factual. This is most clearly and substantially the case in the prologue and epilogue where Goodison introduces Jamaican spirituality in the form of "visitations" by her deceased mother and where there is a fluid intermingling of past and present. Furthermore, Goodison reveals in her acknowledgments that she has taken various liberties, including the changing of dates to suit the narrative flow. In fact, she largely excludes dates that refer to personal history, such as births and deaths, using them almost exclusively to furnish historical detail.

Moreover, *From Harvey River* is not a "standard" memoir in the sense that in its final section (roughly one third of its entire length), it morphs from biographical memoir to autobiography. In these final seventy pages, Goodison writes from her own, first-person point of view, beginning with the middle years of her childhood and moving forward to the time of her mother's death. With these different narrative stances, different forms of memory operate within the text: more constructed memory in the biographical part due to it being based upon the experiences of family members prior to Goodison's lifetime, which would have been largely passed down through storytelling; less constructed memory in the autobiographical part due to its origins in first-hand experience.

Section I: Sensorial Rootedness: The Primacy of Place of Origin

The pre-eminence of the community of Harvey River, and of the river itself, is in many respects the foundation upon which Goodison's memoir is built. It is *the* original place from which the rest is consequent: the original seat of the Harvey family in Jamaica and the birthplace of Goodison's mother, Doris Harvey. The importance Doris Harvey gives to it is attested to by her ongoing mention of Harvey River to her family even when they lived in Kingston. As Goodison explains: "I do not think there was ever a day in my childhood when the river or the village was not mentioned in our house" (*From Harvey River* 1).

In examining Doris Harvey's (and by extension Goodison's) feeling for her place of origin, it is pertinent to take into consideration two ecological concepts; Topophilia[10], the affective bond between people and place, and Biophilia,[11] which articulates a love of life and living systems and the urge to affiliate with other forms of life. I will elaborate on this subject in Chapter V where I examine the memoirs through an ecological framework. As Goodison explains in her essay, "The Caribbean Imaginary, for Ifeona Fulani" writing her memoir was a means of re-engaging with, and actively preserving, the best of the past, and this act has as its centre places and people[12]. As such, *From Harvey River* has Proustian undertones. It can also be seen, in its collective scope, through the lens of cultural memory, concerned, as the literary critic

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[10] The suffix philia, as opposed to phobia, indicates an affirmation of life. See Tuan, Yi-Fu. *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values. Columbia University Press, 1990.*

[11] According to a theory of the biologist E. O. Wilson, biophilia is an innate and genetically determined affinity of human beings with the natural world.

[12] In "The Caribbean Imaginary, for Ifeona Fulani" Goodison writes that "in the Caribbean, the centre will not, does not, and looks like it might not ever, hold. A Caribbean writer therefore has to take what is available even if much has been lost, and give it a presence, a reality through their writing. All writers do this, but Caribbean writers face formidable or particular challenges because of the ways in which slavery, and then colonialism, erased or distorted so much of our lives that we have had to learn to write ourselves into the story in any way we can" (*Redemption Ground,* 74).

Max Saunders conceptualizes cultural memory, with "memories as representations, and with representations of memories" (330). Goodison's referencing of the imagination highlights the constructive aspect of cultural memory's representation:

> My memoir *From Harvey River* was born out of a need to preserve a time and place that is all but gone, because the small village founded by my maternal great grandfather looks nothing like it did in my mother's time, the family home no longer exists, and climate change has altered the flow of the river. I had to imagine it in all its original bucolic charm in order to write that memoir. And I do this because as a Caribbean writer it is my job to imagine and keep reimagining the past and the future into being, so that the best of what was lost might exist again in the future. (*Redemption* 76)

From Harvey River is life-affirming in its desire to bring forth, through reimagining and writing, the "best" of life from the past, and in imagining a desired future into being. While Goodison writes about struggles and hardship, it is ultimately a positive vision that she strives for, as evidenced by her expansive, flamboyant, imagining of her mother's afterlife in the prologue as well as by her statements in *Redemption Ground* that she needs to "hold on to things that are life-affirming" (*Redemption* 28) and that "[r]edemption is the key" (62). In reference to "Redemption Song", written by those fighting for freedom in the wake of slavery, she asserts the importance of the values behind it: "Implied in the words is the plea for us all to help to sing, to write Redemption songs; songs and stories, for the rest of my life, this is what I hope to be doing" (63). Given Goodison's Christian upbringing, a subject I will address below, the Old Testament concept of redemption as deliverance from bondage would have been an influence during her childhood, as a response to Jamaica's history of slavery and racism. As an underlying

trope, the recovery of what was lost to slavery, such as African heritage and culture, and of Doris Harvey's lost past, greatly informs the writing of *From Harvey River*.

The community of Harvey River is located in north-western Jamaica, approximately 200 kms from the capital of Kingston. It was named after Goodison's maternal great-grandfather, William Harvey, who gave his name to the river and the river in turn to the village when he and his brother founded it in 1840. Goodison describes the history of the settlement and how it began as a clearing, near the hillside plots farmed by formerly enslaved Africans who had begun to work as hired workers on nearby estates. The Harveys, originally from England, were considered to be the first family of the village. William Harvey was one of the first English men to legally marry a black Jamaican woman and Goodison's other great-grandfather on her mother's side was likewise white (Irish) and his wife black, the daughter of a "Guinea woman." Goodison's maternal background is thus multi-racial, a mix of African-Anglo-Irish and, as Goodison speculates, with likely Indigenous American, Arawak, heritage from her paternal ancestry.

The complexities of race and of racism in Jamaica are addressed on an ongoing basis, especially when Goodison writes directly about Jamaican history and slavery. This is personal in its intersection with Goodison's family and with Goodison herself as a person of mixed race. Much is related through stories, as I will detail in the final section of this chapter. In a passage where she confronts racism directly, she explains:

> Whites born in Jamaica were not considered white by the English, because by now there was so much mixing of white and black blood; with so many black women giving birth to "sailor pickney," light-skinned children and jet-black children walking around with "good hair," Aryan features, and eyes the colour of semi-precious stones. Creole families needed to find white husbands for their daughters, for one day they all hoped to escape

> this place where they were outnumbered by Negroes and return to the "mother country," which many of them had never seen but which they nonetheless regarded as home. (*From Harvey River* 40)

The Harvey family's connection with England is maintained culturally through numerous customs and practices, such as being active members of the Church of England and being educated in English schools. Goodison herself attended an Anglican school for girls in Kingston, and went to Sunday school along with her siblings. Of her maternal grandfather, David Harvey, and the Harvey family as a whole, she writes:

> The Harveys were devout Anglicans, pillars of the Church of England. David was the catechist at the Eton church and each Sunday the family attended worship there, to recite appropriate creeds and collects from the Book of Common Prayer, and raise the great hymns penned by masterful English wordsmiths like George Herbert and John Keble. (*From Harvey River* 82)

While Goodison's English ancestry is a conduit of religion and moral values (her eldest maternal aunt, for instance, attended a finishing school run by an English woman, and in turn educated her siblings in etiquette), her spirituality was greatly informed by her African ancestry, which she traces directly to her great-grandmother of Guinean descent. It is to this great-grandmother that she attributes "visitations" by the dead and premonitory dreams.

Place is thus presented as a source of culture and customs, deriving from ethnically diverse origins, as well as being physical and geographical. Culture and nature are intertwined. Nature is evoked through vivid, sensorial language but it is also seen as the human connected intimately, physically and bodily, with the earth. In the first line of *From Harvey River,* with its description of Doris Harvey as an infant, Goodison uses simile to link her with the land where

she was raised and grew up: "The baby was plump and pretty as a ripe ox-heart tomato" (5). Indeed, not only are people connected to the land of their upbringing, but crops and, in particular, food preparation, feature prominently and descriptions of food are extensive and elaborate. The first of these appears in relation to the food Goodison's maternal grandmother prepared for her pregnant daughter-in-law who initially had difficulty conceiving:

> She prepared nourishing invalid food and fed her steamed egg custards and cornmeal porridge boiled for hours into creaminess and sweetened with cow's milk. She made her thyme-fragrant pumpkin soup and fresh carrot juice, because Margaret's cravings were all for golden-coloured foods, which she ate sitting up in her big four-poster mahogany marriage bed. (*From Harvey River* 8)

This sensorial description of food preparation relates not only to nourishment but to nurturing and links to Goodison's maternal ancestors, specifically Doris Harvey for whom food preparation was an act of generosity: "Our home at Studley Park Road became a hospitality centre, much of which revolved around my mother's seemingly bottomless cooking pot," Goodison writes (*From Harvey River* 234). Additionally, Goodison presents her mother's breastfeeding of her through sensorial descriptions of food, linking it to culture and language: "She dipped her finger in sugar when I was born and rubbed it under my tongue to give me the gift of words." (*From Harvey River* 274). In imagining her own infancy, and in reimagining the local food that was a part of her family history and upbringing, Goodison evokes people and place sensorially. Writing in her essay, "I-Land" that, "I always loved the sensuousness of island life" (*Redemption* 44) she embodies the concept of topophilia referred to previously, through her affective bond with place.

In the opening scene, in which Goodison compares her mother as an infant to an ox-heart tomato, and describes her being anointed with the gift of speech through sugar being placed under her tongue, Goodison is imagining and constructing a past event at which she was not present. This exemplifies the imaginative construction I have referred to that constitutes most of the memoir in its relating of events and descriptions of scenarios that existed prior to her birth. Within this process of imagining and reimagining, constructing and reconstructing, Goodison draws from memory rooted in the five senses. It is the sensorial detail, related as the sensory is to direct experience, that gives life to Goodison's writing, conveying the vividness of lived experience. As such, the writing embodies a fundamentally eco-centric conception of life. A striking example, in this case of a time when Goodison herself was physically present, is when she describes her mother breastfeeding one of her younger siblings:

> She loved being a wife but she really, really was born to be a mother. She sometimes fed her children like mother birds do, passing food from her mouth to theirs. Like her mother, Margaret, she was known to put her own mouth to the tiny, congested nostrils of any of her nine babies and pull mucus down to clear their heads. A mammal is a warm-blooded animal that gives suck to its young. She had told this to her children as a fact, a piece of information she handed out from a great mine of facts she stored in her head. "Mama, are you a mammal?" one of the children asked her. "Yes," she said laughing, "Doris is a mammal." (*From Harvey River* 186)

Goodison's connection of the human with the other than human exemplifies an ecological consciousness that is also transmitted through her sensibility as a poet. This sensibility is conveyed through her poetic use of simile and metaphor, as when she compares her mother and her mother's female siblings, the "Fabulous Harvey Girls," to flowers:

> Doris is not the prettiest one, but she is the one that everyone loves," her brother Flavius would say. "Dear Dor" they called her, for if Cleodine was pristine and as perfectly designed as an anthurium, Albertha a lily above reproach, Rose a fragrant damask rose by name and nature, and Anne gorgeous and intense as a bird of paradise, my mother could be described as a mixed bouquet. She was a little of all those flowers, with a good spray of common wildflowers like buttercups and ramgoat roses bundled in with hardy perennials and quick-growing impatiens, and she learned how to send her roots down deep when storm-time came. (*From Harvey River* 61)

The memoir contains a number of black-and-white photographs of the five "Fabulous Harvey Girls," each of them as a young woman, posing in a special dress. Only the photo of the youngest, Ann, has a natural backdrop of palm fronds and other vegetation, while the photos of the other Harvey girls appear to have been taken in studios. Slightly later, in the same chapter, we are presented with a black-and-white photo of Doris Harvey's parents, David and Margaret Harvey. They are also well dressed and the photo is posed, taken on the occasion of their fortieth wedding anniversary. The background shows the lush, natural setting of Harvey River with large fronds of palm trees and other verdant vegetation. Following this is a photo of Marcus Harvey as a young man, the father of Lorna Goodison and husband of Doris. Unlike the preceding photos, it shows only his face. At the end of the book, we are presented with a photo of Doris Harvey as a mature woman, as well as a photo of Goodison herself, one that is posed but less formal than all the others.

The inclusion of family photos adds a sensorial element – the visual – to the memoir, and is a further means of bringing the Harvey family to life. In addition to this visual element, and to the abundance of sensorial elements within the text itself, Goodison's writing also draws from

the extrasensory, or "sixth sense." The metaphysical content of the prologue and the epilogue, in which she writes about an imagined afterlife, exemplifies this. Goodison, as mentioned, references a concept of dreams, including premonitory dreams, and "visitations" that she traces to her African heritage. Additionally, prior to colonization by the Spanish and the English, Jamaica, then known as Xaymaca, was populated by indigenous people known as Taino, whose language was Arawak. Goodison's paternal grandmother, deemed to be of Arawak descent, was a further source of her non-European based spirituality, a subject I will explore in the third section of this chapter.

From Harvey River, with its grounding in a specific place in nature and expression of love for this place, portrays not only the particular community of Harvey River, but Jamaica as a country, and not only Goodison's mother, but her family and Jamaican people as a whole, through sensorial language and, at times, through an expression of the extra-sensorial. Embodied in Goodison's writing is a love of life and an affective bond between people and place. The affective bond most present is that felt towards her mother.

Section II: A Loving Gaze: Goodison's Tribute to Her Mother, Doris

While the place of Harvey River, as a source of life and a family seat, provides the foundation for Goodison's memoir, her mother Doris is at its heart. Much of Goodison's writing can be seen as a tribute to Doris Harvey and as a way of honouring her; primarily as a mother but, ultimately, as a human being. As such, there is a *largeur* and generosity to Goodison's honouring. In the poem "Island Aubade," written after Goodison had become a mother herself, she writes that Doris, as a grandmother, "is now mother to the whole island." Indeed, in *From Harvey River,* Goodison establishes a oneness between her mother, her mother's people (and

Goodison's people as well), and the island of Jamaica itself. In this regard, Goodison's memoir typifies what has been identified as the most distinctive and consistent difference between male and female life-writing; the presentation of the self as related rather than single and isolate (Eakin, *How Our Lives* 48). As Eakin states: "individuation is decisively inflected by gender" (*How Our Lives* 48). Questions of gendered writing are largely beyond the scope of this thesis which concerns itself with a small pool of only three works; however, the one work by a male writer is clearly atypical of Eakin's generalization in that it is as highly relational as those of the two female writers. Its assertion of relationality is part of what informed my inclusion of *Running in the Family* in the tripartite structure of this thesis: Ondaatje's memoir, in drawing from sensorial based memory, affirms an intimate relationality with the natural world, much as does *From Harvey River*.

Regarding questions of gender in the memoirs, I take as pertinent Hala Kamal's statement in "Gendered Autobiography" that "[t]here are marked differences between men's and women's writing not based on an essentialist notion of masculinity and femininity but as a reflection of experiential variation" (529). This experiential variation in respect to the assertion of relationality and interrelationality implies generational and other historical considerations, alongside geographical and locational ones. Relevant to this study is that, while all three memoirs affirm interrelationality, Ondaatje's does so through the employment of greater impersonality, as I will detail in Chapter III, which focuses on *Running in the Family.*

In examining the eulogistic aspect of Goodison's beholding and honouring of her mother, I will use Iris Murdoch's concept of the "loving gaze." In her book-length essay, *The Sovereignty of Good,* Murdoch writes, "I have used the idea of attention which I borrow from Simone Weil, to express the idea of a just and loving gaze directed upon an individual reality. I believe this to

be the characteristic and proper mark of the active moral agent" (33). Murdoch goes on to describe this form of attention as "unselfing" and becoming "self-forgetful," something she and Weil both also call "decentring." She relates it to ethics and virtue, further stating: "anything which alters consciousness in the direction of unselfishness, objectivity and realism is to be connected with virtue" (Murdoch qtd. in Scarry 112).

While Murdoch's concept of virtue is detached from Christianity, and is, in fact, decidedly non-Christian, Goodison's memoir is underpinned, as stated previously, by values directly related to her Christian upbringing and her family's Anglicanism as embodied specifically by Doris Harvey. Therefore, in examining Goodison's "loving gaze," it is essential to take into account her Christian background and education as transmitted by her mother, a framework fundamentally different from Murdoch's. Goodison makes explicit this context, and her views about truth and beauty, in an essay on Keats:

> He, more than any writer, has caused me to think long and hard about the love of what is true and beautiful, and how the Creator of all things seen and unseen, who bestows such gifts, is obviously totally impartial, because some of the most unlikely people have been given this gift. (Goodison, *Redemption* 99)

Doris Harvey's father, whose ancestors came from England, was a "staunch Anglican" and her mother, whose father was Irish, adopted Anglicanism through marriage. Goodison recounts that her grandparents' daily speech was often peppered with Biblical quotations, as when she writes that David Harvey prayed aloud from Psalm 91 (*From Harvey River* 18) and that Margaret Harvey quoted the Biblical injunction about honouring one's mother and father (*From Harvey River* 28). When their son Howard was killed by a man "jealous over his red-

haired woman" we learn that David Harvey quoted proverbs: "Howard fell like a wounded ox on the way to the slaughter house" (*From Harvey River* 103).

Doris Harvey, through having been raised in a Christian, church-going family, is presented as a person who actively drew from these values in her thoughts and actions. As a wife and a mother of nine, as well as a devoted daughter and sibling, she is presented as being selfless and known for her "legendary good nature and kindness" (*From Harvey River* 136). During the period when she raised her family in an underprivileged Kingston neighbourhood where life was tough, she became known for her charitable acts to the extent she was given the nickname "Mama Goodie." Working for a time at an asylum, she took in a girl who had been sexually abused and found her a new home in Harvey River. Goodison explains that, at this time of struggle, her mother called upon her religious beliefs to give her strength: "she needed to be silent and pray for herself, to ask the Lord, who was her shepherd, to walk with her through the valley of the shadow of the madhouse" (*From Harvey River* 178).

I consider that the attentive "loving gaze" aspect of Goodison's writing is informed by the values and virtues transmitted by her mother and that her honouring of Doris Harvey can be attributed to Goodison's love and respect for her. Goodison's writing itself can also be viewed from this perspective in that her attention is focused on her mother and her mother's family, rather than on herself and her own experience. As stated previously, it is only in the latter part of the memoir that Goodison brings her own life directly into her writing, and even then it is herself in relation to her mother and her family of origin (primarily her matrilineal rather than patrilineal lineage).

In her dissertation, *Looking with a Just and Loving Gaze: The Concept of Attention in the Writings of Simone Weil and Iris Murdoch*, Karen Ravensberger defines attention as "the attempt

to see what is not the self. It is a perspective that is open to a sense of inherent value in an other, it is looking without thinking instrumentally" (30). Furthermore:

> in the process of imagining the being of the other the imagination cultivates empathy. It also enables us to understand that we are not the centre of the universe, and that indeed every person has an equally legitimate claim to exceptionality. Attention sparks the ethical imagination. When we imagine the being and experiences of those who are not us, we see a more truthful and complete picture of reality. As Murdoch writes, "we use our imagination not to escape the world but to join it." (28)

In focusing on her mother, and in honouring her, Goodison does not elevate her in a way that is exaggerated but rather depicts her in a way that is "life-sized." She is presented as a member of the communities in which she lives and as actively belonging to them, with the exception of when she moves to the city of Kingston from rural Jamaica and experiences a state of un-belonging. Also, as I've argued in the previous section, she is portrayed as being embedded in nature. As Maureen Warner Lewis writes, Goodison "makes none of her characters larger than life. They all seem familiar. They stand out because of their idiosyncrasies and the saga of their individual experiences and mannerisms keeps reader interest alive" (86).

Goodison's portrayal of her mother is rich in emotional affect, foregrounding and giving space to subjectivity. In sharing Doris Harvey's life, Goodison includes her mother's range of subjective and emotional states: the joys of her marriage, motherhood, and her work as a seamstress; the pains of mistreatment by a boy when she was a child; the sorrows of loss; the frustrations involved in accustoming herself to hostile and unfavourable environments. Through presenting her mother so fully, in portraying her weaknesses and her strengths, Goodison engenders not only empathy, but also recognition, one of the four modes of textual engagement

identified by Rita Felski in her delineation of the writer-reader relationship.[13] Indirectly, in describing her mother's frictions and conflicts with people, Goodison also allows for the view that her mother may have come across as proud, superior, or self-righteous, though Goodison does not judge or insert direct opinions. Her representation of her mother is largely non-analytical, markedly less so than in the other memoirs of my study, *Lost in Translation* in particular.

Doris Harvey is presented as an "ordinary" woman, that is to say, a woman who did not become known outside her local circles of family, community and work and whose life was not newsworthy. In her portrayal of her mother and her virtues, Goodison exemplifies the moral idea of the significance of ordinary life referenced in my introduction. The "ordinary" is a trope that takes several forms. It first features in regard to Doris's name. While her father wanted her to be given the name of an English literary heroine, Clarabelle, a character who was not ordinary, her mother wanted her to be named Doris, after a school friend, i.e., an "ordinary" person. Their conflict, Goodison explains, ultimately resulted in Doris herself finding a creative solution, by redesigning her name:

> she signed her name Dorice, as if to distance herself from the whole Clarabelle/Doris business. Besides, Dorice, pronounced "Do-reese," conjured up images of a woman who was not ordinary; and to be ordinary, according to my mother's oldest sister, Cleodine, was just about the worst thing that a member of the Harvey family could be. (*From Harvey River* 7)

Within the Harvey family, names were bearers of social significance. The giving of a name, according to the environmental writer Leslie Van Gelder, is also related to power:

[13] In *Uses of Literature,* Rita Felski identifies four modes of textual engagement: recognition, enchantment, knowledge and shock.

"naming is intrinsically powerful. To name is to define, to call into being, to differentiate from unknown to known" (44-45). While Goodison rarely addresses the subject of social class, in her poem, "For My Mother (May I inherit half her strength)", she writes, "My mother was a child of the petite bourgeoisie" ("About Lorna Goodison"). It is her mother's eldest sister, Cleodine, who most embodies the concerns of this social class, and of whom Doris is critical (it is in her relationship with Cleodine that Doris is shown at her least magnanimous). These social concerns appear to have been transmitted by her maternal grandmother, Nana Frances, who is quoted as advising her daughter-in-law to get a maid: "Above all, she cautioned, 'Don't go and wash clothes in the river. Get somebody to do that for you. Don't make these people think you are ordinary'" (*From Harvey River* 37).

A dismissiveness of "ordinary," as associated with Nana Francis and, repeatedly throughout the memoir with Cleodine, stands in contrast to the value Goodison gives to the ordinary, including domesticity. As described by the Caribbean scholar Sandra Pouchet Paquet, Goodison's memoir is a tribute that, in honouring Doris Harvey, "honors domesticity as the necessary and valuable work of nurturing family and community" (168). Kate Siklosi likewise writes that Goodison's singularity as a writer lies in her belief in the "micro-resistances of domestic life: she infuses the everyday with 'salt and light,' turning mundane acts into transformative rituals." ("Lorna Goodison and the Wicked Force") Goodison specifically honours her mother's thirty-year career as a seamstress, seeing artistry, and the extraordinary, in her work:

> She was an artist, an artist who created with shining white bolts of slipper satin, crepe de chine, organza, chiffon, guipure lace, Brussels lace, and Venice lace. She hung "tears of joy" pearls, iridescent sequins, and diamond-like rhinestones upon her creations, which

> turned ordinary women into queens, ethereal bridal beings, their glowing faces framed by mists of illusion tulle flowing veils or fingertip veils. (*From Harvey River* 230).

From this aesthetic (and also ethical, in that it concerns values) perspective, *From Harvey River* is about a way of seeing the world in which the extraordinary is extracted or prised from the ordinary through a "loving gaze." This can be considered through the form of aesthetic response Felski calls enchantment, whereby pleasurable self-forgetting and absorption or immersion takes place. While Felski's phenomenological conceptualization pertains to the experience of the reader (and I acknowledge and affirm my experience as a reader in this regard), I suggest that it can also apply to the writer. It is also pertinent here to return to Simone Weil and Iris Murdoch's concept of the decentring of the self through the cognitive act of beholding, coincident, to some extent, with enchantment and relevant to not only the ethical underpinning of *From Harvey River,* but also to its aesthetics.

In her book-length essay *On Beauty*, the American writer Elaine Scarry builds upon Weil and Murdoch's ideas concerning "unselfinterestedness," as Scarry calls it, to articulate the position we find ourselves in when beholding beauty as being "lateral," or "adjacent". She considers that equality is brought about by one then ceasing to be the central figure. She calls this decentring an "opiated adjacency" because of the way adjacent beholding can be pleasure-bearing. Scarry goes on to argue that people want beauty even when their self-interest is not served by it; they are interested in protecting it for others to enjoy in the future. She says that if one asks people if they think not of themselves but of others, it is their wish for others that they be beauty-loving and also a wish that people look back on past generations and see them as beauty-loving. It is furthermore people's wish, she asserts, that beauty be distributed throughout

the world and she links people's appreciation of the distributional beauty found in nature to justice and equality (Scarry 123).

Goodison's memoir exemplifies this distributional, generational aspect of beholding that Scarry delicately articulates. It is distributional in its sharing of a way of life, specifically an individual life that is presented as exemplary (while at the same time being "ordinary"). It is generational in that, as a published memoir, it is intended to be passed on to future generations. As Goodison writes in *Redemption Ground*, she considers that, as a Caribbean writer, it is her role to "imagine and keep reimagining the past and the future into being, so that the best of what was lost might exist again in the future" (76). An example of this, and of the way Goodison brings together beauty and the generational, can be found in a passage about stitching, which is the essence of her mother's work as a seamstress: "Every once in a while, when the culture of a people undergoes great stress, stitches drop out of existence, out of memory" (*From Harvey River* 76). The stitch called hardanga, she explains, disappeared in 1832 with the execution of the Jamaican freedom fighter, Sam Sharpe. "Perhaps," she suggests, the women who made "his flowing white garments had hidden the hardanga stitch in the seams" (*From Harvey River* 76).

I consider that, in the eulogistic nature of her memoir, Goodison is conveying the beauty of her mother's life, including her work as a seamstress, similar to the Platonic concept of it as described by Murdoch and Weil, which is to say beauty as a form. It is in this perception of beauty that the ordinary becomes the extraordinary. As Weil states: "[B]eauty requires us to give up our imaginary position as the centre… a transformation then takes place at the very roots of our sensibility, in our immediate reception of sense impression and psychological impressions" (159).

Goodison's inclusion of family photographs, none of which include Goodison herself, can be viewed as a further facet of her loving gaze and capacity for the perception of beauty. The memoir's final photograph is of her mother, at whom the reader is invited thereby to gaze. The reader can also bear witness to a statement Goodison has made earlier that "her smooth face was the colour of a biscuit (till the day she died she never had a wrinkle)" (*From Harvey River* 195). This visual and tactile description follows on from another highly sensorial description of her mother's smell: "Sweet and sour of breastmilk, Johnson's baby talcum powder, and the faint vinegar of perspiration, that was my mother's perfume" (195). Again, here, Goodison highlights the beauty she prises from the ordinary in employing the word "perfume," a word that harkens back to an earlier description of her mother, like the other "Fabulous Harvey Girls," as a flower.

Goodison's writing, in containing sensorial language based around the senses of taste and smell, is representative of what Yuriko Saito calls the "lower senses". In *Everyday Aesthetics* (a work that, like Goodison's, highlights the "extraordinary" in the "ordinary") Saito advocates the use of these often neglected senses in artistic production, considering them an important dimension of daily life that merits validation:

> Sight and sound have traditionally been regarded as "higher" senses for their affinity to the conceptual and intellectual. Visual images and sounds can be arranged according to some rational scheme; hence, they are amenable to objective, sometimes even mathematical, analysis. In contrast, the so called "lower senses", smell, taste and touch, as well as kinaesthetic sensations are considered to be too visceral, animalistic and crude to allow intellectual description, conceptual analysis, and rational organization…It is clear that once we set a paradigmatic art of sight and sounds as the model for an aesthetic object, we neglect a large portion of the aesthetic dimension of our daily affairs. (22)

Murdoch likewise calls for the inclusion of these "lower senses" in art, writing that "[t]ouch and movement, not vision, should supply our metaphors: Touching, handling and the manipulation of things are misrepresented if we follow the analogy of vision" (*Sovereignty* 5).

As concerns hierarchies, it is also pertinent to consider not only those of the senses in regard to Goodison, but hierarchies of emotion and thought. Sara Ahmed, in her investigation of the cultural politics of emotion, refers to the way some emotions are "elevated" as signs of cultivation, whilst others remain "lower" as signs of weakness ("Cultural Politics" 3). She writes about the cultural fear of emotionality in which weakness is defined in terms of a tendency to be shaped. Being "shaped" or influenced is an aspect of all three memoirs and a facet of the relationality that all three assert. Goodison, in presenting her mother's emotional life, gives voice to her emotional breadth along a spectrum of strength and weakness from a stance of acceptance rather than judgement. This is a further aspect of her mother being presented, as Maureen Warner Lewis has noted, as life-sized rather than larger than life.

Section III: The Spirit of the Imagination: Dreaming, Fabricating, and African- Based Spirituality

In an essay centring around South Africa, Goodison writes that one of the great gifts the writers and thinkers of the continent of Africa, and of the African diaspora, have given the world is "a way of being entirely at home with the unempirical gifts of prophecy" (*Redemption* 33). This is specifically related to Nelson Mandela saying that South Africa would be free in his lifetime and people's subsequent disbelief, including Goodison's own, that this would happen. In *From Harvey River,* Goodison imagines and describes similar prophesying by her African-Jamaican ancestors, alongside other forms of spirituality passed down specifically by her

maternal great-grandmother. This forms part of the spiritual dimension of the memoir strongly present in the prologue and epilogue but also present throughout the text as a whole, and exemplary of what can be considered non-Western, or subaltern,[14] forms of knowing often marginalized by Western intellectuals. These include myth and folklore, which Goodison employs extensively.

As Maureen Warner Lewis states in a 2008 review, "*From Harvey River* is mytho-poetically framed by two dream visions" (83). In the first, contained in the prologue, Goodison describes "dreaming" her mother, and asking her questions following her death. We learn at the end of the memoir that Doris Harvey died aged eighty-five and, in the acknowledgements, that Goodison began the process of writing thereafter, taking twelve years to complete the book. Goodison writes in the prologue of a particularly vivid "visitation" in which she visited her mother in her "celestial workroom," where she sewed fine garments for angels:

> After my mother's death I began to "dream" her, as Jamaicans say, and in those dreams I continued to ask her questions about her life before and after she came to Kingston. And then there was this one very vivid visitation when I dreamt that I went to see her in her new residence, a really palatial and splendid sewing room with high stained-glass windows, where she was now in charge of sewing gorgeous garments for top-ranking angels. She said they were paying her a lot for her sewing in this place, and that all her friends came to talk angelic big-woman business with her there as she sewed. She said she could not tell me more as she did not want me to stay with her too long, because the

[14] Subaltern implies marginalization or oppression by the dominant culture, especially in a colonial context. In reference to the concept of subaltern I have drawn from Anzaldúa, Gloria. "How to Tame a Wild Tongue." sausd.us/cms/lib/CA01000471/Centricity/Domain/457/Anzaldua-Wild-Tongue.pdf.

> living should not mix-up too much with the dead. But as I was leaving the celestial work-room she handed me a book. This is that book. (*From Harvey River* 2)

The above esoteric passage locates the story of *From Harvey River* symbolically, as an offering to Goodison by her mother. While on the one hand it is Doris's book because it is about her, Goodison also reveals in an interview that, had her mother lived at another time, she believes she would have become a writer: "She is the person who encouraged my older sister to be a journalist, and I believe if she had lived at another time, she would have become a writer" ("The Muse of Memory").

While Goodison does not theorize about the Jamaican concept of "visitations" or "dreaming," she traces it in her own family to her maternal great-grandmother, Leanna Sinclair, who was a "Guinea woman," a descendant of slaves from west Africa. It was passed down to her mother Doris and through to her. She relates various stories of Doris's experiences, underlining their impact by stating that, "for the rest of her life my mother lived by these visitations" (*From Harvey River* 203). Goodison recounts that, in one influential visitation, during her early struggles to settle into urban life in Kingston, Doris saw Leanna riding a mule and joined her on the mule's back to ride through the Jamaican countryside, returning to the courtyard where Doris had been mistreated by her neighbours. According to Goodison, "Doris always said that it was after her grandmother Leanna came and made space for her on the firewall that the women in the yard all started to befriend her" (*From Harvey River* 205). Through this story of an ancestral dream/visitation Goodison conveys the positive influence of Leanna upon Doris. Goodison also relates the story of how Leanna, who had two children with her Irish partner (they did not marry), met her true love, a man she became involved with later, through visions she had prior to meeting him:

> Leanna had started to see the man who would become the love of her life just about the time she entered puberty, and in her visions he was always walking towards her. Sometimes she would not see him for months and then she would be doing her domestic work up at the Irish pen keeper's house, polishing a mahogany table, and she would see an image of a young man, not too tall, but with strong legs and big hands, appear up through the wood grain of the table. For years she saw his image. (*From Harvey River* 45)

This man, John Bogle, who, Goodison recounts, would become her grandmother's husband, had a family connection to a defining event in Jamaican history, the Morant Bay Uprising. Goodison's inclusion of her great-grandmother's story is one of many examples of her connecting her family's history with the broader history of Jamaica as a whole. John Bogle's relative, Paul Bogle, had been hanged following what Goodison quotes school history books calling the "Morant Bay Rebellion" and what she calls the "Morant Bay Uprising". During this brutal massacre, more than six hundred ex-slaves were executed, and as many flogged in response to an uprising against slave owners during which twenty-one men, mostly white, were killed.[15] While the love story surrounding Leanna Sinclair is constructed in Goodison's imagination, it is interwoven with historical events. Leanna's story, which is largely presented through a metaphysical lens, is one of many examples of the fictional or fabricated content of the memoir. As Goodison states, "We have to take what is lost and give it presence through the imagination" ("Recovering the Lost").

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[15] As a person who is white, I cannot be indifferent to reading that more than six hundred black slaves were executed by white slave owners; this ties back to my reference to Felski and her statement that as readers we are emotionally affected and thus involved in the texts we read.

Goodison further makes present that which has been lost or "covered up" in her grandmother's culture in the poem, "Guinea Woman." Here she writes about the covering up of her grandmother's name, the control of her movements and language, and the erasure of her presence through patriarchal and racist practices. Naming, as I have explained, is significant in *From Harvey River* given its relationship to power. In replacing the word "rebellion" with "uprising,[16]" Goodison reclaims power through language, an act that underpins the process of redemption she advocates:

> The first Mulatta
> taken into backra's household
> and covered with his name.
> They forbade great grandmother's
> guinea woman presence
> they washed away her scent of
> cinnamon and escallions
> controlled the child's antelope walk
> and called her uprisings rebellions.
> But, great grandmother
> I see your features blood dark
> appearing
> in the children of each new
> breeding
> the high yellow brown

[16]Sarah Jilani explains: "Language is never ahistorical or apolitical, but it carries an especial charge in post-colonial contexts. Educational, administrative and religious institutions had conducted life in the colonies in the language of the colonizers" (Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart 60 Years on and the Power of Africa's Universal English." *Quartz Africa*, 30 Nov. 2018, qz.com/africa/1480548/chinua-achebes-things-fall-apart-at-60-and-african-english/).

is darkening down.

Listen, children

it's great grandmother's turn. ("Guinea Woman")

Goodison's evocation of her great-grandmother in this poem and in the memoir is a making present of a way of being in the world that includes a spiritual dimension, originating from Africa, and which is non-empirical. As previously stated, this dimension is especially present in the prologue and epilogue, along with this lineage being traced back to a "Guinea Woman." In the epilogue, Goodison writes as though from her own tomb, imagining an afterlife. From this space she remembers her birth and describes her birthplace from a local perspective radiating outwards to the broader context of her present life and the moment from which she is writing, purportedly in Hanover, Germany. The radiating form is a circular one – a return to origins and then a resurfacing to the present – and the imagined tomb she is writing from is underwater. Indeed, she writes as though from beneath Harvey River itself and this writing takes place at night during a dream:

> I'm alert too, under this dark water, watching out for the pincers of crabs that can bite. Under this river there are shocking eels, quick and slippery, and there are secrets hidden in the holes where they coil. The don't care girl is still dancing there under the river. There are lost pearls and hopeless cases and the bones of runaway Africans down there as well as wedges of iron-hard brown soap which the women of Harvey River used to wash acres of clothes in this same river. As long as I swim in it, I will be born to safety. And so I swim until morning comes and reveals that I'm sleeping in a small baroque hotel room, with the heavy velvet curtain drawn, after giving a poetry reading in Hanover, Germany, and immersing myself in the waters of the river named for the Harveys calmed my night fears. (*From Harvey River* 277)

As I have elucidated, *From Harvey River's* prologue and epilogue have an ethereal/metaphysical dimension – as though transmitted in part from an otherworldly, disembodied state of Doris Harvey's afterlife but also, in the epilogue, Goodison's own night-time dreaming. Furthermore, referring back to the words of Maureen Warner Lewis, they have a poetic–mythological quality in that they are rich in description related to both the celestial, in the case of the prologue, and treasure-filled depths, in the case of the epilogue. The treasure-filled depths are also associated with a state of "hell" in that Goodison describes waking in the middle of the night in a state of panic. This panic is not related to dreaming but to not knowing where she is – to disorientation. She describes the hotel room in Germany as tomb-like. It is here that Goodison's writing is at its most fictional and imaginary, where she extends herself beyond conventional reality and explores other dimensions of her own and her mother's "world."

Section IV: Language and Stories

Goodison gives great importance to storytelling and to the language through which stories are told, making present in her writing not only the English of her family background, culture, and education but also Jamaican patois or Creole. As the Caribbean scholar Velma Pollard has said: "[T]he rendering of… complex voices in a single statement by the deft manipulation of lexicon and syntax of the different codes is, I believe, Goodison's major contribution to Caribbean literature" (qtd. in Goodison, "About Lorna Goodison").

Andrea Stuart similarly refers to the range of voices in *From Harvey River* describing Jamaican Creole, an English-based Creole with West African influences, as a "bouillabaisse" that expresses "[t]he interiority of Jamaican life in all its vibrancy and warmth and pathos" (Stuart "The Dead Yard"). Goodison conveys this through reconstructed examples from her

grandparents' speech and that of others from the community of Harvey River, as well as quoting from Jamaican folk songs and proverbs. In Part III we are also presented with the Creole spoken in the Kingston neighbourhood to which Doris Harvey and her family moved in 1940. This language can be challenging for a reader outside of this local environment to decipher, as when neighbours are quoted as saying: "Scornful dog nyam dutty pudding" and "High seat kill Miss Thomas' puss" (*From Harvey River* 169). However, this challenging aspect of the dialect is rare. Usually, the use of Creole simply serves to create a sense of reality and authenticity: of immersion in a time and place.

In *Redemption Ground*, Goodison credits the Caribbean writer Derek Walcott, a personal friend and mentor, for encouragement in using patois or Creole. She writes that, because his poems allude to people and landscapes with which she is familiar, she realized that "patois could be used for something other than humour" (Goodison, "The Muse of Memory" 23). Her employment of a range of English lexicons can also be seen as a result of her mother's direct influence, as Goodison reveals her to be a rich source of language stemming from her family background:

> She had a way with words, words being one of the things she learned from her village lawyer father, David, from the vituperative Irish eloquence of her maternal grandfather, George O'Brian Wilson, and from the West African Guinea woman griot-style of her grandmother Leanna. (*From Harvey River* 61)

This statement also gives credence to Goodison's statement quoted earlier that she believes that, had her mother been born at a different time, she would have been a writer.

There is a stark contrast between David's classical English, Biblical quotes and references, and George Wilson's colloquial Irish and swearing at people to "[s]hut your focking

mout and just do what I tell you" (*From Harvey River* 44). George Wilson, a shoemaker, is also the source of one of the memoir's most amusing stories involving a misunderstanding around "oiling" boots, which, because of his Irish brogue, sounded like "boiling" boots to one woman's West African ears, and which she proceeded to do. Stories surrounding this grandfather are also significant in regard to race. For example, Goodison writes that he loved his black daughter more than he loved anyone, and that he favoured her over the children he had with a woman who was white: "George Wilson grew to love the child Margaret more than he ever loved any human being in his life" (*From Harvey River* 41). At the same time, she relates that he referred to her as his "little neega" when she was a child and that she replied by affirming: "If me a neega, you a neega too, for you is my father, you a white neega" (*From Harvey River* 41).

Following this, Goodison goes on to explain the particular circumstances of her Irish great-grandfather who married into a Creole family he was at odds with culturally and who he ultimately left in his old age to live with his black daughter, Margaret, and her husband:

> He was much more in tune with the ways of the poor black Jamaican people than he was with the imitation English manners of the Creole class into which he had married. He had little or none of the graces of the well-to-do. As the head of his new family, he was expected to behave like a member of the colonial ruling class, having to sit at a table at night with the local gentry of Lucea, who talked about the "lazy, dirty Negroes" in much the same way that they spoke about the "lazy, dirty Irish" in England. (*From Harvey River* 42)

As previously stated, Goodison's writing is deeply relational, sewing up, to use Warner Lewis's term, Irish, English, African and Creole culture, her use of language creating a linguistic fabric of the layers of multiple heritages. Her storytelling exemplifies this, as it does the

emotional; the relational and emotional are intertwined. As the writer Leslie Van Gelder states, "Our emotional experiences are best reached through the sharing of stories… stories function like thistle seeds, linking experience to place and one experience to another ... they are binding material, what the nature writer Terry Tempest Williams calls 'the connective tissue' serving as the umbilical cord between past, present and future" (12-13). In her autobiography *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?* the novelist Jeanette Winterson similarly expresses the connective power of stories, but specifically in spatial terms: "The intensity of a story … releases into a bigger space than the one it occupied in time and place. The story crosses the threshold from my world into yours" (61).

On the one hand, the emotional affect present in *From Harvey River* is that of Goodison's mother, Doris, conveyed through the remembering and reconstruction of her subjective states; on the other, it is Goodison's itself, including that which is a part of her loving gaze, as outlined in the previous section. Ultimately, her storytelling, and the emotions bound with it, concerns attachment, belonging, and home – home as mother and home as place (as localized as the body but also as far reaching as community and the wider world), along with home associated with language. As such it is bound up also with questions of selfhood and identity. In regard to these broad, but also delicate and intricate, connections of which emotion is a vital element, I take as an important reference Martha Nussbaum's stance that the emotions are "forms of evaluative thought" (11), suffused with intelligence and discernment. The philosopher Alison Jaggar likewise underscores the ways in which emotion is involved in evaluation and observation, contrary to the western epistemological tradition obscuring its vital role in the construction of

knowledge (151-176).[17] Concurrently, Sara Ahmed's conceptualization of emotions as "sticky" in being a cohesive and ubiquitous connective element, underlines their prevalence. Challenging assumptions that emotions are a private matter, Ahmed writes, "[E]motions are not simply 'within' or 'without' but create the very effect of the surfaces or boundaries of bodies and worlds" ("Cultural Politics" 117).

Doris's subjective, emotional life as a girl and young woman is first introduced through the telling of two stories, both involving mistreatment by young men that displayed a lack of respect for her personal space and body. These stories exemplify Ahmed's assertion that emotions are not merely a private matter but implicate boundaries of bodies and worlds. The first involves a young man spying on Doris while she was swimming alone in the river, and Doris subsequently being overheard cursing loudly at him, causing him to flee. Though chastised by neighbours and her oldest sister for her use of bad language, she was also praised by her parents, proud of her for defending her virtue. Virtue, in its various forms, is one of Doris's defining traits as exemplified throughout the memoir. As Goodison explains about the Harvey girls: "They were charged to remain virgins till they married, and to defend their virtues to the death. A charge which they all took very, very seriously" (*From Harvey River* 57).

This first story highlights Doris's virtuous nature, dating back to girlhood and also instilled in her by her parents. It also presents her as a victim of a young man, a sexual predator, or a potential one. It can furthermore be considered from the perspective of how Goodison as daughter views her mother; this is Goodison's book after all (or her mother's, as her statement "she handed me a book. This is that book." as the prologue implies). The second story, which

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[17] See Jaggar, Alison. "Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology." *Inquiry*, vol. 32, no. 2, 1989, pp. 151-176 in which she argues that by construing emotion as epistemologically subversive, the Western tradition has tended to obscure its vital role in the construction of knowledge.

provides greater insight into Doris's emotional life, concerns a boy at school cutting off her braid. Goodison explains that Doris was so devastated she refused to go to school for weeks, bursting into tears at any mention of what had happened. Her strong emotions are also presented in relation to events surrounding her marriage: crying when her engagement ring disappears; sobbing after undergoing gruelling pre-nuptial etiquette training from her sister Cleodine, a graduate of a finishing school; weeping during the wedding ceremony. This latter is presented as an act expected of a bride, not related to her husband himself who was considered a good catch: "The worst thing a decent young woman could do was look happy on her wedding day, for surely that meant she was looking forward to the sensual pleasures of the honeymoon bed and only a bad woman would enjoy that" (*From Harvey River* 127).

Doris's emotional states, transmitted through these stories of her girlhood and young womanhood, all reveal vulnerability. Relating this to Rita Felski's honouring of the reader's implication and involvement in the works we read, referenced earlier in this chapter, vulnerability can be considered through what Felski names strands of identification: alignment, allegiance, recognition and empathy (*Uses* 94). Just as Goodison relates Doris to her family and Jamaican world, so too does she create a relationship between the reader (and specifically myself as reader) and Doris on an emotional level. This relationship can be seen as representative of what Goodison refers to as "womanly poetics," a term she uses to explain that "a lot of what I do is so related to being a woman and a mother" (Goodison qtd. in Campbell 31). This specifically female content, evidenced in the aforementioned stories, pertains to the female body and questions of respect/disrespect surrounding an appropriating male gaze (the spying story) and appropriating male behaviour (the braid story). Restrictions upon the female body also feature in

the story of the engagement ring, wedding preparations and the wedding itself, including restrictions as to which feelings to feign or to hide.

"Womanly poetics" and their relationship to Goodison's morality can be further considered through the concept of ethics of care, a concept whereby, according to the academic philosopher Carol Gilligan, "morality is grounded in a psychological logic, reflecting the ways in which we experience ourselves in relation to others… the origins of morality lie in human relationships as they give rise to concerns about injustice and carelessness." Gilligan defines the ethics of care as a "different voice," an ethic "grounded in voice and relationships, in the importance of everyone having a voice, being listened to carefully (in their own right and on their own terms) and heard with respect. An ethics of care directs our attention to the need for responsiveness in relationships (paying attention, listening, responding) and to the costs of losing connection with oneself or with others. Its logic is inductive, contextual, psychological, rather than deductive or mathematical" (Gilligan). Goodison's stories of her mother give expression to experiences of injustices that, along with the linguistic expression of Creole or patois, were hitherto largely unvoiced, thus exemplifying Gilligan's ethics of care.

Following the first story of swimming in the river, Goodison goes on to describe her mother as a girl in sweeping terms: "She was an easy-going child who from an early age displayed signs of a quick intelligence and a love of hyperbole" (*From Harvey River* 61). Doris's love of hyperbole raises questions about stories passed down and possible elements of exaggeration. In light of this, when Goodison writes towards the end of the memoir, "[m]y mother… loved nothing better than a good story" (*From Harvey River* 255), it begs the question of the level of hyperbole in these stories and, thus, their fictional aspect.

Doris's tendency to hyperbole and her love of storytelling are among the various layers of constructedness present in the memoir. Other layers are those of Goodison's own relationship with, and access to, the past, and involve her memory and imagination. In *Redemption Ground* she explains: "If I wanted to write about my people I had to learn to listen carefully to family stories then imagine, and constantly reimagine these stories" (73). The stories of Doris's early life, and of her parents' lives, would have been passed down to Goodison by her older relatives and her older siblings. Goodison was born in Kingston, and it is only the third part of the memoir, which is devoted to the Kingston period of Doris' life, that Goodison experienced first-hand.

Part III is especially replete with storytelling, arguably because this was the period when Goodison was most in her mother's presence. During a substantial part of this period, Doris worked from home as a seamstress and Goodison was frequently an onlooker in her office.[18] Prior to this, during the "hardscrabble" times upon arriving in Kingston and suffering economic hardship, Doris worked for a while in an asylum. Goodison tells the story of her befriending a girl there who had been sexually abused and having her moved to Harvey River where the girl lived for some years, thus connecting the girl to the healthier environment of a rural community. While Goodison does not raise the subject, it is pertinent to consider her care for the girl in light of her own mistreatment by young men and the empathy for victims of abuse this may have provoked.

This is one of numerous stories about the very different people Doris came into contact with in Kingston, "the really strange people who passed right outside the front window of her

[18] In *How Our Lives Become Stories*, Paul John Eakin evidences the impact overhearing adult stories has upon children, quoting from the historian Carolyn Steedman's book *Strange Dislocation:Childhood and the Idea of Human Identity 1790-1930* where she explains, in relation to children from working class families overhearing adult women converse: "People talking to each other, and the effects that this talking had, was the most important and powerful event that the children ever witnessed" (Eakin, *How Our Lives* 120)

house in Kingston" (Goodison, *From Harvey River* 189). Stories include those of a shopkeeper who stole money from his customers and whose store eventually burned to the ground and, later, an extensive story of a Rastafarian Doris befriended. The majority of these stories highlight, in one way or another, Doris's virtuous character, earlier in the memoir described as her "legendary good nature and kindness" (*From Harvey River* 136). It is here too that we learn about the children in the neighbourhood being drawn to Doris and giving her the nickname "Mama Goodie": "She fed them when their mothers, who did not like her, were not around. She called them sweet names like 'precious' or nonsense names like 'my little noonoonkum' and encouraged them to go to school" (*From Harvey River* 187).

Doris's success amidst adversity in Kingston is the backbone of what Goodison relates in the prologue as the story of rising up to a new life. Emplacement in a new life can be seen as resolution and, to use specifically one of Goodison's own terms, redemption, following the experience of displacement. This is a subject I address in detail in Chapter VI, "Displacement in the Three Memoirs." However, given its importance in *From Harvey River*, I will introduce it here as a fundamental, constitutional element of the memoir. Displacement-related stories form one of the overarching threads of Goodison's narration and they are also an area of storytelling where emotional affect is especially present.

Doris Harvey's displacement from her home of origin is introduced in the prologue as an experience of severing: "Throughout her life my mother lived in two places at once: Kingston, Jamaica, where she raised a family of nine children, and Harvey River, in the parish of Hanover, where she was born and grew up" (Goodison, *From Harvey River* 1). A duality of existence, that of the place lived in in the past transposed over the place lived in during the present, is characterized as Doris Harvey's defining experience upon moving to urban Kingston from rural

Harvey River. It has parallels with Hoffman's articulation of severing, quoted in Chapter I, in regard to its effects upon memory, whereby dislocation affects one's awareness of time, such that it no longer appears to unfold in a continuous, linear way (Hoffman, *Time* 4). This experience of duality is a facet of exile coincident with that articulated by Edward Said: "The exile exists in a median state, neither completely at one with the new setting, nor fully disencumbered with the old" ("Intellectual Exile" 3-25). While Said has written of those exiled from their countries of origin and not domestic *regions*, the experience he describes also applies to a range of exilic states, such as Doris's.

Doris Harvey's first, though from Goodison's perspective, relatively minor, experience of displacement, takes place upon marriage when she leaves Harvey River for the community of Malvern, where her husband, Marcus, was born and raised. Though only a few hours drive away, this experience is presented as being difficult partly because of initially living with Marcus's grandmother, Dorcas, a woman with whom Doris had a highly strained relationship. Through her struggles, both with Dorcas and having to adapt to her life in a different community, Doris is portrayed as experiencing melancholy and homesickness. Goodison presents her melancholy through dialogue between Marcus and Malvern residents, showing a mix of concern and gossip, some of it indicating intolerance of outsiders and people from racially-mixed backgrounds. Local people are quoted:

> "What kind of mixed marriage is that anyway? Marcus should never have married outside this parish. I hear the wedding have all kind of people mix up, whole heap of big shots siddown beside poor nayga." This was true, thanks to David Harvey's egalitarian thinking, but some snobbish St. Elizabeth people had not liked it. (*From Harvey River* 135)

The story of Doris's homesickness places her, therefore, within an unwelcoming community where there are prejudices.

While this initial experience of displacement in Malvern is presented as being challenging for reasons of homesickness, loneliness, marginalization, and racism – an array of disempowered states and conditions – it is also an experience that is eventually overcome and that is not as deeply difficult as the later move to Kingston, which is a much more hostile environment. Goodison credits the arrival of her mother's youngest sister, Ann, to join the Malvern household, with curing her homesickness. In fact, Goodison writes that Doris's life in Malvern improved over time to the extent that, in the future, she would look back upon her years there as one of the best periods of her life. While Harvey River was idyllic as a place in nature, Malvern was idyllic insofar as it was the place where Doris established her own family home: it was where her first four children were born and where she could put her domestic skills, taught to her largely by her eldest sister Cleodine, into practice. Summing up the years Doris spent in Malvern, Goodison writes, "In those days we had the very best, my mother always said. And then war broke out in 1939" (*From Harvey River* 119).

The narrative of adversity and struggle, over which there is an eventual rising up, begins with the international context of WWII. Goodison explains that, during the Malvern period, her father worked as a chauffeur for an English manager of a branch of Barclays Bank and then went on to have his own, initially successful, garage. His income provided for a comfortable life, including plenty of domestic help when he and Doris were raising their first four children. However, when WWII war broke out the family's fortunes changed when car parts and gasoline became increasingly scarce and many of Marcus's customers were forced to convert their cars into horse-drawn carriages by removing their engines. Marcus had to close his business and it

was this that precipitated the family's move to Kingston where they experienced hardship of a nature Doris was not prepared for.

Goodison describes the many ways in which life in Kingston was hard for Doris. While she had lived in a detached house in Malvern, in Kingston her family of six moved into a three-room tenement apartment. There was friction with her neighbours and with one neighbour in particular who took a virulent dislike to her and mocked her for appearing superior. Goodison quotes the demeaning language used by this neighbour and others: "She think she better than we…. Then if she better than we, why she and her husband and pickney have fi live here so? and 'How art the mighty fallen, how art the mighty fallen'" (*From Harvey River* 168).

It is at this time of confronting and adapting to a hostile environment that Doris is presented as having a clear line drawn between her former life and her new one, that the severing alluded to in the prologue takes place:

> Little by little she put away the fabulous Doris. The one who was the clothes horse, the one with the beautiful hands, who along with her handsome husband and lovely children was going to run a fine guest house situated in salubrious Malvern …She began to live in two places: as Mama Goodie the mammal in hard-life Kingston, and as the daughter of David and Margaret Harvey in her memories of Harvey River. (*From Harvey River* 188)

Amidst the hardscrabble life of Kingston, Harvey River remained the reference for a healthier, better way of life, a kind of lost idyll or Eden. To repeat a key statement Goodison makes in the prologue: "Over the years Harvey River came to function as an enchanted place in my imagination, an Eden from which we fell to the city of Kingston" (*From Harvey River* 1). This Garden of Eden aspect is especially vivid in Goodison's recounting of the importance of the arrival of fruit baskets from the countryside to the people of Kingston:

> All over the city of Kingston, happiness and contentment would be generated in cramped tenements with the arrival of these baskets sent by friends and relatives in the country. Families would partake of generous, oily-mouthed feasts, and children would be told stories about life in the villages where this food came from. Normally ill-tempered mothers, nerves frayed from hard life in town, fathers burdened by hard work or lack of employment, would become carefree children again as they enjoyed the sense of ease and plenty generated by the largesse of those back home in the country. (*From Harvey River* 184)

Goodison's narrative of her mother's experience of displacement and the displacement related stories of Malvern and Kingston, like the childhood stories of Part II, are rich in emotional affect. This again raises the questions posed by Sara Ahmed and others around the stickiness of emotions as cohesive elements. It also raises the questions posed by Rita Felski around how writers and readers engage with emotional content. As she writes, "[A] text is not a sequence of signs to be decoded but a structure that we come to inhabit" (*Hooked* 77), going on to describe the "messy co-implication of text and reader" (*Hooked* 77). With what does a reader identify, or not? As Felski goes on to point out, identifying is not to be identical but to aspectual, based on some form of similarity. And yet, as she writes, identification "is often held to be slightly shameful – something that other people do (the naive, the unschooled, the sentimental)" (*Hooked* 79). As such, as she explains, there can be discomfort in writing about affective attachment: "Such language brings academic discourse perilously close to adolescent infatuation or amateurish enthusiasm, to a treacly and treacherous cult of feeling" (*Hooked* 30). This is a subject I will take up in Chapter IV in my examination of *Lost in Translation,* a memoir that confronts emotional affect directly and analytically.

It is in Part III that Goodison inserts herself and her own experience of moving as a textual presence, and in a way that does not exclude emotional affect. In this regard, the latter section of the memoir takes on autobiographical characteristics, a shift from the largely biographical tone of the memoir. In contrast to Doris Harvey, who left Harvey River for Kingston, via several years in the community of Malvern, Goodison was born in Kingston and spent childhood summers in Harvey River. As she reveals in *Redemption Ground,* her experience of having a new place in her life was one of *gain.* She considers her life broadened, in contrast to her mother's experience of loss: "It was only after I began to visit my mother's birthplace, where I would bathe in the river named for her family and roam freely through the bush enjoying the pastoral delights of rural Jamaica with my cousins, that I began to think of myself as being more than a Kingstonian" (Goodison, *Redemption* 43).

Goodison does not write about her later experience of displacement as a Jamaican living abroad – as explained previously, she is mainly a peripheral presence. She does, however, tell the story of two of her mother's sisters who migrated to Montreal as young women in the 1930's (whom she later credits in an essay with giving her a sense of what was beyond the horizon of Jamaica). They are presented as being stoical and positive, preferring to transmit their enjoyment of the beauty of snow in letters home rather than complain about the challenges of doing domestic work. This chimes with Goodison's explanation in an interview of a Jamaican concept of expatriate life that is life-affirming and creative, as opposed to one of loss. She calls the Jamaican concept "making life" and explains that "we never call ourselves exiles… we see our sojourns as "making life" (Goodison, "Louise Welsh")[19].

[19] The Jamaican poet and scholar Edward Baugh,writing about Goodison's poem "Making Life" explains that the "Jamaican expression, "making life,"constitutes and affirms a variation on a standard global phenomenon. By acting out the transformation of "exile" into "making life," the poem represents the creative capacity of a people, their

Goodison's own creative response to displacement is evident in the way she has drawn from her experience of Harvey River and credits it for shaping her imagination. When she introduces her first experience of Harvey River as a child, she says that it "was to shape my imagination for the rest of my life" (Goodison, *From Harvey River* 209). In the prologue she also writes that, "[o]ver the years Harvey River came to function as an enchanted place in my imagination," further relating it, as stated previously, to the Garden of Eden (*From Harvey River* 1).

In relating her initial experience of being taken to Harvey River as a seven year old, Goodison provides evocative descriptions of her newfound relationship with nature and its transformative influence on her life. She includes memories of the fourteen-hour drive from Kingston, spending a night en route at a cousin's, and her first impression of the garden in front of the family home. She describes how she found the light from the kerosene lamps sinister in comparison with the electric lights of Kingston and how she cried at night. In contrast, her experience of being with her cousins and swimming in the Harvey River the next morning was joyful. She tells of how she ran wild that summer, roaming the countryside, knocking fruit from the trees, and eating picnic lunches with her cousins among the tombstones of her ancestors.

While her experience is not one of agency – she did not choose to go to Harvey River, but was taken there as a child – and while she initially rejects the experience – she becomes anxious because of the lack of electric lights at night and cries wanting to go home – her mood changes the next morning. Her aunt, with whom she was staying for the summer, lets her give vent to her emotions:

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capacity for "making" something of circumstance, necessity, and lack, as in another Jamaican saying, "turn you hand make fashion." (Baugh, "Making Life")

> She let me weep for what seemed like a long time. Even when I drooled all over the front of my good pin-and-white dress, she said nothing to me. We just sat there at the dining room table – she, who looked like a woman in a Gauguin painting, and I, a younger version of her, sat in the gathering darkness with the Home Sweet Home lamp casting a waterwash yellow light between us, arranged in a composition that could have been painted on velvet and titled "Crying for the light." She said nothing, she just let me cry. When I sobbed myself into silence, she lifted me up and put me into bed with my cousin Joan, where I fell asleep at once. (Goodison, *From Harvey River* 211)

While Goodison does not reflect upon or analyze the emotions she presents, this aesthetically based scene in which she and her aunt are compared with figures in a Gauguin painting casts a positive light. Furthermore, it is an example of the loving gaze aspect of her writing to which I have referred in which beauty is seen in ordinary domestic life and depicted aesthetically through carefully crafted language.

From Harvey River concludes, in the epilogue, with Goodison displaced, waking up in a hotel room in Hanover, Germany, in a state of fear: "I have no idea where I am. I have woken in pure panic in a place solid with darkness which smells like the rusting interior of a brass trunk" (277). It is in memories of Harvey River that she finds solace and transforms her displacement into emplacement. Realignment takes place through a process of faith and mental re-grounding in identity and place of origin. She begins by remembering, saying, and chanting the Lord's Prayer, taught to her by her mother. Then, in her final words, Goodison provides an image of her African origins at the base of the river connected to her swimming, stating, "[I]mmersing myself in the waters of the river named for the Harveys calmed my night fears" (*From Harvey River* 277). Further underlining the importance of solace in her life, Goodison picks up the thread more

than a decade later in an interview, employing a synonym: “I’m very drawn to consoling” (Goodison, “Poetry Unbound”).

Chapter III: "I wanted to touch them into words": Michael Ondatje's *Running in the Family*

Man is but a network of relationships and these alone matter to him.

–Antoine Saint-Exupéry, *A Flight to Arras*

Introduction

Michael Ondaatje's *Running in the Family* is a formally complex, genre-bending memoir that centres around his family of origin in Ceylon, present day Sri Lanka. Its form is multi-faceted and fragmented without a linear chronology and in this respect is strikingly different from *From Harvey River* with its three distinct parts presented sequentially. *Lost in Translation* also adheres to a similarly neat, three-part, linear trajectory. *Running in the Family,* not giving such consideration to order – and, in fact, allowing textually for degrees of chaos – sets up a different relationship with the reader that necessitates engaging with what is more collage or pastiche than conventional narrative (and, as such, an aesthetic positioning). The reader is called upon to actively decipher a diversity of content that is enigmatic and at times elusive, including that which is a deliberate blurring of fact and fiction. For this reason, the reader is to some extent a detective or analyst in a quest to understand. Furthermore, as underlined by Douglas Barbour, "*Running in the Family* simultaneously allows and denies conventional readings, drawing us into its apparent representation even as it reveals the deeply fictional agenda of all writing" (136).

Following a presentation of Ondaatje's life and work, including an overview of *Running in the Family*, I will examine what I consider to be at its core or heart: a quest narrative – that of Ondaatje and, as a matter of consequence, of the reader. It is a narrative that while being decidedly, and consciously, non-linear, does possess linear elements. My introductory

presentation and my examination of the narrative of quest that follows it both deal with matters of identity. The fact that identity is a core subject in Ondaatje's memoir, and the multi-faceted ways in which it is explored, are key factors in this being the most postmodern of the memoirs of my study. Its postmodern nature is a subject I will explore in Section II, which is devoted to questions of genre, a subject essential to a presentation of *Running In The Family* given its unconventional form. This will be followed by a section on sensorial rootedness in place of origin and a final section on storytelling and myth, both of which have thematic parallels with *From Harvey River.*

Michael Ondaatje was born in Colombo, Sri Lanka, in 1943, during the latter period of WWII. Like Goodison, he was raised in a country that was a part of the British Empire during his childhood, underwent decolonization and is now a member of the British Commonwealth. While Jamaica gained independence in 1962, when Goodison was sixteen, Ceylon was first a colony, and then a dominion, of Britain, becoming Sri Lanka in 1972. At that time, Ondaatje was almost thirty and living in Canada, having left what was still Ceylon when he was eleven, and having completed his secondary school education in London.

Ondaatje's national and cultural past is not a subject he addresses directly; *Running in the Family* is almost exclusively about his Ceylonese family and ancestry. His references to the British Empire are few and drawn with broad brush strokes, as when he states that his parents' generation was the "last era of a colonial Ceylon" (Ondaatje, *Running* 169). That he does not overtly acknowledge his ancestors' complicity in the colonization of Ceylon, or address political issues, has led to critiques of his ethics. Ihab Hassan writes that Ondaatje's autobiography "simulates the past in the present. It feigns recollection. But it cannot escape the pressures of its moment, the prejudices of its author. Why not admit, then, these pressures, prejudices, from the

start?” (282). Arun Mukherjee has likewise criticized Ondaatje for his lack of perspective in ignoring questions of empire (49-67). Ondaatje furthermore largely excludes details from his personal life; be it his childhood in Ceylon, his adolescence in England, or his adult life in Canada. This conscious exclusion, or selective focus, is an authorial and aesthetic stance that also typifies Ondaatje’s characteristic opacity and elusiveness. These enigmatic traits, and the curiosity they engender, have, I believe, contributed to him being one of the most studied Canadian writers in contemporary history. They are also coincident with T.S. Eliot’s cultivation of the idea of impersonality by which Ondaatje may have been influenced, either directly or through theories such as those of New Criticism.[20] Eliot’s idea, conveyed by his often quoted statement, “[p]oetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality but an escape of personality” (Eliot 42) can be understood as the adoption of a particular stance towards the personal. As Hunt and Sampson explain, “it involves relinquishing, even if only temporarily, a deep personal connection with material and requires a kind of internal distancing, allowing a space to open up between the self and experience, so that it can develop a life of its own in the imagination and be transformed into art” (Hunt and Sampson 2). This manner of objectifying material coincides with Ondaatje’s aesthetics, reinforced by his own attestation of employing Cubism in his memoir (*Michael Ondaatje*).[21]

As in *From Harvey River, Running in the Family* contains a trope of “fall from grace or privilege,” largely related, in Ondaatje’s case, to the milieu of colonial privilege in which his

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[20] New Criticism, a formalist movement that dominated American literary criticism in the mid-20th century, emphasized close reading to discover how a work of literature functioned as a self-contained, self-referential and aesthetic object; Ondaatje, a student of literature in Canada at that time, would presumably have been exposed to New Criticism.

[21] In the penultimate paragraph of *Running in the Family* Ondaatje references the Sri Lankan poet and painter George Keyt, whose dominant style was influenced by Cubism. Ondaatje’s maternal grandmother, “Lalla,” was born Edith Keyt.

family existed. This trope is, in some respects, an indirect way of addressing the political. In *From Harvey River* the “fall” is primarily attributed to a move from the “garden” of rural Jamaica to a rougher urban life in Kingston, necessitated by the economic hardship related to WWII. There is also a significant ascendency from this fall, as explained by Goodison in the prologue. In *Running in the Family* decline and fall are more prominent and defining, and nowhere in the memoir is there the rising up to a new life that Goodison presents as an overarching story as she perceives it. In Ondaatje’s case, redemption is purely subjective and comes through understanding and a capacity for love and aestheticization rather than being a feature of the narrative itself. And while “rising” features in the final paragraph, it is presented ironically and is darkly associated with degradation and decay: “Here where some ants as small as microdots bite and feel themselves being lifted by the swelling five times as large as their own bodies. Rising on their own poison” (Ondaatje, *Running* 203).

The trope of “decline and fall” is more complex in *Running in the Family* than in *From Harvey River* in that it is related not only to the economic conditions of the decolonization period, but to human frailties and to nature’s poisons – to both the human and the non, or “other-than” human. That is to say, it is implicit as an inherent aspect of different forms of nature. Ondaatje’s focus being that of his family’s world, frailties manifest in specific behaviours caused by his father’s dipsomania or binge drinking. These are portrayed, to some extent, as arising from personality, the surrounding society with its drinking based social life – a facet of a colonial life in decline – and a wildness of nature. *Running in the Family* thus contains psychological underpinnings of a greater intensity and complexity than those detailed in *From Harvey River*, though significantly less so than in *Lost in Translation*.

While Ondaatje's memoir is about family, it is dominated by a central, patriarchal figure. However, this figure is unknown to a significant extent, given that Ondaatje spent little time with his father. Upon his parents' divorce, when he was eleven, Ondaatje moved to England to join his mother, only visiting his father during school holidays. His 2015 novel, *Cat's Table,* which features an eleven-year-old main character who travels unaccompanied from Ceylon to Southampton by ship, is loosely based on Ondaatje's own childhood journey. The novel that follows it, *Warlight,* takes place in London during the post-war period when he was growing up. While Ondaatje fictionalizes his experience in these works in a way that he does not in the memoir, he similarly detaches from personal experience in *Running in the Family*, through employing different, particularly formal, means in his playing with a diversity of genre forms and his use of different sources and voices.

Exposing his father's – and to a lesser extent his own – background of Colonial-era privilege, Ondaatje writes: "I think my father believed that he owned the railway by birthright" (*Running* 148). Ondaatje describes his paternal grandfather as having made "huge sums of money in land deals" (*Running* 55) and being "immensely wealthy" (*Running* 56). Although Philip Ondaatje had willed his land to his grandchildren, Ondaatje explains that his father would periodically sell some off and ultimately ended up with only one property, the chicken farm. The existence of a family farm has a parallel with *From Harvey River.* However, while the farm in *From Harvey River* is presented as a source of great abundance (albeit augmented financially by David Harvey's part-time work as a lawyer), the Ondaatje family's financial decline entails a demotion from the large tea estates of his early childhood to a modest farm at the time of his parents' divorce. As he relates: "They had come a long way in fourteen years from being the products of two of the best known and wealthiest families in Ceylon: my father now only owning

a chicken farm at Rock Hill, my mother working in a hotel" (*Running* 172). He describes returning to Rock Hill years later when it was "occupied" by a Sinhalese family, following the 1971 Insurgency, writing that the house that had seemed spacious to him as a child appeared small and even the garden seemed "depressed". He concludes: "Whatever 'empire' my grandfather had fought for had to all purposes disappeared" (*Running* 60).

The family's economic decline is pointedly expressed in the words of one of Ondaatje's siblings in the chapter "Dialogues":

> I remember when Daddy lost his job. Mummy was in the front seat with him and you and I were in the back. And for the whole trip he kept saying, "I'm ruined. I've ruined all of you. All of you." And he would weep. It was a terrible trip. And mum kept comforting him and saying she would never leave him, she would never leave him. Do you remember that? (*Running* 174)

This is one of the rare instances in the memoir where Ondaatje directly situates himself as a child. His mother did ultimately leave her husband and family and, like Doris Harvey, took on work out of economic necessity; first in housekeeping at a Colombo hotel, and eventually moving to London to work in hotels. These choices, and their impact upon Ondaatje – emotional and otherwise – are absent as a subject in the memoir. Ondaatje's mother herself is largely absent as a figure.

Like Goodison, Ondaatje moved to Canada as an adult, though at a younger age. He studied at Bishop's, Toronto and Queen's Universities and, as he acknowledges, it was at Bishop's University, under the instruction of his teacher Arthur Motyer, that he "discovered reading and writing. I had never thought about being a writer but (Motyer) changed my life" (Ondaatje, "The divided man"). Ondaatje began his career as a poet, publishing several

collections of poetry from the late 1960's onwards, beginning with *Dainty Monsters,* in 1967. In 1973, he published the play *Billy the Kid* and, in 1976, the novel *Coming Through Slaughter.* Both of these works stretch the boundaries of their form, providing a precedent for the genre-bending that is characteristic of *Running In The Family. Billy the Kid*, for example, while sometimes categorized as a play, is also considered a "verse novel," being a series of poems that fictionalize the life of the gangster William Bonney, also known as Billy the Kid. Ondaatje explains that he decided to write poems from Billy the Kid's point of view, then added prose. The book, to use a term frequently employed by Ondaatje to describe both himself and his work, can be construed as "mongrel," being poetry, part prose.

Running In The Family was thus undertaken in the wake of Ondaatje's experimentation with, and manipulation of, genre in the forms of these two works. This experimentation grew and developed out of a largely poetic base, one he shares with Goodison whose memoir followed many years of poetry publishing. As with Goodison, a deeply poetic sensibility informs the sensorial qualities of his writing. As he writes of his quest to engage with his ancestors, " I wanted to touch them into words" (Ondaatje, *Running* 22)[22]. Furthermore, just as Goodison published a poem about her mother, in which can be seen strands used in *From Harvey River*, so too Ondaatje published a poem "Letters and Other Worlds" about his father prior to writing the memoir. In the poem, as in the memoir, the father is repeatedly defined by his absence and unknowability, as when Ondaatje writes, "My father's body was… a town we never knew" (Ondaatje, "Letters & Other Worlds"). Indeed, Ondaatje's writing grapples with the question of how to approach the unknown, raising further questions about whether his effort to access and retrace steps towards his father is a form of mourning or healing. Such grappling typifies what

[22] In Chapter II, I quoted Yuriko Saito and Iris Murdoch in their call for the validation of the "lower senses" of smell, taste and touch; Ondaatje's words here embody this validation.

Thomas Couser has identified as a common trait of memoirs written by sons about their fathers, when he asserts:

> …it seems predominantly driven not by the desire to memorialize a beloved or admired father but by the impulse to shore up, repair, or compensate for a flawed relationship. That is, the books are best read not as static representations of fathers, whether favourable or not… but rather as attempts to claim or even fashion a relationship with a father who is somehow absent because of death, geographical distance or emotional reserve. ("Genre Matters" 135)

The absence of Ondaatje's father is characterized by all three of the factors delineated by Couser.

Ondaatje now lives in Toronto, where Goodison has also lived and taught. Their common English diaspora experience also involves being born and raised in countries not only both former British colonies, but also islands. Furthermore, these countries are ethnically heterogeneous, as are both writers themselves. Referring to his heritage, Ondaatje calls himself a "mongrel," the same word he used to describe his book *Billy the Kid:* "I am a mongrel of place. Of race. Of cultures. Of many genres" ("The divided man"). His ethnic roots are a mix of Dutch, Tamil, Burgher, English, and French and he speculates that Ondaatje was originally a Tamil name ("The divided man"). Daniel Coleman includes ethnicity as a factor in Ondaatje not directly addressing his national or cultural past, but only his family's: "Ondaatje's severance from his own national and cultural past, then, is the effect of the combined history of his elite Burgher class ancestry, his British colonial education and his family's history of divorce and emigration" (114).

Ondaatje's "owning" of the term mongrel has parallels with that of Bharati Mukerjee, also from elite Indian subcontinent ancestry and a writer who made her home in Canada, who

refers to mongrelization as "a word I celebrate" (273), adding, "I am an integrationist and, to use a deliberately ugly word, a mongrelizer" (78). This affirmation of mongrel identity has similarly been conceptualized as hybrid, a concept developed by the Jamaican born sociologist Stuart Hall who asserts that there is no unified cultural identity for diasporic people but rather a multiplicity of different cultural identities all of which should be respected. His conceptualization is highly pertinent to Ondaatje who relates to identity in a way that is fractured and fragmented and whose presentation of identity is, as Hall elaborates, "a production, which is never complete, always in process" (2).

Ondaatje has gained both national and international recognition as a writer, editor, and filmmaker. He is probably best known for his 1992 novel, *The English Patient,* successfully adapted as a film in 1996. He is the recipient of multiple literary awards such as the Governor General's award, the Giller Prize, the Booker Prize, and the Prix Médicis Étranger.

Section I: *Running in the Family* as a Quest For Identity

While *From Harvey River* is a memoir of a mother and her people, *Running in the Family* has a more dispersed focus, with less emphasis on a single individual. However, amidst its myriad characters, Michael Ondaatje's father, Mervyn Ondaatje, is its most central, pivotal, figure. Furthermore, it is through an exploration of his father's life that Michael Ondaatje endeavours to grapple with, and come to a better understanding of, himself and his own identity. This quest is at the core of his memoir, as Ondaatje himself explains when he writes that it "centres around my quest towards grasping a better understanding of myself through my father" (*Michael Ondaatje*).

In this section, I will use as a template Arthur Frank's categorization of narratives in *The Wounded Storyteller.* While Frank writes specifically about illness, a context outside the realm of this thesis, I consider his classifications relevant in that Ondaatje's quest, which takes place via the act of writing, involves an inconclusive form of healing. Frank identifies three narrative types: restitution, chaos and quest.[23] In the restitution narrative, illness is a transitory state followed by a restoration of health in the form of a cure or healing; in the chaos narrative, the restitution narrative's opposite, there is an absence of narrative order, retrospectivity and control; in the quest narrative suffering and loss are confronted, and often contextualized as part of a journey, with an acceptance that a full return to health is not always possible. It is my perspective that Ondaatje's is a quest narrative constructed out of a chaos narrative associated with his father; it is a means of resolving, or attempting to heal, his relationship with him, and, ultimately, his relationship with himself. Indeed, he textually confronts or "meets" his father through this process, an event that has its climax towards the end of the memoir in the form of a fictionalized encounter. In this regard there is an achievement of healing, while partial. It is pertinent that this is different from the redemption of *From Harvey River* in that it is based in the psychological rather than in the religious. Religion does not feature in Ondaatje's narrative, or in the colonial era world as presented in *Running in the Family* (apart from in the motif of the fall from the Garden of Eden, but this is not developed thematically and features only tangentially). *Running in the Family* is the only one of the three memoirs which is not informed in some way by a family's religion (Hoffman's Jewish background features prominently in *Lost in Translation* while, as I've explained in Chapter II, Goodison's Anglicanism, as well as African-based spirituality, features in her work). In the absence of religion, Ondaatje, as I've stated in my

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[23] Frank broadens this typology in the second edition of *The Wounded Storyteller*.

introduction, actively engages in myth-making, with the absence of a formal religious frame giving way then to the powerful presence of myth.

Fundamentally, Ondaatje's quest concerns identity, and identity as directly linked to the figure of the patriarch. The literary critic W.M Verhoeven writes that Ondaatje sets out to discover his father but finds himself instead (Verhoeven, 1994, 36), while another critic, Smaro Kamboureli, concludes that Ondaatje sets out to discover himself but, rather, finds his father. (79-91). Common to both perspectives is the view that, through a quest, an unexpected, inverse, discovery takes place, and this discovery takes the form of an encounter. In terms of classic narrative tropes, part of the quest can be seen as the "facing of one's demons". It is my view that this is a restorative, healing process that involves language and specifically the act of writing. As with any act of restitution, it involves the restoration of something that has been taken away, lost or surrendered.

In Ondaatje's case the restitution involves making what was absent present: a summoning of his father through memory and language. Ondaatje makes numerous references to his father's absence: "My loss is that I never spoke to him as an adult" (*Running* 179) and, "Always separate until he died, away from us. The north pole" (*Running* 172), and again, "I am writing this book about you" (*Running* 180). In these statements Ondaatje includes his own experience of regret and loss and, in employing the second person pronoun you towards the end of the memoir, he ultimately addresses his father directly, achieving a level of intimacy not present earlier.

As with *From Harvey River,* in which a dream state bookends the body of the memoir in the form of the dream/visitation by her mother in the prologue and Goodison's own dream in the epilogue, Ondaatje's quest is instigated by a dream featuring his father that is revisited at the end of the memoir.

Both memoirs thus involve dreams featuring a deceased parent and these dreams are associated with the very existence of the book. Just as Goodison presents *From Harvey River* as a gift handed to her by her mother, Ondaatje blurs the boundaries between his book and his father's book in a scene of merging where his father finds an unfinished book on the bathroom floor. Both memoirs involve a psychic meeting in the sense of their arising to consciousness from an inception in a subconscious dream state. It is as though they are written *because of* dreams, having their inception in the unconscious. Indeed, it can be said that the writing of them involves a process whereby the unconscious is made conscious. Or, as Rosita Boland says of *Running In The Family*, Ondaatje writes "through so many different filters of style that the book itself reads at times like one long, surreal and impressionistic dream."

In the first chapter, Ondaatje writes: "What began it all was the bright bone of a dream I could hardly hold onto. I was sleeping at a friend's house. I saw my father, chaotic, surrounded by dogs, and all of them were screaming and barking into the tropical landscape" (*Running* 21). Here, Ondaatje sets out two of the key elements of his work: the elusive, ungraspable nature of his quest and the centrality of his father. He also introduces the subject of wildness and chaos associated with his father that contributes to the ungraspable nature of his material, and the fragmented form his writing takes. In the final chapter, Ondaatje presents the story behind the dream in which his father is walking naked with black dogs held at the end of ropes, observed by a friend:

> My father is walking towards him, huge and naked. In one hand he holds five ropes, and dangling on the end of each of them is a black dog. None of the five are touching the ground. He is holding his arm outstretched, holding them with one arm as if he has supernatural strength. Terrible noises are coming from him and from the dogs as if there

> is a conversation between them that is subterranean, volcanic. All their tongues hanging out. (*Running* 181)

Ondaatje goes on to rationalize that the dogs were probably strays that his father had stumbled across and taken because he loved dogs, and that he was holding them at arm's length because they were dangerous. He then abandons his rationalization by concluding that his father had captured, and was holding, evil. The coexistence of the rational and the irrational typifies the dream state aspect of Ondaatje's writing that Boland refers to, a state that is accentuated by the wildness of nature, also an omnipresent element of the memoir.

The rational and irrational as coexistent are most present in the aforementioned merging scene towards the end of the memoir where Ondaatje imagines his father, drunk, finding a novel he has been reading on the bathroom floor. The novel has been attacked by an army of ants that are carrying a page of it away. The page they are carrying is page 189, the same page in front of the reader. Ondaatje writes that his father had not read that far and that he surrenders the page to the ants. The image that follows is that of a mirror that he is afraid of and does not look into. The final image is of Mervyn Ondaatje drinking and witnessing wild nature: the ants carrying the page away and the appearance of a rat:

> He sat down forgetting the mirror he had been moving towards. Scared of the company of the mirror. He sat down with his back against the wall and waited. The white rectangle moved with the busy arduous ants. Duty, he thought. But that was just a fragment gazed at by the bottom of his eye. He drank. There. He saw the midnight rat. (*Running* 189)

Following this scene, and in one of his two penultimate sections, Ondaatje uses first person narration to position himself with a school exercise book, looking out the window at midnight onto a "dry black night." He refers to midnight, along with dawn and noon, as an hour

of malignant spirits. He describes his hand moving, writing, as though it is a wild creature, inhuman:

> At midnight this hand is the only thing moving. As discreetly and carefully as whatever animals in the garden fold brown leaves into their mouths, visit the drain for water, or scale the broken glass that crowns the walls. Watch the hand move. Waiting for it to say something, to stumble casually on perception, the shape of an unknown thing. (*Running* 190)

Here, Ondaatje intimately, physically, articulates the quest aspect of the memoir in the discovery of a new perception. This discovery is immediately followed by a description of the sudden appearance of rain. Textually, the rain is connected with the body in the form of "the fist of a downpour" (*Running* 191). In contrast to the drought at the memoir's outset, the concluding pages feature water. The release of rain is followed by a penultimate chapter in which Ondaatje describes, and imagines, his father's final days. There is a circularity of content at the memoir's end in that it concludes with both a return to the subject of weather, and of his father who was introduced in the first pages as a figure in a triggering dream. This circularity is one shared by *From Harvey River* in its repetition of dream states in the prologue and epilogue.

Be it through a visitation, or a dream, both *From Harvey River* and *Running in the Family* have their inception in a visual image. As explained in Chapter I, memoirs typically arise in this way. As Paul Jay states, autobiography "unfolds as the reading of an image" ("Posing" 203), ultimately demonstrating that the act of interpreting visual memories "becomes integral to the construction of identity in autobiographical works" ("Posing" 191). According to Jay, what is required in the autobiographical act is to "retrospectively read the significance of these visual memories…to read into this image a meaning and an identity" ("Posing" 201).

Jay's linkage of the interpretation of visual images and meaning is pertinent in regard to Ondaatje who acknowledges, on the one hand, having wanted his book *Billy the Kid* to be made into a film (as was to happen later with *The English Patient*) and who, on the other, relates his quest journey back to Sri Lanka to an instigating dream image featuring his father. Because of his journeying – in fact two journeys, one of them in the company of his children – *Running in the Family* takes, to some extent, the form of travelogue. Both trips took place when Ondaatje was in his thirties, after an absence of twenty-five years. In his acknowledgements, he describes *Running In The Family* as a "composite" of journeys taken in 1978 and 1980. That it is a composite contributes to its form being non-linear: it is layered temporally (as a temporally layered, non-linear work it typifies the characteristics of exilic experience, articulated by Edward Said and present in different respects in Goodison and Hoffman's memoirs). Ondaatje's travels provided a substantial portion of the narrative content in *Running In The Family* in that they are mentioned explicitly; for example, in relation to visits he pays to family and to his father's friends and acquaintances. Additionally, he describes specific outings in which his children are present.

In the first chapter, Ondaatje addresses, though obliquely, his decision to return to the country of his childhood and his realization at a farewell party in Toronto of what he was undertaking: "I knew I was already running… I was running to Asia and everything would change" (Ondaatje, *Running* 22). It is here that he introduces the running element of his memoir's title – running as a movement *towards* a place. It can thus be seen as significant not only in the obvious sense of what is passed down from one family member to another, through family blood/genetics, but in the sense of eager movement and embarkation on a journey.

In one of only a few biblical references (the aforementioned fall from the Garden of Eden motif being another), Ondaatje entitles a chapter "Prodigal" and begins it with characteristic irony, describing not an arrival home but a departure (with similar irony the chapter "Tropical Gossip" is not about frivolous gossip but astute observations and "Honeymoon" is about local and world affairs rather than private matters). Perhaps this can be taken as a suggestion that, to some degree, he has never left. Furthermore, just as *Running in the Family* contains a merger scene of father and son, of reading and being read, so too is there a merging of times past and present, not only the two return journeys but also of childhood and adult life. This temporal complexity is more accentuated than in Goodison whose memoir is not based upon such a lengthy absence from her home of origin. Her experience is more one of ongoingness: an on-going relationship with Jamaica, family there and specifically her mother who was a constant presence in her life until her death in her mid-eighties. For this reason, *From Harvey River* does not in any way have the same element and dilemma of enigma and subsequent quest that is at the core of *Running in the Family*. There is a fundamental, pre-existent understanding upon which Goodison's writing is based.

Yet despite his attempt through writing to come to terms, in some way, with his father's absence, Ondaatje acknowledges at the end of it all the impossibility of ever truly knowing him: "He is still one of those books we long to read whose pages remain uncut" (*Running* 200). The ultimate unknowability of the other also applies to Ondaatje's conception of the self. I agree with Verhoeven's assessment that in Ondaatje, "the self is unknowable and incommunicable" (25). What can be attained through quest is an increased closeness, a heightened proximity, and Ondaatje acknowledges this textually in various ways. There is an increased focus on understanding his father in the final chapters and a resultant, intensifying, psychological depth. It

is here that Ondaatje delves into his parents' marriage and divorce, and details an imagined day in his father's life following his wife's departure. He documents his father's downfall into alcoholism, depression, and, finally, death. At certain moments, the pronouns change unexpectedly, so that "he" and "I" become interchangeable. In the section, "Thanikama" the "he" and "I" switch in the middle of the narrative, so that it is unclear who is the subject of the passage. These pronoun shifts forge an intimate connection between the narrator and Mervyn Ondaatje. Finally, in the last lines of "Final Days/Father Tongue," the pronoun changes to "you" and there is a direct address from son to father:

> In the end all your children move among the scattered acts and memories with no more clues. Not that we ever thought we would ever be able to understand you. Love is often enough, towards your stadium of small things. Whatever brought you solace we would have applauded. Whatever controlled the fear we all share we would have embraced. That could only be dealt with one day at a time – with that song we cannot translate, or the dusty green of the cactus you touch and turn carefully like a wounded child towards the sun, or the cigarettes you light (Ondaatje, *Running* 201).

In his biography of Ondaatje, Edward Jewinski quotes Ondaatje's elder brother, Christopher: "In many ways my brother Michael's book is a love letter to the father he never knew" (13). Returning to Arthur W. Frank's concept of restitution in storytelling, and Ondaatje's elucidation of his quest to better understand himself through his father, there is a setting to rights or completion in *Running in the Family'*s concluding chapters that, while not the all's well that ends well of Frank's concept, is a tempered expression of a sense of peace. In being considered a love letter to his father, as his brother suggests, Ondaatje's work can be viewed psychoanalytically as a mirroring of the letters Ondaatje received from him as a child, which

were his father's means, across continents, of expressing his love. When Ondaatje quotes his brother as encouraging him to "[g]et it right" (*Running* 201) – that he only has one chance in writing his book – there is also an expression of duty, a further form of reciprocity, and a further aspect of restitution.

Viewing *Running in the Family* through this psychoanalytical lens is a perspective taken up by the critic Peter Cumming in response to initial critical analyses that steer away from doing so. Cumming quotes Sam Solecki as assuming that this would be "intrusive and presumptuous" … because it would lead to "the radical darkness at the heart of Ondaatje's vision," (Cumming 41-62). Cumming suggests that, on the contrary, it might just as well lead to a "radical gentleness, interrelation, and domesticity at the core of Ondaatje's writing" (41-62). Certainly, Ondaatje's direct words to his father that I have quoted above, along with the words of his brother, support Cumming's perspective, and it is one with which I concur. As I elucidate at various points in this thesis, relationality in particular is inherent to *Running in the Family,* and is thus *invited* in the act of reading and interpreting. Gentleness is a feature of Ondaatje's sensuality. Domesticity is the more fraught of the three given the presence of wild nature in home environments and the relative absence of the maternal, yet, as Cumming writes, it can be worthwhile to examine domesticity through a psychoanalytical lens, a thread I will pick up in my chapter on displacement.

Section II: Genre and Form

Running In The Family is a work that exposes its own process and its own assemblage, both on the level of quest and in terms of its form. Structurally, the act of assemblage manifests as a fragmented structure consisting of seven chapters or sections, each with a distinct heading

not clearly, obviously, or logically, connected to the others. These are divided into subsections, ranging from two to eleven in number, each one of them between one to four pages in length. What is assembled are diverse texts: dialogue, transcribed conversations, numerous poems, quotations, stream of consciousness writing, and a fictional section that includes the merging, mirror scene between son and father that I have detailed. As well as texts, *Running In The Family* contains images: a map of Ceylon, images of Sinhalese letters, and various photos. As in *From Harvey River*, most of the photos are of family, although unlike *From Harvey River*, there are also group and landscape photos, indicative of the memoir's enlarged relationality. The final image of Ondaatje and his three siblings as young children at a waterfall has parallels with Goodison's experience as a child in the waters of Harvey River, and the importance given to water is underlined by the three monsoon chapters and the memoir's final word: rain.

Ondaatje thus not only writes *about,* but provides documentation *of,* his research. This process not only results in a diverse assortment of fragments but it involves multiple perspectives and voices – those of his family, and his elderly aunts in particular, and of family friends – and encompasses a wide range of disciplines, including history, geography, psychology and aesthetics. Ondaatje himself refers to his struggle to capture, above all else, the right voice ("Mongrel Art"). Ultimately, he achieves what Joanne Saul terms "polyvocality" (35).

The chapter "Aunts" begins with the narrator's reflection upon his process, stating, "How have I used them". The subject of "use" itself is levelled at Ondaatje as criticism by feminist writers such as York and Ray (York, "Whirling" 71-91), with whom, in light of Ondaatje's expression of love and tenderness for the two aunts he meets with and consults, I disagree. As he writes in reference to one of them: "suddenly all these journeys are worth it, just to be able to hug this thin woman who throws her cane onto the table in order to embrace me" (Ondaatje,

Running 111). Assemblage itself is made explicit at the very outset in an initial chapter based around a visit with another elderly aunt: "In the heart of this 250-year-old fort we will trade anecdotes and faint memories, trying to swell them with the order of dates and asides, interlocking them all as if assembling the hull of a ship" (*Running* 26). The construction of the autobiographical self intersects with the quest aspect of *Running in the Family* in that it is through this quest that elements are collected, assembled, and ultimately constructed.

When Ondaatje writes about visiting his Aunt Phyllis he tells of "trying to trace the maze of relationships in our ancestry" and of her plucking "notorious incidents from her brain" (*Running* 25). In detailing further research, he includes excerpts of conversations with a range of people, including a librarian with whom he discusses Ceylonese writers and a former Prime Minister who knew his father. In a unique, later section, "Dialogues," other family members are quoted directly as though in real time, exemplifying the polyvocality to which Saul refers. This transcribed conversation has the effect of immersing the reader in the moment, trying to make sense of multiple perspectives just as Ondaatje can be imagined attempting. His transmission of the oral, and especially storytelling, gives credence to Andrew Saikali's statement that, "[a]t its heart this is oral family history".

Numerous writers and critics have addressed the postmodern aspect of Ondaatje's assembling of genres, employing a vast array of terminology as a means of categorization. Like Saikali, emphasizing family history, George Elliot Clarke calls *Running in the Family* a "biographical novel." Linda Hutcheon identifies "foregrounding the apparatus" as an aspect of postmodern metafiction and has coined the term "historiographic metafiction" to identify this as it applies to historically-based writing, such as Ondaatje's (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 3). She explains that *Running In The Family* invokes autobiography in order to "deconstruct the autobiographical

privileging of self-referentiality" (Kamboureli 81) stating that "autobiography in relation to *Running In The Family* is not a genre but a rhetorical trope" (6).

Matthew Bolton, on the other hand, refers to *Running in the Family* as a memoir, but tenuously so, writing that "this classification does not do justice to the textual play found in the work or to the author's elusive identity as both writer and subject… Ondaatje creates a historiographic identity that is both historically referential and textually created" (Bolton 221-242). Employing other terminology, Saul calls *Running in the Family* a "biotext" that challenges formal and generic definitions as a way of articulating the complexities of the subject in process (Saul 33).

The aforementioned complex and varied postmodern categorizing of genre and employment of terminology is a response to the originality of *Running in the Family's* form, itself a response to the complexity of Ondaatje's material. Underlying this all is an exploration of intensely personal, subjective experience – experience that is deeply and inherently relational. It is that of *identifying with,* which is to say – returning to Hall's articulation of identification over identity – subjective experience that is always in process, not fixed, singular or essentialist.

Ondaatje himself references art forms in relation to the formal, constructed aspects of his work, employing aesthetics for contextualization, more specifically using Cubism as a basis for his non-linear structuring, "in which I [Ondaatje] jump between varying perspectives and styles. Ultimately, this is done to develop a more holistic understanding of all thematic elements" (*Michael Ondaatje*). While he doesn't mention him specifically in relation to Cubism, one of Ondaatje's ancestors, George Keyt, was considered Sri Lanka's most distinguished modern painter, whose style was influenced by Cubism and Matisse. Ondaatje mentions Keyt's poetry in his penultimate paragraph, raising questions about Keyt's influence on his own writing.

As well as Cubism, Ondaatje refers to an Eastern, and specifically Japanese, use of juxtaposition, assembling, and bricolage with which he feels an affinity. Referencing the American writer Donald Ritchie who lived in Japan for sixty years, he explains that Ritchie made him realize that he has followed, "or perhaps guessed at," an aesthetics that comes from the East – one of "following the brush" (Ondaatje, "Mongrel Art"). This is especially pertinent given that Ondaatje himself spent the first ten years of his childhood in the East. As he explains:

> In the conventions of a Western discourse – order, logical progression, symmetry – impose upon the subject an aspect that does not belong to it. Eastern aesthetics suggests that ordered structure contrives, that logical exposition falsifies, and that linear, consecutive argument eventually limits… The necessity of improvising, of inventing something from the bedrock of an incident, of painting a whole literary canvas that draws from all the sources at our disposal, means it is not surprising that a work of art will criss-cross the border between fact and fiction, or truth and a half-remembered memoir. We believe in and accept the reality of someone's portrait in a drawing. But the truth of a book is tested more severely. We as writers and as readers should admit there *is* no such thing as "non-fiction." ("Mongrel Art")

Ondaatje's final statement underlines the constructed nature of *Running in the Family,* not only in the sense of assemblage but also of fabrication. Concerning fabrication in its sense of fiction and storytelling, and also of "making" aesthetically, Ondaatje's perspectives intersect with those of Goodison who, as I have explained, underlines the constructed, "making" aspect of her writing. Similarly, her training as a visual artist informs her work, as do aesthetics Ondaatje's. More significant is the commonality of poetry in that both writers are as much poets as writers of prose who draw from what John Cowper Powys called "imaginative sensuality,"

(*In Defense of Sensuality*) invoking the life of the imagination in deliberately sensual, sensorial terms.

Section III: Wild Nature: Sensorial Rootedness in Home of Origin

Like *From Harvey River*, *Running in the Family* is deeply rooted in the home of origin, similarly evoked through sensorially-based memory, an aesthetic sensibility, and poetic language. It has in common a revisiting and reimagining of origins – familial and cultural. These origins, like Harvey River, are largely rural; Ondaatje's childhood was spent in close contact with the natural world, primarily on family tea estates outside of urban Colombo. In revisiting his country of origin, both through the two trips to Sri Lanka, and through memory to the Ceylon of his childhood and ancestry, it is primarily to rural areas that Ondaatje returns. In his accounts of these places, past and present, nature is characterized by wildness, different from Goodison's Jamaica, which she describes as bucolic. Wildness, furthermore, is not only associated with nature but also with humanity, and in particular Ondaatje's father Mervyn, but also his grandmother, Lalla.

Running In The Family begins with an evocation of place and nature that is unframed – neither delineated as a prologue or as chapter, it is simply there: an initial fragment that stands alone, like a Cubist block. It occupies half a page and, while a disparate piece, sets a tone and creates an atmosphere. Nature is presented as extreme: it is a time of heat and drought. Ondaatje describes a nightmare and fever:

> Drought since December. All across the city men roll carts with ice clothed in sawdust. Later on, during a fever, the drought still continuing, his nightmare is that thorn trees in the garden send their hard roots underground towards the house climbing through the

windows, so they can drink sweat off his body, steal the last of the saliva off his tongue. (*Running* 17)

As critics have noted, this beginning fragment is unique to the memoir in that it is written in the third person rather than the first (Kamboureli qtd. in Massel 8). Its detachment creates distance: a time and a place witnessed and observed. In parallel to the first reference to Ondaatje's father in the pages that immediately follow it, the fragment relays a dream state, a nightmare, depicting wild and threatening nature. In the disturbing, triggering, dream involving his father nature takes the form of wild dogs, while, here, it is trees with thorns that, like the dogs, have the capacity to cause pain by invading the domestic space built by humans. The passage goes on to explain that the third person narrator has returned to this place after twenty-five years, having left when he was eleven, thus indicating to the reader that the character is, at least in part, Ondaatje himself.

Images of extreme heat such as those in this first passage are a frequent presence throughout the memoir and are depicted through simile and metaphor, often involving animal imagery: "sweat runs with its own tangible life down a body as if a giant egg had been broken onto our shoulders" (Ondaatje, *Running* 79); "heat walks the house as an animal hugging everybody" (*Running* 79). In the entirety of the memoir, Ondaatje draws viscerally from all five senses, evoking sensations, smells, tastes, sounds and visual images. These are of weather conditions – heat and drought but also monsoons; of local seafood dishes eaten directly with the hands, the scent of raw rubber and coconut and cinnamon, the sounds of birds, insects, and other creatures. This is especially the case in the three monsoon sections where the sensory dominates in descriptions of sometimes overpowering weather conditions: "I witnessed everything. One morning I would wake and just smell things for the whole day, it was so rich I had to select

senses” (*Running* 71). Ondaatje’s evocation of all five senses embodies Yuriko Saiko’s call for their inclusion in artistic production, referenced earlier, in its validation of ordinary experience and daily affairs, similar in this respect to Goodison’s writing (a similarity that may be derived from their not exclusively “Western” backgrounds – the non-empirical/non-rational animism Goodison relates to her African heritage and the Eastern/non-rational “following of the brush” Ondaatje references).

Nature’s omnipotence and pervasiveness is further conveyed in a comparison of animal sounds to human breathing – sounds that Ondaatje has captured by recording them during one of his return visits and that he listens to during a Canadian winter: “Now, and here, Canadian February, I write this in the kitchen and play that section of cassette to hear not just peacocks but all the noises of the night behind them – inaudible then because they were always there like breath” (*Running* 136).

The intimate, fine line between the natural world and the human is a subject Ondaatje returns to and articulates in his novel *The English Patient* as being “marked by nature”:

> We die containing a richness of lovers and tribes, tastes we have swallowed, bodies we have plunged into and swum up as if rivers of wisdom, characters we have climbed into as if trees, fears we have hidden, as if caves. I wish for all this to be marked on my body, when I am dead. I believe in such cartography – to be marked by nature. (261)

The density of marking described is characteristic of *Running in the Family* as a whole: a book that, like the imagined body Ondaatje outlines, is profoundly imprinted by nature. It is informed by an aesthetic sensibility in which nature is not only a source of felt beauty but one that is actively formed and fashioned through language – that is, recreated poetically. In this

regard, Ondaatje embodies the adjacent beholding and appreciation of natural beauty as explored in the previous chapter's referencing of Murdoch and Weil. Beholding and attention-giving are performative as literary sources that reflect a stance or "vision of the world" through which value is attributed to the imprinting of the natural world on the human. As the literary critic Peter Easingwood explains of Ondaatje, the sensual aspect of his work appears both in the conception of individual consciousness within the text and also in the relationship between the text and its reader. Ondaatje constructs the meaning of sensuality in such a way as to appeal to the freedom of the imagination, even, as Easingwood states, at the risk of being called romantic in some highly pejorative sense. In relation to what can be considered Ondaatje's philosophical stance, Easingwood invokes Powys's recognition and defence of sensuality as a program of self-culture: "We must take the fluctuating, undulating margin of our simplest sensuous impressions – that margin which has so many avenues and vistas, and which hitherto has floated around us unconsidered, discarded, neglected - and out of it…weave…our identity" (Easingwood 79-96).

Ondaatje's acknowledged employment of Cubist techniques evidences this aesthetic sensibility in that the disparate, mosaic elements that constitute his writing have nature as their source. Natural elements are often presented in contrast, as takes place fundamentally with art: light after darkness, rain following drought, the delicate against the hard and sharp, gentleness amidst the wild. The following passage, of a scene in the wake of a monsoon, exemplifies such sensorially drawn aesthetics:

> The dining room doors open to the wet lawn and the francisco bushes. Their blossoms, like torn blue and white paper, release perfume into this room. When the dogs bark, eight or so parakeets swerve out of the guava tree and disappear over the cliff of the hill. Across the valley, a waterfall stumbles down. In a month or two the really hard rains will

> come for eighteen hours a day and that waterfall will once again become tough as a glacier and wash away the road. But now it looks as delicate as the path of a white butterfly in a long exposed photograph. (Ondaatje, *Running* 167)

The beauty of nature is always a vibrant, vivid, dramatic presence. In relation to the specific estate where Ondaatje spent much of his childhood, and where his parents lived for the longest part of their marriage, it is also presented as Eden-esque. This is a departure from the utter wildness of nature characteristic of the memoir as a whole. Ondaatje takes his children to visit the family estate, Kuttapitiya, which he describes as famous for its gardens and as cut off from the real world. Writing about, and remembering it as it was during his childhood, but also as it remains, he uses superlative terms: "We had everything. It was and still is the most beautiful place in the world … It was the perfect place for children who were allowed to go wild" (*Running* 145). Later, he quotes an exchange with his daughter, including her words and his reply: "'If we lived here it would be perfect.' 'Yes' I said" (*Running* 146). The perfection described reinforces the Garden of Eden trope, including the aspect of the subsequent fall, which is made apparent in the estate no longer belonging to the family and, on a broader level, relating to the decolonization of Ceylon.

In being a place where children can run wild, Kuttapitiya is similar to Goodison's Harvey River where she and her cousins played freely, picnicking on family tombstones, swimming in the river, and picking fruit. Unlike Goodison's Jamaica, however, Ondaatje's Ceylon/Sri Lanka is a place where the wildness of nature is at the fore and also where the lines between the human, and the non-human, are blurred. In Goodison's Jamaica both the rural worlds of Harvey River and Malvern, and the urban environment of Kingston, nature is gentle and homes are sites of decorum and propriety, infused with Christian values; the indoors is clearly separate from the

outdoors. Contrastingly, in *Running in the Family* nature is invasive and often threatening, as in the opening image of the roots of thorn trees climbing through windows. Elsewhere, Ondaatje frequently refers to the prevalence of snakes entering homes and threatening livestock and also mentions bats and chickens doing the same. An entire chapter, "Kegalle," centres around snakes: "The family home Rock Hill was littered with snakes, especially cobras," he states, describing shrieks when they entered the house, everyone running around, a shotgun being pulled out and the snake "blasted to pieces" (Ondaatje, *Running* 98). Further on in the book, he describes how "Wildlife stormed or crept into homes":

> The snake either entered through the bathroom drain for remnants of water or, finding the porch doors open, came in like a king and moved in a straight line through the living room, dining room, the kitchen and servant's quarters, and out the back, as if taking the most civilized shortcut to another street in town. Others moved in permanently; birds nested above the fans, the silverfish slid into steamer trunks and photograph albums – eating their way through portraits and wedding pictures. What images of family life they consumed in their minute jaws and took into their bodies no thicker than the pages they ate. (*Running* 136)

Wild nature is characterized as invasive and boundaryless through numerous descriptions like this. Outside, a wild boar appears while Ondaatje and his children are bathing outside in the rain and they encounter dangerous, crocodile-like creatures indigenous to Ceylon while walking along a beach. The wildness of nature is furthermore depicted at times as not only invasive, hostile, and dangerous, but also malevolent**.** While in *From Harvey River* indigenous spirituality is presented as being life-begetting and benevolent, in *Running in the Family* it is associated with natural forces that are dark and evil. Ondaatje refers to "grahayas" – planetary spirits of

malignant character (*Running* 190), a subject he returns to in his novel *Anil's Ghost* where he describes Sri Lankan beliefs about the stars and planets having "malefic" influences and evil having a precise seat in the amygdala area of the brain (134).

In one chapter Ondaatje writes about Ceylon as experienced and described by foreign writers during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with nature as "malefic" also a theme. He describes the dark view of Ceylonese nature in Pablo Neruda's poems about Ceylon: "that saw this landscape governed by a crowded surrealism – full of vegetable oppressiveness" (Ondaatje, *Running* 80) and of similar depictions by D.H. Lawrence who found its extremes unbearable. He also tells of his ancestor, William Charles Ondaatje, who knew of at least fifty-five species of poisons easily available to his countrymen (*Running* 81).

Furthermore, humanity is also presented as wild and possessing nature's malefic tendencies. Ondaatje's father is described as perceiving malevolent energies, as when one of his friends recounts a story told in his father's words:

> When I saw you come… I saw poisonous gas around you. You walked across the lawn to me and you were wading through green gas as if you were crossing a river by foot and you were not aware of it. And I thought if I speak, if I point it out it will destroy you instantly. I was immune. It would not kill me but if I revealed this world to you you would suffer because you had no knowledge, no defences against it (*Running* 200).

Mervyn Ondaatje's extremes, such as those imagined and described, above, and of behaviour, such as in the significant scene in which he is depicted walking naked with black dogs at the end of ropes, are presented as an ongoing aspect of his personality, though diminished and softened in his later years. His behaviour is presented as uncontrolled, frequently destructive and damaging, often the result of his binge drinking. Ondaatje provides some of the

background to this, describing the influence of his closest friend as a youth who was a heavy drinker and whose home was the site for most parties (*Running* 46). This was during the "roaring twenties," a time of colonial decadence; not only in the wild social atmosphere of parties but of gambling and horse-racing. Ondaatje writes of the knife-edge lives of his father's social set at that time: "They could have almost drowned or fallen in love and their lives would have been totally changed during any one of those evenings" (*Running* 52).

The depicted manifestations of Mervyn Ondaatje's wildness are numerous, including deceiving his family for three years that he was studying at Cambridge when he was living there but not attending classes; threatening to shoot himself if his fiancé did not marry him; nearly killing himself and his children when driving drunk and half-asleep; his extreme behaviour on trains that resulted in him being banned from the Ceylon Railways. Ondaatje also details his father hiding bottles of gin around his property and refers to alcohol as one of the memoir's motifs and as being destructive (*Michael Ondaatje*). He concludes: "Most Ondaatjes liked liquor, sometimes to excess. Most of them were hot-tempered" (Ondaatje, *Running* 57). Given his acknowledgement of exaggeration and disbelief in non-fiction, Ondaatje's words cannot be taken at face value but, rather, considered as a subjectively drawn portrait of his father based upon reimagined experiences; primarily those of others, not his own.

Ondaatje's grandmother, Lalla, the second most written about personality, is similarly presented as having a wildness of nature, "like a bee attracted to the perfume of any flower" (*Running* 145) and as someone who "managed to persuade all those she met into chaos" (*Running* 41). Ondaatje writes that she was loved most by people who saw her arriving from the distance "like a storm" (*Running* 119). Even her death is recounted as an extreme incident

involving her own wildness wedded to the wildness of nature, as she drowns during a flood, holding on to a jacaranda tree.

Ondaatje introduces floods as the cause of his grandmother's death during a reported exchange with a friend in Toronto: "'So how *did* your grandmother die?' 'Natural causes.' 'What?' 'Floods'" (*Running* 23). Later, he details the event, using imagery of nature that is not only wild but also savage: "In her last years she was searching for the great death. She never found, looking under leaves, the great snake, the fang which would brush against the ankle like a whisper" (*Running* 125). Still later, when he goes on to describe her taken by flood waters, there is a parallel with *From Harvey River*'*s* epilogue in which Goodison imagines her own death and the underwater world of the river. While in Goodison there is peace, in Ondaatje there is only harshness and a blunt brutality:

> The water here was rougher and she went under for longer and longer moments coming up with a gasp and then pulled down like bait, pulled under by something not comfortable any more, and then there was the great blue ahead of her, like a sheaf of blue wheat, like a large eye that peered towards her, and she hit it and was dead (*Running* 129).

In his biography of Ondaatje, Edward Jewiski refers to Lalla's "factual" death by alcohol poisoning as the "brutal" truth (20). Ondaatje, who writes of his grandmother's drinking, even to the point of her resorting to imbibing eau de cologne, deliberately chooses to fictionalize her death, just as he fictionalizes other events and aspects of his family history. This substantiates Sam Soleki's assertion of the darkness at the heart of Ondaatje's memoir, approached, as referenced previously, through an aesthetics of impersonality.

Section IV: Storytelling and Myth-Making

The wildness and drama in *Running in the Family* have storytelling at their roots, fertilised by Ondaatje's acknowledged use of exaggeration, confabulation and fictionalising. These aspects can also be seen as reflections of his interest in myth and myth-making as a powerful means of accessing primal stories. This subject has been explored by the writer and academic George Elliott Clarke who asserts that, in Ondaatje, storytelling becomes the narration of myth and issues "from a landscape or stage of chaos and mirrors the source of its genesis" (1-12). Clarke's statement is keenly pertinent with regard to the merging scene I have detailed where the chaos provoked by an alcoholic and absent father lies at the root of Ondaatje's quest, and where mirroring becomes a search for understanding.

Elliott Clarke cites Ondaatje's own critical writing about myth, prior to the publishing of his novels and memoir, in which he refers to the "raw power of myth" (Ondaatje, "O'Hagan's Rough-Edged Chronicle" 24), and its pervasive power in writing, even when used sparingly, adding that "[m]yth breeds on itself no matter what the situation or landscape" ("O'Hagan's Rough-Edged Chronicle" 26). This last statement can be related to the myth of colonial decline and fall in *Running in the Family*, and that of the Garden of Eden, as well as imagery of ants engaged in unstoppable destruction. When Ondaatje writes about myth that it is "biblical, surreal, brief, imagistic" ("O'Hagan's Rough-Edged Chronicle" 24), he could be writing about *Running in the Family* itself, as it exemplifies all aspects of this description[24].

On the one hand, myth informs *Running in the Family* as a background element of its apparatus. On the other hand, it can be seen as an entwined, integral element of Ondaatje's

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[24] Similarly, as Sam Solecki points out, when Ondaatje writes in his M.A. thesis on the Scottish poet Muir that "there was no distinction between the ordinary and the fabulous," in regard to Muir's homeland, he could be writing about himself. (Solecki *Ragas* 13)

storytelling related to drama. Ondaatje traces this dramatic storytelling to his home environment as a child, as he explained in an interview:

> Growing up in Colombo, I was surrounded by an oral tradition rather than a literary one. Tall stories, gossip, arguments, lies at the dinner table, – this was what "stories" or "literature" were to me as a boy. So when I eventually came to write my memoir about Sri Lanka, *Running in the Family*, it was not so much the content I struggled to catch but a voice – that free-wheeling conversational art of the anecdote – that I had to get right. For while I was researching those family stories I knew that in many cases, like Herodotus, I was listening not to accurate memory but exaggerations and falsehoods. ("Mongrel Art")

Additional detail is provided in *Running in the Family* when Ondaatje explains: "No story is ever told just once. Whether a memory or funny hideous scandal, we will return to it an hour later and retell the story with additions and this time a few judgements thrown in. In this way history is organized" (Ondaatje, *Running* 26).

Ondaatje's description of storytelling in his family highlights the exaggerations and fabrications at the root of oral storytelling, which are then further altered and mutate over time. In his references to Herodotus and world history, he further underlines his view that all history is, to some degree, fictive. He has reiterated this elsewhere, as in his previously quoted statement that there is no such thing as nonfiction.

Ondaatje traces the dramatic and theatrical qualities of the oral tradition in his family directly to his mother, Doris Gratien. While largely absent from the memoir, and overshadowed by the presence of his father and his grandmother, she is credited with instilling drama in all of her children. Ondaatje writes that she studied dance and, as an adult, ran a small dance and

theatre school in Colombo. One of the first things we learn about her is that, as a young woman, she performed "radical dances in private" with a friend. Her tendency to exaggeration is related to her side of the family in general:

> She belonged to a type of Ceylonese family whose women would take the minutest reaction from another and blow it into a tremendously exciting tale, then later use it as an example of someone's strain of character. If anything kept their generation alive it was this recording by exaggeration. (Ondaatje, *Running* 169)

Ondaatje captures the similarly transmitted drama in his mother's and grandmother's voices when first relating the story of his parents' marriage, in which his grandmother's voice is featured and, following that, in the story of his mother receiving the news that he'd published a book of poetry. In both cases, there is drama but also an air of superiority and condescension. Lalla comments upon her daughter's engagement through a racial lens, which comes across as one of superiority and dismissiveness. Of European ancestry herself, Doris was engaged to a man of Tamil ancestry who had darker skin than her. Ondaatje also highlights his grandmother's flamboyant, exaggerated behaviour during the wedding ceremony:

> She's going to marry a Tamil… Lalla continued to stress the Tamil element in my father's background, which pleased him enormously. For the wedding ceremony she had two marriage chairs decorated in Hindu style and laughed all the way through the ceremony. The incident was, however, the beginning of a war with my father. (*Running* 119)

Lalla's dismissiveness is paralleled by Ondaatje's mother in a description of the moment when she first received a book of his poems and her tone of voice is that of his grandmother:

> Years later, when I sent my mother my first book of poems, she met my sister at the door with a shocked face and in exactly the same tone and phrasing said, "What do you *think*, Janet" (her hand holding her cheek to emphasize the tragedy), "Michael has become a *poet.*" (*Running* 119)

A stance of superiority is attributed to Ondaatje's "immensely wealthy" grandfather, described as a snob who had a "weakness for pretending to be English" (*Running* 56). Ondaatje relates that he was dark, while his wife was very white.

Race and ethnicity pervade *Running in the Family* and Ondaatje's description of himself as a "mongrel." In a chapter where he details a visit to Colombo's St Thomas church, he traces his Dutch, Portuguese, and English, ancestry; elsewhere he references Tamil and Burgher ethnicity. When writing about the days leading up to his father's death, he highlights the ethnicity of his father's circle of friends, none of whom were Europeans like his ex-wife but "[a]ll burghers and Sinhalese families, separate from the Europeans" (*Running* 186). Daniel Coleman, in writing about ethnicity in *Running in the Family*, underlines the separateness of the Burghers stating that, "[a]s Burghers, Ondaatje's family would have been separated both from the colonial rulers and the Sinhalese and Tamil denizens of the island" (46), yet Ondaatje presents his father, an intensely private man in his later years, as having an ethnically-mixed group of friends, thereby suggesting that the racial separation was characteristic of earlier generations.

Since Ondaatje's reconstruction of his past is filtered through other people and their stories, and these are of a hybrid nature, making sense of his own life is inherently relational. As Joanne Saul points out, his emphasis on family and a larger social community is an important deviation from a conventional Western autobiographical text with its focus on an individual life

(41). Just as Ondaatje has referenced a preference for an Eastern "following of the brush" in his writing process, so too can the relational aspect of his writing be seen from this Eastern-influenced aspect of his background. In a passage where he references discovery through family members he recognizes his attachment to something larger than himself and the shaping force of it on his own life:

> That night, I will have not so much a dream as an image that repeats itself. I see my own straining body which stands shaped like a star and realise gradually I am part of a human pyramid. Below me are other bodies that I am standing on and above me are several more, though I am quite near the top. (Ondaatje, *Running* 27).

As Donna Bennett explains, Ondaatje's means of construction through the stories of others is, "by its nature, already an act of fiction making" because narratives of lives (autobiographies and biographies) "must confront both a surplus of information, which requires filtering, and information gaps, which means that what has been lost needs filling in or what is untellable must be elided" (Bennett 203). The idea that, with the polyvocality of others' stories comes no singular, truthful version, is similarly expressed by Saul who writes that, "Ondaatje supplies his readers with a range of seemingly unmediated stories to decipher. The result is often more disorienting than explanatory, thus making it difficult to interpret what any 'true' version of the past may be" (41). Ultimately, what Ondaatje achieves is a meta-textuality whereby a heightened consciousness of the writing process is actually written into the text.

The relational aspects of Ondaatje's writing, whereby his quest to understand identity takes place through the narratives of others, are strands that will be picked up in my three theoretically based chapters, V, VI and VII. These chapters examine Ondaatje's attachments to place and to people as well as his displacement from these both, and subsequent re-emplacement

through writing. The meta-textuality he achieves involves the myth-making I have referenced, along with other forms of fabrication and fictionalization, including, as I will explain in Chapter VII, writing as not only an interplaying of elements but as play itself.

Chapter IV: "Out of the net of meaning into the weightlessness of chaos" Eva Hoffman's *Lost in Translation*

We write to taste life twice, in the moment and in retrospection.

–Anaïs Nin, *The Diary of Anaïs Nin*

Introduction

Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language is a narrative that details Eva Hoffman's experience from childhood to adulthood, grappling with emigration from Poland to North America and establishing herself in English. Uprooted when she was thirteen, following her parents' decision to move to Canada in the wake of the Polish government lifting a ban on emigration for Jews in 1957, Hoffman's is a story informed by the Holocaust, and the Jewish exodus from Europe in the aftermath of WWII. It is underpinned by the influences and consequences of global politics as they affect individual lives, and as they intersect with ethnicity; specifically, Jewishness. At the same time, *Lost in Translation* is intensely personal and psychoanalytical. The experiences of the self, and of emotional affect, are at the core of Hoffman's narrative. Hers is a dislocated self and, as such, one confronted with loss, exile, and questions of identity.

Lost in Translation, as stated previously, differs radically from *From Harvey River* and *Running in the Family* in that it is autobiographical, with its focus on the Self rather than the Other. Otherness, as it exists within Hoffman's narrative, is largely a subjective, internal state – an aspect of a divided self – whereas in Goodison and Ondaatje's works Otherness is specifically embodied by the figure of the mother or the father, and by family. Yet *Lost in Translation* can also be categorized as memoir in that it is based on memories of a part of a life and does not attempt to tell a whole life story. To some degree it can be considered a coming-of-age memoir in that it deals

most concretely with the period in Hoffman's life between late girlhood and the first stage of establishing herself as a working adult. Biological processes, such as those that occur during adolescence, can be taken into consideration in regard to questions of the self and of identity as they arise within the narrative. For instance, the coinciding of emigration with puberty and the formulations of meaning that take place at this stage of development result in Hoffman experiencing a crisis of meaning at this time. Her sister, who is four years younger, and whose mental structures and capacities of understanding are less formed, is considered by Hoffman to have assimilated more easily because of her particular age. With its subtitle, "*Life in a New Language," Lost in Translation* can also be viewed as a "language memoir," as has been noted by Brisolara and Becker (41) who refers to Alice Kaplan's identification of this new genre (Kaplan 59).

Lost in Translation was published in 1989 and is the first of Hoffman's books. From 1979-1990 she worked as an editor and writer at the *New York Times* and *Lost in Translation* was published during the culmination of her career in journalism in the United States. As she has explained in an interview, it was through reviewing the books of others that she came to realize that she wanted to write her own. *Lost in Translation* was followed by two historical works, both about Eastern Europe: *Exit into History: A Journey Through Eastern Europe* (1993) and *Schetl: The Life and Death of A Small Town in the World of Polish Jews* (1997). After that came two novels: *The Secret* (2002) and *Illuminations* (2008). Most recently, Hoffman has published two nonfiction works: *Time: Big Ideas, Small Books* (2009) and *How to Be Bored* (2016) under the School of Life banner. Additionally, she has published *After Such Knowledge* (2004), which, to some extent, can be considered a companion work to *Lost in Translation* in its focus on the personal and on memory. *After Such Knowledge,* in its treatment of memories and emotional

affect passed down generationally – what has been called “post-memory” (Hirsch) – is a work I will draw on in this chapter’s final section, which explores memory and emotional affect.

Following a brief introduction to Eva Hoffman the writer, this chapter will consist of three sections. Due to the autobiographical, highly subjective, nature of *Lost in Translation,* it is inherently more fluid and less boundaried than *From Harvey River* and *Running in the Family* which, in their focus on the Other, rather than the Self, delimit content more objectively. *Lost in Translation* is characterized by a texture of subjective, emotional states which, because they represent different phases in the life of the narrator that are reconstructed in the act of writing, reflect evolutions of psychological development. For this reason, I consider the three sections to be comparatively less discrete than the four sections of the other memoirs. That being said, *Lost in Translation* shares an organization of form with *From Harvey River* in that it is divided into three parts. While in *From Harvey River* these follow the linear trajectory of Goodison’s mother’s life from birth to death, in *Lost in Translation* they follow Hoffman’s own life trajectory from childhood: Paradise; to her teenage years in Vancouver: Exile; to Hoffman’s adulthood in the United States: The New World.

In Section I: Emigration and Exile, I present and examine Hoffman’s emigration with her family from Poland to Canada in the aftermath of WWII and the Holocaust, and her exilic experience in Vancouver. In Section II: The Self, Language and Identity, I explore the psychological severing inherent in Hoffman’s experience of displacement and the subsequent formation of selves in her construction of a new identity and eventual emplacement in language and culture. In Section III: Memory and Emotional Affect, I address the affective, emotional content of *Lost in Translation* through a psychoanalytically informed exploration of trauma, memory and post-memory as present in Hoffman’s writing. As with my exploration of Goodison

and Ondaatje's work, these elements will be further developed in Chapters V, VI and VII where I relate them to the overarching questions this thesis poses, thus interrelating the three distinct and unique works.

Eva Hoffman was born Ewa Wydra in Kraków, Poland in 1945, the first of two daughters born to Holocaust survivors who had left the Ukraine where they survived in hiding during WWII, and settled in Poland. Hoffman equates her origins with the war:

> …in the beginning was the war. That was my childhood theory of origins, akin perhaps to certain childhood theories of sexuality. For me, the world as I knew it and the people in it emerged not from the womb, but from war. The theory was perhaps understandable, for I was born in Poland, in 1945, that is, on the site of the Second World War's greatest ravages; and so soon after the cataclysm as to conflate it with the causes of my own birth. (*After* 3)

Hoffman spent the first thirteen years of her life in Kraków. Her remembered experience of this time – of emigration to Canada and her teenage years in Vancouver – as well as of her university education in the United States thereafter, forms the substance of *Lost in Translation.* Her life after this period is touched upon minimally (it is addressed more fully in *After Such Knowledge*); her writing takes place in the aftermath of finishing a PhD at Harvard and while working at the *New York Times*. It addresses her academic life but not her career as a writer and editor.

It was in publishing *Lost in Translation,* which was widely read and well-received, that Hoffman began her career as a writer and public intellectual. She has taught literature and creative writing at universities in the United States and the UK and has lectured internationally on subjects of exile, historical memory, human rights, and other contemporary issues. Her work

has been translated internationally, and she was awarded an honorary DLitt from Warwick University in 2008. Hoffman is now based in London. As she has explained, London is a "kind of halfway return to Europe" ("Out of Exile" 1), attesting to a relational stance in her life as well as in her writing.

Section I: Emigration and Exile

Lost in Translation begins with a departure that is inherently both a beginning and an end. In the emotional experience of Hoffman's thirteen-year-old self, remembered and articulated approximately three decades later, it is the sense of ending that is most present. In the memoir's first scene, Hoffman and her family are on a ship in Gdynia**,** Poland, about to embark on a transatlantic journey to Halifax, Canada. "I feel that my life is ending," Hoffman writes, "I am thirteen years old and we are emigrating. It's a notion of such crushing, definitive finality that to me it might as well mean the end of the world" (*Lost* 3). The sense of drama with which Hoffman's experience is expressed, akin to the equating of her origins with the war not the womb, quoted previously, typifies the quality of heightened emotional affect present in her writing. Both Part I and Part II centre largely on the experience of loss and alienation associated with emigration, expressed with this fullness of affect.

As a specific condition of emigration, exile is characterized by an inability to return to the country of origin, usually for political reasons. As Jews restricted, like most of the Polish population, in their movement until 1957 when the government lifted a ban on emigration, Hoffman's parents were aware of the definitive nature of their departure as a consequence of official policy as well as through the act of emigration itself. As Hoffman explains, her parents were clear in their resolve to be a part of the large Jewish exodus from Poland: "My parents have

no doubts about the matter. Poland is home, in a way, but it is also hostile territory. They tried to get out once before, shortly after the war, when some Jews were given exit visas, but didn't succeed. The question is not whether to leave, but for where" (*Lost* 84).

Hoffman's voice here is that of her teenage self, articulating her awareness of the conditions of her family's departure from her parents' perspective. As she indicates elsewhere, Poland is not hostile to her as a child; her world there is primarily that of her family home and her life as a girl in Kraków, a place where she feels safe and secure. As a result of her strong sense of belonging, and her equally strong sense of the definitiveness of departure, leaving is synonymous with exile on levels that are at once rational and affective. In narrating her trajectory, Hoffman summons different selves from different phases of her life, with a consequent layering and occasional merging of these selves and their voices and, as Anita Jarczok underlines, narrative is at the heart of making sense of their complexity ("Reconstructing" 30).

Edward Said, in his extensive experience and exploration of the condition of exile, describes it as the "unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place" (Said, *Out* 173). The severing and the duality of emigration, and with it, the condition of exile it engenders, is Hoffman's defining experience on leaving Poland for Canada. Referring to the moment when she sets foot in Canada and departs for Vancouver, she writes, "From now on my life will be divided into two parts, with the line drawn by that train" (*Lost* 100). Hers is a radical reckoning in its awareness that, displacement having taken place, the possibility of a singular identity has come to end. Yet, while there is henceforth a schism in respect to her sense of her individual life and identity, there is an enduring subjective presence of native place and a love for it as a site of sensorially-based memory. She writes from her new world standpoint: "the country of my

childhood lives within me with a primacy that is a form of love" (*Lost* 74), echoing the assertion by Said that, "[e]xile is predicated on the existence of, love for, and bond with, one's native place" (*Out* 185).

That which has been left behind through emigration and upon which Hoffman's deeply felt sense of exile is predicated, constitutes much of Part I: Paradise. On the one hand, it is an entire childhood, as Hoffman's departure from Poland took place during the end of this developmental phase. On the other hand, it is a whole spatial "world" of experiences in a particular place: a country, a city, and a home. Hoffman's memories are by and large happy ones; hers is presented as an ordinary childhood insofar as it was not marked by strife or traumatic events within her immediate environment prior to the departure for Canada. On the contrary, it was relatively comfortable and, significantly, secure. Her mother stayed at home caring for her two daughters with the help of a live-in maid, her father had a job that enabled him to provide for his family, and her parents' marriage was, by all accounts, relatively harmonious (Hoffman references "squabbles"). The live-in maid, Ciocia Bronia, was an especially meaningful presence as her parents' only link with their pre-war past, since she had been a servant in the home where they had been sequestered for a year during the war and had traveled with them to Kraków.

Hoffman describes Ciocia Bronia as a source of comfort, stability and trust (perhaps, in these specific respects, she was just as *maternal* as her mother), but also of pure love. Hoffman quotes Ciocia Bronia intoning: "My kitten, my princess, my golden one" and summons her own remembered response; "then I feel singled out for special attention – but I am also infused with a gentle, disinterested love, almost as if I were its source" (Hoffman, *Lost* 22). On top of describing this loving domestic habitat, Hoffman writes of ordinary childhood pursuits such as

outdoor play, having close friends and a boyfriend, and spending time in parks and in the countryside during summer holidays. These, as an accumulation of woven, mundane, but also deeply meaningful experience, constituted paradise for Hoffman as a child (much in the way that ordinariness is invested with importance in *From Harvey River*).

In the reconstruction of her childhood in Poland, and in "Paradise" as a designation for this part of her life, Hoffman evokes a range of biblical and cultural associations connected with childhood as being Edenic (as Goodison and Ondaatje also do). She directly references these associations when she comments, in relation to her family's modest circumstances, "the wonder is what you can make a paradise out of … And yet, when it came time to leave… I felt I was being pushed out of the happy, safe, enclosures of Eden" (*Lost* 5).

The academic Marianne Hirsch, whose parents were also Holocaust survivors and who, in being born in Romania, shares the commonality of a former Soviet block country childhood, has been critical of Hoffman's reference to paradise. She questions why Hoffman would want to recapture a childhood resting on a legacy of anti-semitism, arguing that Hoffman's identity was already divided due to her childhood knowledge of the persecution her parents suffered in the Holocaust (Hirsch 77). Hirsch asks, "What does it take for Hoffman to consider [Poland] paradise? Why would she want to recapture a childhood that rests on such a legacy? ... With her evocation of childhood plenitude, Hoffman has displaced the reality of the war, of the anti-semitism she admittedly still experiences" (Hirsch qtd. in MacPherson 94). However, as Sarah Jilani asserts, "[S]he was aware of the irony, that it was paradise to a child, perceived as one, not a real one because she was forcibly removed from it, it took on heightened meaning" (8).

The particular qualities of childhood perception, as I outlined in my introduction with reference to Edith Cobb, are further elucidated by the writer Richard Coe, who has studied

childhood autobiography and argues it is a distinct literary genre. He describes childhood experiences of the adult world of religion, politics etc., as "trivia" in the way that they are processed and codified by young minds (Coe 37), explaining that the experiences of childhood take place in a material, spiritual, and linguistic dimension different from that of the adult (241). Coe's affirmation of childhood's different dimension is evidenced by Hoffman's descriptions of the early years of her childhood when she writes of her happiness and her oblivion to the world at large:

> I'm four years old, and I don't know that this happiness is taking place in a country recently destroyed by war, a place where my father has to hustle to get us a bit more than our meagre ration of meat and sugar. I only know that I'm in my room, which to me is an everywhere, and that the patterns on the ceiling are enough to fill me with a feeling of sufficiency because… well, just because I'm conscious, because the world exists and it flows so gently into my head. (Hoffman, *Lost* 5)

Hoffman's reconstructed memory, in her description of light on the ceiling, is predominantly sensorial, chiming with Coe's further articulation of childhood memory in autobiography's alternative dimension and the tendency to recreate an autonomous, now-vanished, self that formerly existed in an alternative, magical, or play dimension, controlled by concepts and rules, not necessarily incompatible with, but nonetheless essentially different from those which dominate the more rational and pragmatically oriented life of the adult (Coe 293). Childhood memory in autobiography cannot, in other words, be entirely judged by the rational, pragmatic criteria of Hirsch since it emerges from another framework, equally valid within its own parameters; that of the proximate home environment, experienced directly and sensorially.

In her descriptions of early childhood happiness within a family environment of modest financial circumstances – those of a "lumpen" apartment home – Hoffman validates the supremacy of the immediate local environment (as experienced through the particular aforementioned dimensions of the child's psychological development and direct sensorial experience) as a criterion during childhood in determining well-being. According to attachment theory, as articulated by Winnicott, Bowlby, Ainsworth, and others (dating back to the wartime period of the 1940's through to the end of the twentieth century), the quality of early-life attachments between caregivers, babies, and children deeply influences well-being throughout life. These psychoanalysts conceptualized the importance of "good enough" attachments; those of ordinary parenting. These early-life attachments will be explored in my next two chapters.

Hoffman, in her description of her sense of childhood well-being in a humble apartment, "squeezed into three rudimentary rooms with four other people" (*Lost* 5), and other descriptions of her ordinary, generally happy, early childhood, especially including the loving attention of the family maid/caregiver, exemplifies the theory that, when attachments with caregivers are "good enough," other environmental factors, such as those associated with financial means or political contexts, have relatively little bearing on children. However, equally paramount to this is the quality of the emotional affect of the caregivers as transmitted to children – and experienced by the child psychologically.

Rosalía Baena has noted that it is the part of *Lost in Translation* devoted to childhood in which descriptions are most abundant (5). Along with Hoffman's description of her memory of light in her bedroom as a young child, the Paradise chapter contains many other sensorially based descriptions involving nature, in both urban and rural contexts. It is pertinent to connect Hoffman's sensorial descriptiveness associated with early childhood memory to her comments

later in the memoir about Vladimir Nabokov, another émigré writer from Eastern Europe, who draws from sensorially based memory.

Hoffman's reference to Nabokov is significant in that she underlines his privilege as a member of the Russian aristocracy, which enables him to detach himself from social circumstance and focus on individual sensibility and aesthetics to an extent that she cannot. Explaining how he "disdains, in his autobiography to give the Russian Revolution more than a passing mention," giving him the liberty to focus on beauty and "the telling detail," (Hoffman, *Lost* 197) she writes: "I wish I could attain such a world because in part that is our most real, and most loved world – the world of utterly individual sensibility, untrampled by history, or horrid intrusions of social circumstance." Furthermore, characters, "attain the graced amorality of aesthetic objects" (*Lost* 198).

While Hoffman is able, to some extent, to enter into the sensibility she associates with Nabokov, this is largely connected to her early childhood memories prior to her knowledge of the larger world of Polish politics and anti-semitism, and of her parents' experience of the Holocaust. Nabokov's aristocratic privilege, which has similarities to Ondaatje's colonial upbringing in the opportunity it affords him to aestheticize and detach from social circumstance because of his wealth (and which also manifests in highly sensorial "telling detail") was ongoing, even within the context of emigration and exile. Hoffman's social circumstances, as a consequence of her ethnicity and nationality, were more constraining and pressurizing, both during adolescence, when she became aware of them, and later on as a child of immigrants in Canada who had to struggle to make ends meet (she writes of her father peddling junk in Vancouver and working in a sawmill, and of her own summer job in a laundromat).

Hoffman states that she only became aware of her Jewishness at age seven. As Andrew Brown writes, "Most of her Cracow childhood was unaffectedly Polish". Her family, as she explains, was not very religious, observing Passover and going to the synagogue once a year. When she describes going to the synagogue, it is with the detachment of someone who does not identify with the experience, writing that when her parents kiss her and her sister there it is different and formal; "as if they were stamping on our foreheads the seal of an impersonal legacy. For this day we cease being their children and become something larger and smaller" (Hoffman, *Lost* 37). Likewise, in the synagogue, her chanting father is experienced by Hoffman as being in another world: "I feel painfully that he has become inaccessible to me" (*Lost* 36). She further articulates her own experience of estrangement when she recounts being stung by a bee near the synagogue and learning that she is allergic and could die: "I don't know why but this sting under the leafy branches of the synagogue tree becomes my private transaction with Mystery" (*Lost* 38). Hoffman's capitalization of the word mystery highlights spirituality, as opposed to a specific religion as such, one of her few references to the spiritual (another, in her final paragraph, pertains to American spirituality, reminiscent of Emerson,[25] which she treats with some degree of irony).

This example of estrangement, and Hoffman's early awareness of the fragility of life, supports Hirsch's criticism of her Paradise trope to the extent that Hoffman had early life experiences of difference, alienation, and marginality. As Jilani writes, "Hoffman realizes the spaces of home(land) always contained degrees of disorientation within themselves" (3). Wholeness and plenitude were not constant, ongoing states. However, I would argue that

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[25] Hoffman's reminder to herself, "Be here now, I think to myself in the faintly ironic tones in which the phrase is uttered by the likes of me"(*Lost,* 280) is suggestive of a sceptical stance towards the American transcendentalist movement of the mid-19th century.

Hoffman's more challenging early childhood experiences, related to her awareness of religious and ethnic difference from the dominant culture in which she was raised, gave her a capacity to empathize, albeit at times with a resultant psychological cost. For example, in the final section of the memoir, she addresses the subject of grappling with her mother's emotional life in psychoanalysis, an external but also pervasively internalized influence which would have been at once enriching and painful, a "blessing and a terror," as Hoffman herself at one point characterizes her life's multiplicity. Moreover, her most sociologically and morally challenging childhood experiences did not take place during the earliest, most formative, years of childhood, but on the cusp of adolescence and beyond.

An example of Hoffman's capacity for empathy and magnanimity – aspects of the fullness of emotional affect I have referenced – involves a friend of her mother's asking an ignorant question about Jews, which would have occurred during this later period of Hoffman's Polish childhood. While Hoffman recalls her mother's fury, she also relates her own recognition that, "[t]here are other parts to Pani Orlovska, after all, as there are to all the people who have drunk anti-Semitism with their mother's milk, but among whom we live in friendship and even intimacy, and with all the complexities of affection and impatience that those bring" (Hoffman, *Lost* 33). Her understanding of, and ability to live with, the complexities of self – in others but also within her own self – is evidenced by the words of the Canadian writer and intellectual Michael Ignatieff, who has known her since they were at Harvard together. He states: "[S]he doesn't shut off any side of her. Most people who are Polish-Jewish decide to be one or the other. She has decided to be both" (qtd. in Brown). Hoffman's capacity to recognize and understand the multifaceted nature of both the Self and the Other – her capacity for inclusiveness – is empathic and relational; furthermore, as it is collectively informed it is also *cultural,* insofar

as culture can be considered an everyday experience shared by people in a particular time and place (this relates to Sara Ahmed's concept of the stickiness of the emotional and cultural, referenced in Chapter II).

Hoffman's heightened awareness of politics and of the implications of her Jewishness – her awareness of cultural context – develops during the middle years of her childhood, leading up to adolescence. She explains that her mother tells her about anti-semitism and she recounts her own experience, not long before emigration to Canada, of being shouted at by children at school and of having her Jewishness pointed out accusingly by a friend's father after an altercation between his daughter and her. She furthermore details a similarly shaming classroom incident when a girl passes a note asking if she is of "Hebraic faith," to which she writes back, "I'm a Jew" and concludes that, "from that day on, I hate her, and cherish dreams of revenge. Someday I'll be more beautiful, more famous than she. Then she'll see" (*Lost* 33).

Hoffman contextualizes some of these anti-semitic experiences as taking place in the wake of power shifts within Poland, following the death of president Bierut in 1956, and describes an atmosphere of tension in the air with "Poland for the Poles" posters and the new government of Gomulka instituting prayers and religion classes in the schools in 1957. Within this personal and cultural context, Hoffman as adult narrator presents her identification as a girl with her Jewishness, and her construction at that time of a Jewish self alongside her existent Polish one. As she writes, "I gradually come to understand that it is a matter of honor to affirm my Jewishness and to do so with my head held high" (*Lost* 33).

In reconstructing her remembered teenage self, Hoffman revisits her emotional reactions to the prospect of emigration, especially through what was then her idea of Canada as conveyed mostly by an article describing it as a cultural desert. The idea of Canada fills her with "a sort of

horror vacui" (*Lost* 85) and she prefers the idea of moving to Israel, where her boyfriend Marek has emigrated with his family. Hoffman relates spending days in bed crying, thinking of Marek, and of reliving scenes of their togetherness and repeating fantasies:

> The sense of impending loss makes me want to hold on to what I've had with all my might. I stoke up the images of Marek – they are not memories yet, he is too much alive within me – as if my will could make him materialize. Immediately after he leaves I take to my bed for a week and plunge into fits of unstoppable tears… (*Lost* 86).

Hoffman's physical and emotional response to impending emigration takes the additional form of migraines and of making nostalgic weekly pilgrimages to Marek's family's building after they have departed, somatics which were also present in her earlier childhood when she makes reference to spending a year in bed due to what was considered to be self-inflicted malnutrition, reflecting her already heightened emotional life (and indicative of childhood instances of psychosomatic severing).

Emigration robs Hoffman of her imagined future, not only with Marek, but also as a successful pianist. Having begun piano lessons at age eight, and been told she had talent, her relationship with playing the piano, and with her teacher, had taken on a vital importance. The depth of this connection is fully conveyed when she writes:

> It turns out this is the person and room I can least bear to leave; after all, it's here that I've felt most intimately understood; it's here that I've felt most intensely all my hopes for the future; it's here that I've acquired perhaps the only ideal I'll ever really understand – the ideal of an equilibrium between effort and pleasure, between mind and passion, between receptivity and power. (*Lost* 82)

Playing the piano is problematized in relation to emigration in that, while Hoffman continues to have lessons in Vancouver, and to give concerts later at university, she concludes that being a pianist is not valued as highly as a career in the new world as in the old; in a sense, it does not translate well culturally. It is the perceived unviable nature of a career as a pianist that leads Hoffman to ultimately, and after great deliberation, pursue literature. Some of her conflicted inner questioning takes the form of polarized dialogues with parts of herself that take place in the New World section of the narrative.

Part II: Exile, focuses on Hoffman's arrival in Canada and her adolescence in Vancouver, ending with her move to the United States to study at Rice University in Texas. The rejection of Canada *as a purely mental construct* before she left Poland, becomes the rejection of Canada as an experienced reality once she arrives there. She describes her first impressions of the Canadian landscape during the train journey from Halifax to Vancouver as flat and monotonous, but equally rejects the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific Ocean. However, from her position of hindsight decades later, Hoffman the writer analyzes this rejection as stemming from her underlying negative preconceptions at the time, which prevented her from appreciating Canada before truly knowing it: "My soul does not go out to these spectacular sights (the mountains and ocean), which reject me, because I reject them…" (*Lost* 134). Jilani, examining Hoffman's spatial understanding of Canada explains, "Representations of landscape in *Lost in Translation* embody mindsets and emotions as much as they do physical geographies" (4), a concept Sarah Phillips Casteel develops further in regard to Holocaust memory and post memory in connecting Hoffman's rejection of Canada with the transference of Holocaust memory onto Canada. For Casteel, Hoffman's Canada is a "negative valency partly because she transposes the dark affect of received Holocaust memory onto it" (293). Jilani further articulates:

> The Holocaust is an unspoken narrative on the margins of Hoffman's memoir, and only after she assigns Vancouver the representational weight of her displacement does it also call up and take on the weight of her parents' legacy. Her displacement within Canada becomes the immediate scene of exile, but also a signifier of Holocaust memory. It triggers a realisation that 'home', or her Polish identity, was never entirely an originary and final subjecthood. (8)

Hoffman's initial rejection of Canada's landscape becomes an ongoing rejection of its culture as detailed throughout the Exile chapter. This includes her negative impression of the Rosenbergs, a couple with whom she and her family stay upon their arrival in Vancouver, who embody aspects of capitalism and "culturelessness" that she identifies with Canada. She considers Mr Rosenberg, a millionaire, as stingy in expecting her parents to reimburse the train tickets he has paid for and compares the food Mrs Rosenberg offers them with plastic. She finds the decoration of their home flat and lacking in interiority. Flatness, levelled as a criticism, extends not only to the landscape and to the Rosenbergs' home but also to Hoffman's perception of Canadian accents. Given Hoffman's heightened emotional affect, and her valuing of her Jewish-Polish vitality, flatness can be considered the antithesis of what she holds in esteem.

Hoffman details her ongoing remembrances of her experience of Vancouver as a place she dislikes, rejects, and feels alienated from, referencing its culturally bleak, ramshackle, outpost feel, and comparing it with her positive memories of Kraków. Additionally, she describes her experience of marginality in not fitting in with Canadian young people and being ill at ease at teenage parties. Hoffman's Canada, as summed up by Casteel, is "no place" and a "nowhere" (284), standing for "non-assimilation, non-integration, for the irreconcilability of the Old World and the New" (295).

The thirteen-year-old Hoffman's rejection of Canada extends further to a rejection of herself, based on struggling with different cultural standards concerning how to look and be. She explains that, whereas she was considered a pretty young girl in Poland, in Canada she is "less attractive, less graceful, less desirable" and how, seeing a photo of herself, she rejects it: "Alienation is beginning to be inscribed in my flesh and face" (*Lost* 110). She further experiences rejection from her mother, who tells her she is becoming colder, having learned to gesticulate less, to be less tactile and less emotionally expressive. Given that expressiveness and vivacity are Polish traits she values, this disturbs her relationship with her self to the point of nullification: "What do I look like, here? Imperceptible, I think; impalpable, neutral, faceless" (*Lost* 147). Exile is thus a state of erasure for Hoffman; alienation does not only occur in her interface with the exterior world but within herself.

Section II: Selves, Language and Identity

The dislocation and subsequent disorientation Hoffman experiences in relation to her self and her identity, aged thirteen, is understood by the adult-narrator Hoffman as a crisis of meaning. In reconstructing this time, Vancouver is pinpointed as the site of this crisis: "it was here that I fell out of the net of meaning into the weightlessness of chaos" (*Lost* 151). Chaos is described as an experience of decentring: "The reference points inside my head are beginning to do a flickering dance. I suppose this is the most palpable meaning of displacement. I have been dislocated from my own centre of the world" (*Lost* 132).

As explained by Anita Jarczok, under "normal" experiences, such as those of Hoffman's life prior to the life altering experience of emigration, our brains have a natural propensity to put random pieces – the normal chaos of life – together into a logical whole. Emigration, as Jarczok

explains, undermined the capacities of a brain that was unprepared (“Reconstructing” 23). This aligns with Frank’s chaos narrative, referenced in my chapter on Ondaatje, in which suffering, mental and/or physical, stems from a lack of control. Hoffman articulates her unpreparedness as a state in which there is a virtual absence of identity. There are few mental structures, or frameworks, within which to function. This state of absence, or naiveté, is also one that is associated with positive attachments that are present but unquestioned, and of which she is largely unaware. Remembering her thirteen-year-old self about to leave Kraków for Gydnia and the ocean liner to Canada, she explains: “I hardly have an identity, except the most powerful one of first, private loves” (Hoffman, *Lost* 88). This understanding suggests that identifications do not fully emerge until they are put into question, which occurs when Hoffman experiences dislocation and a severing of identity through emigration.

A turning point in Hoffman’s life in a new language is the imposition at school of an English name to replace her Polish one. Her Polish name Ewa is anglicized to Eva and her sister’s Alina to Elaine (*Lost* 104). Given that both Eva and her sister were named for family members killed in the Holocaust (Ewa for their two grandmothers and her sister for their aunt) the erasure of their given names touches upon a deep and painful family history. The new names are detached from, and objectify, them and, as Elizabeth Kella observes, “naming Eva from Ewa precipitates an identity crisis that is inseparable from a crisis in language” (11).

The affective, felt aspect of this identity crisis can be extrapolated from when Hoffman writes about her acquisition of English vocabulary and of her perception of English words as cold. Using the example of the Polish word for river as having evocative, accumulative associations, she writes that the English word “river” does not have an aura giving off the “radiating haze of connotation” (Hoffman, *Lost* 107). On the one hand, as an adult narrator, she

uses academic, structuralist language to explain that, "[t]he problem is that the signifier has become severed from the signified" (*Lost* 106), language the teenage self she is writing about would not have used. On the other hand, she describes the experience deeply, existentially, and sensorially: "This radical disjoining between word and thing is a desiccating alchemy, draining the world not only of significance but of its colours, striations, nuances – its very existence. It is the loss of a living connection" (*Lost* 107).

Hoffman's last words testify to the embodied aspect of language and of her visceral loss of Polish words. This loss of a first language, to the extent that it ceases to be her language of daily functioning, and her gaining of a second language, which becomes that of her public self but also, eventually, that of her inner self as well, is an experience that neither Goodison nor Ondaatje share. Their relationship to language is one of greater singularity in that they live and write in their first language. However, their relationship with language is complex and nuanced in that they were each raised and educated in more than one variety of English; in Goodison's case, the Englishes of Jamaica, Canada, and the US, along with Jamaican Creole and the British English of her Anglican school education, and in Ondaatje's case the English of Colonial Ceylon and of his schooling in England and the Canadian English of his university education and life in Canada. Theirs are trajectories of language acquisition, while Hoffman's is not only one of acquisition but of the loss of her mother tongue as the language of her everyday life:

> It's not that we all want to speak the King's English, but whether we speak Appalachian or Harlem English, or Cockney, or Jamaican Creole, we want to be at home in our tongue. (*Lost* 124)

In psychoanalytic terms, Hoffman's narrative evidences that, as a result of the loss of identity and meaning that occurred through emigration and, before this, that arose from the

ensuing ground zero state in which a unified unquestioned sense of self no longer existed, a process of self-construction began to emerge. Firstly, an observer or meta-self began to arise from the chaotic, ground zero fragmentation. This self allowed her to detach from that with which she did not identify in Canada.

Initially, the field upon which this formation took place was that of human, social interaction to which she felt alienated:

> Since I don't have the ordinary pleasures of sociability, of play, I turn inward with a vengeance. The only self that matters, I decide, is a sort of universal, pure, quintessential self that can hover above all the actual, daily events like a bird suspended in midair. (Hoffman, *Lost* 138)

She determines that, because she is unable to participate externally, she can have subjective, "internal goods" (*Lost* 137). As Rosalía Baena summarizes, "In Exile, Hoffman becomes more self-reflexive as she discovers her inner world, where she finds self-realization, independently from the hostile outer world" (5).

Hoffman's subjective, observer, world is one that begins to receive external validation at school where her immigrant status leads her to be considered an authority on some political subjects; communism in particular. Being "an immigrant," she writes, "I begin to learn, is considered a sort of location in itself – and sometimes a highly advantageous one at that" (*Lost* 133). She speaks up in the classroom, is interviewed by a radio station for her immigrant perspectives and, after winning a speech contest, travels on a bus to the United Nations in New York. As Jilani writes: "*Lost In Translation* recounts a life of constant adjustments and re-orientations of the Self where the anchoring concept of 'home' cannot denote a centre upon which (their) multiple displacements can be tethered" (2). Being an immigrant, as Hoffman has

explained, is one of these displacements on which location, while not "home" and while not firmly "anchored," is tenuously "tethered."

Hoffman dates her trip to New York to her fourteenth year, when she has been in Canada for a mere year, and she estimates that, at this time, she has a limited vocabulary though she reports using it with gusto: "I have an active vocabulary of about six hundred words, but it doesn't occur to me that I should mince any of them" (*Lost* 133). It is thus not long after she has arrived in Canada that Hoffman's "Life in a New Language" not only begins but accelerates rapidly.

It is through learning a new language that Hoffman constructs a new identity in which there is no longer a sense of a singular self, but of multiple selves. A pivotal event at the outset of this process, and in Hoffman's narration, is when she is given a diary as a birthday gift by a Canadian friend. While Hoffman does not speculate about diaries as cultural artifacts, the writing of diaries, as detailed in my chapter on memoir as a genre, is associated with societies in which the individual, rather than the collective, is emphasized; Hoffman was raised in a communal, collective culture before emigrating to an individually-based one. She details being conflicted between writing in Polish or English, explaining that she is unable to use the word "I" and that, "Polish is becoming a dead language, the language of an untranslatable past" (*Lost* 120). This leads her to conclude that if she is to write in the language of the present she has to write in English even though it is "not the language of the self" (*Lost* 121). Herewith, she echoes the assertion by Alfred Kazin that, "to speak a foreign language is to depart from yourself" (Kazin qtd. in Jarczok, "Reconstructing" 21). Given that this new language is necessary for life in a new culture, it is foundational to Hoffman's construction of a new identity.

Hoffman analyzes her inner struggles with English:

> I learn English through writing, and, in turn, writing gives me a written self. Refracted through the double distance of English and writing, this self – my English self – becomes oddly objective; more than anything, it perceives. It exists more easily in the abstract sphere of thoughts and observations than in the world. For a while, this impersonal self, this cultural negative capability, becomes the truest thing about me. When I write, I have a real existence that is proper to the act of writing – an existence that takes place midway between me and the sphere of artifice, art, pure language. This language is beginning to invent another me. (*Lost* 121)

Jarczok writes of this English/writing self that it is presented as more serious, mature, and intellectual than her Polish self since her diary written in English does not record "sentimental effusions of rejected love, eruptions of familial anger, or consoling broodings about death" (Hoffman, *Lost* 121). Instead, it consists of "reflections on the ugliness of wrestling; on the elegance of Mozart, and on how Dostoyevsky puts me in mind of El Greco" (*Lost* 121). Writing a diary, as Jarczok explains, gives Hoffman the chance to create meaning out of disorienting circumstances by providing a space for detachment (Jarczok, "Reconstructing" 27).

One of the advantages of writing and speaking a foreign language, Hoffman perceives, is that it facilitates clear thought and is conducive to abstraction. As she explains:

> [M]y mind, relatively deprived of words, has become a deft instrument of abstraction. In my head, there is no ongoing, daily monologue to distract me, no layers of verbal filigree to peel away before the skeleton of an argument can become clear. Without this sensuous texturing, the geometries of my own perceptions have become as naked to me as the exposed girders of a building before the actual building hides them. (*Lost* 180)

As Hoffman achieves higher education, her vocabulary increases, as evidenced in the above passage where she is writing about her limited vocabulary while employing an already extensive one. As Baena has noted, her knowledge of language and self are simultaneously reflected in the narrative, with more and more digressions on the role of language and translation in the formation of her identity (5). Her digression about abstract thought, for instance, takes place during the part of her narrative where she writes about her education at Rice University and the environment of "New Criticism" which she describes as prizing detachment, objectivity, and the critical, rather than the sympathetic, faculties. Hoffman uses discourses popular among American intellectuals and academics in the 1980s – structuralism, post-structuralism, psychoanalysis – to capture the changes her identity has undergone in relation to the switch of a language. Later, when she describes, "[T]alking herself into Harvard" (Hoffman, *Lost* 201), it is obvious that her linguistic skills have already been finely and keenly tuned.

In tracing her linguistic path from the ground zero point where she has no interior language, to finishing graduate school at Harvard, Hoffman identifies a turning point when she was teaching literature and analysing T.S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." She explains that it is then that English becomes embodied to the same extent as her first language, but in a way that is better. It is through poetics, which connect the sensorial with layers of meaning that she is able to relate to and apprehend words in a richer, fuller way. She suddenly feels that "words become, as they were in childhood, beautiful things – except this is better, because they're now crosshatched with a complexity of meaning, with the sonorities of felt, sensuous thought" (Hoffman, *Lost* 186). As Jarczok notes, this is the point where her two main selves – the Polish-speaking and the English-speaking – begin to co-exist peacefully (Jarczok 31). Words as constitutive elements of the self become, as considered by Joyce, sensuous objects

and, “by associating and linking them together, we create our own world” (Jay, *Self-Representation* 128).

At numerous points in her narrative, Hoffman compares the achievement of peaceful, co-existing selves to a mosaic of diverse fragments, suggesting the final construction of a whole. While her Polish and English-speaking selves are the primary ones, with her original Polish self revived and reclaimed through writing about it in English, there are other sub-selves, such as her public one, which she describes as “the most American thing about me; after all, I acquired it here” (*Lost* 251) At the same time, this wholeness is not the original one of singularity: “there’s no returning to the point of origin, no regaining of childhood unity” (*Lost* 273).

It is in the last chapter, “The New World,” that Hoffman describes a state of belonging she has arrived at after finishing her studies and living in New York. While at university she experiences an “equalizing space” (*Lost* 172), and while it is also within this environment that she experiences the democratizing power of literature that she credits with making her feel at home in America, it is also related to this time that she details what she calls immigrant rage directed at her closest friends and at the culture. Some of this conflict, both internal and external, is presented in the form of inner dialogues referenced earlier in which her emotional and rational selves engage in active combat. It is later, when she describes her participation in a glittering literary party in New York, and at the very end of the memoir when she describes being in a park with a close friend, that she conveys a comprehensive and complete sense of belonging: “I fit, and my surroundings fit me” (*Lost* 170).

While at the literary party this belonging is tempered by a sense of arbitrariness related to her awareness of the relativity of cultural meanings, the sense of belonging Hoffman associates with her friend and the park is more rooted and sensorial. In relating the former, she references

the ancient Greeks' process of triangulation whereby from two points of a triangle drawn in the sand they tried to extrapolate the moon's distance from the earth, using it to describe her own "removed, abstract promontory" on the Upper West Side of New York, the city's apex from which she has "just one arbitrary version of reality" (*Lost* 170). In the park, on the other hand, she describes a more transcendent (while at the same time physically rooted) sense of belonging:

> Right now, this is the place where I'm alive. How could there be any other place? Be here now, I think to myself in the faintly ironic tones in which the phrase is uttered by the likes of me. Then the phrase dissolves. The brilliant colours are refracted by the sun. The small space of garden expands into the dimensions of peace. (*Lost* 280)

In this way, Hoffman ends her narrative on a note of serenity, in which the different facets of her identity are aligned in harmony, albeit a state she also perceives from an observer stance of irony.

Section III: Memory and Emotional Affect

In writing a narrative of her past, Hoffman creates a reconstructed version of past events and of herself. "Herself," as I have illustrated, is constituted of different selves and through narrative she examines, makes sense of, and comes to terms with, these disparate pieces; what Danielle Schaub calls "facets to the diamond of identity" ("Loss and Disorientation" 107). Memory, as a part of this process, is an unstable faculty insofar as it is fluid and ever-changing and, moreover, selective. Referencing the memory research of P.L. O'Connell, Florence Sutton-Manders writes, "[A]lthough the past may have happened a certain way, we can only remember it through all the distortions that we know memory to involve as well as with its empowering and enabling creativity" (4).

An aspect of memory's capacities that Sutton-Manders further references is its emotional charge, which in Hoffman's writing is keenly present. Throughout *Lost in Translation,* memory and emotion are tightly intertwined to the extent that emotional affect is one of the memoir's most salient features. As the literary critic Andy Mousley asserts, "Feeling is at the heart – is the heart – of Hoffman's autobiography" (108). Its infusive presence, I will argue, is a consequence of a complexity of factors, ranging from Hoffman's Jewish-Polish background, which she describes as having a vitality she considers absent from the Canadian environment of her teenage years in Vancouver, to the power of received Holocaust memory, to her nature and personality as presented in the narrative of her early childhood in Poland.

As previously mentioned, *Lost in Translation* begins with a departure, which is experienced by Hoffman's remembered and reconstructed thirteen-year-old self entirely as an ending. Her primary emotions are deep sadness and pain, arising from an overwhelming experience of loss. The intensity of these emotions, and the articulation of Hoffman's affective experience that, throughout the trajectory of her narrative encompasses a broad register (not merely the negative emotions but positive ones such as excitement and joy), underpins the memoir as a whole. At the same time, *Lost in Translation*'s emotional terrain of memory is intellectualized, coincident with the process of bringing the unconscious to consciousness. Filtered and articulated through Hoffman's educated, intellectual lens, it is suffused with intelligence and discernment. Emotions can also be conceptualized broadly, as a consequence of Hoffman's multifaceted and multicultural experiences, in the way Kella conceptualizes them, referencing Sara Ahmed, as "cultural practices, capable of being elicited by language use, that move or affect us in particular ways" (Kella 14).

Hoffman's writing, as well as being influenced by her culture and education, is further informed by an experience of psychoanalysis, which she primarily references during the latter part of her narrative when she situates herself in New York. Leading up to her directly described experience with a psychoanalyst, are musings about Polish versus American mothers, and distances – geographical and otherwise – in America as "the salient thing" (Hoffman, *Lost* 267). In a merging of these two abstract and personal elements, she indicates that her mother (and her sister) continues to live on the west coast, in Vancouver, while she lives on the east. She refers to how, because of geographical distance, the drama between them has become psychological: "in battling her, I battle ghosts, and those have the tendency to become both bigger and more insubstantial than life. It takes longer to catch them, stare them in the face, divest them of their charge and their mystique" (*Lost* 267). Recounting that she tells her mother she has decided to go to a "shrink," she includes her mother's dismissive and acerbic reaction which, in light of other Polish perspectives on psychology Hoffman has articulated, can also be seen as a response typical of her home of origin where psychoanalysis was not a part of the surrounding culture. She explains: "'Identity,' for my Polish friends, is not a category of daily thought, not an entity etched in their minds in high relief" (*Lost* 263). This absence, culturally and otherwise, of self-analysis has parallels in a comment made by Ondaatje who, when asked in an interview about the preponderance of small time criminals in his work, replies, perhaps flippantly, "I should probably go to a shrink one of these days and have a serious talk with them" ("In Warlight").

In contrast to the Poland of her upbringing, Hoffman says of America that "[i]dentity is the number-one problem here" (*Lost* 262). Hoffman presents psychoanalysis as a means of confronting the problematics of identity she experiences as a Polish-American. Indeed, *Lost in Translation* as a work can be viewed as a site for Hoffman's construction of identity as she both

reconstructs her Polish identity and aligns it with her new English-language American one, informed by her experience of psychoanalysis. One of the fields on which this construction takes place is that of emotion. While her mother does not control her own emotions, Hoffman describes becoming adept at doing so. She writes contrastingly of her mother and herself, firstly saying of her mother: "[she] cannot imagine tampering with her feelings, which are the most authentic part of her, which are her. She suffers her emotions as if they were forces of nature, winds and storms and volcanic eruptions" (*Lost* 269). This unfettered propensity to be emotional has parallels with Doris Harvey's expression of emotion, detailed in Chapter II, which can be considered generationally. Contrastingly, Hoffman says of herself, the second generation, one that "needs" emotional control more than the first one, due to pressures on the individual:

> I don't allow myself to be blown about this way and that helplessly; I've learned how to use the mechanisms of my will, how to look for symptom and root cause before sadness or happiness overwhelm me. I've gained some control, and control is something I need more than my mother did. I have more of a public life, in which it's important to appear strong. I live in an individualistic society, in which people blend less easily with each other. (*Lost* 269)

It is Hoffman's Polish self that is unquestionably her emotional one and the one that she retrieves and revives through the process of writing. As she frequently alludes to, her English-language self is her colder, more formal, intellectual and public one. Remembering her thirteen-year-old self on the deck of the ocean liner, about to depart Poland for Canada, she revisits and reconstructs her emotional depths:

> When the brass band on the shore strikes up the jaunty mazurka rhythms of the Polish anthem, I am pierced by a youthful sorrow so powerful that I suddenly stop crying and

> try to hold still against the pain…a whole new geography of emotions, an annunciation of how much an absence can hurt. Or a premonition of absence, because at this divide, I'm filled to the brim with what I'm about to lose – images of Cracow, which I loved as one loves a person, of the sun-baked villages where we had taken summer vacations, of the hours I spent poring over passages of music with my piano teacher, of conversations and escapades with friends. (*Lost* 4)

The immediacy of present tense narration and Hoffman's expression of sorrow, pain, hurt and loss, along with her love of the home she is leaving, convey the drama of departure. Emigration, she writes, is a notion "of such crushing, definitive finality that to me it might as well mean the end of the world" (*Lost* 3). Insofar as psychological trauma[26] is the result of an overwhelming amount of stress that exceeds one's ability to cope, or integrate the emotions involved, with that experience, Hoffman's experience as a thirteen-year-old girl can be considered one of trauma. Her life prior to her departure for Canada had not prepared her for the enormity of change – it was an event that through its very nature could not have been prepared for; such wholesale loss can never be prepared for when you are thirteen. Moreover, those who could theoretically have prepared her in some way for the life-altering change – her parents – had themselves suffered from unspeakable losses that they were each struggling with emotionally, in different ways.

Hoffman writes that her father was largely silent: "My father almost never mentions the war; dignity for him is silence" (*Lost* 23), while her mother, being intensely expressive, was the opposite. Hoffman was thus predisposed to an acute emotional – traumatic – response to emigration through her experience of her parents' transmission of psychological states

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[26] The presence of trauma in the three memoirs will be elaborated on in Chapter VI where I explore the effects of geographical displacement.

(particularly that of her mother) resulting from the trauma of the Holocaust, alongside other contributing elements in the formation of her thirteen-year-old self.

Hoffman's parents lost their entire families in the Holocaust: their own parents, sisters, brothers, cousins, uncles, and aunts (Hoffman, *After* 3). Hoffman writes that it was the death of her mother's younger sister that aroused her mother's most alive pain and that this pain surfaced in Hoffman's presence when she was a young child, sometimes causing what would be an otherwise beautiful day to be inhabited with grief and sorrow:

> It's the middle of a sun-filled day, but suddenly, while she's kneading some dough, or perhaps sewing up a hole in my sweater's elbow, my mother begins to weep softly "This is the day when she died," she says, looking at me with pity as if I too were included in her sorrow. "I can't stop thinking about her." (Hoffman, *Lost* 6)

Later in the chapter, Hoffman describes the ways in which she was not only a witness to her mother's sorrow but a receptacle for it, receiving it in all of its subjective complexity (a parallel, as previously mentioned, with Goodison and her mother but markedly different from Ondaatje's relationship with his mother, which is barely addressed, and that with his father which involved little time together and considerable unknowingness). Underpinning Hoffman's receptivity – her holding and keeping of memory – were moral and ethical values she was raised to uphold as a matter of responsibility in respect to her family's past and the Holocaust. As she writes, "Morality is not separable from affect" (*After* xiii). Just as Hoffman identifies with her Jewishness when her awareness of it has been raised by her mother during the time of political change in Poland leading up to their emigration, so too does she identify with ethical values at that time. Remembering the strength of her convictions as an eleven-year-old, she writes: "Justice is justice. Truth is truth" (*Lost* 35). Yet, as a child, she did not have the mental structures

to allow her to fully manage how to deal with such psychological complexity, putting her in a complicated situation subjectively that takes the form of inner conflict:

> My mother wants me to know what happened, and I keep every detail of what she tells me in my memory like black beads. It's a matter of honor to remember, like affirming one's Jewishness. But I don't understand what I remember. To atone for what happened, I should relive it all with her, and I try. No, not really. I can't go as near this pain as I should. But I can't draw away from it either. (*Lost* 25)

The ongoing presence of this psychological pain later in her life is detailed by Hoffman's narration of an encounter years later with someone who told her about her father carrying her mother many kilometres after she had had a miscarriage: "As I listen, I lower my head in acknowledgement that this – the pain of this – is where I come from, and that it's useless to try to get away" (*Lost* 25).

Hoffman's comparison of received memory with black beads underlines not only its darkness, the interiorized darkness of the Holocaust, but also its hardness, making it unmalleable, impossible to loosen. Furthermore, the image of beads is associated with the sanctity of religion. Emotional pain is a presence that she must negotiate – "the ground of personhood" as she describes it (*After* 13). It is connected with fear, which she also traces to transmission by her mother: "I inherit some of this fear" (*Lost* 7).

Hoffman has elaborated extensively on the generational transmission of fear and other emotional states in *After Such Knowledge,* examining the effects of this transmission and the second generation's responsibilities to its received memories. She writes that she took in her parents' memories as a sort of fairy tale, "deriving not so much from another world as from the centre of the cosmos: an enigmatic but real fable" (6) describing them as embodiments of

psychic matter, "too awful to be processed and assimilated" (7). The force of an internalized past is such that, "[t]he pain of their psyches reverberated in my body almost as if it were mine" (14) which she expresses in *After Such Knowledge*: "Clearly, the strongest form of transmission is the earliest… maternal states are conveyed to the child through body, gesture, ways of holding gaze…" (61).

Hoffman details the externalization of embodied psychic pain – her own and that of her parents – in its language of gestures and sounds. She references her father's violent gestures with his powerful arms when telling the story of his escape from the Gestapo and her mother's weeping, as well as her own crying spells and her nightmares. She also recounts being removed from school for a whole year owing to what was attributed to self-willed malnutrition. From the perspective of her adult, psychoanalytically informed, self she contextualizes her refusal to eat with the period in which she was born and raised, describing it as a refusal to inherit the earth, common among post-war children. Referring to the liminal presence of the horrors of the past that she was already made aware of as a child, she says, "Every survivor's child has such images available right behind the eyelids" (*Lost* 12).

Despite the embodied weight of the transmitted past, Hoffman associates her experience of fear in its most acute and tangible form with the trauma of emigration and the nightmares that succeed it, describing a state of terror that she labels "the Big Fear." While her knowledge of the Holocaust is received knowledge, that of the "Big Fear" is firsthand and direct, and thus additionally visceral. She describes it as a psychic state resulting from a psyche forcibly pried from its structures:

> The primal scream of my birth into the New World is a mutative insight of a negative kind – and I know that I can never lose the knowledge it brings me. The black,

> bituminous terror of the dream solders itself into the chemical base of my being – and from then on, fragments of the fear lodge themselves in my consciousness, thorns and pinpricks of anxiety, loose electricity floating in a psyche that has been forcibly pried from its structures. Eventually, I become accustomed to it; I know that it comes, and that it also goes; but when it hits with full force, in its pure form, I call it the Big Fear." (*Lost* 104*)*

Hoffman's use of the word "pried" echoes her statement at the beginning of her narrative that, as a teenager leaving Poland, she doesn't want to be "pried out of (her) childhood" (*Lost* 4), while the black, bituminous terror also harkens back to her description of transmitted memory of the Holocaust as black beads.

The subject of the "Big Fear" is one Hoffman returns to in a later part of her narrative, which centres around the time of leaving home for university and her experience of expectations around success. She details being psychologically driven and getting a scholarship to Rice university in Houston, and the pressurized feeling that she'd better do well "or else" and that "no battle will ever be as hard as the one I wage with the dangers in my head" (*Lost* 157), a form of pressurization that is common among the children of first-generation immigrants such as hers.[27] Hoffman concludes that she ultimately learns to live with the "Big Fear" by accepting it as something that comes and goes.

Viewed psychoanalytically, the weight of expectation placed upon her can be seen as emanating, not only from her immigrant experience, but from her parents' unfulfilled wishes in their own lives being placed upon their first child. Hoffman writes that her father treats her like a

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[27] This pressurization is documented, for instance, in Saw, Anne, Howard Berenbaum and Sumie Okazaki. "Influences of personal standards and perceived parental expectations on worry for Asian American and White American college students." *Anxiety Stress Coping*, vol. 26, no. 2, 2013, pp. 187-202.

boy and that her mother wanted her to have the life she couldn't have and, for this reason, gave importance to education and music rather than domestic skills. She explains that her mother was a prize pupil but never went to university and was not allowed to study the violin as she had wanted to (*Lost* 9). As a result of the importance her mother gave to music, and her own lack of opportunity, Hoffman began piano lessons at age eight:

> Piano lessons are part of my parents' ambitions for giving their children the better things in life. …Besides, who knows, maybe there's a prodigy among us? Having musical talent is an avenue of success open to everyone; if one of us turns out to have sufficient quantities of it, we may achieve that meteoric ascent from ordinariness to fame and glamour that all of us, not so secretly, dream of. (*Lost* 67)

Playing the piano is not only connected with avenues of success but to the emotions and their *language*, which also has to do with her relationship to her teacher: "When Pani G sits down to play a simple melody for me – well, it's instant love" (*Lost* 69). She goes on: "In this intimate, one-to-one apprenticeship – an apprenticeship mediated through the objective correlative of music – they teach me something about the motions and the conduct of my inner life." The teacher, she feels, is "trying, indirectly, to teach me the language of the emotions" (*Lost* 70). As she progresses to pieces by Mozart or Chopin or Beethoven, Hoffman begins to feel in possession of "enormous, oceanic passions" (*Lost* 71) and she tells Marek, the boy with whom she has a special closeness, that music gives her the capacity to know how anyone in the world feels.

Hoffman's capacity for emotional perspicacity and depth, as evidenced in her writing, can thus be connected not only to her received emotional memory of the Holocaust, transmitted largely by her mother, but also her education in music along with her education in literature. In

her rejection of Canada (where she continues with her training in piano) she also rejects what she perceives as a lack of emotion in Canadian culture. As Mousley explains:

> Cultural difference gets to Hoffman above all because the difference, as she experiences it, between Polish and North American cultures is the emotional extravagance and vitality of the former contrasted with what she perceives to be the more muted, sometimes barren, emotional landscape of the latter. (Mousley 109)

Hoffman's difficulty in aligning Poland and Canada comes across in her inability to reply to the letters from the family's Polish maid once in Canada, with whom she had a relationship of affective attachment. Hoffman refers to the pain of nostalgia and the too different world of Canada. Different languages shape what can and cannot be expressed and the use of a foreign language is associated with psychological distance. Alongside the vision of her young, emotionally charged Polish self, reconstructed in her narrative, is Hoffman's more abstract, detached English self. However, her new life in English ultimately gives her not only this binary, double-vision but ultimately, in the complexity of her experiences – linguistic, emotional, ethnic, and cultural, among others – a plurality of vision and of selves. In the final analysis, as well, this multiplicity is one with which she makes peace in the emplacement achieved through the transcription of her narrative.

Hoffman's plurality of vision and her achievement of a more expansive selfhood are aspects of the coming of age trope of her memoir, referenced earlier in this chapter. In this respect *Lost in Translation* is archetypal of what Edward Said has called "beginning texts," narratives that are about, and that at the same time seek to enact, the individual's search for a new beginning for the self, that serve the purpose of "forging the beginning" of their authors' careers (Said, *Beginnings* 45). Emplacement in her career is one of the forms Hoffman's

emplacement in writing takes. Other forms of emplacement and, with them, senses of belonging (and the absence thereof), will be explored in the following three chapters, beginning with emplacement in nature, the subject of Chapter V.

Chapter V: Childhood and the Ecological Self

> There was a child went forth every day,
>
> And the first object he look'd upon, that object he became,
>
> And that object became part of him for the day or a certain part
>
> of the day,
>
> Or for many years or stretching cycles of years.
>
> The early lilacs became part of this child,
>
> –Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*

In this chapter I will focus on the three memoirs of my study through the lens of nature and place, specifically the influence of time spent in contact with the natural world during childhood on the development of the creative and poetic sensibilities of the three writers. I consider an understanding of foundational place and home of origin relationships, attachments and identifications, crucial to a full and holistic understanding of the memoirs, especially in regard to language and to questions of self and selfhood. As a tool or means of facilitating this understanding, I will use as a fundamental resource the social scientist Edith Cobb's *The Ecology of Imagination in Childhood* (1977), a seminal work in its presentation of ideas vital to the subject of how time in nature during childhood, be it in rural or urban environments, can affect adult perception, emotions, behaviour and cognition throughout life. It concerns such matters as the ways in which spontaneous encounters with the natural world and free play benefit the development of the brain/mind/psyche; the self as it interfaces with the other in a process of identification and identity formation; and the validation of the sensory. At their core, Cobb's

ideas are about the ways in which the imagination is, or can be, formed during childhood and how it can serve as a source of creativity in adulthood. Given that memory is a fundamental aspect of the memoirs, it is nature and place as they intersect not only with the imagination but with the imagination *through memory* that is critical to my examination of the works. As the philosopher Gaston Bachelard states, connecting the imagination with the physicality of the brain, (and, in turn, the humanistic with the scientific, as Cobb herself does) "it is as though the imagination creates a nerve fibre" (xxvi).

The degree to which I include Cobb's work as a fundamental resource may, at times, give it the appearance of being a fourth book in my corpus. This is not my intention. While *The Ecology of Imagination in Childhood* forms a significant part of this thesis' whole, its importance is secondary. Its relevance lies in Cobb's study of hundreds of autobiographical works, including memoirs, and the conclusions that she drew. These concern important conceptualizations of self-formation that view the self as integrated into a larger natural and social environment upon which it depends, and from which it can only analytically separate itself. These considerations, textual examples of which have been evidenced throughout this thesis, as in Hoffman's articulation of the problematics of selfhood, explored in Chapter IV, are pertinent in regard to selfhood, language and, more specifically, poetics.

In my presentation of Cobb's theories I will consult the findings of the ecologist and academic Louise Chawla who has revisited and reappraised Cobb's mid-twentieth century work in recent decades through her own research-based studies. Cobb's *The Ecology of Imagination in Childhood* has been their acknowledged inspiration and the springboard of Chawla's research. Chawla's findings largely support those of Cobb but also go beyond them in their nuance, relating them to the twenty-first century. As well as Chawla, I will draw from the work of other

contemporary ecologists and ecopsychologists whose work, roughly half a century onwards, has strong affinities with Cobb's. Nonetheless, Cobb's pioneering *The Ecology of Imagination in Childhood* is the fulcrum around which the structure of this chapter will largely pivot; Chawla's work can be considered a newer version of the fulcrum, with insights relevant to the contemporary context of the memoirs.

This chapter consists of three sections. Section I: The Ecology of Imagination and Childhood Attachments encompasses a detailed presentation of Cobb and Chawla, as well as an overview of attachment theory, pertinent to childhood attachments to people and places both. Section II: Nature and the Memoirs provides a close reading of the memoirs in which each stands on its own in relation to the subject of nature. Section III: The Memoirs and The Ecological Self adds contemporary eco-psychological perspectives to conceptualizations of selfhood. It is my view that an examination of humans in relationship to nature cannot preclude or exempt psychological considerations; hence, this eco-psychological standpoint. Furthermore, my work as a psychotherapist inevitably informs my thinking. As stated in the introduction, mine is a multidisciplinary approach with a particular bridging of the literary with the psychological and psychoanalytical. It is also an approach that asserts Rita Felski's honouring of the reader's implication in the texts she reads (Felski, *Uses*). Just as the geographer Jon Anderson underlines that cultural geographers focus on a wide range of contexts, "not simply the material but the non-material, for instance, emotional spaces, language spaces or virtual spaces" (13), so too does my examination of the memoirs through the vertex of nature and place take psychological and emotional factors, among others, into account. As the philosopher Edward Casey states, "[W]e can no longer distinguish neatly between physical and personal identity… place is regarded as

constitutive of the self...The relationship between self and place is not just one of reciprocal influence… but also, more radically, of constitutive co-ingredience" (683-693).

Section I: The Ecology of Imagination in Childhood and Childhood Attachments

To approach a presentation of Cobb it is important to first take into consideration the historical context from which her work emerged, particularly the predominantly male world of academia and science in which she began her research and writing in the 1940's, and to which she was an outsider. Cobb entered this milieu as an educated mother of two, passionate about learning. Her fieldwork through the New York School of Social Work, based upon the observation of children at play, was preceded by the experience she had with her own children along with extensive, multidisciplinary reading. On the one hand, she did not belong to the academy; on the other, she had intimate, first-hand experience with young children that her male counterparts would not have had and that gave her particular insights into child psychology. It was in her close observation of children interacting with their environments through free form play – as opposed to, for instance, game playing – and in her relating that to broader questions of the self and creativity, that she was a pioneer. Furthermore, she derived encouragement from another woman, the anthropologist Margaret Mead (1901-1978), who was herself an outlier, and pioneer, in what was then the male dominated field of anthropology. These details are relevant in light of the struggles Cobb had in putting forth her ideas and in publishing them in a pre-feminist era. It is also relevant that Cobb underwent psychoanalysis, as Hoffman has done, and that psychoanalysis to some extent informed her work. *The Ecology of Imagination in Childhood,* a slim volume, was her sole book, published posthumously in 1977, the year of her death.

The psychoanalytically informed underpinning of Cobb's work, however minor or opaque, is one she shares with Hoffman (and that I share through my work as a psychotherapist), and that is absent from the work of Goodison and Ondaatje. Cobb's position is fundamentally one of liminality or in-betweenness, not only in her multiplidisciplinarity, but in regard to gender through her experience as a middle aged mother engaging with academia at a time when this was groundbreaking (the 1940's). The challenges this undoubtedly entailed are supported by Sally Schauman's referencing of a nervous breakdown Cobb suffered during a transitional period between her daughter leaving home and her New York School of Social Works studies, and by her embarking on psychoanalysis at this time (Schauman 197-199).

From a broad, historical perspective, Cobb's work can be seen as belonging to a philosophy of nature whereby nature is considered to be within each person and its realization is considered a form of expression; that which Charles Taylor calls "expressivism" (374). This is closely tied to the idea of a self whereby each individual is seen as different and individual and includes a cosmic dimension, to which Cobb, influenced by the psychologist Erik Erikson's concept of cosmic play[28] (the importance of play is further underlined by the psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott whose work I discuss later in this chapter), adheres, whereby source is seen not only as nature within but linked with the larger sphere of life. This coincides with the Romantic period of the late eighteenth century and stands in opposition to the instrumental stance of objectifying nature associated with Enlightenment disengagement. It is exemplified by Wordsworth's words: "I was often unable to think of external things as having external existence, and I communed with all that I saw as something not apart from, but inherent in, my

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[28] Erik Erikson (1902-1994) was a German-American developmental psychologist and psychoanalyst who studied childhood play extensively and believed in its importance.

own immaterial nature" (Wordsworth qtd. in Taylor 300). Cobb was deeply influenced by Wordsworth, whose *Prelude* (1850) she quotes and draws from in the naming of her first chapter, "Prelude to a Method," as well as by the other Romantic poets, especially Keats and Whitman. Along with literary sources, she was influenced by the scientific currents of her time, evidenced by the diverse range of scientists whose work she references: the aforementioned Erik Erikson; the physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer; the ecologist Edward Smith Deevey; the zoologist Konrad Lorenz; the ornithologist William Thorpe and others, not to mention Charles Darwin and Sigmund Freud (whose theories about the latency period of childhood and regression she contested – she viewed adults as "returning" to childhood not "regressing" – considering Freud's perspectives excessively negative). As Shaun McNiff, the academic who provides the forward for the 1993 edition of *The Ecology of Imagination in Childhood* explains, Cobb was a multi-disciplined person with interests spanning philosophy, poetry, diverse scientific disciplines, ecology, art, child studies and psychoanalysis, among others (x). Mead, who wrote the introduction, underlines Cobb's incorporation of these in her work when she writes that Cobb "was both living and breathing in the emerging climate of opinion that was to insist on a closer relationship between the humanities and the sciences" (*Ecology* 9).

Concerning Cobb and her influences, it is pertinent to consider the theory of resonance developed by the literary scholar Wai Chee Dimock which counters the commonly held view of synchronistic historicism, whereby a work's resonance is considered to be entirely contained in one slice of time, usually the period of its appearance. Dimock theorizes the text as a temporal continuum through which it endures. Cobb's work remains relevant and one of the ways it endures is not only in itself as an entity to be read and reread, but through contemporary eco-theory in which can be seen a recycling and reformulating of her ideas. Rita Felski explains the

process articulated by Dimock regarding the enduring capacities of texts, elaborating on the way we are hampered by a narrowly progressive view of history:

> Literary meaning does not reveal itself in a flash, and texts do not disclose themselves irrevocably and absolutely at the moment of their first appearance. What of their potential to resonate across time and the power of past art to disorient and disturb? We might think of such texts as time travellers or even time bombs, incendiary devices packed with an explosive force that unleashes itself long after the moment of their manufacture. Our ideas about the aesthetics of shock are hampered by a required and progressive view of history, overly constrained by a mindset that conceives of the shocking as synonymous with the new. (*Uses* 115)

Extrapolating on Dimock and Felski's perspectives on the enduring capacities of texts and their resonance, it is germane to consider Cobb's vocabulary itself through a temporal continuum. A number of terms she employs, such as cosmos, genius and source, along with Chawla's use of the word ecstatic, can be looked at from a non-essentialist perspective taking into account associative meanings that vary with historical context. As the literary theorist Toril Moi explains, "There is no need to assume that words have a common essence … we can think of the word as a network of criss-crossing similarities, constantly established and extended in concrete use" (100). I raise this issue in part as an apology for Cobb whose language may appear dated while containing meaning that is nonetheless relevant over half a century later. This also raises questions concerning my own language and choice of sources influenced inevitably by my socio-historical context. Dimock and Felski have been helpful in framing what can be perceived as time period related limitations.

Edith Cobb began her studies at the New York School of Social Work in 1942, in the midst of World War II (a year before Michael Ondaatje, the oldest of the three writers of my study, was born and a further WWII facet of this thesis). While she specialized in child psychology, she was keenly interested in the burgeoning field of ecology, influenced in part by her husband who was an expert on ferns; his field guide to ferns is considered a classic on the subject, remaining in print today. *The Ecology of Imagination in Childhood* was the distillation of her ideas, dating back to the 1940's and spanning the hands-on fieldwork with children and extensive observation of their free form play I have referred to, as well as academic research. During a period of more than twenty years, Cobb researched and studied over three hundred autobiographical recollections of childhood including biographies, memoirs, letters, diaries and fiction written by writers from a range of countries. These are now a permanent collection at Columbia University. I consider the three memoirs of my study to be contemporary examples or representations of these childhood recollections in their inclusion of autobiographical content, and it is my claim that they reaffirm Cobb's findings about the influence of nature upon children and its link to creativity in adulthood.

It is important to note that Louise Chawla, in examining Cobb's collection at Columbia, observed that many of the three hundred autobiographical recollections were of British and European childhoods by authors who made their name in some field of the arts; in other words, their range was not as diverse or universal as purported. This led Chawla to assert that Cobb's conclusions were overly generalized. Such shortcomings, I believe, can be attributed to the mid-twentieth century period when Cobb was conducting most of her research when access to international resources would have been limited and questions of inclusivity would not have been posed. Chawla, in conducting her own research, studied a random sample of fifteen

accounts from a selection of thirty-eight autobiographical recollections by people from a range of backgrounds (business, as well as the arts, for example), and from a range of countries. As a result of this research, she would go on to specify that it is only people in the arts, and not those in areas such as business, who are as influenced by nature during childhood as Cobb claims. In regard to people connected with the arts, Chawla formulates questions around whether these people begin life already especially attuned to notice their physical, sensory environment; whether they are encouraged to notice their surroundings with respectful attention by cues and examples from people around them that they themselves can no longer recall; or whether it is that the arts are the only field of endeavour that validates such an attention to the sensory aspects of the outer world. As well, Chawla considers emotional responses to nature and whether it is only in the arts that people are encouraged to preserve their memories of time spent in nature as children, or at least to write them down ("The Natural World"). Chawla answers some of these questions in her later works.[29] For the time being, it can be said that the three memoirs confirm not only Cobb's, but Chawla's findings as well, in their relation to the influence of time spent in nature during childhood upon artistic creation during adulthood.

In the following pages, I will examine the characteristics of the childhood recollections of Cobb's study and the conclusions she has drawn, relating them to the three memoirs. I will also briefly summarize her perspectives in general. To begin with, and as a means of introducing her work, the following extract from "Prelude to a Method,*" The Ecology of Imagination in Childhood's* first chapter, serves to clarify Cobb's main goals:

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[29] One of Chawla's works that responds to these questions is her essay "Childhood nature connection and constructive hope: A Review of research on connecting with nature and coping with environmental loss", *People and Nature,* Vol 2, Issue 3, 5th August 2020, p. 619-642.

> I am attempting two difficult tasks. The first is to define what is meant by the genius of childhood as a common human possession and a biological condition peculiar to man. The second consists of showing that a major clue to mental and psychosocial, as well as psychophysical, health lies in the spontaneous and innately creative imagination of childhood, both as a form of learning and as a function of the organizing powers of the perceiving nervous system. (15)

Relating Cobb's two tasks to the memoirs of my study, it is my assertion that the memoirs all have their roots in the genius of childhood as articulated by Cobb and embody an expression of health, to greater or lesser degrees and in significantly different ways, derived from the formation and spontaneous expression of the imagination during childhood, as she describes. According to Cobb, genius is not a quality of the special few, of the "gifted," but a common human possession, that is to say, accessible to people in general. She considers it biological and evolutionary and also deeply related to place. As she states, "I would define genius as an evolutionary phenomenon, at bicultural levels, beginning with the natural genius of childhood and the 'spirit of place'" (44). Cobb refers to the original meaning of genius as a "living ecological relationship between an observer and an environment, a person and a place" (*Ecology* 46) and quotes the poet Conrad Aiken (1889-1973) who gives poetic expression to this concept: "The landscape and the language are the same. For we ourselves are landscape and are land" (Cobb, *Ecology* 67).

Cobb's concept of the genius of childhood as connected with place, while indebted to Romanticism, is congruent with contemporary views (at times critical, and disdainful even, of Romanticism) on the reciprocity of humans and natural environments, as presented by such ecologists as Arne Naess and Neil Evernden in their respective conceptualizations of the

ecological self and fields of self. But, again, it is Chawla whose work has the greatest affinities with Cobb's in that she closely studied and based research upon them and has delved deeply into the specific relationship between children and environments in similar ways. Her article "Ecstatic Places," for instance, deals directly with the influence of landscape upon the psyche. In choosing the term ecstatic, Chawla refers to the original meaning of ecstasy, from the Greek, as "standing outside of oneself as one was lifted from a mundane state of mind and set in communion with divine forces" (Chawla, "Ecstatic" 18). This coincides with Iris Murdoch's concept of unselfing, referenced in Chapter II, which concerns the benefits of attention giving to beauty outside of oneself (as well as the concept of wonder articulated by Rita Felski and Rachel Carson, as will be addressed later in this chapter). Beauty in this case is less about the nature of the subject than the experience evoked – of beholding. Associated with an aesthetics that began in the eighteenth century, the beautiful is defined as a subjective reaction (Taylor 373). As Chawla concludes, the ecstatic place is "intensely felt in response to what it contains in itself – so that, for this moment at least, his or her childhood was this place" (Chawla, "Ecstatic"). So strong is this moment of connection – this subjective reaction – that it is one of communion, or epiphany. In regard to the power of memories of these places, Chawla writes, "they are like radioactive jewels buried within us, emitting energy across the years of our life. On each occasion when we dig them up, repolishing them as we reclaim them, they reendow us" (Chawla, "Ecstatic" 18).

It is the "reendowment" Chawla describes that is the creative power of the memories and imagination that Cobb sets out to examine as her second task, relating the spontaneous and innately creative imagination of childhood to health in adulthood. She quotes the French born American microbiologist and environmentalist René Dubos who writes: "health in the case of

human beings means more than a state in which the organism has become physically suited to the surrounding physiochemical conditions… it demands that the personality be able to express itself creatively" (Cobb, *Ecology* 77). Cobb views spontaneous, creative play during childhood and the formative process she calls world building – a process whereby children gain a sense of agency in creative construction through their natural desire to form their experiences – vital activities. Cobb, characteristically interweaving the literary with the scientific, quotes Nabokov: "There is in every child the essentially human urge to reshape the earth, to act upon a friable environment" (*Ecology 4*2). Childhood play is thus conceived as crucial to personal development and a source or font of adult creativity. As Cobb writes: "Certain aspects of childhood experience remain in memory as a psychophysical force, an élan, which produces the pressure to perceive creatively and inventively, that is, imaginatively" (89).

Crucial to her findings, Cobb delineates a special period from the ages of 5/6 - 11/12 when the natural world is experienced in a highly evocative way producing a sense of continuity with natural processes. As the environmental educator David Sobel explains, the "critical period" notion is well developed in the fields of animal behaviour and language development. In his book about the special places in nature such as forts, dens and bush homes that children construct during the middle range of childhood he draws parallels with animal behaviour, which is considered to be genetically programmed:

> If the white-throated sparrow chick is not exposed to the correct song of its species during a certain prescribed period (between one month and two months of age), it will not develop a normal song. In other words, certain types of learning need to happen at very specific times in the individual's life. The assumption is that this requirement is genetically programmed. (Sobel 79)

It is this middle age range in their early life that Cobb discovered people return to in memory in order to renew the power and impulse to create at its very source. As she explains:

> It is significant that adult memories of childhood, even when nostalgic and romantic, seldom suggest the need to be a child but refer to a deep desire to renew the ability to perceive as a child and to participate with the whole bodily self in the forms, colours and motions, the sights and sounds of the external world of nature and artifact. … the experiences remain largely non verbal. (Cobb, "Ecology" 546)

It is here in particular that Cobb's work intersects most cogently with the three memoirs. All three writers spent time in nature between the ages of five and thirteen and connected deeply with landscapes (Jamaica, Ceylon/Sri Lanka and Poland). These were predominantly, but not exclusively, experiences in rural environments. Only in Goodison's case did the epiphanic connection with nature take place exclusively in rural Jamaica; urban Kingston is portrayed derogatorily as an "urban wasteland" in her description of tenements, poverty and strife. Hoffman references both urban Kraków and the Polish countryside in respect to deep childhood connections with nature, as does Ondaatje reference both urban Colombo and rural Ceylon. In his website's references to his deeply rooted connection with nature, he includes Ceylon as a whole: "I use the motif of nature throughout my memoir to express the physical beauty of Ceylon and through connotation my deep emotional connection with the bountifully rich and breathtakingly beautiful country" (*Michael Ondaatje*).

Ondaatje, as I explain in Chapter VII**,** aligns himself with Robert Frost's statement that what we do when we write represents the last of our childhood. Cobb's words also dovetail with Charles Taylor's articulation of expressivism when he states: "my claim is that the idea of nature

as an intrinsic source goes along with an expressive view of life. Fulfilling my nature means expressing the inner élan, the voice or impulse" (Taylor 374).

Common to Goodison, Ondaatje and Hoffman is the presence in their writing, through reconstructed memory, of childhood perception and participation of the whole bodily self in the world of nature as delineated by Cobb. The embodied relationship of the child and the environment is explained metaphorically by Cobb when she writes: "We feel and think all over just as a bird flies all over… the child, like the poet, is his own instrument and uses his whole body as a mental tool" (Cobb, *Ecology* 61). Paul Shepard, in his introduction to the Japanese edition of *The Ecology of Imagination in Childhood*, summarizes, "Cobb has described nothing less than a new meta-physiology, connecting the most prized human faculties with the pungent presence of soil, leaves and butterflies." The writers' childhood experiences were highly sensorial and, in this regard, biologically and physiologically rooted; they were also ecological in being experiences in which the body was actively engaged with the surrounding natural world. The works can furthermore be considered exemplary of Cobb's claim that "all knowledge begins in sensory experience" (Cobb, *Ecology* 53). In her chapter on perceptual organization she uses the term reticulate, meaning having the form or appearance of a net, to describe sensorially derived knowledge, which she believes must be appreciated in tandem with more linear intellectual structures dominated by the sciences. Neither, she writes, can function effectively without the presence of the other: "Intuition remains 'guesswork' until interpreted and given shape by intellect; intellect, unless it is served by sensory experience, and intuitive levels, becomes mechanized, computerized memory – colourless and dehumanized" (49). Ondaatje echoes Cobb's call for the validation of reticulate, sensorially based knowledge in referencing

"visual, auditory, tactile, and kinaesthetic imagery in *Running in the Family"* (*Michael Ondaatje*), specifically highlighting the sensorial as it operates in tandem with the imagination.

Chawla, as a result of her own research and the study of contemporary autobiographies to which I have referred, broadens the period of childhood specified by Cobb to include very early childhood and adolescence. While she reaffirms Cobb's findings about the influence of natural environments upon children, stating that "the natural environment was the lure and allure that aroused their spirits" (Chawla, "The Natural World" 47), she concludes that it is one font of creative impulses among others and primarily important as a base of calm and stability. Her results lead me to pose the following question: is it because a base of calm and stability is less present in the twenty-first century than it was at the time of the autobiographical recollections consulted by Cobb in the 1940's (that largely predated the twentieth century), the reason it is more highly valued nowadays? In other words, is great value currently placed upon calm and stability because of their relative lack? How can these elements be related to the historical context of the memoirs, written in the latter half of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first by writers born in the 1940's? These are questions I will pick up later in this chapter but that have been partially answered by Goodison's statement that "I'm very drawn to consoling" (Goodison, "Poetry Unbound") and to her references to the calming effects of Harvey River.

In drawing from *The Ecology of Imagination in Childhood* it is pertinent to examine the components of the title itself, starting with the word "ecology". This is partly because Cobb has been criticized for her use of the word in her title as creating an unnecessary awkwardness – Shaun McNiff in his foreword describes it as "cumbersome" (x) – yet Cobb considered it essential. In being a scientific term used alongside the non-scientific word *imagination*, its usage

is representative of Cobb's weaving of disciplines and, more broadly, her valorization of the multidisciplinary. Her employment of *ecology* can also be viewed in the light of Toril Moi's perspective, cited at the beginning of this chapter, that there is no need to assume that words have a common essence and that we can think of a given word as a network of criss-crossing similarities, constantly established and extended in concrete use (100). Furthermore, while as previously stated, none of the memoirs of my study can be considered eco-literature or nature writing, an ecological understanding informs their poetics. Insofar as the notion of the ecological self involves two qualities: a high level of ecological understanding and a sense of the self as part of a larger system, it is implicated to greater or lesser degrees in the memoirs. *Running in the Family* and *From Harvey River* through their linguistic embeddings of humans in monsoons and rivers, as well as other direct contact with nature, explicitly articulate an ecological understanding, while *Lost in Translation* does not. All three articulate a sense of the self as part of a larger system, geographically and cosmically.

Both Margaret Mead in her introduction, and Shaun McNiff in his forward, underline the ecological dimensions of Cobb's work. Mead, in referencing an article Cobb published in the journal *Dedalus* (1959), explains that Cobb concludes with a demand for "redefinition of human individuality" in terms of not only human relations but also man's total relations with "outerness," with nature itself; in other words, with a conceptualization of ecological thought (Cobb, *Ecology* 11). McNiff distinguishes ecology in particular as supplying for Cobb the "web enabling diversities to collaborate" (x), and underlines her distrust of its opposite, overspecialization, as when he quotes her as identifying overspecialization as a "rigidity of response" which not only inhibits the imagination but threatens the species through the "sheer inability to change and adapt" (x). By contrast, McNiff explains that the imagination depends

upon cooperation among disciplines (and, in so doing, reinforces the argument for reticulate, as opposed to excessively linear, based knowledge, as referenced earlier).

I have drawn from the underpinnings of Cobb's choice of the word "ecology" to highlight her keen interest in the science of her time and her impetus to understand childhood from this angle, but also because I consider Cobb's ecologically informed perspectives a precursor to the field of ecopsychology in correlating the formation of selfhood with the surrounding environment and nature. While ecology itself was in its infancy during Cobb's lifetime (the term ecology was first introduced by the German scientist E.H. Haekl during the period 1870-75), and an influence on her thought, ecopsychology was only to be formulated later: Theodore Roszak is credited with coining the term in his 1992 book *The Voice of the Earth*, a time when it was entering the Berkeley circles to which he belonged. Ecopsychology is defined as, "The psychology of animals or humans in relation to their social, physical, or natural environments; especially (in later use) psychology in interaction with considerations of integrating human and ecological concerns" ("ecopsychology"). Chawla credits Cobb as being "the person first to bring attention to environmental autobiography" (Chawla, "Ecstatic" 19), an area related to ecopsychology in its contextualization of autobiographical narratives, which are inherently psychological in their focus on the self, within environmental frameworks. The central premise of ecopsychology is that, while the human mind is affected by the surrounding social world, its deep structure is inevitably adapted to and informed by the more-than-human natural environment in which it evolved.

In his review of *The Ecology of Imagination in Childhood*, John Shotter draws attention to Cobb's very contemporary views, relating them to those of her contemporary Jean Piaget (1896-1980). He explains that what she grasps and Piaget misses is that there is an ecological

relation between children and their "worlds" and that a child has his/her own world and makes sense of things in his/her own terms (82-84). In Cobb's view, the formation of a unique world image by the individual is an integral part of the achievement of identity or self-image; in creatively relating himself to his/her world the child must construct an image of both. As Shotter states: "It is in moments of wonder and amazement in 'the wordless dialectic between self and nature' that we are reminded, Cobb maintains, of our basic ecological relationship with nature at large" (82-84). Cobb devotes a chapter to wonder, citing Plato's affirmation of wonder as the basis of knowledge and philosophy. In her examination of children's capacity for wonder, she draws attention to the ways in which an aesthetic and philosophical sensibility can develop in childhood (evidenced herewith in the memoirs). Chawla, in quoting the educator Maria Montessori who, echoing Weil and Murdoch, underlines the importance of attention giving: "It is the quality of our attention which reveals ourselves" (Chawla, "The Natural World" 55), also references children's capacity for wonder: "children exercise the noble parts of their personality. Compassion. Wonder" ("The Natural World" 55).

It is of vital importance to note that a common thread between Cobb's work and ecopsychology is attachment theory, which connects with the psychological component of her views. Psychoanalysts Donald Winnicott and John Bowlby, like Piaget, were contemporaries of Cobb's whose work, like hers, deals with the early years of childhood. Cobb would have read their work in journals such as *Dedalus* in which she, as cited by Mead, was published, as well as being introduced to them in her New York School of Social Work course. Furthermore, it is likely that Cobb met Winnicott at the first World Congress on Mental Health that she attended in London in 1948. It was there that she met Margaret Lowenfeld, herself a part of Winnicott's circle, as detailed by Mead (6).

Attachment theory grew out of WWII when the psychiatrist and psychoanalyst John Bowlby was invited by the United Nations to write about maternal deprivation. His work was informed by the research of Mary Ainsworth concerning the importance of secure relationships between children and their parents and his book *A Secure Base – Parent Child Attachment and Healthy Human Development* (1988), asserting the importance of secure mother-child attachments, and the harm caused by their absence, draws from Ainsworth's research. Winnicott's concepts of the "good enough mother" and of the "holding environment" were further articulations of the importance of mother-child contact. As he writes, "the foundations of health are laid down by the ordinary mother in her ordinary loving care of her own baby" (Winnicott, *The Child*). Hoffman asserts her adherence to this belief when she states that "[c]learly, the strongest form of transmission is the earliest… maternal states are conveyed to the child through body, gesture, ways of holding gaze…" (Hoffman, *After* 61). Goodison's entire memoir can be construed as a testament to secure mother-child attachments (while Ondaatje's, in which his mother barely features, is suggestive of their lack, or problematics).

Winnicott, Bowlby, Ainsworth and other proponents of attachment theory had as a starting point ill mental and physical health developing in the wake of the harmful consequences of the removal of children from their parents during wartime. While this was not the case or condition of either Goodison, Ondaatje or Hoffman, Ondaatje's mother left her family to move to London during the post-war period and Ondaatje was only reunited with her following a separation of several years; his novels *The Cat's Table* and *Warlight* are both set in this time period and the protagonists are young children in the company of strangers who are presented as potentially dangerous. Although attachment theory had a "negative" starting point (maternal deprivation), "positives" were articulated (an affirmation of the psychologist William James'

statement that "to study the abnormal is the best way to understand the normal" (James qtd. in O'Keane 10), namely the aforementioned affirmation of the "good enough" mother as key to a secure "holding" environment from which a child can develop healthily. The role of the mother was later extended to include a significant adult figure, not solely the mother (while Ondaatje does not reference caregivers in *Running in the Family*, it is likely, given his family's wealthy post-colonial status in Ceylon, that domestic help played a considerable role in his early upbringing, taking the place, to some extent, of his mother).

The existence of such a secure childhood base is crucial as an underpinning to Cobb's thought in that it is through this base, and the capacity to be alone within it, that she considers a child is able to develop imaginatively and creatively and to discover a self. According to Cobb, "testing of the self against the bounded and unbounded begins within the spatiotemporal relations of mother and child and continues into play and the iconography of play art" (Cobb, *Ecology* 37). As she elaborates: "I became acutely aware that what a child wanted to do most of all was to make a world in which to find a place to discover a self" (Cobb, "Ecology" 540). For this world making to occur, the child first needs the experience of a safe holding environment within which to gradually develop trust and therefore be increasingly able to tackle difficulties. This is the interface between the psychological and the environmental. It also involves, as stated previously, the capacity to be alone. While attachment theory primarily focuses on the relationship between child and mother, Cobb's work focuses more specifically on the relationship between the child and world beyond this initial one of infancy and very early childhood and includes interaction with the non-human other. However, a significant common thread is the importance given to the capacity to be alone for the purpose of self building.

Chawla's study of autobiographical writing reinforces the importance of a secure base in its connection to psychological freedom and the capacity it engenders to engage with the surrounding environment:

> Familiarity with the autobiographies revealed a final unvarying psychological freedom: the child enjoyed a basic emotional security of his or her family's love. Regardless of family troubles, some relative provided a fund of unconditional love, freeing the child from self-preoccupation so that he or she could give full attention to the place itself. (Chawla, "Ecstatic" 21)

Cobb also asserts the importance of personal and individual free form play:

> Almost all studies of play seem based on the idea that play is a matter of games and is primarily a group process. The child's constructive, creative, learning, and his cosmopoetic exploration of the environment, which is only possible within personal and individual effort, is largely overlooked. I suggest that it is chiefly within the child's plastic play with blocks, paints, or any amorphous or semi-structured material (e.g., sand, twigs and stones), that we can observe the earliest form of an increasing ability to produce ever more complex and structured gestalten. (Cobb, *Ecology* 30).

Cobb's words tie in with her concept of the genius of childhood whereby all children are born as creative beings, curious about the world and keen to discover new things, and whereby free form play in natural settings offers the most infinite array of *loose parts* with which to engage sensorially. Her words are relevant to the memoirs for three reasons: in their articulation of individual free form play involving plasticity, as opposed to the rigidity of games; in their emphasis on individual and personal world making, not subsumed by a group; in their assertion of the constructive capacities of individual free form play, leading to the formation of gestalten

or wholes. Gestalt psychology's understanding of the capacity of the mind to holistically create a sense of self from the constructive integration and interaction of different parts or "selves" resonated with Cobb's observations of children at play, integrating the external world into their interior ones. Today, Cobb's words are echoed by the environmentalist Robin Moore who further articulates the confluent linkage through the senses of the child's exterior world with their inner, affective one. This linkage is additionally relevant to the memoirs in that it is suggestive of the early formation of poetics in affective subjectivity. Moore writes:

> Children live through their senses. Sensory experiences link the child's exterior world with their interior, hidden, affective world. Since the natural environment is the principal source of sensory stimulation, freedom to explore and play with the outdoor environment through the senses in their own space and time is essential for healthy development of an interior life. … This type of self-activated, autonomous interaction is what we call free play. Individual children test themselves by interacting with their environment, activating their potential and reconstructing human culture. The content of the environment is a critical factor in this process. A rich, open environment will continuously present alternative choices for creative engagement. A rigid, bland environment will limit healthy growth and development of the individual or group. (Moore qtd. in Louv 66).

The aforementioned conceptualizations around sensorial engagement and play are relevant to the memoirs not only in regard to the free form contact with nature and play during childhood referenced by all three writers, but in the constructive or "making" aspect of writing that both Goodison and Ondaatje highlight in reference to their work. These factors, in their relationship to the constructive capacities of memory and of writing, inform my exploration of nature and the memoirs in the next section of this chapter.

Section II: Nature and the Memoirs

In regard to the influence of spontaneous contact with nature during childhood on adult memory as it functions in the three memoirs, the following elements are relevant: Goodison, Ondaatje and Hoffman all spent substantial time in contact with nature from early childhood until its middle years. This was especially the case of Ondaatje whose early childhood was largely spent on tea estates, while Goodison and Hoffman had more urban childhoods spending mainly their summers – quite long and abundant ones – in rural areas. Furthermore, all three had experiences that, in being deeply affecting, to the degree of being reconstructed through writing decades later, are similar in kind to those described by Chawla whose concept of "ecstatic memory" postulates a type of memory that has a basis in environmental freedom conducive to certain mental states. Chawla explains:

> Ecstatic memory was reported under conditions so constant they appeared inflexible. In my interpretation, these conditions combine to constitute multiple dimensions of environmental freedom. Freedom was evident as a physical fact and as a state of mind… whatever the case, the child was free from intrusion, distraction, surveillance and prohibition – free to encounter the space spontaneously. (Chawla, "Ecstatic" 20)

The spontaneity Chawla references is an element in the development of the imagination, as Cobb has underlined in stressing the importance of plasticity as opposed to rigidity. As well, ecstatic memory has a power Chawla refers to as "reendowment" through which the revisiting and re-creation of the past transports what Cobb calls "vitality or élan" to the present (Cobb, "Ecology" 540).

Running in the Family begins with an expression of this vitality or élan in Ondaatje's expression of his desire to return to the country of his birth after an absence of roughly twenty-five years. Situating himself in Toronto, Ondaatje refers to the *running* of the memoir's title as movement towards the country of his childhood, thus indicating that the title can be taken to refer to more than family heritage and blood relationships; it iterates a trajectory of desire:

Once a friend had told me that it was only when I was drunk that I seemed to know exactly what I wanted. And so, two months later, in the midst of my farewell party in the growing wildness – dancing, balancing a glass of wine on my forehead and falling to the floor twisting round and getting up without letting the glass tip, a trick which seemed only possible when drunk and relaxed – I knew I was already running (Ondaatje, *Running* 22).

While Ondaatje's running is an anticipatory *running towards,* as transcribed through memoir, it is also a running *back*. The revisiting of, and reconnection with, landscapes and people that forms the experience of his two return journeys, one on his own and one with his children, supplies the material for running back through memory, as does his childhood experience of decades earlier. The temporal dimensions of his experience inform the construction and reconstruction that take place through the vertices of memory and writing, a process I will elaborate on in Chapter VII, which explores the transformative capacities of the memoir writing process.

As explained in Chapter III, *Running in The Family* is deeply sensorial in its depiction of place and of nature. Its very first word is drought, evoking an atmosphere that, in being dry and hot, is tactile, but also extreme. The sensorial depiction of other extreme weather, drought's opposite, monsoon, is given the importance of three chapters: "Monsoon 1," "Monsoon 2," and "Monsoon 3," the memoir's only tripartite or tryptic chapter. "Kegalle," a chapter that is

repeated twice, and that centres around a description of the town where Ondaatje's grandfather built the family home, is similarly sensorial in its focus on nature. It details the garden surrounding the house, including the naming of specific trees and animals that climbed in them (evidencing Ondaatje's understanding of nature, a feature of ecologically informed writing). The memoir likewise concludes with a paragraph that is richly sensorial in its depiction of nature's power, and its final word, "rain," picks up the thread of weather which began with the first word, "Drought": "Here where some ants as small as microdots bite and feel themselves being lifted by the swelling five times as large as their bodies. Rising on their own poison. Here where the cassette now starts up in the next room. During the monsoon, on my last morning, all this Beethoven and rain" (Ondaatje, *Running* 203).

As I've argued in Chapter III, there is a wildness in the natural world in *Running in the Family*, both in nature and in human nature and, as exemplified in the last paragraph where ants swell with human blood, and by the final word "rain," nature has a dominating power. Nearly every page is replete with descriptions of tropical landscapes filled with creatures such as snakes, geckos and other reptiles, wild boar and bats, and of diverse and flamboyant fauna. The wildness in human nature is especially embodied by Ondaatje's father but also by his maternal grandmother Lalla, who is depicted as dying wildly and flamboyantly in the "blue arms of a jacaranda tree" during a flood (129), and by Ondaatje himself such as through the example of his wild drunkenness in Toronto. This wildness – that which is uncontrollable, irrational and incomprehensible (and aligns with Verhoeven's observation of the self in Ondaatje as "unknowable and incommunicable," as discussed in Chapter III) – exerts an enormous power and is even central to the lure and fascination that impels Ondaatje to travel and write, as when he begins his first chapter with the lines: "What began it all was the bright bone of a dream I

could hardly hold onto. I was sleeping at a friend's house. I saw my father, chaotic, surrounded by dogs, and all of them were screaming and barking into the tropical landscape" (*Running* 2). Untamed nature imprinted in memory surfaces in the form of a dream, an elusive fragment, which then becomes the impetus for a return journey that is later reconstructed in words.

There is an intimate intermingling of the human and non-human in *Running in the Family*, as evidenced by both the early dream fragment describing the wild chaos of Ondaatje's father surrounded by dogs and the memoir's final passage where ants are filled with human blood amidst a backdrop of Beethoven and monsoon rain. This consanguineous relationship between human and non-human intelligences in its literary articulations has affinities with the philosophical and ecological concept of the phenomenal field being a collective landscape, inclusive of other than human experiencing subjects. It is a concept of the "living land" articulated by ecologists such as Val Plumwood who writes of "multiple interacting and collaborative agencies" within "collaborative" or "interacting" landscapes (Plumwood 125) and David Abram who proposes a sensorial empathy with the natural world that, however wild, remote and even desolate it may be, is a place within which one is never truly alone or alien:

> The cycling of the human back into the larger world ensures that the other forms of experience that we encounter – whether ants, or willow trees, or clouds – are never really alien to ourselves. Despite the obvious difference in shape and ability, and style of being, they remain at least distantly familiar, even familial. It is, paradoxically, this perceived kinship or consanguinity that renders the difference, or otherness, so eerily potent. (Abram 16)

Abram draws from Husserl's concept of intersubjectivity whereby the phenomenal field is a landscape constituted by other experiencing subjects, as well as by oneself, and from

Merleau-Ponty's invitation to recognize at the heart of our most abstract cogitations the sensuous and sentient life of the body itself. In other words, according to Abram:

> the real world in which we find ourselves, then – the very world our sciences strive to fathom – is not a sheer "object," not a fixed and finished "datum" from which all subjects and subjective qualities could be pared away, but is rather an intertwined matrix of sensations and perceptions, a collective field of experience lived through from many different angles. (Abram 39)

What Abram proposes is an environmental ethic through a renewed attentiveness to the perceptual dimension that underlies our logics, and rejuvenation of our carnal, sensorial empathy with the living land that surrounds us. It is this that is embodied by Ondaatje's evocation of nature in *Running in the Family*, an evocation in which the human and the non-human are of such a closeness that wild nature and wild human nature have an inter-animating kinship.

A further aspect of Ondaatje's depiction of nature involves the value he places upon free movement within it. This echoes Cobb's affirmations about the importance of free form play during childhood and its influence upon adult creativity. When Ondaatje describes visiting the estates where he grew up, including that where he spent the longest period of his childhood, and which was undoubtedly the place to which he developed the greatest attachment, the desirability of free movement in nature is made clear. Following a sensorial description of the estate's verdant fauna, he states that it was "the perfect place for children who were allowed to go wild" (*Running* 145). His view of its perfection is further underlined when he goes on to write, "It was and still is the most beautiful place in the world… my daughter turned to me on the edge of the lawn where I had my first haircuts and said, 'If we lived here it would be perfect.' 'Yes,' I said" (*Running* 146).

In the chapter entitled "Tongue," Ondaatje describes an encounter with a crocodile-like creature called a kabaragoya while wandering along a beach with his children, which leads to a story involving his own experience of kabaragoyas and free play in nature as a child. The aforementioned wildness within him, as well as in nature, is further evidenced by a memory of collecting kabaragoya eggs with other children and throwing them into the audience during cricket matches. These accounts and reconstructed memories, along with others, such as that of taking his own children on a trip to experience a jungle, support Chawla's research concerning appreciators of nature. In her comparison of appreciators of nature in two countries, the US and Norway, she found two commonalities: natural areas that were loved during childhood and family members who drew attention to the value of the natural world and provided the example of it being worth noticing[30] (Chawla, "The Natural World"). Noticing, which is a form of beholding, relates to the environmental ethic of attention to the perceptual, sensorial dimension that underlies our rational minds, as proposed by Abram, and to the concept of the loving gaze I have referenced earlier in my citations of Weil and Murdoch.

While Ondaatje does not reference specific exchanges with his elders, such as the one with his daughter quoted from above, he frequently relates his maternal grandmother's obsession with plants as well as his father's love of his garden and expertise in the subject of cacti, indicating an appreciation of nature as part of his family heritage.

Running in the Family's final photo shows Ondaatje as a young boy at the base of a waterfall with his three siblings, a profusion of water cascading behind them. This photo illuminates an element common to all three memoirs: the inclusion of experiences in water

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[30] Rachel Carson similarly asserts the importance of adults sharing their love of nature with children when she writes: "If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder, he or she needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement and mystery of the world we live in" (55).

during childhood. These are associated with a range of emotional affect, including joy, excitement, contentment and solace. In *From Harvey River* the river itself is an ongoing presence, as when Goodison underlines: “I do not think there was a day in my childhood when the river or the village was not mentioned in our house” (1). Goodison details her first experience of the river, explaining that because she didn’t know how to swim, she nearly drowned. Yet, following this admission, she immediately associates the river with states of happiness and also solace, a thread of emotional affect she picks up in the epilogue’s dream scene when she refers to images of Harvey River calming her night fears (which aligns with Chawla’s findings on contemporary autobiographical writing relating nature to calm and security).

In the Paradise section of *Lost in Translation*, Hoffman, like Goodison, associates rivers with happy times during childhood when her family spent summers in riverside villages. Like Ondaatje, she references wild nature when relating experiences in rivers: “I feel a slight, gratifying thrill of danger; it's great to be enveloped in this current, to feel its energy and movement” (Hoffman, *Lost* 19) and describes experiences under waterfalls and, like Goodison, references security, but the security is directly connected with the person she is with, her close friend Marek, rather than the place: “on sunny days, we stand under a waterfall, getting our clothes soaked through, and I feel both the wildness of my own spirits and the safety of being with Marek” (*Lost* 19).

Ondaatje devotes a chapter to the subject of being bathed as a child, a chapter followed by one describing bathing outside during a monsoon with his children and a mix of people of different nationalities. In “How I was Bathed” he details communal experiences with other children under the authority of a “vicious woman” (Ondaatje, *Running* 138), a nurse or ayah, in which buckets of water were thrown at “cowering, screaming, bodies” (*Running* 138). It is clear

from his statement, "[t]he first school I went to was a girls' school in Colombo which accepted young boys of five or six for a couple of years" (*Running* 137), and where children were given a bath every second night, that he attended a boarding school aged five or six. His employment of the word "vicious" to describe the woman in charge of bathing him is indicative of the hostility of the environment, and raises further questions around wildness. In the next chapter he contrastingly conveys the pleasure of spontaneously bathing outside during a rainstorm during his return visit to Sri Lanka with his family:

> We are slightly drunk with this place – the beautiful house, the animals which are appearing now, and this tough cold rain turning the hard baked red earth into red mud. All of us are in our solitude. Not really concerned about the others, just revelling in a private pleasure. It is like communal sleep. (*Running* 141)

Ondaatje goes on to describe the sudden appearance of a wild boar, a further example of the omniscient presence of wild nature, and again it is intermingled with human wildness as when he uses a metaphor of drunkenness to describe trees: "All of us – the lilies, the trees with their wind drunken hair, this magnificent val ooora who is now the centre of the storm – celebrating the elimination of heat" (*Running* 142). Drunkenness is a pervasive motif throughout the memoir, an aestheticized facet of the portrayed alcoholism, itself acknowledged by Ondaatje as one of *Running in the Family*'s themes (*Michael Ondaatje*).

While Ondaatje's Ceylon/Sri Lanka is a place of wild nature and of human wildness, Goodison's rural Jamaica is a gentle, pastoral environment. There is no mention of wildlife as threatening and, even when Goodison mentions nearly drowning, she follows this with an expression of happiness (perhaps a reflection of the easygoingness she attributes to her mother, and her own trait). Goodison describes Harvey River not only as a bucolic place geographically

but as an enchanted one in the imagination, a garden of Eden, representing a healthy way of life. The transmission of this perspective is presented as coming not only through her mother but through her maternal grandfather whom she quotes as saying “Jamaica is a blessed country, there are no fierce animals or poisonous snakes here, and Harvey River is like a Garden of Eden” (Goodison, *From Harvey River* 21). This perspective of rural Jamaica as blessed is borne out by the narrative of Goodison’s own experience, beginning with the story of how at age seven she left Kingston to spend her first summer in rural Harvey River and how, because of her childhood summers being spent there, her imagination was shaped for the rest of her life.

In common with *Running in the Family* is an attentiveness, while not to fauna, to flora: the land itself and the Harvey family’s farm and crops of coffee, cocoa and yams. When Goodison reconstructs her first impressions of Harvey River upon seeing it as a child, it is the garden with which she begins:

> This garden was thick with pink June roses and oleanders and red flowering hibiscus, and foaming white “rice and peas” bushes that stretched out and brushed against you when you walked up the short stone-paved path to the front door. I did not know the names of flowers then, but the first one I learned was “jasmine,” the tiny starry white flowers that proceeded to perfume the evening with a lovely scent that was activated once it grew dark. Also, there was a large field of white lilies that grew behind the house, giving off a honey-and-spice perfume so fragrant that clothes which were hung on the wash line came in dry and sweet-smelling (*From Harvey River* 210).

Like Ondaatje, Goodison uses sensorially based language to convey the visual, tactile and olfactory aspects of nature, giving as much importance, as Ondaatje does, to the “hierarchically lower” senses of touch and smell as to the “higher” visual and auditory ones. As the psychiatrist

Veronica O'Keane explains about the sense of smell, "[it is] the most mysterious, soulful and delicate, and the most intrinsically emotional, of our senses" (66). Rachel Carson, referenced earlier, expresses the same, going on to link the sense of smell with memory: "The sense of smell, almost more than any other, has the power to recall memories and it is a pity we use it so little" (83). Goodison evidences the linkage of smell and memory in her words about her mother's smell: "sweet and sour of breastmilk, Johnson's baby talcum powder, and the faint vinegar of perspiration, that was my mother's perfume" (*From Harvey River* 195). Additionally, in a passage in which she compares her mother and her sisters to flowers, quoted in Chapter II, Goodison evokes scents, comparing one of her mother's sisters to "a fragrant, damask rose by name and nature" (*From Harvey River* 61).

Lost in Translation concludes with Hoffman in a garden, being taught the names of flowers by an American friend. This underscores not only the primacy of language acquisition in her narrative but the achievement of belonging: "Azalea, hyacinth, forsythia, delphinium," Miriam says, pointing at the flowers with a mock-didactic gesture. "I'm going to make you feel at home in the New World" (Hoffman, *Lost* 280). The importance of achieved belonging as connected to nature is reinforced by *Lost in Translation'*s final lines in which Hoffman returns to the motif of rivers. Not only is time compared with the movement of a river, but it is time and the river as incorporated into her body: "Time pulses through my blood like a river. The language of this is sufficient. I am here now" (*Lost* 280). Hoffman's river reference is additionally significant because early in her narrative she describes "river" as an English word that is "cold," while at the end of her narrative, incorporated into her body, it can be conceived of as warm: "River in English is cold – a word without an aura. It has no accumulated associations for me, and it does

not give off the radiating haze of connotation. It does not evoke”.[31] At the end of her narrative Hoffman has achieved an embodied linguistic integration of English vocabulary that is also evocative: “river” connotes and evokes time.

Like Ondaatje, both Hoffman and Goodison give value to free form play during childhood. Just as Hoffman references summer freedom in riverside villages, Goodison describes free form play with her cousins and village children, picnicking on family tombstones, swimming in the river and picking fruit. It is an experience of spontaneity and discovery conducive to the development of the creative imagination as articulated by Cobb and confirmed by Chawla in her research. Goodison’s writing also supports Chawla’s findings surrounding the generational validation of experiences in nature when she quotes her grandfather’s characterization of Jamaica as a blessed country in its bucolic nature. Hoffman likewise references generational influences when she describes her father’s attraction to Canadian nature, dating back to wartime when he hid in a bunker:

> When my parents were hiding in a branch-covered forest bunker during the war, my father had a book with him called *Canada Fragrant with Resin* which, in his horrible confinement, spoke to him of majestic wilderness, of animals roaming without being pursued, of freedom. (*Lost* 4)

In *Lost In Translation* the importance given to childhood contact with the natural world is evidenced by the title “*Paradise*” given to the memoir’s first section, devoted to Hoffman’s childhood years in Poland. While Ondaatje’s childhood was primarily spent in the countryside, and Goodison presents rural Harvey River as an Eden in comparison with urban Kingston, for

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[31] Hoffman’s inference that the Polish word for river evokes an accumulation of associations connects with Louise Chawla’s findings about “ecstatic places” that are claimed during childhood and of memories of them that express ecstatic belonging and communication (Chawla, “Ecstatic” 18-23).

Hoffman urban Kraków is also paradise. She details the holistic construction in her memory of what constituted a happy childhood there: a life of friendships and a special relationship with a boy, Marek; school; playing the piano etc., that existed prior to her departure for Canada, age thirteen. Paradise may be paradise partly because it is seen through the rose-tinted glasses of hindsight but also because, despite Hoffman's home being modest and what she calls "lumpen," she also lives within a secure world, what she calls the "happy, safe enclosures of Eden" (*Lost* 5). This description echoes the psychoanalytical conclusions of Winnicott, Bowlby and others, along with the findings of Cobb and Chawla, that a secure base during early childhood is vital to well-being later in life (Ondaatje's experience of being given a bath by a "vicious woman named Maratina," is indicative of an absence of safety, as is the wildness trope). As I have detailed in Chapter IV, Hoffman's childhood took place in a country that suffered among the greatest ravages of WWII and her parents were Holocaust survivors who had lost virtually their entire families to the Holocaust; yet, because Hoffman had a comfortable, secure and loving home environment she had what she considered a happy childhood.

The places Hoffman lived during childhood, both Kraków and the villages where she spent long summer vacations, are places with which she expresses strong affective bonds, including love. In remembering and reconstructing her departure as a thirteen-year-old girl she relates the power of her attachment to her home of origin, referring to: "images of Cracow, which I loved as one loves a person, of the sun-baked villages where we had taken summer vacations (*Lost* 14), later affirming that:

> The country of my childhood lives within me with a primacy that is a form of love… All it has given me is the world… Insofar as we retain the capacity for attachment, the energy

> of desire that draws us toward the world and makes us want to live within it, we're always returning. (*Lost* 75)

The enormity of the importance Hoffman gives to her home of origin is underlined by her statement that it has given her the world, and her understanding of its function as a source to which she returns echoes Cobb's conceptualization of home as origin as a source of creativity for writers and artists.

In Chawla's examination of autobiographical writings and the influence of natural settings, one of her findings was that three cities had an impact as ecstatic places in the same way that rural places did. These were Maya Angelou's San Francisco; Pablo Neruda's Santiago, and Cecil Day Lewis's London. In this regard, Hoffman's Kraków, which she describes in an essay as "enchanting" (Hoffman, "The New Nomads" 48), is consistent with Chawla's findings. Hoffman describes walks along boulevards using the Polish word "Planty" to identify them, underlining enchantment when stating that "at the goldfish pond I fall right into magic" (*Lost* 41) and summarizing that the Planty are a "space of happiness" (*Lost* 41). As Chawla concludes in her examination of urban environments as ecstatic places, "all are cities where nature makes its presence particularly felt" (Chawla, "Ecstatic" 21). Her findings echo the thoughts of the poet and environmentalist Gary Snyder who in his essay "The Etiquette of Freedom" (2010), describes wild nature as being something that can be found almost anywhere, in cities, for instance, and in parks. Differences between Hoffman's experience of Kraków as enchanting and ecstatic and Goodison's description of Kingston as a treeless wasteland underline distinctions between cities that are green and those that are not. Furthermore, they underscore attachment patterns related to home of origin, as previously detailed.

Of the three writers, it is Hoffman, the most analytical and reflective, who most fully renders the subtleties of attachments formed in childhood – attachments to people and places both – and who directly relates them to love. She describes them as forming a substance that is not yet divided in that the sense of self is as yet undifferentiated from the objects (people, places and objects themselves) with which it is in contact. This experience of wholeness is commonly associated with early childhood and has affinities with the cosmic pleasure Cobb considers part of the joy of childhood to which the writers of her study have referred. As Hoffman writes:

> How absurd our childhood attachments are, how small and without significance. Why did that one, particular, willow tree arouse in me a sense of beauty almost too acute for pleasure, why did I want to throw myself on the grassy hill with an upswelling of joy that seemed overwhelming, oceanic, absolute? Because they were the first things, the incomparable things, the only things. It's by adhering to the contours of a few childhood objects that the substance of ourselves – the molten force we're made of – molds and shapes itself. We are not yet divided. (*Lost* 74)

Hoffman's experience is analogous to what Chawla describes as the appropriation of a place when she writes that: "a sense of appropriation was another psychological freedom. The child belonged to a place because the place, in some way, belonged to the child" (Chawla, "Ecstatic" 21). It is also noteworthy that Hoffman refers to the molding and shaping of the self of which Cobb writes and of the self as being a not yet divided whole. Yet, as MacPherson asserts, Hoffman "engages with the myth of wholeness" only to understand, through her underlying ironic voice, the illusory qualities of childhood and of uncritical view of essential identity (MacPherson qtd. in Kella 7-20). Contrastingly, Kella references Lena Karlsson who argues that in spite of Hoffman's irony and musings on double-consciousness and the divided immigrant

self, "what comes across the strongest is the desire for stable absolutes, suggested in her choice of title (…) and reinforced in her closing remark, "I am here now" (Kella 7-20). It is also my perspective that while Hoffman distances herself from postulations of childhood plenitude as when she writes, "[T]here's no returning to the point of origin, no regaining of childhood unity" (Hoffman, *Lost* 273), there remains a desire for stable absolutes and unity. This desire has affinities with those Armstrong attributes to Said when he writes "Said's split self is simultaneously a resource and a cause for anguish and regret. He desires an integral, unified self, but… the perspective that this doubleness gives him on the defining categories of the authorities distances him sufficiently from their power that he criticize and evade them" (Armstrong 111).

Section III: Nature, the Memoirs and the Ecological Self

Thus far, I have delineated various conceptualizations of the self: the narrative self as it relates to autobiographical writing in Chapter I; the divided self as related to language and culture in my presentation of Hoffman in Chapter IV and in this chapter the ecological self through the developmentally based findings of Edith Cobb, which I have argued is present, to greater or lesser degrees, in all of the memoirs. While being one of various formulations of the self, I consider it vitally important in its bearing on the sensorial content and poetics characteristic of all three memoirs. In this final section I move on from Cobb's twentieth century findings to draw from contemporary conceptualizations of the ecological self drawing in particular from the work of the Norwegian philosopher and environmentalist Arne Naess (1912-2009) whose "ecological self" relates to identification and identity formation, as well as to self-realization and joy, facets of the writing process that I will build upon in Chapter VII. His perspectives go beyond psychological models of the psyche, such as those of the narrative self

and the divided self as implicated in attachment theory, introducing further, more expansive, means of considering nature and its impact on emotional affect. Naess's perspectives align with Cobb's while providing fresh insights on identification that go beyond Cobb's framework of childhood to adulthood and that expand on interrelationality with the natural world. Cobb concludes her work with a demand for a redefinition of human individuality not only in terms of human relations also man's total relatedness with but "outerness" with nature itself (Cobb, *Ecology* 11), and it is this thread Naess picks up. His views on embeddedness in nature further align with concepts of dwelling and emplacement, pertinent to the "making" or constructive aspect of writing referenced earlier in this chapter that I will develop in this section and expand upon in Chapter VII. Dwelling not only denotes a relationship to home but to other emplacements, such as emplacement in language, crucial to my argument that the memoirs *emplace* through sensorially based poetics.

Arne Naess conceptualizes the ecological self stating: "We may be said to be in, and of, Nature from the very beginning of our selves. Society and human relationships are important, but our self is much richer in its constitutive relationships. These relationships are not just those we have with other people and the human community" (Naess, "Self-realization" 516). In summarizing this ecological self as a person's "process of identification" (Naess, "Self-realization" 517) Naess posits an interrelationality that entails self-realization through the broadening and deepening of the self, that is to say of the self identifying with that which is increasingly different. At the same time, and echoing Cobb in his emphasis on the uniqueness of the individual, he stresses that even in identification the self and others must be recognized as different individuals, writing, "The identification process leads deeper into Nature as a whole, but also into unique features of particular beings. It does not lead away from the singular and

finite" (Naess, "Spinoza and Ecology" 51). Cobb similarly explains: "Creative intelligence requires the ability to identify and to participate in otherness while retaining a sense of one's own ego-world identity" (Cobb, *Ecology* 22).

The participation in otherness described by both Cobb and Naess is relevant to the memoirs in regard to subjectivity that is both formed in childhood and a component of the writing process. Cobb situates the ecology of imagination in the flexible and plastic capacity, especially keen during childhood, to go out and beyond the self. As she explains: "the child fills in the distance between the self and the objects of desire with imagined forms. This psychological distance between self and universe and between self and progenitors is the locus in which the ecology of imagination in childhood has its origin" (Cobb, *Ecology* 53). The memoirs embody the bridging of the self and otherness through the imagination's constructive relationship with memory. Goodison, for instance, in various descriptions of her mother breastfeeding, reimagines the otherness of her mother's body, as experienced by Goodison's childhood self. In one particular instance she situates herself as a three year old witnessing her mother breast-feeding her younger brother:

> In this early memory of my mother, she was breast-feeding my baby brother as I sat pressed up against her in the big cane seat rocking chair, so I must have been about three years old. For what seemed like a long time, there was only the rubbery sound of my baby brother sucking hard on her left breast, then I felt her soft body shift in the chair. (Goodison, *From Harvey River* 196)

In another instance, Goodison describes her mother "feeding her child from her own mouth, like a mother bird" (*From Harvey River* 186), extending her sense of her mother's otherness outwardly further, towards nature at large. The self and the other are not only presented in spatial

terms of proximate bodily contact but Goodison renders the *experience* of the self in relation to viscerally felt connectedness with the other, and through metaphor.

Naess's views on interrelatedness are predicated on respect for the other as evidenced by the influence of Martin Buber's I-Thou concept upon his thought. The "I" does not objectify an "it" but acknowledges it as a living relationship. For Naess, there is no isolatable I: "the individual is not and will not be isolatable; whatever exists has a gestalt character (Naess, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle* 195). Naess, like Cobb, invokes the gestalt concept of wholeness and integration to express interrelationality. In *Lost in Translation*, this living relationship of interrelationality can be seen in Hoffman's attachments to places: at the outset, her deep attachment to Kraków and at the end of her narrative her developing connection with intermeshed nature and culture through her portrayal of a garden scene in America. Remembering her last walks around Kraków, she expresses the depth of her attachment observing that "places hold bits of you" (Hoffman, *Lost* 88). The hold that places can exert is evidenced by the research of the contemporary environmentalist Martin Jordan who writes: "literature suggests that the longer an individual has been living in the same community, the stronger the attachment to place is developed"[32] (27).The strength of Hoffman's attachment and bonds of affective identification with place of origin contributes to the acuteness of the dividing of the self that occurs during geographical displacement. As Hoffman states, "The acute loss I felt on emigrating was commensurate to the depth of the attachment" (Hoffman, "Conversations" 52).[33]

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[32] Louise Chawla's "Learning to Love the Natural World Enough to Protect It," which draws from her research in the United States and Norway, evidences the link between time spent in nature and attachments to it.

[33] Jordan's findings, and Hoffman's experience, are echoed by T.S. Eliot, who lived an expatriate life in Europe and writes of his deep attachment to his birthplace, St. Louis, and the Mississippi River that: "St. Louis affected me more deeply than any other environment has ever done. I feel there is something in having passed one's childhood beside

At the end of Hoffman's narrative she reveals a developing relationship with her surroundings in America and the achievement of a state of harmony (albeit presented with acknowledged irony) through the triangulation of nature, language and friendship in a Cambridge, Massachusetts garden. Describing how she is taught the English names of flowers by an American friend, she asserts a burgeoning connection with her new homeland, almost as though she is a child learning her first words:

> "Azalea, hyacinth, forsythia, delphinium," Miriam says, pointing at the flowers with a mock-didactic gesture. "I'm going to make you feel at home in the New World." I look at the flowers; some of them I've never seen before; some names I've read but haven't put together with the flowers themselves. This is the kind of thing that comes latest in my strange building of the language from the roof down. "Azalea," I repeat. "Forsythia, delphinium." The names are beautiful, and they fit the flowers perfectly. They are the flowers, these particular flowers in this Cambridge garden. For now there are no Platonic azaleas, no Polish hyacinths against which these are compared. I breathe in the fresh spring air. Right now this is the place where I'm alive. How could there be any other place? Be here now, I think to myself in the faintly ironic tones in which the phrase is uttered by the likes of me. (*Lost* 280)

By detailing identification through language and specifically naming, Hoffman, on the one hand, presents new names as becoming a part of her, showing the centrality of language in the constitution of her subjectivity. On the other, and in a more generalized sense, she presents

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the big river, which is incommunicable to those people who have not. I consider myself fortunate to have been born here, rather than in Boston, New York or London" (Letter to Marquis Childs qtd. in *St. Louis Post Dispatch* (15 October 1930) and in the address "American Literature and the American Language" delivered at Washington University in St. Louis (9 June 1953), published in Washington University Studies, *New Series: Literature and Language*, no. 23, Washington University Press, 1953, p. 6).

her American environment itself as becoming an integral part of her. While she refers to her trajectory of language acquisition in North America as the “strange building of the language from the roof down,” in this garden scene she is literally learning from the earth up, an act of integration. This achievement is coincident with Luca Valera’s explanation, in his study of Naess’s phenomenological philosophy, that a person can create a home through identifying with the place in which he or she has chosen to dwell. Valera explains that Naess’s work is of particular relevance because he relates connections between humans and the non-human or more-than-human to self-realization and therefore to well-being. As Valera states, “Naess’s ecological self is nothing but an echo of the theme of the home and of belonging to a place (i.e dwelling), and, therefore, it deals with a positive relationship of the individual with its environment” (661-675). That Hoffman’s narrative concludes with a positive internalization of her American environment/home is an expression of the self-realization articulated by Valera (and Naess). Goodison similarly concludes her narrative with an internalization of Harvey River in a dream in which, in the afterlife, she is swimming at the bottom of the river. Ondaatje, as quoted earlier, concludes *Running in the Family* with an image of the human and non-human intermingling in human blood bloating the bodies of ants – that it is parasitic supports Solecki’s argument that there is “darkness at the heart of Ondaatje’s narrative” – (Soleki, *Ragas* 10). All three memoirs thus conclude with an assertion of emplacement in nature: a garden in Hoffman’s case, a river in Goodison’s and wildlife in Ondaatje’s, with Hoffman’s emplacement additionally a linguistic one through embeddedness in a second language.

The embeddedness in language, and concurrently culture (itself embedded in nature), achieved by Hoffman is a facet of the constructive or “making” aspect of writing I have referenced earlier. While Goodison and Ondaatje reference “making” overtly in their

conceptualizations of writing, with Goodison comparing her writing to her mother's sewing, and Ondaatje comparing his aunts' storytelling to the knitting of threads in a sarong, in Hoffman it is a second, (and also literary), language that is constructed in her writing. Writing itself becomes a home or dwelling.

Taking as a starting point in examining Hoffman's "dwelling" in writing, it is useful to consider Martin Heidegger's concept of dwelling as "always a staying with things… Dwelling is not primarily inhabiting but taking care of and creating that space within which something comes into its own and flourishes" (Heidegger 150). As extrapolated by Valera, "through dwelling, human beings open spaces and create new worlds. They rediscover the actual meaning of things and establish essential links with spaces through memory, artistic production, construction of places etc.; to put it briefly, through the act of changing the world" (4). Hoffman, through the act of writing, creates space, including a subjective space in which memory can, in the sense of Heidegger's dwelling, come into its own and flourish, creating what Sarah Jilani calls an "abode" in writing (3). Writing, in other words, creates a new, subjective, imaginative and memory based, home.

In reconstructing her childhood world in Poland, Hoffman describes the experience of dwelling physically, and by extension, subjectively, in natural habitats, such as in her family's garden in Kraków. In a description of physical dwelling she includes its accompanying subjective states:

> I lie down under the apple tree in the garden and look upward at the moving clouds, and it is enough. I like being alone sometimes, and having thoughts that are no thoughts, green thoughts against the blue sky. And I like meandering on the narrow paths through the

> fragrant fields after sunset, when the stars begin to come out and the horizon fills out into a great bowl and the silence hums just for me, creating a great silence in me. (*Lost* 19)

In this passage, Hoffman depicts subjective states coincident with the self realization and joy Naess attributes to contact with nature. As Margarita García Notario writes of Naess:

> What needs to be emphasized, according to Naess, is the great satisfaction and huge possibilities of joy that we find when we are able to increment our sensibility toward the richness and diversity of forms of life that exist in free nature. This will allow us to contact our surroundings and, as a consequence, to love them: to establish a personal connection that will enable us to do "beautiful actions" in the Kantian sense." (8)

Martin Jordan similarly writes about the effects of contact with the natural world on emotional affect and the ways in which, through this contact, emotional states can be both consciously and unconsciously balanced. Individuals with a broad range of affect regulation strategies are able to modulate their mental states and in so doing adapt to a range of stressful situations. As Jordan states: "[I]ncorporating nature into a broader system of attachment relationships can play a central role in helping us regulate our emotional worlds" (26).

Jordan's proposal of the use of natural environments to shift negative mood states and maintain positive ones links with a spiritual exercise articulated by Iris Murdoch, referenced in Chapter II, whereby "unselfing" or "radical decentering" occurs when attention is shifted from the self to nature or to art, and, in particular, to the apprehension of beauty. Through being attentive to external stimuli which contain beauty, one's consciousness is taken outside of the self. According to Murdoch, who acknowledges the influence on her thought of Simone Weil, the act of "unselfing" is a "checking of selfishness" of "divesting oneself of ego and thereby letting world emerge" (Murdoch, *Sovereignty* 63). As she explains, "There are innumerable

points at which we have to detach ourselves, to change our orientation, to redirect our desire and refresh and purify our energy, to keep on looking in the right direction" (Murdoch, *Sovereignty* 25**)**. In Chapter II, I related Lorna Goodison's "unselfing" to her honouring of her mother and her attentiveness to the beauty of Doris Harvey's virtuous character. In this chapter it is "unselfing" and "radical decentring" in relation to close attention to the natural world that I am referencing. The environmental writer Emily Brady, drawing from the work of Ronald Hepburn on the aesthetic appreciation of nature, explains this radical decentring in terms of its disinterested character which allows for a freeing up from constraining instrumental concerns. This freeing up enables perceptual and imaginative perspectives to emerge. Brady quotes Hepburn pointing to the imagination's power to "shift attention flexibly from aspect to aspect of the natural objects before one, to shift focus from close-up to long shot, from textual details to overall atmosphere haze or radiance; to overcome stereotyped grouping and clichéd ways of seeing" (Hepburn qtd in Brady 143).[34] The imagination's power to shift attention and see anew as so described has affinities with Rachel Carson's investigation of children's states of wonder and awe, referenced at the beginning of this chapter, which Carson advocates nurturing throughout life as an antidote against the boredom and disenchantments that can be experienced during adulthood. "Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth," writes Carson, "find reserves that will endure as long as life" (100).

The process of decentring from the self, involving close attention to the natural objects before one, and wonderment, is evidenced in the garden scene at the end of *Lost in Translation,* quoted earlier*,* where Hoffman details her attentiveness to the different species of flowers in the

[34] Brady goes on to identify four specific modes of imaginative activity in relation to natural objects: exploratory, projective, ampliative and revelatory imagination.(Brady, Emily. "Imagination and the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 56, no.2, 1998, pp. 139-147).

Cambridge garden she visits with a friend. There is a freshness of impression that dovetails with Carson's articulation of childhood newness. Both this garden scene and the childhood garden scene in Kraków are also exemplifications of Louise Chawla's research findings that nature in contemporary autobiography is presented as providing a base of calm and stability. When, in the Kraków scene, Hoffman writes that the night sky creates "a great silence in me" and, in the Cambridge scene, "I breathe in the fresh spring air. Right now this is the place where I'm alive. How could there be any other place?" she expresses both calm and grounded stability. Goodison likewise refers to the waters of Harvey River as "calming". In Ondaatje, his final word, "rain," expresses a state of restoration and balance in relation to the memoir's first word, "drought" (and to the image of ants feeding on human blood).

The calm and stability present in the concluding pages of all three memoirs bears consideration for several reasons. Firstly, it is an expression of a broadened expansiveness of the self – that which can be called an ecological self. Additionally, it evidences states of well-being associated with time in natural environments. Finally, it is pertinent to the transformative aspects of sensorially based poetics, the subject of my final chapter. Before addressing these transformative aspects, however, I will explore the subject of geographical displacement, that which stands in contrast to the calm and stability associated with the ecological self as postulated in this chapter. Geographical displacement, as I will detail, does not only implicate objective, physical states but subjective ones, such as those that can be considered exilic, derived from a range of attachments.

Chapter VI - Displacement in the Three Memoirs: The Translated Self

At times home is nowhere. At times one only knows extreme estrangement and alienation. Then home is no longer just one place. It is locations.

–bell hooks, "Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness"

Ondaatje, Hoffman, and Goodison all left their countries of origin during their youth; Ondaatje at age eleven, Hoffman at thirteen, and Goodison as a young woman, following art school. It is only Goodison who left of her own volition and whose departure therefore involved agency, a capacity that is significant in its relationship to questions of empowerment. They have all subsequently spent the rest of their lives abroad, each living for extended periods in more than one foreign country, including Canada. Furthermore, having being born either during, or in the immediate aftermath of, WWII, they were affected, to a greater or lesser degree, by the political and social upheavals related to the war as well as by, in the cases of Goodison and Ondaatje, British decolonization; that of Jamaica, which gained independence in 1962, and Ceylon, which gained it in 1948. Hoffman was born and raised in the immediate aftermath of the Holocaust, which both her parents survived, and *Lost in Translation,* like its successor *After Such Knowledge*, is imprinted with Holocaust related trauma. The Holocaust, as Sarah Jilani underlines, is "an unspoken narrative on the margins of Hoffman's memoir" (8).

Taking into account this diversity of personal, cultural and socio-political factors, including post-colonial, post-WWII, and diasporic elements, this chapter will explore how geographical displacement features in each of the memoirs. This includes its relationship with emotional affect and how affect is influenced by personal agency. Emotional affect, already addressed in previous chapters, can be considered the presence of subjective and emotional states

in the writing. Geographical displacement, encompassing immigration, exile and other forms of migration, implicates a vast range of emotions, categorized broadly by Adriana Margareta Dancus as "affective displacement" and "diasporic feeling," (247-266). Dancus characterizes diasporic feeling as an "analytic category" which is "concerned with the ways in which diasporas perform their difference, not primarily in relation to their lost homeland but in response to the host country's institutions, discourses, practices, and the official national affect that supports them" (250). She observes that "[d]iasporas long for the lost home at the same time they love, hate, hope, fear, panic, resent, envy, mourn, cheer, complain, etc., within a different emotional register than the host country" (250). In other words, diasporic feeling, as Elizabeth Kella comments, is not only about the past, but about the present: "It orients the subject not only toward the past, but also to the present place and time" (14). Diasporic feeling is present in the three memoirs to greater or lesser degrees, with particular acuity in *Lost in Translation*, as detailed in Chapter IV, but also in *From Harvey River* and, to a lesser extent, in *Running in the Family*.

In regard to geographical displacement, it is important to note that conceptions of displacement and exile undergo constant change due to altering contexts of migrations and other population movements over time (as has been evidenced by the Covid pandemic which has had as a consequence restricted movement on national and international levels). The meaning of exile, for instance, is broader in a contemporary context than in antiquity, when it referred specifically to individual banishment from a centre of civilization. Still, the concept of exile is based on the assumption that an individual belongs to a place and/or a community and is in some way forcibly removed from it. It can also be considered that the sense of "original context" constitutes, or connects with, self-identity to a certain extent and that exile becomes a deprivation

of belonging. The broad term "displacement" encompasses a range of spatial relationships, all of them problematic in including states that, while not necessarily exilic and deprived of belonging, involve degrees of non-belonging.

It is worth noting that Hoffman in her essay "The New Nomads," published two decades after *Lost in Translation,* addresses what she describes as easier, twenty-first century forms of transnational displacement which have as a consequence that leaving one's native country has not been as dramatic or as traumatic as it used to be. She underlines the contrast between contemporary freedoms and her experience leaving Poland in the late 1950's when she felt that it was "irrevocable: I felt as if I were being taken out of life itself" ("The New Nomads" 45). While Ondaatje does not address his experience of being prised from home (which was an experience much like Hoffman's, but at an even younger age, eleven, and during an earlier part of the 1950's), the literary critic Sam Solecki draws attention to his exilic condition:

> The great hurt of everything is also at the heart of Ondaatje's vision, though we can also narrow it down to the essential underlying donnée, which is the breakup of his parents' marriage, their divorce, and his subsequent childhood exile from Ceylon in 1954, an exile that also included a permanent separation from his father. (*Spider Blues* 8)

Hoffman and Ondaatje's radical experiences of emigration stand in stark contrast to the contemporary freedoms outlined by Hoffman in "The New Nomads" and are significantly different from Goodison's emigration as an adult, while they have common elements with her mother, Doris Goodison's, exilic experiences within national parameters.

My aim in this chapter is to examine how, to greater or lesser degrees, different forms of geographical displacement, including exile, but also immigration and other forms of migration, are reflected in, and inform, the memoirs on various levels. This ranges from the aforementioned

level of emotional affect and permutations of personal agency, to the formal level of textual construction, taking into account the extent to which postmodern elements and stylistics, such as the stance of impersonality, are an overt influence, especially in Ondaatje, on narrative content and emotional affect. Affect's presence, or its absence, invites a psychological or psychoanalytical reading, which I consider to some extent to be a *necessary* reading, or perspective, given the subjective terrain of displacement, but also because of my positioning as a psychotherapist working with a population base that is largely comprised of immigrants and expatriates. Furthermore, my stance is personal in that I am myself displaced, living outside of the country in which I was born.[35] I have chosen the word displacement as an umbrella term not only because it encompasses exile, immigration and migration, as well as other forms of movement across borders, both national and otherwise, but because it provides a framework for theorizing around the subject of emplacement, which is vital to my conceptualization of the writing process as related to the memoirs. I agree with Sarah Jilani's assertion that, "[f]or life writing of displacement and exile, the act of autobiography does not only become one of inscribing subjectivities, but the writing itself becomes a *space of abode* for these subjectivities" (3). The writing process is a subject I will explore in Chapter VII as I examine the three memoirs through the vertices of language and creativity; however, Jilani's triangulation of life writing, displacement, and subjectivities is particularly relevant here in regard to emotional affect as it intersects with geographical displacement in both national and international contextualizations.

This chapter will be divided into three sections. Section I will have as its focus conceptualizations of displacement as it intersects with home of origin, attachments, belonging, and the psychological dimensions of third culture experiences. These latter will be considered

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[35] While employing the term displaced, I am doing so from a stance of fluidity with a recognition that displacement and emplacement are evolving and transitory states, as well as subjective ones.

along a spectrum of affect, ranging from that of homesickness to loneliness and nostalgia, and trauma, among others. Section II will provide a close reading of displacement as it features in the memoirs, addressing dimensions of emotional affect. It will also address the humanistic aspects of the memoirs (of which emotional affect is a characteristic), especially salient in *From Harvey River* and *Lost in Translation*. Section III will examine the presence of Canada, the country that is the common thread in the fabric of nationhood as woven through the memoirs.

Section I: Conceptualization of Displacement as Related to Home of Origin and Attachments

In writing about Hoffman's experience of displacement in Vancouver, Jilani uses the term "belated affect" to describe the way that emotions from the past are imprinted on present life experiences (Jilani 5). This can be viewed in contrast to "placement," which can be considered the original affect. From a psychoanalytically informed perspective, this "placement" can be conceived as a first home connected to one's mother, an original state of belonging, referenced briefly in my previous chapters. As the writer Nasir Abbas Nayyar elaborates:

> It can easily be discerned that at a quintessential level almost all creatures are displaced beings. They are destined to depart the paradise of their mothers' womb, which may be called their first place. There must be some 'first place or some basic identity' to endure the agonies of displacement. (Nayyar)

Hoffman addresses this "first place" identity referencing Genesis and the tendency of all people to relate to exile from an elusive authentic self: "We feel that there is an ideal sense of belonging, of community, of attachment with others and at-homeness with ourselves, that keeps eluding us"

("The New Nomads" 43). Hoffman also asks, "is there not anyone who does not – in some way, on some level – feel that they are in exile?" ("The New Nomads" 39).

Whether or not one adheres to these metaphysical, psychoanalytic and, to some extent, essentialist, positions, they are concurrent with another thesis that there are two kinds of homes in the life of an individual: "first, and most importantly, there is the childhood home that is equal to one's origin and which is a given and non exchangeable. Second, there is the home of our adulthood, an abstract an individual chooses to create" (V.S. Naipaul qtd. in Leimig 3). Relationships connected with home of origin are formulated by Edward Said as filial bonds, while those connected with adult homes that an individual chooses to create are formulated as bonds of affiliation (Said, *The World* 24). Goodison, Ondaatje, and Hoffman all draw from the source of the original childhood home, associating it in different ways with paradise and employing the trope of Garden of Eden. In all three memoirs, displacement is related to home of origin and its subsequent loss. Louise Chawla, in her environmentally based study of twentieth-century memoirs detailed in Chapter V, references the poet Henry Weinfield in his articulation of this loss: "home is just a metaphor for everything that we must leave behind" (Chawla, *First Country* 68).

Viewed psychoanalytically, home of origin is the source of first attachments upon which all others are built. From this perspective, being prised from home at a young age, as was the case with both Ondaatje and Hoffman, can be considered a highly significant and affecting formative experience (it is pertinent as well to draw parallels with Doris Harvey's intranational experience in that it too was deeply affecting while less severe in not involving a foreign country and in taking place at a later age). In considering Ondaatje and Hoffman's experience, it is helpful to draw from research based around the experiences of children transplanted from one

culture and continent to another. The formative experience of children being prised from home at a young age to accompany one or both of their parents abroad has been an area of study since the 1950's when researchers John and Ruth Useem coined the term "third culture kid" (Useem). In 1984 a broader term, "global nomad" was coined by Norma McCaig to similarly describe a child's global displacement as a result of one or more parents' career or life choices. Research has identified common characteristics of these children, most notably that of not possessing a fixed cultural identity of belonging to a group, but rather a tendency to build relationships to all of the cultures lived in and experienced. This marginalization outside of groups is an exilic experience such as that delineated by Said when he writes that "in a very acute sense exile is a solitude experienced outside the group: the deprivations felt at not being with others in the communal habitation" (Said, *Out* 177).

While the subject of third culture children is too vast to more than touch upon here, it is relevant to Ondaatje and Hoffman in that they were both taken as children to live in countries that were foreign not only to themselves but to their parents. They can be considered third culture children and subsequently third culture adults (a term also coined by Useem). Broadly speaking, third culture experience has been identified as including, along with the absence of a fixed cultural identity, such qualities as an expanded world view and the ability to empathize, but also characteristics such as confused loyalties in respect to politics and values, and mental instability related to confusion over identity (*TCK World*).

Third culture challenges, such as the subjective ones of confused loyalties and mental instability, are relevant here only as questions, but they are pertinent nevertheless because of the involuntary nature of both Ondaatje's and Hoffman's departure from their countries of origin. Both can be considered exilic in that they did not have agency to be able to return to their homes

of origin after their departures. For Hoffman, whose family left Poland in 1959 during the communist era of the "iron curtain," return, even if desired, was not possible, either for herself or for her parents. When she attempted to return as a visitor during her twenties she was refused a visa. She was only able to make her first return visit in the 1970's, over ten years after her departure. Ondaatje, on the other hand, made return journeys to what was no longer Ceylon but Sri Lanka during school holidays. His departure was therefore not as absolute as Hoffman's. However, it was more solitary in that he travelled without the company of either parent. His journey from Ceylon to England, aged eleven, took place in the context of travelling alone except for the company of peripheral family contacts, to join his mother who had left his father to go and live in England. It was a journey that involved both a severing from his homeland and father, and the prospect of reunion with his mother. Ondaatje has fictionalized this experience in his 2011 novel *The Cat's Table* and commented upon its incongruity with contemporary life saying that nowadays: "You wouldn't put your kid on a bus to go across America, let alone on a ship for 21 days" ("Ondaatje Delivers").

Exilic experiences, such of those of Hoffman and Ondaatje, raise the question of trauma, defined as:

> the unique individual experience of an event or enduring conditions in which the individual's ability to integrate his/her emotional experience is overwhelmed and the individual experiences (either objectively or subjectively) a threat to his/her life, bodily integrity, or that of a caregiver or family. (Saakvitne, K., Gamble, Pearlman and Tabor Lev)

Traumatic events can also be defined as "those which resist incorporation into narrative" (Bal viiix). Because of the subjective nature of trauma, traumatic events are deeply individual matters,

processed differently based on prior experiences. It is not within the scope of this thesis or my place as a researcher to evaluate experiences of trauma that are not addressed specifically on a textual level. Ondaatje himself is sceptical, and dismissive even, of psychological interpretations, as when he comments after describing being bathed by a "vicious woman" as a young boy: "I am dreaming and wondering why this was never to be traumatically remembered. It is the kind of event that should have surfaced as the first chapter of an anguished autobiographical novel" (*Running* 138). Hoffman, on the other hand, explicitly refers to trauma when she states that immigration was the formative experience of her life and "something like a cultural trauma" ("Conversations").

An aspect of Hoffman's experience of cultural trauma brought about by dislocation is that wherein a previous sense of time as linear is altered:

> Dislocation exacerbates the consciousness of time. For me, emigration constituted a great interruption, putting paid to the idea that time necessarily unfolds in a continuous, linear way. The past was all of a sudden on the other side of a great divide, preserved in memory but severed from the present. (*Time* 4)

That there is virtually no linearity of time in *Running in the Family* is suggestive of what could be Ondaatje's similar experience of time as non-linear. Jilani's description of the exile's experience of displacement as creating "inner dépaysement" (Jilani 2) conceives of a spatial reconfiguration parallel to this temporal one. Such reconfigurations are characteristic of the non-fixity of exilic, third culture experiences and of an experience of doubling (through severing into two, as Hoffman describes).

In respect to the absence of a fixed cultural identity, Ondaatje frequently asserts his fluid and multifaceted identity, particularly in his use of the term "mongrel" to describe himself

(Ondaatje, “The divided man”). Hoffman as well expresses multifaceted ethnic and cultural affiliations, substantiated by the writer and academic Michael Ignatieff’s observation that “she doesn’t shut off any side of her. Most people who are Polish-Jewish decide to be one or the other. She has decided to be both” (qtd. in Brown) and by her own assertion of the preference for cultural in-betweenness that living in London provides (Hoffman, “Out of Exile” 1). Both *Running in the Family* and *Lost in Translation* are likewise attestations to third culture’s expansive world view and ability to empathize. Ondaatje, for example, in his direct address to his father at the memoir’s end, expresses an empathy that supersedes knowledge and understanding:

> In the end all your children move among the scattered acts and memories with no more clues. Not that we ever thought we would be able to fully understand you. Love is often enough, towards your stadium of small things. Whatever brought you solace we would have applauded. Whatever controlled the fear we all share we would have embraced. (Ondaatje, *Running* 201)

In *Reflections on Exile*, Edward Said states that, “[e]xile is predicated on the existence of, love for, and bond with, one’s native place” (185). Ondaatje’s expression of love for his father is conflated with his native place through his exilic experience of leaving both his father and his country of origin behind upon emigration to England at age eleven. This confluence of place and person is unique to Ondaatje. While Hoffman left her country of origin behind, she emigrated to Canada with both of her parents. Doris Harvey’s experience of moving from her home of origin in Harvey River to Malvern as a newlywed, while intranational, involved leaving both of her parents, as well as her siblings, behind. When Goodison remarks that her mother’s homesickness was cured by the arrival of her youngest sister to her Malvern home, the importance of a linkage between home of origin and adult home is underlined. Although Doris Harvey’s move from one

parish of Jamaica to another did not involve international distances or borders, as was the case of both Ondaatje and Hoffman, it did involve a spatial breach that for Doris Harvey as a young woman felt significant and had emotional repercussions. Such diverse experiences attest to the complexity of geographical displacement, intranational as well as international.

Alongside national and international iterations, displacement, in its most literal sense, refers to the act of moving or being expelled from the usual or original place and into a negative state, that of the "non-home" and non-belonging. Together with its opposite, "emplacement," it is an action involving spatial relationships. Placement, displacement, and emplacement, can also be considered temporally as part of an ongoing process, and one that is not necessarily linear, and frequently not. Furthermore, as being both spatial and temporal, these movements involve transformation. As Jilani explains, movement through geographical space engenders awareness and, through the cojoining of this awareness with language, transformation takes place: "mobility through geographical space and the double vision this engenders dictates inner spatial awareness... refuge in language turns displaced selves into articulated, and thus inhabited, ones" (Jilani 3). This transformative process is present at the textual level of the narrative self, which is to say that the initial narrator is transformed during the process of writing the memoir. In other words, as the writer Bruce Chatwin speculates in his exploration of Aboriginal culture in Australia in *The Song Lines*, narrative is itself a form of motion. As he explains, when a person moves through the world, he/she gives the world meaning for himself; and the experienced world only comes into being, like the line of a narrative we write, when it is given meaning in this way (149), thus underlining the ontological underpinnings of narrative.

As Hoffman explains, picking up the thread of narrative's transformative powers when discussing *Lost in Translation* in an interview with a psychology magazine: "This book is about

the process of *becoming* – bilingual and bicultural rather than having achieved these conditions (Hoffman, "Lost in Translation"). The final narrator can be conceived of as a "translated self," as described by Ondaatje when he refers to writers like himself who have lived in different countries: "what is magnificent in nearly every one of these writers is their evolving, the translation they made of themselves, refusing to remain who they originally were. They arrived carrying a past vision and history but also that necessary half-open door in themselves so they could discover the new land" (Ondaatje, "Mongrel Art"). Hoffman affirms her self-translation when she refers to "the internal journey involved in emigration, and the process of *translating* yourself into another language and culture" (Hoffman, "Lost in Translation").

Andy Mousley, in his exploration of Hoffman's self-translation as humanistic in its expression of capacities of feeling, describes the placement, displacement, emplacement dynamic I have presented in similar terms of composition, de-composition, and re-composition:

> As a story of exile, Hoffman's autobiography plays out, on various levels, the humanist/posthumanist dynamic of composition/de-composition/re-composition with Hoffman's self and her inherited understandings of the human "lost" in their "translation" into another culture, but eventually – and tentatively – re found. (102)

In regard to self-translation, I concur with Celia Hunt and Fiona Sampson that engaging in creative writing (both Goodison and Ondaatje's memoirs can be conceived of as creative writing in that, in their acknowledgments, both writers refer to, and "own," some degree of fabulation or fictionalization in their works, while Hoffman's memoir involves recomposition and reconstruction but not overt fictionalization) "is itself a reflexive practice" (Hunt and Sampson 5). As they explain in reference to Derrida, there is an unbridgeable gap, or *différence,* between ourselves and our words, meaning that the moment we speak or commit words to the

page we are doubling ourselves (Derrida qtd. in Hunt and Sampson 5). Therefore, the use of words always involves "being two-to-speak" (153). The literary theorist and writer Roland Barthes suggests a similar idea: the "person" who speaks in the narrative is not identical with the "real life" person who does the writing; so there are always at least two "selves" in the writing process (Barthes, *Introduction* pp. 1-27). This reflexive, or doubling, aspect of writing is of particular significance as concerns displacement since displacement itself is a form of doubling, of existing within more than one place. This is expressed by Goodison when she writes that, after leaving her home in Harvey River, her mother lived in two places at once, and by Hoffman, in her statement about emigration dividing time into the categories of before and after she left Poland.

Elizabeth Kella refers to Hoffman's "loyalty to her homeland" (Kella 13), which, considered from the perspective of third culture experience of confused loyalties in regard to politics and values, must be viewed as a nuanced loyalty. It is my assertion that Hoffman's loyalty is to early affective attachments, such as those to her music teacher and her close friend Marek, and as such is connected with homeland as experienced through people, or humanistically. It is also connected specifically with childhood and its innocence. Hoffman writes:

> we must somehow preserve the memory and the possibility of our childish, absurd, affections. Insofar as we retain the capacity for attachment, the energy of desire that draws us toward the world and makes us want to live within it, we're always returning. All we have to draw on is that first potent furnace, the uncomparing, ignorant, love, the original heat and hunger for the forms of the world, for the here and now. (Hoffman, *Lost* 75)

Mousley relates the childhood attachments Hoffman writes about to her humanism and a vision whereby in an ideal world we would not leave childhood attachments entirely behind but exercise judgement about what to attach to: "Pre-reflective childhood feeling and post-childhood critical reflection would harmonize" (Mousley 106). In other words, Mousley underlines Hoffman's honouring and cultivating of positive attachments. These attachments can be furthermore seen in the light of topophilia, or love of place, formulated by Yi-Fu Tuan and others, in its inclusiveness of humanity and affective humanism. As I've argued in Chapter V, this is a characteristic of all three memoirs, including through the trope of Garden of Eden or Paradise Lost. It and other iterations of displacement or, to use Mousley's term, de-composition, are the subject of the next section of this chapter in which I have a close look at displacement in the memoirs.

Section II: Displacement in the Three Memoirs

Displacement from home of origin features significantly in all three of the memoirs in the form of articulated loss**.** It is through memory and writing that this loss is reckoned with and, it can be argued, reconciled. In the case of Goodison, loss centres around her mother, Doris Harvey. Its primary locus is Doris's experience of displacement and loss in relation to her home of origin. In addition, Goodison writes in the wake of her mother's death; the memoir thus stems from her own experience of loss as a daughter. Similarly, *Running in the Family* concerns a parent, Ondaatje's father, but the displaced self is primarily Ondaatje himself. Ondaatje attempts to understand his lostness, to use Hoffman's term, through his father and his family in Ceylon as a whole. *From Harvey River* and *Running in the Family* therefore centre largely around loss of the Other (in both the singular and plural senses of the word), while in *Lost in Translation* the

experience of the displaced self and of loss are primarily those of Hoffman, singularly, as narrator.

Immigration is a feature of all three of the memoirs, although it is only a minor element of *From Harvey River* in which Goodison does not address her own emigration from Jamaica to the United States and Canada but rather her mother's domestic displacement within Jamaica and, to a very minor degree, the immigration of two of her maternal aunts to Canada. Immigration is most prominent in *Lost in Translation*, including as a source of trauma, which is partly through it being experienced as exile by teenage Hoffman. In *Running in the Family* immigration is addressed perfunctorily or indirectly, not questioned or explored overtly as a subject, nor does it have a notable presence on the level of emotional affect. While Ondaatje states of his father, "[m]y loss is that I never spoke to him as an adult" (*Running* 179) – due to Ondaatje living in England and Canada from age eleven onwards, while his father remained in Ceylon until his death – he does not explicitly expand on this loss. Immigration and loss are approached at a largely superficial, or compositional, level in the sense that Ondaatje presents fragments of information or images but generally does not parse them analytically. He briefly references his mother's immigration to England, for instance, but does not expand upon its effects on either her or on him. As previously mentioned, Ondaatje's writing is not psychologically or psychoanalytically informed in the manner of Goodison or Hoffman (Goodison's writing is psychologically informed, and Hoffman's psychologically and psychoanalytically informed, both) although psychology and emotion deepen and heighten towards its conclusion.

In examining displacement from home of origin in *From Harvey River,* it is pertinent to begin with a consideration of home from the perspective of domesticity. Despite the supernatural bookending of the preface and epilogue, and the frequent references to the influence of African

based spirituality, grounding domesticity is a dominant feature in the presentation of Doris Harvey's life and in her struggles with displacement. Goodison traces her mother's materially and morally grounded domestic self culturally to her English heritage, including Anglicanism, and to her education in British schools, along with her training in etiquette from her eldest sister who attended a school of etiquette (and, when Doris was preparing to marry, was enlisted with teaching her how to run a household). It is this molded homemaker aspect of Doris, of entrenched values around home and emplacement in the local, that stands in stark contrast to the wrench of migration that Goodison depicts her mother as experiencing. There are many references to home decor and hospitality in Malvern, Doris's first home of her own, to which, Goodison explains, she developed a strong and intimate attachment, before being pried away due to financial difficulties:

> She was well acquainted with every corner of this house, every door, every window. "Brussels" and "tarshan." My mother had carefully stitched every one of the lace curtains that were now being taken down from the windows of their house. She could identify a Brussels lace from a Venice or chantilly lace with her eyes closed. She would rub a forefinger over the surface and directly identify the lace in question. She had arranged every bed, chair and table in that house, where they had kept the front door open from morning till night because they so loved to see their house filled with guests. (Goodison, *From Harvey River* 154)

Doris's intimate, tactile, bodily attachment to her home is conveyed through the highly sensorial description of rubbing her finger over lace with her eyes closed; the physicality of her home is, in this way, presented as part of her subjective world associated with belonging and care. That Goodison gives expression to the tactile also exemplifies her characteristic validation

of the so-called “lower” senses in contrast with the culturally privileged visual (it is significant that Doris Harvey’s eyes are closed, enabling her to feel with greater intensity). Home and belonging are embodied and *felt*.

Hoffman similarly provides home of origin domestic detail through a description of her childhood bedroom in Kraków. Just as Goodison lists various types of lace, so does Hoffman detail different types of fabric, conveying beauty, pleasure and comfort. There is a confluence between material detail and subjective states; home as a state of mind:

> I am lying in bed, watching the slowly moving shadows on the ceiling made by the gently blowing curtains, and the lights of an occasional car moving by. I’m trying hard not to fall asleep. Being awake is so sweet that I want to delay the loss of consciousness. I’m snuggled under an enormous goose-feather quilt covered in hand-embroidered silk. Across the room from me is my sister’s crib. From the next room, “the first room,” I hear my parents’ breathing. (Hoffman, *Lost* 5)

Hoffman’s, like Goodison’s, is an expression of home and belonging, reinforced by the intimate detail of her parents’ breathing that conveys a sense of security. This exemplifies the primacy and warmth of early childhood attachments referenced in the first section of this chapter, tying in with Hoffman’s description of the “first potent furnace” and “original heat”. Home of origin is a site of belonging and a source of mental as well as physical well-being.

The intimacy of home of origin and belonging expressed in Goodison and Hoffman through descriptions of fabric and cozy homeyness in other forms, is contrastingly, and starkly, absent from Ondaatje’s writing. Ondaatje’s childhood home is presented as a site of wild and invasive nature, as when he writes that, “[t]he family home of Rock Hill was littered with snakes, especially cobras” (*Running* 98), and goes on to describe shrieks and shotguns as the snakes are

discovered and killed. Bats and other wildlife are described as storming or creeping into homes. The absence of homeyness in Ondaatje can also be construed as a reflection of the absence of the maternal. Not only is Ondaatje's mother largely absent from the memoir,[36] but when she is mentioned it is not in reference to domesticity nor does she come across as a homemaker, as Doris Harvey does or, to a lesser extent, Hoffman's mother. It seems not without irony that when Ondaatje's non-homemaking mother left her family it was to work in housekeeping at hotels.

Certainly, the absence of domesticity and homeyness in *Running in the Family* raises questions of gender in Ondaatje's writing in regard to what can be considered feminine domestic detail that is not necessarily given as much importance by a male writer. However, the absence of domestic detail in Ondaatje's writing can largely be understood as a function of the type of home he was raised in (a wealthy colonial one in which there was domestic help). When Ondaatje quotes one of his siblings saying that his mother was a highly social person (Ondaatje, *Running* 165), and when he writes about her interest in drama and dance (and running a small dance academy), it can be inferred that she was not domestically inclined or motivated. As well, she would have been challenged by the isolating condition of living on a tea estate surrounded by wild nature. Her experience can be seen in light of exilic displacement, as evidenced by one of Ondaatje's sibling's statement (in reference to their mother's marriage): "The thing about Mum was – she was a terrifically social person. And then he came down to Colombo and swooped her up and took her to the tea estate. OK. They were in love, happy with each other, and they had kids. But later there was nothing for her to do there." (*Running* 165).

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[36] In an interview, Ondaatje explains his mother's relative absence: "The book focuses on my father more than my mother because I knew my mother better in England" ("An Interview with Michael Ondaatje").

One of the silences in *Running in the Family* is that surrounding unnamed caregivers who would have cared for Ondaatje as a young boy after his mother had departed for England.[37] It can be inferred through his references to being bathed at the first school he attended, "a girls' school in Colombo which accepted young boys of five or six for a couple of years" that, even before his mother left, Ondaatje attended boarding school as of age five. It is not surprising that, in regard to his motivation in writing the novel *The Cat's Table,* he explains in an interview: "One of the things I wanted to do was have a sense of that huge gulf between children and parents." When Ondaatje describes, in this same interview, his reunion with his mother after an absence of several years, he reveals that the state of estrangement raises concerns he won't even recognize her. In referencing the novel's main character, also named Michael, he explains: "Michael is going to meet his mother in England, who's been living there for four or five years, but he doesn't really know her and doesn't even know if he will recognize her when he gets there." Or, for that matter, if she will recognize him. (Ondaatje, "Ondaatje Delivers"). From a psychoanalytical perspective, recognition of the child by the mother, and with it acceptance, is a key feature of a secure holding environment necessary for healthy attachments, as outlined in Chapter V.

Ondaatje's formulation of estrangement between mother and child attests to the state of "inner dépaysement," or dislocation, Sarah Jilani associates with displacement. While this estrangement is only developed as a subject in Ondaatje's later novels, *The Cat's Table* and *Warlight, Running in the Family* contains intimations of its existence, even in Ondaatje's life as a five-year-old (such as through the boarding school reference). Home is a site of nature – wild

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[37] While domestic help is unnamed in *Running in the Family*, apart from a reference to the "servants' quarters," Ondaatje dedicates his poetry collection *Handwriting,* published in 2000, to his childhood ayah, or nanny, writing: for Rosalin Perera, "For the long nights you lay awake/ And watched for my unworthy sake/ For your most comfortable hand/ That led me through the uneven land". Ondaatje's gratitude to Rosalin Perera is further underlined by feelings expressed in an interview: "I remember leaving Sri Lanka and being devastated by leaving her. When I went back she'd died" (Jaggi).

and untamed – and of forms of belonging, but not of domesticity in its humanistic iterations. While *Running in the Family* shares an expression of embeddedness of self in place of origin with *From Harvey River* and *Lost in Translation,* this embeddedness is largely exclusive of domestic and, by implication, humanistic, incarnations of belonging.

From Harvey River is the most domestic of the memoirs not only in its preponderance of domestic detail (home life encompassing household interiors and nourishment both physical and emotional, for example), but in that it concerns intranational, rather than international, migration. Doris Harvey's experience in moving from Harvey River to Malvern, and then to Kingston, is that of a kind of intranational, or domestic, exile – what the philosopher Paul Carter designates "migrant poetics"; a permanent state of transit resulting from exchanging one place for another and of not belonging (Carter qtd. in K. Gunn 25). Doris's experience of migration, while intranational, is analogous to Edward Said's description of exile in which while "most people are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home; exiles are aware of at least two, and this plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions, an awareness that – to borrow a phrase from music – is contrapuntal. For an exile, habits of life, expression or activity in the new environment inevitably occur against the memory of these things in another environment" (Said, *Out* 186). Said's framing of the exile's experience of the new environment occurring against memory's backdrop of the old environment is supported by Goodison's comment that her mother lived in two places at once (as it is by Hoffman's articulation of severing).

Doris Harvey's exilic experience of geographical displacement can be considered that of affective displacement, theorized by Dancus and cited at the beginning of this chapter. It takes the form of nostalgic longing encompassing homesickness and other forms of emotional distress,

such as loneliness and sadness. Svetlana Boym, interested in the condition of exile and how it can give rise to nostalgia, distinguishes between its different forms, one that she labels "restorative" and the other "reflective". She considers restorative nostalgia to be evocative of an ideal home or nation, an origin, gravitating toward collective symbolism and oral tradition. This is present in Doris Harvey's idealization of Harvey River. Reflective nostalgia, by contrast, which focuses on history and the passage of time, is present in Goodison's narrative as scribe and writer.

Doris Harvey's affective displacement and nostalgic longing is attributed to her leaving the home of origin, to which she was greatly attached, upon marriage, first to live in her husband's hometown of Malvern, in a nearby parish, and later to relocate with her husband and children to the capital city of Kingston, at the opposite end of Jamaica. While the move to Malvern is presented as provoking homesickness, that to Kingston is presented as a source of greater suffering, an ongoing "cross to bear," both emotionally and physically. At various times, it is presented in biblical terms as a fall from the Edenic paradise of Harvey River to the urban wasteland and hardscrabble world of Kingston. It is also an experience of "demotion" in the sense of a loss of rank or status, which in Doris Harvey's case involves leaving two successive rural communities in which she had status, for a city in which that social status was downgraded. Doris Harvey's experience is one of double migration in which the second destination is "lesser" than the first. This is the opposite of Hoffman's double emigration where the second destination, the United States, is experienced as superior to that of the first, Canada. At the same time, Goodison presents her mother's move to Kingston as ultimately (as noted by Goodison, perhaps through the writing of her memoir) a success story: "over time I have come to see that my parents' story is really a story about rising up to a new life" (*From Harvey River* 1).

In her presentation of Doris Harvey's homesickness and unhappiness upon moving to Malvern, Goodison identifies its various sources, almost all of them related to human interaction, underlining the humanity, and humanism, at the heart of her mother's story. Malvern itself is described as a bucolic rural environment, not a problematic location in purely geographical terms in that it was "said to have one of the most salubrious climates in the world. A place that was almost always cool and where the air was clear and clean" (*From Harvey River* 137). Doris Harvey's suffering is attributed primarily to missing her family (thus the significant solace provided by having her youngest sister come to live with her) but also to the conflictive relationship with her husband's grandmother, with whom they initially share a house, a woman presented as highly disagreeable and as "stingy and controlling." Through snippets of conversation between her husband, his friends and acquaintances in the community, and comments made at church, Doris's melancholy is presented as being a subject of gossip and talk in Malvern, a community in which she is an outsider:

> "How is Mrs. Goodison?" asks Marcus's best friend Stanley Parsons.
>
> "She not so bright today, I think she a little low. Miss her people, you know."
>
> At one point, Stanley tells a former suitor of Marcus's, a woman he himself is interested in, "Patsy gal, it look like that stranger woman that Marcus go and find clear a Hanover, head not so right you know. I hear the big woman just bawling like a child night and day for her mother and father." (*From Harvey River* 135)[38]

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[38] Goodison's use of the term big woman, one she also employs in the preface where she references her mother's "big-woman" business as a seamstress is addressed in an interview where Goodison states that:

> My mother's actions, especially the ways she helped other women and took care of many children in addition to her own nine, have helped to shape my own thoughts about feminism. I actually prefer the term "big woman" to "feminism." Big woman is how my mother and her friends and many ordinary Jamaican women describe a woman who is independent, grown-up, and a caring and responsible member of her community. (Goodison, "Poetry Unbound")

The above passage is an example not only of Doris Harvey's affective struggle with geographical displacement, but, more specifically, of her deep embeddedness in family and community of origin in contrast with her state of unbelonging and marginality in the community of Malvern. The extensive detail Goodison supplies throughout *From Harvey River* in regard to generational history not only pertains to Doris Harvey's individual rootedness in her rural home of origin, but to a broader breadth of familial belonging. This includes the narrative of the village's naming, after Doris's paternal grandfather who had come from England during the early half of the nineteenth century, and was one of the few Englishmen of his time to marry a black Jamaican woman. Her maternal grandfather, who was Irish, also fathered children with a black Jamaican woman of Guinean descent. Doris's family background was thus one of significant racial mixing and of her father's family having status due to generational ownership of land (and English origins). As Goodison writes, highlighting generational embeddedness, "no matter who came to live there, the Harveys were considered the first family of the village" (*From Harvey River* 33) and, of Doris Harvey and her sisters, "Even when they were old women, they were still the fabulous Harvey girls" (*From Harvey River* 72).

Given that displacement for Doris Harvey was the result of marriage, it raises questions of personal agency, introduced at the beginning of this chapter. While Doris Harvey's marriage was by no means arranged, moving to her husband's hometown was based upon his circumstances and needs rather than hers; he had a home to take her to and prospective work in the car business. She was a spouse accompanying her husband (that which Ondaatje's mother, in leaving the tea estates she had moved to when married, ultimately chose not to be) – and in this respect did not actively seek to leave home. Moreover, as I have detailed, her home of origin was

a place to which she had strong, affective bonds, not only in respect to her immediate family but to a lineage of forebears in Harvey River which exerted a strong generational force.

Doris Harvey's accompanying spouse status was repeated during her move to Kingston, again precipitated by her husband's circumstances rather than hers. Moreover, the move to Kingston was one of socio-economic "demotion" in that her husband went from a position of prestige, working as a chauffeur for an English manager of a branch of Barclays Bank, and later operating his own, initially successful, garage, to holding a lower status position of linesman in the Kingston Electricity Company. It is here that Doris Harvey's life intersects with WWII in that, as Goodison explains, the family's fortunes changed as car parts and gasoline became increasingly scarce and many of her father's customers were forced to convert their cars into horse-drawn carriages, which they did by removing their engines. Summing up the Malvern years, Goodison describes a striking difference in her family's socio-economic position: "In those days we had the very best, my mother always said. And then war broke out in 1939" (*From Harvey River* 151). Doris herself, as a homemaker in a detached Malvern house with dreams of running a guest house, needed to supplement her husband's income upon their move to Kingston, and initially found work in the contrastingly harsh and shocking world of an asylum. The family lived in a Kingston tenement where their decline in social status is underlined by Goodison in the mocking, hectoring words of a neighbour who is quoted as frequently repeating, "How art the mighty fallen, how art the mighty fallen" (*From Harvey River* 168), like a preacher. Given that Doris's family was considered "the first family in Harvey River," and one in which religion was a fundamental underpinning, with judgement a core element, the loss of social status was significant.

While the experience of displacement presented in *From Harvey River* is predominantly that of Doris Harvey, Goodison's narrative exhibits a strong degree of sympathy and empathy with that displacement (perhaps even an indication of her own struggles with diasporic displacement, although these are not addressed). Exemplifying this capacity to imaginatively engage and empathize with her mother's plight are Goodison's portrayals of the multitudinous ways in which life in Kingston, during the wartime period of the 1940's, was hard for Doris Harvey. She underlines its physical manifestations through detailing the effects on her mother's body but also mental strife attributed to the difficult people with whom she came into contact. As with her initial struggles to integrate in the community Malvern, this stands in contrast to her secure and nurturing home of origin in Harvey River:

> I never knew hard life until I came to Kingston, my mother would say as she gazed at her hands. I used to have the most beautiful hands. Hard life. … Hard life was the hurry-come-up, ex-slave landlord who, now that he owned some property in the form of a tenement yard, wanted his turn to play bush, or slave master, to delight in lording his owner status over you, to extract exorbitant sums of money from you for the privilege of living in his dry-weather premises. To inform you loudly that he normally did not rent to people with children and that he would be coming every Sunday morning at 6 a.m. to beat upon your door and demand his rent, which you had better have or he would turn you out onto the street. (*From Harvey River* 183)

Goodison's empathy forms part of the humanistic fabric of *From Harvey River* as one of numerous affective states that typify the bonding or stickiness of emotional affect described by Sara Ahmed. As Ahmed writes, it is "what sustains or preserves the connections between ideas, values, and objects… the messiness of the experiential, the unfolding of bodies into worlds, and

the drama of contingency, how we are touched by what we are near" ("Cultural Politics" 30). Given that *From Harvey River* is highly relational, and that emotional affect is keenly present, it is relevant to consider affect from the perspective of a bonding element, inherent to the memoir. This emotional bonding is exemplified by Goodison describing her mother's weeping after her husband's funeral, and Goodison going on to state, "I will never forget the sound of her crying as long as I live" (*From Harvey River* 269).

As stated previously, Goodison's own displacement is scarcely addressed, neither as daughter nor narrator. Apart from its fleeting appearance in the preface and epilogue, it only surfaces in the last third of the memoir when Goodison describes being taken from Kingston, where she was raised, to spend summer vacations in Harvey River. Goodison states that, in the wake of her first visit, Harvey River would "shape her imagination for the rest of her life" (*From Harvey River* 209) and, as she writes in the preface, with the first of several biblical references to the Garden of Eden, "Over the years Harvey River came to function as an enchanted place in my imagination, an Eden from which we fell to the city of Kingston." Harvey River functions as a muse, and is an almost entirely positive reference, elevated to the status of myth. Given that she was a summer resident or visitor, Goodison's experience can be seen as having parallels with those of a girl whose writing, studied and quoted by Cobb, evidenced a "Cinderella sea-change" that took place through summer holidays in nature. Cobb describes the schizophrenic girl "surrounded by empty psychological space" and "starved of human relations" who "As she writes (externalizes) and recalls autobiographically the actuality of ecological experiences… becomes in memory as she was then, briefly each year, a happy, forward-looking child and adolescent" (Cobb, *Ecology* 76). Cobb includes excerpts of the girl's writing, drawing attention

to its poetics and imagery of movement but also to its connection with positive identity formation:

> Canoes, water against the paddle pushing ahead, home late, moon on the water, crickets singing, stumbling up the path carrying blankets and Jack giggling, always giggling and having to kiss me. Poor Jack. Michigan and Michigan again, always different, each year it changed – it didn't change – I did, a new me in the same place. Each summer I would wonder what would happen…each one with something new, unexpected, exciting, for me to have and to remember, never lose it, always have it, in me, never forget it, just think about it, relive it over and over, love it and keep it, part of me … for me, is *me.* (Cobb, *Ecology* 76; emphasis added)

The girl's experience, as understood by Cobb as not only life but identity affirming, underlines the positive influence of even short periods of time in nature during childhood, analogous to Goodison's summer holiday experiences in Harvey River and their function as an ongoing muse. Summer holidays in nature can be conceived as having a positive exilic facet as expressed by Hoffman when she writes that the exilic perspective tends to freeze one's image of the homeland "in a mythic realm," a "space for projections and fantasies" (Hoffman, "The New Nomads" 52). This is an experience vastly different from Doris Harvey's fraught migratory one in that Goodison's is a forward looking muse state as opposed to her mother's backward looking nostalgic one.[39]

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[39] A pertinent analogy can be made between the ongoing, forward looking muse state described by Goodison and the capacity of wonder as articulated by Cobb. As Cobb explains, "Wonder is itself a kind of expectancy of fulfillment. The child's sense of wonder, displayed as surprise and joy, is aroused as a response to the mystery of some kind of external stimulus that promises "more to come" or, better still, "more to do" – the power of perceptual participation in the known and unknown" (Cobb, *Ecology* 28). Musing and wonderment are similar subjective states.

In contrast to Goodison's happy childhood experiences of free movement in nature and positive attachments to Harvey River in general, and their function as muse, is an experience of imagined entrapment and burial that Goodison describes in her epilogue: a state of panic upon waking up in darkness, in a German hotel room, and not knowing where she is. After reciting the Lord's Prayer, as taught to her by her mother, she summons details of her identity, recreating herself to herself. In so doing, she finds solace within her personal history and, ultimately, from imagining this history as belonging to the waters of Harvey River: "I can turn this darkness into the river at night. My mind like the riverbed will become cool and still" (*From Harvey River* 277).

While Goodison's process of finding solace begins with her reciting the Lord's Prayer, part of her Christian heritage, the further solace she experiences is provided by her sense of communion with the river, an example of the animism she attributes to her African heritage. This is much like the "dreaming" or "visitations" she refers to when a living person is in communication with the spirit world of the absent or deceased and aligns with African-American animism as put forth by Alice Walker: "if there is one thing African-Americans have retained of their African heritage, it is probably animism: a belief that makes it possible to view all creation as living, as being inhabited by spirit" (Chawla, *First Country* 121). This is reinforced by Audre Lorde who writes, "We see ourselves as part of a life force; we are joined, for instance, to the air, to the earth. We are part of the whole life process. We live in accordance with, in a kind of correspondence with, the rest of the world as a whole" (Lorde qtd. in Chawla, *First Country* 121). Goodison at the end of her narrative enacts a dynamic of disemplacement and emplacement with emplacement achieved through a spiritual process informed by both Christian religion and the animism of her African heritage.

Displacement is inherent on a stylistic level in *Running in the Family* which takes the form of assemblage or montage – of diverse fragments placed like pieces of a collage or mosaic. These include seven sections each with short (1-4 page) chapters, not connected in an obvious or linear fashion although all based around Ceylon and Ondaatje's family there. Along with text narrated in the first person, the book contains poems, quoted conversations, stream of consciousness writing, family photos, and a map. As previously mentioned, Ondaatje has referred to the form as Cubist: "In this work I employed 'Cubism' in which I jump between varying perspectives and styles. Ultimately, this is done to develop a more holistic understanding of all thematic elements (*Michael Ondaatje*). Owing to the way this is done, Joanne Saul has called *Running in the Family* a "biotext" (33) that challenges formal and genre definitions as a way of articulating the complexities of the subject in process. She refers to it as a "self-conscious expression of a displaced self – a self in the process of negotiating one's belonging in terms of nation and ethnicity" (33). Furthermore, the negotiating of the displaced self not only concerns nation and ethnicity but, just as significantly, family, and, most of all, Ondaatje's relationship with his father. It is an alignment of both affiliations and filiations. As Sam Solecki argues, "[I]t is the figure of the absent father that is at the centre of the book and is also a metaphor for a lost place and culture" (*Ragas* 10). While Ondaatje's father may be at the centre of the memoir, this can be seen as compensatory for the decentring and dislocation he provoked.

As previously stated, *Running in the Family* is based around two return journeys to Sri Lanka when Ondaatje was in his thirties, one of them in the company of his children. These are melded into a single narrative in which he sets out to come to terms with his origins in what was, during his post-war, colonial period childhood, Ceylon. Sri Lanka, the name of the country at the time of the return journeys and Ondaatje's writing, is rarely mentioned, nor are post-colonial

politics. The geographical relationship that exists within the narrative is between Ondaatje's Canadian environment in Toronto, and Ceylon, with Toronto featuring only tangentially in relationship to Ceylon and not as an entity in its own right.

The contrasting locations of Ceylon and Canada are laid out in the memoir's first pages where Ondaatje describes both places, first Colombo in a single unified scene and then Toronto in a disparate, disjointed, contrast-filled one in which Asian and North American elements are juxtaposed. The Ceylonese scene portrays a remembered whole while the Toronto one conveys chaos and raw emotion:

> I sat up on the uncomfortable sofa and I was in a jungle, hot, sweating. Street lights bounced off the snow and into the room through the hanging vines and ferns at my friend's window. A fish tank glowed in the corner. I had been weeping and my shoulders and face were exhausted. I wound the quilt around myself, leaned back against the head of the sofa, and sat there for most of the night. Tense, not wanting to move as the heat gradually left me, as the sweat evaporated and I became conscious again of brittle air outside the windows searing and howling through the streets and over the frozen cars hunched like sheep all the way down towards Lake Ontario. It was a new winter and I was already dreaming of Asia. (*Running* 21)

Both the drought and the Toronto scene reference dreaming, itself a disconcerting and provocative experience that incites dislocation. In the drought scene, Ondaatje references a nightmare in which wild nature is invasive and threatening, robbing him of life: "thorn trees in the garden send their hard roots underground towards the house climbing through windows so they can drink sweat off his body, steal the last of the saliva off his tongue" (*Running* 17). In the Toronto scene, Ondaatje references, with greater lightness, and hope, a "bright bone of a dream"

(*Running* 21) and "dreaming of Asia" (*Running* 22). The initial part of the Toronto scene furthermore introduces the wildness and chaos of Ondaatje's father: "I saw my father, chaotic, surrounded by dogs, and all of them were screaming and barking into the tropical landscape" (*Running* 5). In the Colombo scene the stronger word "nightmare" is used, connected to wild nature being invasive and life "stealing": nature is, therefore, threatening.

The disturbing and nightmarish qualities of the dreams at the outset of *Running in the Family* stand in stark contrast to the dreaming in *From Harvey River* which is contextualized within a positive framework of African culture and tradition, connected to a benevolent spirit world. This spirit world is attributed to connecting Goodison's great-grandmother with a loving husband and provides her mother with a "palatial and splendid sewing room with high stained-glass windows" (Goodison*, From Harvey River* 2) in her afterlife. When, on the other hand, the spirit world is referenced in *Running in the Family,* it is malevolent, as when Ondaatje refers to so-called "grahayas," which are "planetary spirits of malignant character" (Ondaatje, *Running* 190). Additionally, while in *From Harvey River* dreams are life-affirming, and affirming of an afterlife, in *Running in the Family* they are life-robbing, as when saliva is stolen from Ondaatje's tongue.

Just as Ondaatje himself is displaced, so too is the reader dislocated, transported in the space of several pages from Colombo in southern Ceylon, to Toronto, then to Jaffna in northern Ceylon, and on to England where Ondaatje tells of his father feigning that he was a student at Cambridge for two and a half years (after failing his entrance exam) (*Running* 31). The reader is carried through vastly different landscapes, this movement contributing to the sense of travelogue to which *Running in the Family* has sometimes been compared. The reader is put in the position of deciphering the disparate pieces of "Cubist" landscape as laid out, and so takes

part in Ondaatje's quest. This contrasts with the grounding effect the reader experiences in *From Harvey River,* in which there is the substantial primacy of a singular place.

The importance Ondaatje gives to place is underlined by his statements that "places are my anchor" and "my writing always begins with a time and a place," (Ondaatje, "The divided man"). The environmental writer Leslie Van Gelder's statement that "[i]n the waters (of time) we look for the anchors of place to help us connect the continually unfurling piece of experience into narrative stories" (46) confirms the need for anchoring in place amidst the flux of experience as do the words of the psychiatrist and writer Veronica O'Keane: "humans create intimate places through memory and places are experientially the anchor for both memory and feeling" (98). Questions related to the need for anchoring are relevant to all three writers and have vastly different considerations for each (religious and spiritual for Goodison, as I have explained). In the case of Hoffman, not only is the Holocaust a factor, "an unspoken narrative on the margins of Hoffman's memoir," as stated by Jilani (8) but Jewish history of exclusion and exodus.

The importance of anchoring for Ondaatje can be seen in light of the destabilizing forces of his family as presented in *Running in the Family,* one of which is his father's dipsomania, or alcoholism. A child's experience of a parent's alcoholism is one of unpredictability of mood, which exerts a displacing influence on the child. Ondaatje describes this unpredictability when he writes about his father: "His dipsomania would recur every two months or so. Between bouts he would not touch a drink. Then he would be offered one, take it, and would not or could not stop drinking for three or four days. During that time he could do *nothing* but drink. Humorous and gentle when sober, he changed utterly and would do anything to get alcohol" (*Running* 58). The destruction of his father's marriage and family life, as well as financial decline and chaos, which Ondaatje attributes to his father's behaviour, can be seen to have their origins in the

changeability of mood provoked by the alcoholism. The resultant dispersal of his family is almost dizzying for the reader:

> Before my mother left for England in 1949 she went to a fortune-teller who predicted that while she would continue to see each of her children often for the rest of her life, she would never see them all together again. This turned out to be true. Gillian stayed in Ceylon with me, Christopher and Janet went to England. I went to England, Christopher went to Canada, Gillian went to England, Janet went to America, Gillian returned to Ceylon, Janet returned to England, I went to Canada. Magnetic fields would go crazy in the presence of more than three Ondaatjes. And my father. Always separate until he died, away from us. The north pole. (*Running* 172)

The second most prominent figure in *Running in the Family*, Ondaatje's grandmother, Lalla, like his father, is presented as a destabilizing personality who "managed to persuade all those she met into chaos" (*Running* 41). Ondaatje's mother, largely absent from the memoir, as I have underlined, and presented almost exclusively in relation to her husband, their courtship, marriage and divorce, while not described as chaotic, contributes to the geographical displacement of her family by initiating divorce proceedings:

> Finally, when it all came to an end, she played her last scene with him. She arrived at the divorce court in a stunning white dress and hat (she had never worn a hat in her life before) and calmly asked for a divorce, demanding no alimony – nothing for her and nothing for the children. She got a job at the Grand Oriental Hotel, trained herself as a housekeeper-manager and supported us through schools by working in hotels in Ceylon and then England till she died. The easy life of the tea estate and the theatrical wars were over. They had come a long way in fourteen years from being the products of two of the

> best known and wealthiest families in Ceylon: my father now owning only a chicken farm at Rock Hill, my mother working in a hotel. (*Running* 172)

Ondaatje's statement that his mother supported her children through schools by working in hotels until her death distinguishes her as an ultimately anchoring influence, not chaotic like her mother and husband. In the rare instances when she is mentioned it is with positive regard, respect and understanding. When, in his presentation of his mother's courtroom appearance Ondaatje underlines her theatricality by referring to "her last scene" and the "theatrical wars," it is as though, in some sense, he perceives her marital life as an act or fiction, the drama an aspect of colonial era life that he has already related to the maternal branch of his family. The fact that as an independent woman she trained herself as a housekeeper-manager, suggests that maturity in the form of responsibility began in certain regards when she left her husband.[40] Leaving was an act of agency and, through her initiative, as Ondaatje explains, she was able to provide for her children's education. In this passage it is clear too that her privileged life in its Edenic setting was far from paradisiacal.

While in the case of Goodison's family the expulsion from Edenic rural Jamaica to the hardscrabble life in Kingston is presented as having a singularity of cause in that it took place because of the second world war's effects on her father's employment in the car parts industry, in the case of Ondaatje's displacement it is far more complex. As I've argued, it is related, in part, to his father's alcoholism, and his mother's subsequent filing for divorce, factors Soleki has pinpointed as the source of the "great hurt" he identifies in Ondaatje's vision (*Ragas*). It can also be seen, indirectly, as having broader, societal causes partly due to the changing social and political scene in the aftermath of decolonization, which likely contributed to Mervyn Ondaatje's

[40] In an interview, Ondaatje comments that "until the war, nobody really had to grow up" ("The divided man"), a remark pertinent to his mother who left his father in the post-war period and moved to London in 1949.

mental instability and alcoholism. Ondaatje does not speculate about this but alludes to the ways in which Mervyn Ondaatje's alcoholism began in his youth as part of the drinking culture of the social circles he moved in during the "last era of a colonial Ceylon" (*Running* 169) and continued throughout his life. We learn, for example, that his father's closest friend as a young man was an extreme alcoholic: "Francis Fonseka had the most extreme case of alcoholism in my father's generation and, always the quickest, was the first to drink himself into the grave. He was my father and Noel's closest friend and the best man at several weddings he tried to spoil" (*Running* 35).[41]

Both Goodison and Ondaatje supply substantial ancestral, historical background. Like Goodison, who writes about her ancestors and their arrival to Jamaica from England, Ireland and Africa, Ondaatje contextualizes his family within the era of a colonial Ceylon and references his racially mixed background of Dutch, English, and Tamil (and through such names as de Melho, Silva and Jayawardene, some evidently Portuguese) ancestry. He is struck by his family's deeply rooted, and racially mixed, Ceylonese heritage when he visits a church in Colombo and sees his family name:

> To kneel on the floors of a church built in 1650 and see your name chiselled in large letters so that it stretches from your fingertips to your elbow in some strange way removes vanity, eliminates the personal. It makes your own story a lyric. So the sound which came immediately out of my mouth as I half-gasped and called my sister spoke all that excitement of smallness, of being overpowered by stone. (*Running* 65)

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[41] The spelling of Fonseka is an example of various Ceylonese names of Portuguese origin that are cited in Ondaatje's memoir. Ondaatje's nanny, to whom his poetry collection *Handwriting* is dedicated was Rosalin Perera, whose surname also doesn't follow the conventions of Portuguese spelling.

Along with this overpowering generational rootedness in Ceylon, with its history of continental migrations, Ondaatje also references the peregrinations of foreigners – and particularly foreign writers such as Edward Lear, Leonard Woolf, D.H. Lawrence and Pablo Neruda – to Ceylon. Most of them, he writes, "admired the landscape, disliked the 'inquisitive natives' and left" (*Running* 80). He also refers to an ancestor, William Charles Ondaatje, who knew of at least fifty-five species of Ceylonese poisons, and like the foreign writers who visited, saw Ceylon's dark side: "If this was paradise, it had a darker side," (*Running* 81), a comment that could also have been made by Ondaatje's mother. Ondaatje, in writing about foreigners, includes himself in this category, and also doesn't: "I am the foreigner. I am the prodigal who hates the foreigner" (*Running* 78), underscoring the complexity of his placement and displacement.

While *From Harvey River* and *Running in the Family* centre around family, immediate, extended, and literary (in the case of Ondaatje's references mentioned above), *Lost in Translation,* the most singularly autobiographical and self-reflexive of the memoirs, has the dislocated self as its primary subject. Given its prominence, displacement has already been extensively explored in my presentation of Hoffman in Chapter IV, particularly through the vertices of language and culture. In the following pages I will elaborate on its less explored intersection with family through the generational transmission of affect. While this subject has been introduced in Chapter IV, my aim here is to elucidate the challenges of finding and establishing a sense of self amidst the weight of family history, as evidenced in Hoffman's work. While *Lost in Translation* is a testament to this quest, its successor, *After Such Knowledge* explores its generational and historical dimensions. As Hoffman explains:

> [I]n the beginning was the war. That was my childhood theory of origins, akin perhaps to certain childhood theories of sexuality. For me, the world as I knew it and the people in it emerged not from the womb, but from war. The theory was perhaps understandable, for I was born in Poland, in 1945, that is, on the site of the Second World War's greatest ravages; and so soon after the cataclysm as to conflate it with the causes of my own birth. (*After* 3)

This passage substantiates Hoffman's elucidation in *Lost in Translation* of not only witnessing but taking in her parents', and specifically her mother's, mental suffering, a consequence of the Holocaust. Her experience – that which Marianne Hirsch has termed post memory, as introduced in Chapter IV – involves memory not of theoretical abstraction or ideological strategies only but of proximity charged with feeling (Hoffman, *After* 180). As Hoffman writes, "I inherit some of this fear" (*Lost* 7). She further describes being unable to extricate herself from her mother's pain, pain being so deep within her as to be "where I come from, and it's useless to try to get away" (*Lost* 25). The experience of emotional transmission from parent to child is further explained by the psychologist Luis Cozolino:

> When caretakers are unable to tolerate certain emotions, those emotions will be excluded from their narratives or shaped into distorted but more acceptable forms. In this way, the narratives of children will come to reflect the parents' unconscious editorial choices. Whatever is excluded from the child's narrative will be more difficult to process and comprehend in the years to come. This is one mechanism through which we pass our unresolved issues to our children. (243)

Hoffman's mother lost all of her family during the war – her mother, father, cousins, aunts and her sister and, as Hoffman explains, she suffers emotions "as if they were forces of

nature, winds and storms and volcanic eruptions" (*Lost* 269). One of the vertices of Hoffman's dynamic of displacement is that of family transmission under which she attempts to re-emplace herself to gain control. As she explains, in response to her mother, "I don't allow myself to be blown away… I've gained control" (*Lost* 269).

While neither Goodison nor Ondaatje directly address the subject of transmission of emotional affect, in one of *Running in the Family's* final sections Ondaatje immerses himself in imagining his father's state of mind in the wake of his wife's departure upon filing for divorce. The boundary between his father and himself blurs textually when he interrupts third person narration about his father to fleetingly use first person:

Leaving the car door open like a white broken wing on the lawn, he moved towards the porch, a case of liquor under his arm. *Moonless.* The absence of even an edge of the mood. Into the bedroom, the bottle top already unscrewed. Tooby, Tooby, you should see your school friend now. The bottle in my mouth as I sit on the bed like a lost ship on a white sea. And they sat years ago on deck-chairs, young, going to England. (*Running* 188)

In his use of the first person Ondaatje becomes his father, drinking. Later in the section, Ondaatje introduces the subject of his father looking for his book, which is really Ondaatje's book, and when he finds the novel it is on the floor, eaten by ants:

> In the bathroom ants had attacked the novel thrown on the floor by the commode. A whole battalion was carrying one page away from its source, carrying the intimate print as if rolling a tablet away from him. He knelt down on the red tile, slowly, not wishing to disturb their work. It was page 189. He had not got that far in the book yet, but he surrendered it to them. (*Running* 189)

In this scene it is as though Ondaatje has burrowed under his father's skin in an attempt to better understand him, resulting in a confluent state of communion with his father's abjection and drunkenness. On a textual level, where the drinking and the novel could be attributed to either one of the two men, it is difficult to disentangle which is father and which is son. It is as though Ondaatje's father's chaos has become his son's at this textual level.

Ondaatje's fictionalization of confluence with his father differs from Hoffman's direct, psychoanalytical positioning. Goodison similarly abstains from psychoanalytical interpretations of family transmission while, as previously explained, she engages psychologically and empathically. That said, she is less present on a narrative level than is Ondaatje in that she almost never inserts herself into the family about which she writes, only doing so in the final third of her memoir. The narrative self is all but absent until the final third of her book. In contrast, Ondaatje as an "I," is present from the beginning.

That Hoffman is the only one of the three writers to be uprooted from her first language, can, to some extent, be considered a contributing factor to her analytical approach as well as being, as has been explained, a factor in her experience of displacement. Research on language and emotion indicates that the emotional impact of a first language is far greater than that of a second. Researchers Dewaele and Pavlenko make claims that an individual's languages can vary in emotional impact, "with the first being the language in which personal involvement is expressed, and the second being the language of distance and detachment" (Dewaele and Pavlenko qtd. in Leimig 6). This has been substantiated in autobiography by the Canadian writer Nancy Huston who links her involvement with her second language or new idiom, French, to her desire to be less emotionally attached. She writes of needing to liberate herself from the emotional weight of her childhood experiences connected to her mother tongue, specifically

abandonment by her mother when she was a child, explaining that the acquisition of the French language gave her "an incredible sense of freedom" (Huston qtd. in Kinginger 159-178). Hoffman similarly identifies this advantage of a second language explaining that it "facilitates clear thought and a kind of freedom" (*Lost*, 180). These and other aspects of language, first and second, will form part of the subject of Chapter VII which focuses on features of the writing process. Second language questions also point to Hoffman's relationship with her mother, although these are not questions raised in her work. Hoffman does, however, relate her mother's heightened expression of emotion, as opposed to her own greater degree of control, which can be related to Hoffman having greater detachment and control in her second language of English. It can also be surmised that Hoffman's mother would not have mastered English to the degree of her daughter and that they would have primarily spoken in Polish in North America as well as in Poland. In considering that Hoffman is the only writer of the three of this study to have departed from an original linguistic self and arrived at another, questions of loss and gain thus pertain to her mother as well as to her mother tongue.

Section III: Canada in the Memoirs

In this final section I will examine the very different ways in which Canada features in each of the memoirs. While homes of origin share a Garden of Eden/Paradise trope (which, as Hoffman has pointed out, is common of exilic, expatriate experience), Canada, a site of immigration for all three writers, is only dealt with in detail by Hoffman who devotes the second of her three parts to her exilic experience in Vancouver as a teenager. In *Running in the Family,* Toronto is the springboard from which Ondaatje's two return journeys to Ceylon/Sri Lanka take place and its presence is primarily one of contrast. In *From Harvey River,* Montreal is the site of

emigration of two of Goodison's maternal aunts – an elsewhere, or site of otherness, from the perspective of Jamaica as home base, and a destination Doris Harvey wishes to visit expressly to see her sisters (a desire eventually realized). Goodison's own relationship with Canada is not mentioned in her memoir. She conveys a sense of Canada through the indirect experience of her aunts and mother while Hoffman and Ondaatje both present Canada through their own first-hand experience. It is only in Hoffman that Canada is presented through emotional affect and in such a way that questions of the self and identity are implicated, including, as outlined above, in relation to her mother tongue.

Canada as a site of immigration in the three memoirs contrasts with my experience as researcher and writer in that it is the country in which I was born and raised and from which I have migrated, or sojourned, to use a term employed by Goodison. At the same time, Canada as home of origin shares for me a Garden of Eden/ Paradise trope, due, in part, to my expatriate positioning. The Canadian home of my childhood, down to the "feel of the tiniest latch"[42] alive in memory, is my Harvey River/Kuttapitiya/Kraków in regard to affective attachments. The germination of this thesis, as explained in the introduction, has partly had its roots in an affinity or affiliation, with home of origin that I share with the three writers, as well as filiation. Connecting with their attachments to, and love of, home of origin, I have connected with my own. Hoffman's assertion that "the country of my childhood lives within me with a primacy that is a form of love" (*Lost* 74**)**, expresses a humanistic conceptualization of homeland that I share. It is the articulation of this primary, while not in any way simple or purely essential, substance of home and homeland, and displacement from it, that is part of what drew me to the choice of the three works. The imaginations of the three writers in their reconstructive and revivifying

[42] Taken from Gaston Bachelard's *Poetics of Space*, this reference is quoted in full in Chapter I.

capacities have taken me to my own, evidencing Iris Murdoch's characterization of literature, delineated in the introduction, as having the capacity to move one emotionally (Murdoch, *Existentialists*) and Felski's assertion of the reader's involvement and implication in the works read (Felski, *Uses*).

In this section I will draw from Pierre Nora's framework of ego-histoire[43] through which, rather than remove myself from the text, I will, when pertinent, include my implication and involvement with Canada in my writing, occasionally interweaving my own experiences and reflections. This choice is based upon the perspective that, on the one hand, I cannot claim an unbiased neutrality and, on the other, that it can be fruitful to, on occasion, assert rather than suppress or silence personal elements.

In Hoffman, Canada, not being a home of origin but of affective exile, is a point of placelessness. This stands in contrast to Canada as the source of my subjective, homeland placefulness. As articulated by Sarah Phillips Casteel, Canada for Hoffman, is a "negative valency" – a lack of place, rather than merely a foreign one. Hoffman reimagines her arrival in Vancouver: "As the train approaches the station, I see what is indeed a bit of nowhere" (*Lost* 101). Later, in *After Such Knowledge,* Hoffman further underlines the contrast between Kraków, Poland and Vancouver, Canada: "Vancouver, Canada – a place so different from Cracow along any geographical or cultural coordinate that it might as well have been my native city's antipode" (82).

As a reader of Hoffman responding to her exilic experience, my reactions are complex, even entangled. As someone who has also had exilic experiences, I have an understanding of,

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[43] Ego-histoire is an analytical tool articulated by Nora to ask historians to apply their methods to themselves, contributors to lay open their paths, personal commitments and passion involved in their research. As Nora explains, "the idea was to explain the link between the history you have made and the history that has made you" (22).

and feel an affinity with, those described by Hoffman. I also clamour, perhaps tribalistically, but also in the manner of a child defending her mother, to defend my country of origin and its "somewhereness"; I, too, once moved to Vancouver, and it was a somewhere. Hoffman provokes a questioning of what constitutes culture, and of inclusive and exclusive conceptualizations and framings. Where does the "primacy that is a form of love" with which her country of origin lives within her fit into a conceptualization of culture? To what degree is culture subjective? And what about the fine line that separates nature from culture? This fine line, a further aspect of the in-betweenness explored in this thesis, has been examined in Chapter V. There is an obvious stereotype, containing truth, of Poland as culturally rich and Canada as culturally lacking, while rich in "natural resources". When in an interview Hoffman states that "the Vancouver to which I came did not have a very rich musical life" she is expressing a fact about Vancouver of 1959 which did not possess the cultural institutions of Kraków. Yet this stereotype, as with any, leaves out much in respect to individual experience. Hoffman does go on to explain that she had a wonderful music teacher and that it seemed from her family's immigrant point of view that going to Julliard might have been nearly impossible and becoming a concert pianist very impractical (Kreisler qtd. in Jarczok "Reconstructing" 30), indicating a gap between her personal experience and her, or her parents', ambitions.

Hoffman's "Exile/Canada" chapter has received criticism for being less reflexive and analytical than her other chapters. As Casteel explains:

> One of the hallmarks of her autobiography is Hoffman's remarkable degree of self-awareness, her ability to interpret her own condition for us, yet rarely does she apply this kind of rigorous self-analysis to the Canadian sections. While elsewhere in the autobiography we are conscious of a distinction between Hoffman's mature writing and

> her recollected self, in the Canadian sections Hoffman seems largely unable to distance herself from her teenaged perceptions. And so we are faced with something of a conundrum: a highly articulate and self-reflexive autobiographer who becomes suddenly silent and unpenetrating in the middle section of her narrative. (Casteel 290)

While in the preponderance of her narrative Hoffman does most of the work of interpretation for the reader, in the Canadian sections this is considerably less the case. In other words, Hoffman offers few observations of, and insights about, Canada beyond those of her disdainful teenage self.

As Sarah Jilani has written, representations of landscape embody mindsets and emotions as much as they do physical geographies. Hoffman's preconceptions about Canada are referenced in the beginning of her narrative when she explains that the only information she has about Canada is from a magazine article that describes the country as a "cultural desert" (*Lost* 88). Given that she places importance on culture as a teenager, through her piano lessons, for example, she is predisposed to reject Canada. It is clear from her narrative that her mother favoured immigration to Israel, while Canada was her father's choice, based in part upon a Jewish acquaintance's experience of it as a land of opportunity where he was able to become a millionaire. In regard to cultural versus financial criterion, one embodied by her mother and the other by her father, it was her father's that ultimately prevailed.

Hoffman's first reference to her father's interest in Canada is when she relates that, while hiding in a bunker during the war, he had a book with him called *Canada Fragrant with Resin* "which, in his horrible confinement, spoke to him of majestic wilderness, of animals roaming without being pursued, of freedom" (*Lost* 4). Later, she mentions her own childhood experience reading a Canadian book, *Anne of Green Gables*, which she relates to deeply: "As long as I'm

reading, I assume that I am this girl growing up on Prince Edward Island; the novel's words enter my head as if they were emanating from it. Since I experience what they describe so vividly, they must be mine." (*Lost* 28). Hoffman's mention of her childhood identification with Anne to some extent contradicts her statement later on that the only information she had about Canada prior to her departure from Poland was through a magazine article. This confirms research findings referenced earlier that reveal memory's fallibility (Prager *Representing the Past*). Hoffman's presentation of Canada is a reconstructed one and, as Casteel has argued, it has a negative valency in representing a lack of place – not Kraków – rather than merely being a foreign one (Casteel 293). Thirteen-year-old Hoffman was predisposed to not want to be there. One aspect of her rejection, and an example of Casteel's argument that Hoffman is less analytical in the Exile/Canada section, is the influence of her mother who favoured emigration to Israel and whose choice of destination was overridden by her husband's. Her mother's lack of agency is a further example of the accompanying spouse profile, referenced earlier in this chapter.

Casteel compares *Lost in Translation* with Saul Bellow's *Herzog* where Canada is the alternative space to America and is therefore a candidate for idealization:

> By contrast Hoffman, a double-emigrant, has not two but three possible locations, as the tripartite structure she adopts and her emphasis on the idea of triangulation remind us. This triangularity is what is obscured by the bipolar structure (Poland vs America) that critical readings have tended to impose on the book. Bipolar readings fail to elucidate Hoffman's presentation of Canada because they disregard the double-emigration structure that makes possible her negative construction of Canada. If Canada had been her final destination, it could not have been identified so absolutely with exile – as indeed it has not for her sister who remains in Vancouver. (297)

As Casteel further explains, the Canadian narrative:

> forms a dark underside to the generally optimistic American narrative. Where America represents the possibility of self-invention, and of shedding of the old self and beginning again, Canada stands for non-assimilation, non-integration, for the irreconcilability of the Old World and the New. (295)

Canada, as it features in *From Harvey River,* is the polar opposite of Hoffman's Canadian narrative. It shares the bipolarity of Herzog's presentation in that it is an alternative space to Jamaica and is a site, while not of idealization, of opportunity. Two of Goodison's maternal aunts immigrate to Montreal which, while an environment of hardship because of the bitter cold and challenges of doing domestic work within a French language household, offers "a more cultured and refined lifestyle, far removed from the "rookumbine" and "gal a wey you go a gully for?" culture of rural Jamaica" (Goodison, *From Harvey River* 82). It represents a land of opportunity within the Harvey family as a whole, a place from which special Canadian goods, such as skin care products and clothing, and Canadian dollars, are sent home. It is also presented as a place Goodison's mother aspires to visit, and which she does succeed in going to in later years after achieving financial stability. Canada has a positive "valency," to use Casteel's terminology, the polar opposite of its "negative valency" in Hoffman.

Goodison's narrative excludes her own opinions about and experience of Canada, which she has not only visited but where she has lived; an exclusion consistent with her general removal of herself from the narrative. Ondaatje likewise excludes his opinions about and experience of Canada; it only features to a minor extent and only in juxtaposition with Sri Lanka. Just as Goodison references Canada's bitter cold, so does Ondaatje primarily juxtapose Canada's winter weather with the heat of Ceylon/Sri Lanka. His first reference to Canada is of his waking

from the dream of a Ceylonese jungle, sweating, while street lights outside "bounced off the snow". He situates himself at a friend's house, presumably in Toronto, given a later reference to Lake Ontario and the city itself (*Running* 136). Later he contrasts the Canadian winter, and Canadian sterility, with the lushness of Sri Lankan nature: from a situatedness within a Canadian February, he listens to a cassette recording he has made of the sounds of wildlife in Sri Lanka, in juxtaposition with the sterility of "this silent room (with its own unheard hum of fridge, fluorescent light)" (*Running* 136).

Not only does Ondaatje juxtapose Ceylon's hot climate with Canada's cold one, but so too does he juxtapose its size with Canada's: "Ceylon falls on a map and its outline is the shape of a tear. After the spaces of India and Canada it is so small" (*Running* 147). In a more elaborated comparison, he portrays cultural differences that do not translate. Two of these centre around a Canadian school attended by his sisters where Ceylonese and Canadian culture clash. The first of these involves a visit by his Ceylonese grandmother to the Canadian school:

> When Lalla came to Bishop's College Girls School on Parents' Day and pissed behind bushes… my sisters were so embarrassed and ashamed they did not admit or speak of this to each other for over fifteen years. (*Running* 124)

Ondaatje later references Bishop's College Girls School in relation to a story his sister has heard from another girl from Ceylon who was also a student there. This is the story of how Ondaatje used to be bathed at age five, as referenced earlier. Difficulties with cross-cultural translation are indicated by his question: Why did *she* not tell me the story – the demure woman in a sari who was once "bath prefect" at Bishops College Girls School, who officiated over the cleansing of my lean five-year-old nakedness?" (*Running* 139). Given that Ondaatje had

referenced a “vicious woman” in the bathing scene, his question alludes to culpability and the contrast between a demure appearance and hostile past behaviours.

In Ondaatje’s penultimate paragraph, Canada is present indirectly, again in contrast with Ceylon/Sri Lanka, as the location of a life never imagined from his Ceylonese childhood vantage point. As an adult he finds himself adjacent to bookcases that were part of his childhood world: “Bookcases I stood under again this week which were full of signed first editions by Neruda and Lawrence and George Keyt. All this was here before I dreamed of getting married, having children, wanting to write” (*Running* 203).

While Ondaatje obliquely pays tribute to literary influences dating back to his childhood (and in interviews credits English professors at the Canadian universities he attended) Hoffman, with the exception of referencing her childhood reading of, and identification with, *Anne of Green Gables* while in Poland, does not credit Canada in her literary education. While it is in Canada that her formation as an artist and autobiographer/diarist is set into motion and that she is given the opportunity as a young immigrant to have a voice, taken seriously as an interviewee by Vancouver media and given the opportunity to travel to the United Nations in New York through winning a speech competition at only fourteen, it is only the United States that she credits with forming her literary and public self. This is perhaps because it is in Canada that she has a history of most actively resisting assimilation, and as Elizabeth Kella states “[A]massing her resistance around nostalgic or diasporic feelings” (11). Furthermore, her aspirations while in Canada were towards a career as a pianist rather than as a writer. Nonetheless, it is difficult, from the vantage point of a Canadian reader of Hoffman’s trajectory, to not make note of her lack of acknowledgement of opportunities provided for her by Canadian society and institutions, especially those related to language and voice.

In regard to Hoffman's nostalgic or diasporic feeling, expressed particularly in the "Exile"/ Canadian section, Kella questions the negative charge nostalgia tends to have in contemporary discourse, as a term of "censure, accusatory, signaling a malady, a memory clouded by sentiment, a failure of intellect… frequently said to be innately conservative, even reactionary; it is an irrational longing directed toward regaining an idealized and essentialized past" (7). She cites Angé's and Berliner's (2015) assessment of anthropology's relations to nostalgia which stress how nostalgia emerges in response to real or imagined threats to continuity and how multiple and various nostalgic desires may exist alongside each other. Their perspectives on nostalgia's positive form, further argued by Andrea Deciu Ritivoi who states that it can be "an interpretive stance in which a person is aware of the element of discordance in her life" (Ritivoi qtd. in Kella 9) also apply to Lorna Goodison's depiction of her mother's nostalgic longing for Harvey River which sprang in part from her resistance to the discordant environments of Malvern.

In Hoffman, the range of valencies included in nostalgia – from the reflexive and melancholic to the restorative and faith bearing (faith in the past affirming a vision of the future), also include the lyrical and poetic. Hoffman herself affirms, "Nostalgia is a source of poetry" (*Lost* 115). Nostalgia that idealizes home of origin and fidelity to it – Hoffman herself uses the term fidelity, stating that nostalgia is "a form of fidelity" (*Lost* 115) – functions opposingly with her idea of Canada.[44] Returning to Svetlana Boym's typology of "restorative" and "reflective" nostalgia, outlined earlier in this chapter, it is restorative nostalgia, evocative of an ideal home or nation – adamantly not Canada – that is most present in the "Exile/Canadian" section of *Lost in Translation*. Reflective nostalgia which, by contrast, as Boym elucidates, focuses on history and

[44] It is also worth noting, due to the significant role music has played in Hoffman's life, that fidelity is a musical term, high fidelity denoting how accurately a copy reproduces its source.

the passage of time, is more present in the Paradise/ childhood section. Different forms of nostalgia can thus be seen as operating within the memoir as a whole, and with these different forms are different functions, including the literary function Hoffman asserts in giving credit to nostalgia as a poetic source.

In Hoffman, nostalgia is one of the varieties of diasporic feeling that contribute to her work's dense fabric of emotional affect. In Goodison, emotional affect is also keenly present through her characterization of her mother as a highly emotional person. As in Hoffman, affect is concomitant with exilic forms of geographical displacement. While in Ondaatje an Eliot-esque stance of impersonality informs his memoir in multiple iterations of displacement, emotional affect develops in the final section of *Running in the Family* as Ondaatje identifies and empathizes with his father. This process of identification is one of the forms of emplacement at work in the memoir. It and other forms of emplacement will be addressed in the next and final chapter in which I explore the writing process itself as transformative.

Chapter VII - The Writing Process as a Transformative Act of Emplacement In *From Harvey River*, *Running In The Family*, and *Lost In Translation*

Language is fundamental to the possibility of re-wonderment, for language does not just register experience, it produces it.

–Robert MacFarlane, *Landmarks*

In this chapter I will argue that the creative capacity of language, and specifically of writing *as a process* within the genre of memoir, serves as a means of transforming displaced selves into emplaced ones. Writing, through its ability to metamorphose and transform, and by virtue of its agency, can, in other words, be an act of emplacement in which new selves are formed. As the psychoanalyst Roy Shafer states, "The self is being *formed* in what is told" (qtd. in A. Frank 55) (while I conceive of selfhood as a plurality, as has been demonstrated in this thesis, this is not in opposition to Shafer's articulation of an overarching sense of selfhood). In the creative process, as stated by Sarah Jilani, writing "becomes a space of abode" 3), a place or field for subjectivities in which old selves can continue to exist and new ones can develop. This final chapter, then, explores the memoirs through linguistic becoming. That which has been inchoate and chaotic (as evidenced in Hoffman's coming of age narrative and Ondaatje's chaos narrative) is gathered together and formed. As such, the memoirs can be seen through the concept of poiesis: the bringing of something from concealment into light, a concept I will explore and that connects with the sensorial underpinnings of the memoirs.

As with the other two of my thematic chapters, this third and final chapter is divided into three sections. In Section I: The Birthing of Words and Naming, I examine the importance given to a single word, and to names, in the particular case of each of the memoirs. In Section II: Chaos

and Form, I explore the process whereby the three writers give form to that which is initially chaotic material, drawing from the chaosmos theory of Deleuze and Guatarri that resonates with Edith Cobb's concept of children's cosmic play, as well as with Erik Erikson and Donald Winnicott's theories of play. The subject of wonder, introduced in Chapter V, is also pertinent to chaosmos theory. In Section III: From Displacement to Emplacement, I look at the way displaced, diasporic selves find linguistic emplacement in the memoirs.

Owing to this chapter's exploration of conceptualizations of the self through writing, of the self's movement, construction and deconstruction, its pluralities and its relationship with the other, I will occasionally draw from psychoanalytical sources. However, my focus will predominantly be on the creative and literary rather than on the psychoanalytical (which informed Chapter VI and, to some extent, Chapters IV and V). Furthermore, while this chapter explores the self in relation to writing, only one of the three memoirs, *Lost in Translation*, deals directly with the self as a subject. Yet, as I will argue, there is a process of self-development within all three memoirs, acknowledged by all three writers while given greater or lesser degrees of importance by each. Within this process, language is the dominant creative resource and means of constituting subjective realities. In regard to this creative function, I take as useful Rob Pope's definition of creativity that:

> it may be 'original' in the sense both of drawing on ancient origins and of originating something in its own right; either way, the overall aim or end is a fitting – an active exploration of the changing proportions, measure, ratios – between older modes of understanding and newer ones. (60)

Pope's formulation of creativity can also be applied to my formulation of source in this thesis: while source is to some degree related to origins, it also originates something in its own right and

Pope's "fitting" can be conceived of as dynamically fluid in regard to source. Childhood as source, for instance, can be conceived as existing within a person throughout that person's lifetime and drawn from amidst ever-changing perspectives.

Creative transformation within memoir writing can thus be considered as spanning older and newer modes of understanding through its particular return to origins/ revisiting of the past and in its reexamination and reevaluation of the other and of the self within the back and forth process between past and present. Hoffman asserts writing's particular capacity to revive the past in her statement that, "[e]xcept on the page, the past can never be recaptured or repeated" (*Exit* 97). Ondaatje expresses the same in regard to writing about childhood when he remarks in an interview that "people who lose their childhood eventually have to retrieve it" (Ondaatje, "The divided man"). In the case of the memoirs of my study, there is additionally a diasporic element to the transformative aspects of writing and narrative in that writing away from the home of origin lends itself, because of the geographical severing that takes place, to, as Pabitra Bharali puts it, a "reclamation of root" (33-36)[45]. Transformation involves a backwards movement, not only through time but, in diasporic writing, to fluid and reconstructive revisitings of place and home of origin.

The transformative capacities of language in relation to conceptions of the self are most keenly rendered in *Lost in Translation* which, as explained in Chapter VI, is a memoir that highlights the life-altering changes brought about by adopting, and living in, a foreign language. The Italian writer Dominico Starnone explains, "A new language is almost a new life – grammar and syntax recast you, you slip into another logic and another sensibility" (Starnone qtd. in

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[45] In her introduction to *Plantation Memories* entitled "Becoming the Subject" Grada Kilomba underlines the presence of "becoming" in postcolonial writing explaining that "The concept of "becoming" has been used within Cultural and Postcolonial Studies to elaborate the relationship between self and the "Other" (*Plantation Memories* 10)

Lahiri 161). The vital link between the self and language is further underlined by Paul John Eakin who argues that, from a developmental perspective, self emerges at the moment when language is acquired (Eakin, *How Our Lives* 106). Because the centrality of language is at its very essence*, Lost in Translation* has been described, as previously stated, as exemplifying a new genre: that of language memoir. In fact, all three memoirs illuminate the power of words and their creative and constructive capacities. Furthermore, they connect words with the body and, in Goodison and Hoffman's case, with giving birth. Writing is formative: it is "making." As Hoffman asserts, remembering her love of words as a girl, "Sometimes, when I find a new expression, I roll it on the tongue, as if shaping it in my mouth gave birth to a new shape in the world. Nothing fully exists until it is articulated" (*Lost* 28). Language, as described here, begets; it is life-giving.

Section I: The Birthing of Words and Naming

From Harvey River begins and ends with birth – the birth of Goodison's mother at the outset and Goodison's own birth at the conclusion – and in both instances birth is connected with language. A mother dips her finger in sugar and rubs it under her baby's tongue, symbolically stimulating a connection to language. While at the beginning of the memoir the baby receives "the gift of sweet speech" (Goodison, *From Harvey River* 5), at the end it is "the gift of words" (*From Harvey River* 274) that is transmitted to Goodison herself. On a meta-level, this trajectory is one from the spoken word – especially in the form of the story telling of Goodison's mother – to the written word: that of Goodison's writing. Goodison's final words underscore the generational transmission of language and also the transformative process of writing that derives from a force greater than Goodison herself. Writing is given: it is a gift.

Goodison's writing process itself can, then, be seen as a symbolic form of birthing. Indeed, this creative and transformative aspect of the writing process is explained by Goodison herself when, in an interview, she speaks of being altered by the writing of her book: "It took me twelve years to write my story (I could actually write a book about writing that book.) But I was not the same person when the book was finished as I was when I started it" ("Lorna Goodison: Interview"). Goodison further emphasizes the constructive capacities of writing when she compares it to the manual activity of her mother's sewing. Explaining that, when growing up, she learned a great deal from watching her mother sew, she says, "One of my favourite definitions of a poet is that of 'maker.' I like the idea that you are actually making something when you write a poem" ("The Muse of Memory"). Ondaatje similarly compares the constructive capacities of language with the manual work of knitting when writing about his aunts' storytelling: "They knit the story together, each memory a wild thread in the sarong" (*Running* 110).

As previously mentioned, both Goodison and Ondaatje are, and began their writing lives as, poets. They also both reference a lineage of a tradition of oral storytelling. Neither of these form part of Hoffman's background (she does not acknowledge an oral tradition as an element of her heritage, nor is she a poet). Indeed, it is not an oral tradition but silence that Hoffman references, explaining about her parents: "It was true of my parents, as it was of many survivors, that they did not talk much about their pre-war lives. Perhaps the impact of the subsequent events overwhelmed and deleted everything else. Or perhaps to remember the world before would have made the losses more piercing" ("Out of Exile"). Not only does Hoffman have a different relationship to language in that she does not write in her mother tongue, but she has a different relationship to words and to stories. On the one hand, stories are overshadowed by *the* story of

the Holocaust; on the other, words are not equated with substance and sensorial fullness in the same way that they are for a poet for whom a word is an *entity* (so weighted as to almost seem a physical object). Her writing is more intellectualized (as when she refers to signifier and signified in the New World section). Yet, the "entityness" or substance of English words is something that develops within Hoffman over time and that she describes in *Lost in Translation,* as evidenced by her naming of English flowers at the end of her narrative, among other examples of her deepening relationship with English, as I will go on to explain.

The particularly rich, poetic, substance that a word can have for Ondaatje is conveyed at the outset of *Running in the Family* when he begins to imagine Asia from Canada. The word "Asia" itself is presented sensorially, as connected with the body – the mouth and sound – and as though it is a being, occupying space:

> Asia. The name was a gasp from a dying mouth. An ancient word that had to be whispered, would never be used as a battle cry. The word sprawled. It had none of the clipped sound of Europe, America, Canada. The vowels took over, slept on the map with the S. (22)

In giving a single word several lines on a page, Ondaatje allows for, and enables, subjective space. That is to say, he extends the vast subjective dimensions of a word, giving them physical form that spans lines. This is a form of "world creation" like that articulated by Pope in reference to creativity: "creation articulates a complex sense of wor(l)d be(com)ing, where *words* bring *worlds* into being (and vice versa)".(142)

Just as Ondaatje explores the word "Asia" on the intimate, interior level of sounds and vowels – as though the word and its attributes belong to a body, and have material form – so too does he later write about the Sinhalese alphabet in sensorial, sensual, bodily terms: "I still

believe the most beautiful alphabet was created by the Sinhalese. The insect of ink curves into a shape that is almost a sickle, spoon, eyelid. The letters are washed blunt glass which betray no jaggedness" (Ondaatje, *Running* 83). Included in the text along with this description, are actual Sinhalese letters, placed as though objects of art, the only instance when anything other than standard text or photographs is included, an indication of the importance Ondaatje attributes to the very roots of language, and the value he gives to a part of his Sri Lankan linguistic heritage. The importance and the power of words is additionally expressed when, in describing the Colombo harbour, he refers to their magic:

> I love it here, skimming out in the night anonymous among the lazy commerce, my nieces dancing on the breakwater as they wait, the lovely swallowing of thick night air as it carves around my brain, blunt, cleaning itself with nothing but this anonymity, with the magic words. Harbour. Lost ship. Chandler. Estuary. (*Running* 134)

Here, as with the example of "Asia," Ondaatje gives space to individual words, each having its own place, with periods serving as separating pauses. Value is given to both the power of words and their sensorial aesthetics.

In *From Harvey River* the power of words is transmitted through stories connected with naming, and especially in relation to family and the giving of names at birth. The importance of a Christian name is conveyed in the story behind the naming of her mother by Goodison's grandparents, a source of conflict between them related to a name being "ordinary" or exceptional (the trope of the ordinary, introduced in Chapter II, occupies a significant place in *From Harvey River*). While Margaret Harvey wants to name her daughter after a friend, an "ordinary" girl, her husband David wants her to be given a favourite, lofty name from a novel:

Clarabelle. Although Margaret's choice of Doris prevails, fifteen years later, when Doris is about to write a national exam, she discovers her father had covertly registered her name as Clarabelle.

Through this story the reader is given the background to the importance Doris Harvey, via her parents, gives to names, and that she passes on to Goodison. This includes not only Christian names but place names, and not only Harvey River but the names of other places in Jamaica.[46] On the last page, Goodison writes that she has given a poetry reading in Hanover, Germany; Hanover, Jamaica, is the parish to which Harvey River belongs. This reference is a textual coming home in that it is made directly before Goodison ends her book with an image of Harvey River:

> And so I swim until morning comes and reveals that I'm sleeping in a small baroque hotel room, with the heavy velvet curtains drawn, after giving a poetry reading in Hanover, Germany, and immersing myself in the waters of the river named for the Harveys calmed my night fears. (*From Harvey River* 277)

While, on the one hand, water as a font for the imagination provides solace, it is also a specific body of water that is named and given an identity as part of a family history. The significance of this triadic linkage of place, identity and history (memory) is substantiated by the words of the psychiatrist Veronica O'Keane who, in asserting the central importance of place in memory, writes that places "are experientially the anchor for memory and feeling" (98). O'Keane's assertion can perhaps also be considered, by extension, an affirmation of the importance of literature itself as an anchoring repository of memory of feeling.

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[46] In *The Spell of the Sensuous* David Abram speculates about the recitation of place names in indigenous cultures – confirming Bruce Chatwin's observations of indigenous Australian culture in *The Songlines* – writing that, "the benefit drawn from speaking the names aloud derives not so much from the names themselves but from the nourishing power of the actual locations to which the names draw those who speak them" (Abram 153).

Throughout *From Harvey River* names are imbued with stories and these stories link real and ordinary people to broader stories of Jamaican history (and, likewise, politics). Goodison makes this explicit in an interview when she asserts, “my own memoir is a history of Jamaica; it’s my attempt to show that history happens to real people; how history affects ordinary people.” (“Lorna Goodison: Interview”). The trope of the ordinary is pertinent here both in regard to Goodison’s humanism and to questions of social class in their relationship to language and voice. Goodison’s assertion of the ordinary stands in contrast to Ondaatje’s foregrounding of the extraordinary in its entanglements with social class and language. Ondaatje’s privileged family is described as one of extraordinary or eccentric characters – his father and his grandmother Lalla in particular – including various ancestors such as Ondaatje’s grandfather, Phillip, who is depicted as an imposing man and immensely wealthy, as well as a snob (Ondaatje, *Running* 56). Ondaatje’s highlighting of individual words (such as “Asia”) can also be considered in light of the ability of a privileged person to focus on telling detail, as Hoffman explains of Nabokov. In contrast, the stories and history that make up *From Harvey River* are of ordinary people in terms of social class, rather than an elite, apart from a very local one. Yet naming is related to empowerment – personally, socially and historically – from the power of the name ‘Harvey River’ to that of the collective “Fabulous Harvey Girls” within the community, to the choice of Christian names such as Clarabelle and Flavius, after a Roman nobleman, in the case of one of one of Clarabelle/Doris’s brothers. Naming, within the culture of Goodison’s family, is related to social status and social elevation (in the absence of other forms of means, one still has a name). At the same time, on the level of the memoir as a whole, naming, and Goodison’s use of language in general, privileges “ordinary” people, and in particular, Goodison’s mother (Doris, not Clarabelle). It is a means of honouring mothering, with giving birth the act that both begins

and ends *From Harvey River.* What may be conceived as "ordinary" is, through the process of writing, treated as "extraordinary." In other words, the act of giving voice and attention through literary representation serves a form of honouring.

While in *Running in the Family* the rich, sensorial substance and beauty of words is given space and even presented as a source of power and magic, in *From Harvey River* the "ordinary" is given value textually not only through naming but through the literary representation of Jamaican patois or Creole. This features frequently in the form of direct speech which is often rich, nuanced, and humorous, and at times impenetrable to the outsider. By giving patois a place textually, as Ondaatje does with the Sinhalese alphabet, Goodison validates and honours the language of "ordinary" Jamaicans, and particularly that of her mother. Hers is not the language of English Romanticism, of her father's Clarabelle, or of Jamaica's colonizers, but of the "ordinary" Jamaican girl, Doris. That Goodison gives a voice to this girl whose opportunities were those of an ordinary rather than a privileged Jamaican is further evidenced by the statement she makes about her mother: "I believe that if she had lived at another time, she would have become a writer" (Goodison, "The Muse"). This assertion connects with Goodison's acknowledgement in the prologue that *From Harvey River* was offered to her by her mother, whom she has symbolically transformed into a writer. Furthermore, when Goodison writes in the preface that, "over time I have come to see that my parents' story is really a story about rising up to a new life" (Goodison, *From Harvey River* 1), she evokes the Greek myth of the phoenix rising from the ashes as well as the hero narrative of triumph over adversity, invoking her mother as a heroine.

In *Lost in Translation* names and words have a different resonance, associated with deep, often painful, emotional terrain and abstractions. The former is most pointedly and poignantly

conveyed through Hoffman's story of her sister, Alina, and herself, Ewa, as young immigrants in Vancouver, being assigned new names. As with most of the stories in *Lost in Translation* relating in some way to the defining tragedy of the Holocaust, this re-naming is rife with painful history: Alina was named for her mother's sister, murdered in the Holocaust, and Ewa for both of her grandmothers, also killed. Hoffman writes that their new names, Elaine and Eva, make them strangers to themselves:

> My sister and I hang our heads wordlessly under this careless baptism. The teacher then introduces us to the class, mispronouncing our last name – "Wydra" – in a way we've never heard before. We make our way to a bench at the back of the room; nothing much has happened, except a small, seismic mental shift. The twist in our names takes them a tiny distance from us – but it's a gap in which the infinite hobgoblin of abstraction enters. Our Polish names didn't refer to us; they were as surely us as our eyes or hands. These new appellations, which we ourselves can't yet pronounce, are not us. They are identification tags, disembodied signs pointing to objects that happen to be my sister and myself. We walk to our seats, in a roomful of unknown faces, with names that make us strangers to ourselves. (*Lost* 105)

In writing that their Polish names were as integral a part of her sister and herself as their eyes or hands, names which had also been those of close family members killed in the Holocaust, Hoffman evokes the pain of their loss. Furthermore, she connects words to the body, as we have seen with both Goodison and Ondaatje. However, she does so in a less purely sensorial way. Her writing is more theoretically informed than theirs, as when she refers to disembodied signs and later uses the terms 'signifier' and 'signified' to express the disjoining of word and thing (Hoffman, *Lost* 106).

Hoffman's relationship with language has a dimension of intellectual abstraction, a relationship the reader witnesses developing as Hoffman traces the path of her acquisition of English and the inner, subjective work this entails, including throughout her years studying and working at American universities. As the scholar Florence Sutton-Manders explains, "her writing is clearly born of an academic interest in structuralist thought, with her focus on the 'signifier' and 'signified'" (Sutton-Manders 5). An early turning point in Hoffman's English language acquisition takes place when her friend Penny gives her a diary and, through writing in English, Hoffman begins to create a new self: "When I write I have a real existence, that is proper to the activity of writing – an existence that takes place midway between me and the sphere of artifice, art, pure language. This language is beginning to invent another me" (*Lost* 121).

The diary passage expresses the transformation that takes place within Hoffman through learning a foreign language and furthermore conveys the power of language to alter identity: "to invent another me".[47] The diary provides space for subjectivities and, similar to Goodison attributing the power of language to a force greater than herself, Hoffman attributes to language the capacity to create a new identity. Indeed, the transformative aspect of language is given such importance in *Lost in Translation* as to be a subject of its concluding page where, as referenced in Chapter V**,** Hoffman recounts being taught the names of flowers by her American friend, Miriam. When Hoffman articulates being able to connect with English words directly, without the interference of her first language or of intellectualization, it is as though, at this point, English becomes a first language. While previously she had been "building the language from the roof down," when she finally makes a home in English, a habitation of words, she describes

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[47] As José van Dijck explains in her study of diary as a genre: "Diaries have historically been produced as a sort of materialized feedback loop – dialogue rather than monologist – in which subjective emotions trigger responses that contribute to an individual's formation" (69).

the process as the inverse: being from the bottom up. In being more grounded in the language, which becomes rooted in her, her relationship with it becomes more holistic. In another passage describing the development of her relationship with English, she expresses the same bottom up linguistic process with images involving the earth and the downward force of gravity as opposed to the loftiness of her initially more intellectual engagement with the English language. In so doing, she directly associates the process of language acquisition with the construction of a linguistic home and with wholeness (a construction that, as a reader, reading "into" it, I consider ecological in that the prefix "eco" is derived from the Greek "oikos" meaning home):

> I can't live forever in a windy, unfurnished imagination; I have to make a comfortable habitation there, fill it with a few household things, come comfy, everyday objects, maybe a beveled lamp. I have to add a bottom to the language that I learned from the top – When I write, I want to use every word in the lexicon, to accumulate a thickness and weight of words so that they yield the specific gravity of things. I want to recreate, from the discrete particles of words, that wholeness of a childhood language that had no words. (Hoffman, *Lost* 217)

Hoffman's choice of the adjective beveled to describe a lamp is indicative of her capacity, towards the end of her linguistic trajectory, to make the direct connection of signifier to signified that she references. "Beveled" (unlike the word "river" that she acquired earlier and found cold, a word without an "aura,") evokes – and is specifically evocative of home. This linguistic connectedness stands in contrast to the linguistic uprooting Hoffman experienced when emigrating to Canada – the loss of "interior language" (*Lost* 108) to which Sutton-Manders draws a parallel with the loss of identity in her new language (7).With emigration as 'ground zero' in regard to a loss of identity, and the event with which the narrative of *Lost in Translation*

begins, the memoir's narrative progression can be seen as the coming into being of a new self inseparable from language which, as Sutton-Manders explains, is an intertwining creative process involving linguistic programming, innate biological processes during adolescence, and memory retrieval (13). With the diary experience being a key initial event in the creation of a new identity in a foreign language, subsequent language and identity building turning points include attending high school and university. Writing about university, Hoffman relates that her ground zero experience of lack serves her well; she does well on her courses and attributes this to her position of lack which predisposes her to intellectual abstraction (the concept of lack as being fertile for growth will be developed in the third section of this chapter). Hoffman explains her success:

> I believe this happens not only despite but also because of my handicap: because I have so little language. Like any disability, this one has produced its own compensatory mechanisms, and my mind, relatively deprived of words, has become a deft instrument of abstraction…I soak in the academic vocabulary of the time with an almost suspicious facility; for me, this is an elementary rather than an advanced language, a language I learn while I'm still in my English childhood. It does not have to make its way through layers of other vocabulary… (*Lost* 180)

Hoffman relates that it is later, after she has finished graduate school and begun to teach literature, that she makes a breakthrough in her relationship to English and manages to, "crack the last barrier between myself and language" (*Lost* 186). She describes becoming attuned to English by using references to music, her first passion. The language becomes sensorial in a way that it hadn't been – it becomes fuller, less abstract. Furthermore, she connects this sensorial fullness with childhood: "Words become, as they were in childhood, beautiful things – except

this is better, because they're now crosshatched with a complexity of meaning, with the sonorities of felt, sensuous thought" (*Lost* 186).

Later, Hoffman reinforces the bodily connection, imagining one day integrating her second language in body and mind: "I've become obsessed with words. I gather them, put them away like a squirrel saving nuts for winter, swallow them and hunger for more. If I take in enough, then maybe I can incorporate the language, make it part of my psyche and body" (*Lost* 216).

In writing about creativity, Rob Pope proposes that transformation and metamorphosis are best conceived as "ways of becoming" (17), a perspective that is especially pertinent in relation to Hoffman, whose trajectory can be seen as a way of 'becoming' in a new language, as I have demonstrated. One of the fields to which this becoming takes her is the place of direct experience between word and object, signifier and signified, that is normally the terrain of first language acquisition, not second, because it is unmediated. In this way, her experience ultimately becomes firsthand or 'fresh' – more fully sensorial and bodily.

That *Lost in Translation* concludes with a description of this firsthand experience in a foreign language (learning the names of flowers while in a garden) not only attests to its importance but acknowledges the coming into being of a new self through the process of writing. Earlier, when writing about her developing interest in literature during university, an interest which begins to take the place of her previously projected career as a pianist, a sense of a kindling passion is conveyed: "I like literature a lot. I'm good at it. Perhaps some day I can write. Sometimes, I almost get the same high" (Hoffman, *Lost* 200). The note upon which *Lost in Translation* ends (in the garden scene), referencing time pulsating through her blood like a river, suggests that this literary pleasure has been achieved.

The direct, unmediated experience Hoffman attains and experiences in relation to her sense of self, specifically through language, is that which Edith Cobb connects to creative adults and literary writers who draw from original sources and bring them forth in their writing. Though "summoning" and "making present" these life affirming sources via memory and language, their qualities are reawakened. Louise Chawla calls this process re-endowment (Chawla, "Ecstatic"). In *Lost in Translation*'s concluding paragraph, Hoffman details a direct experience with nature and language as an adult. This experience leads directly to references to sunlight and a river, hitherto related exclusively to childhood and "paradise."

It is additionally significant that the final paragraph, involving language and flowers, situates Hoffman not only in a garden but in dialogue with a friend, whom she quotes as saying, "I'm going to make you feel at home in the New World" **(**Hoffman, *Lost* 280), her experience being that of the linkage of home and words (the emotional bond of friendship itself creating a sense of home, alongside the names her friend teaches her). In her conclusion, Hoffman invokes American spirituality, while with acknowledged scepticism, admitting that she will always ultimately be an outsider, and an intellectual one at that: "Be here now, I think to myself in the faintly ironic tones in which the phrase is uttered by the likes of me" **(***Lost* 280). This statement, with its invocation of romantically influenced Emersonian spirituality and psychology, is also a reference to Hoffman's earlier statement that it is through the democratizing power of literature that she begins to feel at home in America (*Lost* 183). *Lost in Translation*'s last lines underline an ultimate integration in America: "The brilliant colours are refracted by the sun. The small space of the garden expands into the dimensions of peace. Time pulses through my blood like a river. The language of this is sufficient. I am here now" (*Lost* 280).

Significantly, this final passage picks up word threads from the "Paradise" chapter where the play of light, small gardens, time as blood pulsating, and a river, feature as sources of well-being. In "Paradise" Hoffman refers to a "bit of a garden" and "patches of garden" and to Kraców as "a city of shimmering light and shadow," where, in the park, the Planty, "everything pulsates and shimmers as if it were coursing with the blood of life" (Hoffman, *Lost* 42). Earlier, describing a walk home from school, she expresses a sense of timelessness: "The sun is playing its game of lines and shadows. Nothing happens. There is nothing but this moment, in which I am walking toward home, walking in time" (*Lost* 16)

It is significant that the references to time in nature that are placed at the end of Hoffman's writing journey are associated with childhood, and patches of nature in an urban environment, and do not feature in sections devoted to her ground zero "exile" in Canada, or to her academic or intellectual life. They are associated with precisely the period of childhood Cobb identifies as that in which the imagination and, along with it, generative capacities for health and well-being, are formed in the interaction between the child and the natural world. The inner, perceptive world of the child in interaction with the external, sensate environment remains in memory and the adult imagination returns to this vital ecological base connected with well-being. Writing, as a process, becomes a site of pleasure. At the end of *Lost in Translation* Hoffman articulates the attainment of a state of satiation which can be interpreted as well-being, and this is directly related to her experience of nature, and nature as linked to childhood. As such, it is a form of belonging and emplacement, and of a circular, grounded return to origins through language: an establishment of a home in words.

Section II: Chaos and Form

The creative kinship between the ecological world-making of childhood and the worded world-making of literary writing can be considered not only as "becoming" but as a "bringing forth of form" through the mind and imagination, a process delineated by the literary critic Northrop Frye: "The literary writer isn't giving information, either about a subject or about his state of mind: he's trying to let something take on its own form, whether it's a poem or play or novel or whatever… the writer of literature can only write out what takes shape in his mind" (22). When drawing from original childhood (especially early childhood) sources, this literary forming involves the voicing or "coming into language" of what had previously been subconscious and inchoate and, as such, largely chaotic. Regarding this chaotic, unprocessed, material it is pertinent to look at theories of creativity surrounding chaos and order/forming, such as those of Deleuze and Guattari who use the term "chaosmos," taken from James Joyce, who coined it in *Finnegan's Wake*, to describe the creative process. They define it as a "composed chaos" (Deleuze and Guattari 205), using the term because:

> it neatly catches the paradox of many visions of creation and versions of creativity, both ancient and modern: the ways in which kinds of order (cosmos) emerge from kinds of apparent disorder (chaos), and, conversely, the tendency of kinds of apparent order to dissipate into disorder, which in turn may dissolve or resolve into yet other forms of chaos and… or… as… cosmos. (Pope 5)

Deleuze and Guattari's conceptualization of chaosmos can be considered in relation to all three writers in their ordering of disparate material derived from early childhood experiences and thus inherently chaotic in that it is as yet unarticulated and inchoate. Their conceptualization is also pertinent in relation to Cobb who drew from the developmental psychologist Erik Erikson's

theories of "auto cosmic play" (Cobb, *Ecology* 57). Cobb herself writes that language is "cosmological by nature and intention and … it is the specific mode of behaviour by means of which man knows and feels he is managing time and space" (*Ecology* 50).

The managing of time and space is referred to specifically by Goodison when she reveals that it took her twelve years to write about her mother, her family, and her country, attesting to the breadth and complexity of her disparate material. Additionally, that she mentions not being the same person afterwards is suggestive of the abundance of previously unarticulated experience. Ondaatje lays out the "disordered," chaotic elements of his family history, some of them attributed to the subconscious and irrational material of dreams, in his quest to better understand himself through his father. Hoffman details her trajectory from chaotic identity as a young immigrant to having a new cosmos in the English language. Her inner chaos is especially evident in the sections of the memoir where she engages in inner dialogues between her Polish self and her American self, in which she poses difficult questions around such matters as love and her confusion around whether to pursue a career in music or literature. Her Polish and American selves occupy polarized positions, laid out on the page like theatre dialogue, highlighting the drama and acuity of Hoffman's subjective struggles.

In writing about her internal conflicts, Hoffman expresses a desire for a simplicity she as an immigrant with two languages and two cultures cannot have: a desire for a rootedness in English. She relates this to the body and to a basic humanity, but also to a broad, encompassing understanding she wishes she had. She visualizes this in the form of a face:

> I think if I could enter the subjectivity of that face, then I could encompass both myself and my American Friend within it. I could then see our polarities within some larger, more capacious terms, and resolve our antithesis's winning a wiser synthesis. I could see

> that we're both – as the phrase echoes from my childhood – just human. It's that face that I keep as a beacon in my furious mono-dialogues and my triangulations. I want a language that will express what that face knows, a calm and simple language that will subsume the clangor of specialized jargons and of partial visions, a language old enough to plow under the superficial differences between signs, to the deeper strata of significance. (*Lost* 212)

In struggling to bring form to chaotic inner material and, in Hoffman's case, a particular struggle to integrate the linguistic with the bodily, and with identity, all three writers exemplify what Edith Cobb considers an innate tendency towards the formation of wholes or gestalt formation, what she refers to as the "gestalt making powers and sensibilities" of the child's developing nervous and cognitive system (*Ecology* 88). This tendency towards wholeness has also been identified by those who have studied memoir as being a part of the endeavour of memoir writing. The psychologist Diana Raab, for instance, asserts that through her research she was struck by how long it took the memoirist to write, as well as by the sense of flow during the process, but she was also struck by how writing increased the memoir writer's sense of wholeness (17). She references the psychologist Rollo May (1909-1994) who identified that the insights offered by looking backward on a life "emerge not chiefly because they are 'rationally true' or even helpful, but because they have a certain form, the form that is beautiful because it completes an incomplete Gestalt" (May 68). As the writer Katherine Mansfield states in broader, literary terms: "The whole secret of doing anything is to gather oneself together" (qtd. in K. Gunn 112). Another writer, Pico Iyer, observes the same of Ondaatje, stating that "Michael Ondaatje's novels are all about putting pieces together" ("A New Kind").

The gathering together of the disparate, often chaotic, parts of oneself is an aspect of creativity that, in Ondaatje's case, involves play. Asked in an interview about his juvenile side, Ondaatje quotes Robert Frost in self-affirmation: "What we do when we write represents the last of our childhood. We may for that reason practise it somewhat irresponsibly" (Ondaatje, "The divided man"). The English psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott connected both childhood and adult creativity with play, considering creativity a "naturally playful" aspect of a "normal healthy" life and in that sense "ordinary" (Winnicott, *Playing* 119). According to Winnicott:

> It is in playing and only in playing that the individual child or adult is able to be creative and to use the whole personality, and it is only in being creative that the individual discovers the self… There is a direct development from transitional phenomena (e.g a child's dummy/pacifier, a favourite object) to playing, and from playing to shared playing, and from this to cultural experience. (*Playing* 58-63)

In a similar vein, the scholar Dominique Hecq, in her study of the poetics of creative writing, quotes Freud, who, like Winnicott, relates adult creativity, and specifically creative writing, to play: "A piece of creative writing", says Freud, "like a daydream, is a continuation of, and substitutes for, what was once the play of childhood" (Freud 152).

Running in the Family is the only consciously playful of the memoirs. Ondaatje acknowledges his writing's theatricality and fabrication, characteristics he identifies as being passed down by his mother: "It was she who instilled theatre in all of us" (although he also references his father's "dramatic nature") (*Running* 170). Not only does Ondaatje state in his acknowledgements that "in Sri Lanka a well-told lie is worth a thousand facts" but he goes on to use playful, eccentric language when thanking three Canadian writer friends – Daphne Marlatt, Stan Dragland and Barrie Nichol – all of whom are considered "experimental" writers and poets,

writing that: "my papers ware promiscuous and out of force with severall inlargements and untutored narrative" (Ondaatje, *Running* 206). His intentional misspellings, as well as his use of the word "promiscuous" and reference to untutored narrative, convey a disregard for conventions and choosing a wide berth in regard to authenticity. A further example of this is the "spin" around his grandmother's death – hanging onto a jacaranda tree – which is presented as the result of "floods" when in fact the truth was more banal, involving alcohol and a heart attack.

As noted by Paul John Eakin, there is a creative aspect inherent in storytelling, in what is either transmitted or left out (Eakin, *How Our Lives*). Re-telling, through the imagination, enables the highlighting of certain aspects of stories that may have been previously obscured, such as details of family histories, as happens in the case of Ondaatje's recounting of his grandmother's death. Through painting a dramatic picture involving wild nature and the stunning blue violet of a jacaranda tree, Ondaatje prioritizes the dramatic and the sensorial over the purely factual. On top of this, he acknowledges that the stories passed down to him had already been altered: "Growing up in Colombo I was surrounded by an oral tradition rather than a literary one. Tall stories, gossip, arguments, lies at the dinner table, – this was what 'stories' or 'literature' were to me as a boy" (Ondaatje, "Mongrel Art"). Goodison, who was brought up like Ondaatje in a culture of oral tradition, also acknowledges taking liberties with accuracy: "In reconstructing and re-imagining the story of my mother's family and their forebears, I have of course taken certain liberties, including, on some occasions, changing dates to suit narrative flow" (Goodison, *From Harvey River* 278).

In relation to these possible liberties taken by creative and literary writers, Mark Freeman refers to poets who seek to "rewrite the world through the imagination, such that we, readers, can see or feel something about it that might otherwise have gone unnoticed or undisclosed"

(*Hindsight* 43). Indeed, because Ondaatje and Goodison are both poets as well as writers of memoir, the imaginative and poetic is at times given precedence over the factual, as in the example of Ondaatje's grandmother or, in Goodison's case, Jamaican "dreaming," or the changing of dates. Freeman goes on to explain that the insights that can be attained this way have an element of creative destruction, through which creative construction can take place:

> insights attained are acts of destruction: of one's previous understanding of things and of the self whose understandings they were. The flip side of this destruction, however, is creation – of a more adequate, enlightened view and of a self that has moved one step further in the direction of good. (*Hindsight* 186)

In moving beyond the straightforward, or the matter of fact, such as Lalla or Mervyn Ondaatje's alcoholism, for instance, Ondaatje allows for this "enlightened view" of inner drama and chaos driving extreme behaviours. Goodison, in altering dates, gives her work a narrative flow around perspectives of her choosing.

This bringing into existence of that which Freeman calls an "enlightened view" is defined as poiesis, a bringing of something from concealment into the full light and radiation of a created work. Freeman explains:

> As a general rule, the poet is in the business neither of finding meanings, already there in the world, nor of making them, in the sense of fashioning them wholly anew. Rather, the poet is engaged in a process in which meaning is at once found *and* made – or, to be more explicit still, in which *meaning is found through being made.* (*Hindsight* 181)

This process of creative transformation attributed by Freeman to poets applies equally to all creative writers. Hoffman, while not a poet, and more cerebral and analytical than Goodison and Ondaatje, engages with language, as Freeman describes, and through a process involving a

gradual sensorial linking of the body to the new world, as when, at the end of *Lost in Translation,* she attests to the emplacement she has achieved in aligning a new self in language with the physical place where she stands at the present moment.

The academic writer Derek Whitehead further elaborates the process of poiesis as related to place, in artisanal work in particular, but his conceptualizations are also inclusive of writing:

> I submit that poiesis is something very much 'in process' contemporaneously, that it remains an 'undercurrent' striving toward the light of day. As such it is likely to surface in rather surprising forms, not least in 'found objects,' 'ready-mades,' 'assemblages,' or 'installations' where the artist's intuitive faculty – in the selection and compositional arrangement of freely chosen elements – appears uppermost… working with the raw materials of the imagination, such as ideas, concepts and schemata, constitutes a means of renegotiating our sense of place with a 'renewed and peaceful place of poetic and non-exploitative encounter.' (Whitehead, "Poiesis and Art-Making")

All three writers engage in this intuitive, imaginative selection and composition of freely chosen elements associated with their family backgrounds, childhoods, and their pasts in general. The metaphors used by both Freeman and Whitehead to describe this are metaphors involving light: "an enlightened view" or "an undercurrent striving toward the light of day," for example, metaphors for bringing material from the subconscious or unconscious into the conscious mind, a process involving the imagination. This view is echoed by the psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi who states that "[t]he real work begins when the emotion or idea that sprang from the uncharted regions of the psyche is held up to the light of reason … it is here that craft comes into play" (263).

Just as Ondaatje is the only overtly playful of the three writers, so too is he the writer whose writing displays the greatest array of freely chosen elements on a textual level: prose, poetry, dialogue, photographs, Sinhalese letters and other generically diverse material. The playful aspect of Ondaatje's writing involves movement between and through these "loose parts;"[48] a movement of interplay. His narrative of quest, the impulse behind and spanning this interplay, gives rise to wonderment, a quality often associated with childhood – what Cobb refers to as the "first poetic spirit of our life and, according to Plato, the cause of knowledge and basis of cognition" (Cobb, *Ecology* 24). Wonderment, as Cobb explains, and as I have discussed in Chapter V, is a form of curiosity, or expectation of fulfillment, that leads to an appetite for exploration and, in this regard, it is a precursor to, and can be a basis for, creativity. In *Running in the Family,* wonderment acts as a binding or sticky element implicating writer and reader both. On the one hand, fascination and curiosity are the impetus for Ondaatje revisiting a childhood he had "ignored and not understood" (Ondaatje, *Running* 22). A curiosity about the unknown impels him to dig deeply and decipher an opaque past: "What saved me was the lack of clarity" (*Running* 65). On the other hand, the reader, as a fellow journeyer, travelling through the loose parts of Ondaatje's text, engages with her own curiosity, deciphering too.

While Ondaatje's quest journey begins with the instigating "bright bone of a dream" that impels him to revisit his home of origin to better understand his father and, by extension, himself, the dream content, as I have explained throughout this thesis, is not dealt with psychologically or psychoanalytically. While Ondaatje gives form to chaotic and, at times,

[48] "Loose parts" was coined as a theory of creativity by the English architect Simon Nicholson to denote materials that can be moved, carried, combined, taken apart in multiple ways, with the precept being that the more materials are involved, the more ingenuity takes place (Nicholson, Simon. "The Theory of Loose Parts, An important principle for design methodology" *Studies in Design Education and Craft and Technology*, vol. 4, n. 2, 2009)

subconscious, material, he does not analyze it. In the merging scene which portrays his father in front of a book, open at page 189, which is also page 189 of the Picador edition of this thesis, the reader is led to participate in the merging. The reader finds herself positioned within an imaginative process aptly described by Dawson in his use of the slashed term un/conscious:

> The relation between that which is 'conscious' and what is 'unconscious' must be conceived as a dynamic and reciprocally defining process: you can't think about one without at least assuming the other. Nor can you get beyond merely binary thinking without developing a synthesis that includes and eventually exceeds both. That is why un/conscious is here offered as a slashed term, representing 'both/and more' not just 'either-or.' (70)

Dawson's formulation of un/conscious as a dynamic and reciprocally defining process has affinities with that which, in Rita Felski's typology of aesthetic responses in the reader, is described as the immersive experience of enchantment, a state of self-forgetting while absorbed.[49] The boundary between the text and the reader is manipulated by Ondaatje so that it becomes blurred, similar to the blurring of the boundary between father and son that he stages. That which is a conscious blurring on Ondaatje's part (in his use of a page number to merge a fictional and a real book) – and his employment of magic realism (such as by confabulating his grandmother, and her death, with the mesmerizing beauty of a jacaranda tree) – is what Csikszentmihalyi calls the coming into play of craft, referenced earlier; that is to say, of Ondaatje's conscious forming of chaotic inner material. This differs vastly from Hoffman's psychoanalytical approach and from Goodison's broad, historically and culturally encompassing

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[49] Enchantment is one of the four modes of textual engagement delineated by Felski in her typology of the reader's aesthetic responses (*Uses*), the others, as mentioned previously, being recognition, knowledge and shock.

one. Hoffman brings form to psychic content by analyzing it, while Goodison approaches psychic content through the lens of African based spirituality. Apart from Hoffman's dramatic staging of conflicts between different parts of herself and between herself and M.A.F. (My American Friend), and Goodison's rendering of her mother's afterlife, and her own in the waters of Harvey River, neither craft, manipulate or stylize the material of the psyche, presenting it more directly and forthrightly.

Section III: From Displacement to Emplacement

Just as Ondaatje revisits and renegotiates the remembered Ceylon of his childhood through the crafting of hitherto subconscious and unconscious material in symphony with the conscious, so too does Goodison revisit and bring to life the Jamaica of her own and her mother's childhood, and Hoffman reckon analytically with her identity past and present. As such, the past for all three represents, as the scholar Mari Ruti conceptualizes its function for the subject, "a continually evolving space of imaginative possibility that remains highly responsive to the subject's attempts to read it in constructive ways" (Ruti, *Reinventing* 200). The resurrection of the past through writing nourishes potentialities and acts as a vitalizing source.

The literary resurrection and revitalization of the past in the works takes place from a position of loss of country of origin, in the case of all three, and of parents in that of Goodison and Ondaatje. While Hoffman is not responding to the loss of her parents in her work, she does indicate that the psychoanalysis she underwent prior to (or concurrent with) its writing arose in part from the problematics incurred by her living on the east coast of America and her mother on the west. While her mother is alive at the time of Hoffman's writing, she is geographically

distant and, as such, a more ephemeral presence than she would be if they lived in close proximity:

She becomes the mother-in-my-head, a figment of my psyche and imagination with which I struggle mightily and in a vacuum. But then, she lives so far away; I don't have her concrete presence to wrangle with or get angry at. In such commonplace dramas, we might come to some modus vivendi, an ordinary understanding of each other as two people struggling in the world. As it is, the drama has become psycho-drama; in battling her, I battle ghosts, and these have the tendency to become both bigger and more insubstantial than life. It takes longer to catch them, stare them in the face, divest them of their charge and their mystique (Hoffman, *Lost* 267).

Layers of loss – personal loss along with transpersonal, intergenerational loss (that which, in its different forms: the Holocaust, World War II, decolonialization, home of origin, is the post-memory of previous generations) – are constituent elements of the three works' fabric. Viewed in terms of the triptych image I have referenced, they span the three sectional panels. In terms of the psyche, it is relevant to consider the memoirs' grappling with loss through theories of lack. In *Reinventing the Soul*, Mari Ruti cites Jacques Lacan's theory of lack, connecting it with the creative capacities of subjective experience to deal with loss and lack. According to Ruti, Lacan suggests that it is through the experience of loss that the subject emerges as an imaginatively enabled entity and "[i]t is only by accepting the void at the centre of being – by recognizing that the lot of the human being is to be inherently lacking – that the phenomenological subject remains a subject of potentiality" (Ruti, *Reinventing* 123). Lacan, as Ruti explains, "[G]ives us two relevant concepts, namely that we are all beings of lack and that we're all filled with what he calls jouissance, an excess of drive energy. Lack causes desire and jouissance demands an outlet" (Ruti, "Ideas to Live By").

Ruti goes on to relate writing to these concepts of lack and desire, claiming that writing gives you an endless resource for coping with both lack and jouissance. It doesn't fill your lack in any definitive way, but words have a way of easing that sense of emptiness. And writing is an effective means of burning off excess energy: it both augments jouissance and consumes it so that it becomes more manageable. ("Ideas to Live By")

Writing, according to Ruti, is a restorative resource in dealing with subjective states such as inner emptiness and creativity and, as she underlines, "[D]emands the subject's ability to move from melancholia to meaning" (*Reinventing* 158). In "carving out a refuge for introspection" (*Reinventing* 75) and in so doing allowing for the fashioning of meaning, it enables mastery over, and therefore agency in regard to, interiority. Ruti's employment of the term carving out is relevant to the making aspect of emplacement in the memoirs. It also connects with the concept of dwelling, referenced in Chapter V, which, as I have explained, denotes not only a relationship to home (eco or oikos), but to emplacement in language. Heidegger's ideal of poetic dwelling in the world, or *Dasein*, "being there," asserts an active engagement with subjective states, such as inner emptiness, by adopting a deliberately attentive and observant stance toward the world (Ruti, *Reinventing* 124, 125). The Heideggerian *Dasein*, is generative in that it provides the opportunity for the "surfacing of other entities," and is able to translate its inner emptiness into a dwelling ground for these entities. It therefore enables, as Ruti states, a coming to terms with the profound sense of homelessness and lack of shelter that inevitably haunts subjective experience "through dwelling in the world poetically"[50] (*Reinventing* 124).

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[50] Heidegger's Dasein is elaborated on by Ruti in *Reinventing the Soul: Post Humanist Theory and Psychic Life,* Other Press, 2006, pp. 124-125.

From Harvey River was begun in the aftermath of Doris Harvey's death and published roughly twelve years after she died; as such, it is a direct response to an experience of loss and a "being there," or dwelling, with it – a form of grieving. Not only is *From Harvey River* a tribute to the giving of life by a mother, as the Caribbean scholar Sandra Paquet Pouchet has put it (168-178), but it is also a way of keeping the presence of that mother alive. Writing, as conceptualized by the Algerian French writer Hélène Cixous, functions as "an assault of love on nothingness" and transcends death in that it serves as a means of transfiguring the lost object into something that endures in an altered state: "I write and you are not dead…" (181). Writing is "an act of generosity that sustains the absent other as a living presence" (181).

It is in the prologue that Goodison deals most deeply and substantially with her mother's death, invoking not only the terrain of the subconscious but also the transcendent, metaphysical realm of a conceived afterlife (a belief in transcendence being a facet of both her Christian heritage and African-based spirituality). In the prologue's closing lines, she states that in one of her mother's afterlife visitations she handed her *From Harvey River.* Thus, while being a response to a death and a loss, *From Harvey River*, in that it was "handed" to Goodison, is not written from a position of absolute lack. On the contrary, it is written from a stance of having received an offering and of a subsequent state of plenitude and gratitude. The book is symbolically a gift, a trope rethreaded at the outset of Part 1 which begins with the birth of Goodison's mother, who is anointed with the "gift" of speech and returned to at the end with Goodison herself being born and anointed with the "gift" of words. There is a coming full circle at the memoir's end of language conceived as a gift and of life itself as a generational gift. This is one of the life affirming aspects of *From Harvey River* and its poetics in that language is directly associated with birth itself. Goodison emplaces her mother in the cycle of life.

In *Running in the Family* there is also a textual linking of parent and book but it is not explicit and its presence is minor. In contrast to the spiritual offering of *From Harvey River*, it is associated with earthly, mortal degradation that is abject and sordid (the fall from grace trope). In the chapter "Thanikama," where Ondaatje imagines his father returning home alone in the wake of his wife's departure, his father is drunkenly searching for a book of confused origin. When he finds it, we learn that the book is a novel, thrown on the bathroom floor and attacked by ants. This is the merging scene whereby page 189, that of the novel and of *Running in the Family* itself, is referenced. Ondaatje thus stages a plurality of mergings: of books, one fictional, one real; of writer and reader (Felski's honouring of the reader's involvement in the works read is made explicit by Ondaatje's staged merging); of father and son. But ultimately it is a merging with vanquishing nature, to which father and son must surrender. That his father is presented as kneeling is suggestive of religious reverence, yet this reverence is pantheistic, directed at nature:

> In the bathroom ants had attacked the novel thrown on the floor by the commode. A whole battalion was carrying one page away from its source, carrying the intimate print as if rolling a tablet away from him. He knelt down on the red tile, slowly, not wishing to disturb their work. It was page 189. He had not got that far in the book yet but he surrendered it to them. (Ondaatje, *Running,*189)

While, on the one hand, *Running in the Family* can be considered a symbolic offering from a son to his father in that in this scene Ondaatje's father is in possession of his book, on the other, his father's relationship with the book is squalid and rejecting: the book has been abandoned on the bathroom floor next to the toilet (for which commode is a delicate substitute, in much the same way the term dipsomania is employed by Ondaatje in place of alcoholism) and is only half read. His father allows it to be ravaged by ants; he does not rescue or save it.

Ondaatje's abject pantheism is further underlined by an image from the abandoned book that is of Ondaatje himself, presented with self-deprecating humour, as an animal: "a mongrel collection, part Sinhalese part Dutch part Tamil part ass moving slowly in the forests with foolish and serious obsessions" (*Running* 189).

Because the book scene described above takes place at the very end of *Running in the Family,* it raises the question of catharsis in writing (a specific form of transformation involving purging or cleansing), additional to that which Paul Ricoeur formulates as the subject emerging through narrative, as explained in Chapter I. The memoir's three penultimate sections centre around Ondaatje's father and key events in his adult life, such as the dissolution of his marriage and the final days before his death. These are dark, pivotal events during which Ondaatje the writer was not present but which he imagines and, out of necessity, partly fictionalizes. The resolution as a result of his confrontation with psychically dense material is explained by Ondaatje as being only partial: "But the book again is incomplete. In the end all your children move among the scattered acts and memories with no more clues. Not that we ever thought we would be able to fully understand you" (*Running* 201). Yet, while it is with humility and self-deprecation that Ondaatje acknowledges his work's limitations, *Running in the Family* can be read as a testament to the understanding he minimizes: the reader bears witness to his quest which, following on from a mere fragment of a dream through to travels and encounters, conversations, manuscripts, and other myriads of materials, leads to a multifaceted portrayal of a man, a family and a way of life. *Running in the Family* draws to a close with a state of peace and redemption through love. Ondaatje has progressed from the position of avowed confusion and unknowing at the memoir's outset to being able to address his father directly at the end:

> Love is often enough, towards your stadium of small things. Whatever brought you solace we would have applauded. Whatever controlled the fear we all share we would have embraced. That could only be dealt with one day at a time – with that song we cannot translate, or the dusty green of the cactus you touch and turn carefully like a wounded child towards the sun, or the cigarettes you light. (*Running* 201)

The reader bears witness to Ondaatje's process of discovery, understanding and peaceful resolution (made poignant by his father's absence); in other words, of his psychological and affective, transformation. This process, which takes place through the act of writing, is described by the writer Jhumpa Lahiri as "a search for something that alters us, that we weren't aware of before,"(*In Other Words* 171) or, as the biographer Michael Holyroyd explains, "The writer only discovers what is vital to the pattern of his narrative during the actual process of writing" (qtd. in Cline and Angier 120). Thus, while Ondaatje does not directly address the transformative effects that writing has had upon him – unlike both Goodison and Hoffman who on occasion attribute the formative powers of language to a force greater than themselves – it is textually apparent to the reader as a result of his acknowledged quest and catharsis. From the chaos of the initial "bone of a dream" image, Ondaatje progresses to addressing his father directly, and lovingly, in the second person.

Unlike Goodison's life affirming cycle of birth and death (and Hoffman's cycling back to childhood oneness with nature through the closing flower naming garden scene) Ondaatje's vision of human life is, as Sam Solecki, describes it, "fundamentally tragic – "there are no prizes" (*Spider* 6). While there is love, there is not a benevolent deity or spirit world, as in Goodison's memoir, but a malevolent one. In "Monsoon Notebook (iii)," Ondaatje states that "[m]idnight and noon and dawn and dusk are the hours of danger, susceptibility to the

"grahayas" – planetary spirits of malignant character" (*Running* 190), going on to describe writing as though it is emanating from a source outside of himself, one connected with a power more animal than human:

> At midnight this hand is the only thing moving. As discreetly and carefully as whatever animals in the garden fold brown leaves into their mouths, visit the drain for water, or scale that broken glass that crowns the walls. Watch the hand move. Waiting for it to say something, to stumble casually on perception, the shape of an unknown thing. (*Running* 190)

The animistically, and animalistically, presented force described here is one the literary scholars Janet Giltrow and David Stouck call a "mediating operation… so acute as to expose the writing as an operation exterior even to the narrator"(161-179). Their words are reinforced by those of Ondaatje himself in his reference to artists in the East, with whom he aligns himself, who "follow the brush" ("The divided man").

Monsoon Notebook (iii) ends with the arrival of rain, as the "dry black night" that the chapter begins with is transformed into a "white downpour" (Ondaatje, *Running* 191). The trope and binary of dryness versus wetness, as explained in Chapter V, is significant to *Running in the Family* as a whole: "drought" is the memoir's first word while "rain" is its last. Similar to the catharsis that takes place in Ondaatje's understanding of himself through his father, this is a further exemplification of transformation or metamorphosis, and cleansing, on a narrative, textual level.

Similar to *Running in the Family* concluding with rain, so does *From Harvey River* conclude with the image of "the waters of the river". In the epilogue, Goodison writes as though from an underwater tomb, in the wake of her own imagined death. From this tomb space she

remembers her birth and describes her ancestral home in Harvey River, Hanover, Jamaica, from a grounded, local perspective, radiating outwards to the broader context of her present life and the moment from which she is writing, in Hanover, Germany. The form is circular: a return to origins and then a resurfacing to the present. Goodison situates herself imaginatively in the depths of Harvey River:

> I'm alert too, under this dark water, watching out for the pincers of crabs that can bite. Under this river there are shocking eels, quick and slippery, and there are secrets hidden in the holes where they coil. The don't care girl is still dancing there under the river. There are lost pearls and hopeless cases and the bones of runaway Africans down there as well as wedges of iron-hard brown soap which the women of Harvey River used to wash acres of clothes in this same river as long as I swim in it, I will be born to safety. And so I swim until morning comes and reveals that I'm sleeping in a small baroque hotel room, with the heavy velvet curtain drawn, after giving a poetry reading in Hanover, Germany, and immersing myself in the waters of the river named for the Harveys calmed my night fears. (Goodison, *From Harvey River* 277)

Just as the "body" of *From Harvey River* (Parts I, II and III) begins and ends with the transformation of birth, so too does the epilogue return to a beginning: the seat of Goodison's family in Harvey River. In imagining her own death through a dream scene, Goodison returns to her home of origin, and, in coming full circle, finds solace. Through her imagined return to her ancestral home, she embeds and emplaces herself, achieving realignment and consolation in response to the displacement she experiences in the German hotel room. As she explains, "I am a writer. I can turn this darkness into the river at night. My mind like the riverbed will become cool and still" (*From Harvey River* 277). In other words, writing, for Goodison, has the power to

transform and console. It is specifically by drawing from nature associated with home of origin that consolation takes place.

Lost in Translation, like *From Harvey River* and *Running in the Family* concludes, in one of its penultimate lines, with a reference to water and specifically to a river, which is also an element of Hoffman's childhood life. The three final sentences bring together time, the body, and a river with a similar sense of solace and resolution as that expressed by Goodison. When Hoffman writes, "The language of this is sufficient. I am here now" (*Lost* 280) her expression of satisfaction and fulfillment stands in contrast to the memoir's first paragraph which concludes "I feel that my life is ending" (*Lost* 3). Through "life in a new language," Hoffman's narrative is life affirming in that the deeply felt sense of an ending she begins with leads to an affirmation of new life pulsating and a sense of rootedness in the present. Hoffman begins and ends with an existential positioning but with a markedly different expression of emotional affect.

Just as Hoffman repeatedly reflects on, and analyses, her life so too does she occasionally reflect upon and analyze her writing process. When, towards the end of *Lost in Translation* she does this, it is to acknowledge the understanding of the past that the writing process elicits:

> As every writer knows, it's only when you come to a certain point in your manuscript that it becomes clear how the beginning should go, and what importance it has within the whole. And it's usually after revising backward from the middle that one can begin to go on with the rest. To some extent, one has to rewrite the past in order to understand it. (242)

Hoffman's reflective statements assert a movement back and forth through time and space that aligns with Ruti's words, quoted at the beginning of this section, explaining that the subject moves through a continually evolving space of imaginative possibility which she reads in

constructive ways. Studies of memoir writing as a genre have affirmed the deepening of awareness and understanding, as well as the giving of new meaning to lived experiences, that the process of writing brings to the memoir writer. These subjective acts can be as transformative as to provoke alterations in selfhood and identity. As such, resurrecting the past as related to childhood and family of origin serves to vitalize and endow the present. Furthermore, when writing about place of origin from a position of geographical displacement, the process of writing and of engaging with the power of language – of Michael Ondaatje's "magical words" – engenders new forms of self-emplacement, turning, as Sarah Jilani says, "[D]isplaced selves into articulated, and thus inhabited ones" (1) to create "a home of words where I, the writer, may also live" (K. Gunn 1).

Goodison's concluding words about the solace she has achieved by dreaming and imagining Harvey River and Hoffman's concluding words about the sufficiency of being in the moment in a garden attest to the fulfillment of this subjective, literary habitation. Ondaatje similarly underlines present rootedness by repeating the word "here" in his final paragraph. In concluding with the word "rain," the opposite of the word "drought" at the memoir's beginning, he, along with expressing the life affirming transformation of dryness into water, re-emplaces himself in the sensorial world of Ceylon, a world that is ever changing, as he is, but always within him.

Conclusion

From Displacement to Emplacement: Nature, Imagination and Language in Lorna Goodison's *From Harvey River,* Michael Ondaatje's *Running in the Family* and Eva Hoffman's *Lost in Translation* has been an investigation into the poetics of displacement in three literary memoirs. It has above all been a study of form, in detailing the way the three authors transformed experiences of geographical displacement, and loss, into written works of art. It has moreover been a demonstration of the interrelational, humanistic, and affective, while also environmentally informed, understandings the memoirs assert. These are understandings I revisit in this conclusion through several key topics as a means of highlighting their importance: reticulate form (and, associated with it, relational and interrelational positionings); affect theory, with its focus on subjective states; and the ethics of care. Ultimately, I underline in this conclusion, as I have done throughout the thesis as a whole, the capacity of writing that draws from sensorially rooted memory to reckon with experiences of geographical displacement and, in so doing, create new forms of emplacement through language.

This thesis sprang out of the relationships I identified between the sensorially-based language present in the three memoirs and the early life experiences of the writers, especially as related to attachments that developed to places of origin during childhood and later expatriate experiences. The raw power inherent in the bearing of early life influences upon the memoirs struck me in its sustained and impactful effects on the imagination and selfhood through the conduits of memory and writing. I came to see the writing of the memoirs as a process of emplacement and re-emplacement through language and, thus, as a constructive undertaking of situated meaning-making in response, to some extent, to forms of dislocation. The attention I have

given to childhood has not been to assert an essentialist equating of it with wholeness – the memoirs have shown the ways in which wholeness is only ever a temporary or partial state – but, rather, this thesis has argued, and evidenced, that direct sensorial contact with nature during childhood matters *throughout* life. As such, it has been an affirmation of that which John Cowper Powys calls a sense of poetic continuity, which is to say a connection with material reality whereby "our life sensations are handed down from the past, creating a sort of "eternal recurrence" of the poetic mystery of the little-great ritual, the daily acts by which we all must live" (*Autobiography* 652).

An early phase of my investigation of the memoirs' poetics involved parsing the distinctive qualities I identified in each work's sensorial underpinnings, as well as identifying commonalities held by the three, keeping in mind a necessary wariness of the craving for generality that Toril Moi warns can impede an examination of specifics, referenced in my introduction. Instead of taking as a point of departure a specific theoretical approach, I grounded my work in an inductive methodology that allowed theoretical questions to arise from the texts. This resulted in a continuous interweaving movement between the three memoirs and considerations from other fields of research. It led me to foreground and highlight the specificities of each work in the three introductory chapters (II-IV). The triadic interplay of the three subsequent thematic chapters (V-VII) enabled me to explore the works' commonly held ecological, home and country of origin, as well as linguistic and writing-based elements. In my exploration and investigation of these elements in their confluence with the sensorial, I drew from a range of diverse, yet interconnected, disciplines. Most weight was given to literature: Northrop Frye, Paul Jay, Paul John Eakin, Edward Said, Sarah Jilani, and Rita Felski, to name but a few sources, but I also drew from philosophy, including Iris Murdoch, Simone Weil, Gaston Bachelard, Mari Ruti and Yuriko Saito. I

furthermore consulted psychological and psychoanalytical sources, namely the attachment theory of Donald Winnicott, John Bowlby, Mary Ainsworth and others, but also Gestalt Psychotherapy and the work of feminist scholars Carol Gilligan and Sara Ahmed. The ecological and environmental facets of this thesis were informed not only by the work of Edith Cobb and Louise Chawla but by a range of thinkers including Rachel Carson, Arne Naess, Luca Valera and Emily Brady, among others.

As well as adopting a multidisciplinary approach, I employed the precepts of standpoint reading practice, or ego-histoire, referenced in the introduction and in Chapter VI, "Displacement in the Three Memoirs", whereby I asserted my own involvement with the works. In this regard, my thesis has reflected, and it exemplifies, Gaston Bachelard's statement that a text that has been reread and liked is one that inevitably *concerns* the reader (*Poetics* xxvi), further delineated and supported by Rita Felski's typologies of the reader's engagement with works read. Recognition is one of four modes of textual engagement she identifies, the others being enchantment, knowledge and shock (addressed in Chapter II of this thesis). As Felski points out, recognizing oneself in a book does not amount to not seeing the other, but entails seeing aspects of oneself and experiencing a shift in perspective through perceiving something previously outside of one's awareness. In this concept of dialogic identity, the self is known again and recognized via the other (*Uses*, 23-50).

Integral to my involvement with, and recognition of myself in the works are my affective responses. Affect theory and, in particular, the work of Sara Ahmed, but also Adriana Margareta Dancus's articulation of diasporic feeling, highly relevant to the diasporic aspects of the memoirs, has been instrumental in my assertion of these responses. My employment of affect theory, to which I was drawn through the emotional content of both Goodison and Hoffman's memoirs (an example of the theoretical aspects of this thesis arising from my readings) is an aspect of the hybrid,

woven, or reticulate, fabric of this thesis. Activated by the reading process, my involvement with the memoirs has had multifaceted valences, affective ones alongside reflective ones, for example. This multifaceted involvement has been mirrored in the structure of the thesis itself, whereby the three thematic chapters pick up threads from the preceding more individually focused ones. The structure of this thesis thus asserts a looping rather than purely linear movement among the works (which further asserts itself in the "recycling" of various quotations in which different aspects are revealed in different contexts). It is a structure I have chosen in the interest of being more inclusive and capacious than a more linear one would allow, and that offers a fitting scaffolding for complexity – one that is horizontal as well as vertical.

In *The Ecology of Imagination in Childhood,* Edith Cobb employs the term reticulate, defined as web or net, in her understanding of meaning making as formed through interwoven threads and patterns. In Chapter V, "Childhood and the Ecological Self", I presented Cobb's conceptualization of perception, and meaning making, as an active, organizing process derived in part from sensorial experience that intermeshes in a non-linear manner with other forms of knowledge. Cobb underlines an important distinction between linearity in Western culture and the reticulate approach of many Eastern and preliterate cultures, stating that, "The reticulate image of nature and knowledge clearly derives from intuitive levels that are closer to sensory experience and the earth, even when they are elaborated to high levels of sophistication in technology" (*Ecology* 49). Louise Chawla invokes the reticulate in relation to ecological psychology, considering humans, and their psychology, as part of the web of life, dependent on the intrinsic qualities of the physical world and part of a relational system ("The Natural World"). In other words, human minds are seen as both embodied (in a physical body) and embedded (in a physical

environment). This ties in with the statement of Luca Valera, whose work I have drawn from in Chapter V, that nature always implies subjectivity (668).

The recognition and validation of psychology as intertwined with environment and place of origin put forth by Cobb and Chawla is central to the connections I have made between psychology and nature in Chapter V, and as developed onwards throughout the thematic chapters. It is pertinent to both the memoirs' memory-derived poetics and to questions of attention-giving explored in this thesis. I have addressed the latter, a feature of an ethics of care, referenced earlier, by employing the philosophical lens of the "loving gaze" expounded by Simone Weil and Iris Murdoch wherein "unselfing," or shifting one's gaze from the self to nature, and beauty outside of oneself, is considered a form of divesting oneself of ego and therefore letting world emerge (*Sovereignty* 63). This philosophical and ethical stance is one that has informed this thesis as a whole and that has been especially salient in regard to Goodison's loving gaze towards her mother (in whom is seen inner beauty, an aspect of the validation of subjective experience put forth in this thesis), but additionally in regard to affective attachments to places of origin in all three memoirs. De-centring the self and relinquishing egocentric perspectives allows for a more open and porous relationship to the world and recognition of the non-human other, facilitating an understanding of being part of a larger system. Such an understanding informs all three of the works.

In a review of Michael Ondaatje's collection of poetry *Secular Love*, the critic Liz Rosenberg states that Ondaatje "cares more about the relationship between art and nature than any other poet since the Romantics" (Ondaatje "Poetry Foundation"), underlining the influence of his affective relationship with nature upon his work. As this thesis has demonstrated, an ethics of care informs the works on different levels, including, in Ondaatje's case, aesthetically. In Chapter II, I quoted

Yuriko Saito's statement that "we neglect a large portion of the aesthetic dimension of our daily affairs" (*Everyday Aesthetics* 22) in reference to the exclusion of that which she calls the lower senses, touch and smell, from art. These senses are validated and celebrated by Goodison and Ondaatje both, and, while I have argued that none of the three memoirs can be considered Romantic, Romantic elements feature insofar as their poetics draw from a sensorial attentiveness to nature.

Hoffman can, to some extent, be seen as distancing herself from, and apologizing for, what can be perceived as Romantic or transcendentalist stances towards nature in her statement in the garden scene at the end of *Lost in Translation* when she references her embeddedness in nature: "Be here now, I think to myself in the faintly ironic tones in which the phrase is uttered by the likes of me" (280). That her reference is to an American rather than a Polish environment – the latter the source of stronger attachments – contributes to some of her irony; furthermore, the incorporation of the sensorial in Hoffman's work is not only through the visual and tactile but also the aural, derived from her background in music and her embodied musical, and emotional, register, as I have detailed. Embodied knowledge, in its multitudinous forms, has this aural specificity in Hoffman's work.

In Chapter VI, "Displacement in the Three Memoirs," the second of the three thematic chapters, I evidenced the strength of affective attachments to homes and places of origin – that which Yu-Fu Tuan designates topophilia – in relief against the deleterious effects of geographical severing upon the lives of the memoirs' protagonists. Placing psychoanalytical perspectives alongside the environmental ones presented in Chapter V, and exploring the consequences of geographical dislocation upon filial and affiliative attachments, the chapter enumerated the ways in which the memoirs embody an ethics of interdependence.

In substantiating this interrelational stance, my thesis has reaffirmed Edith Cobb's groundbreaking research into and understanding of the importance of children's inner, imaginative worlds – their psychology – throughout life. By linking children's subjective, often inchoate, worlds of experience with the wider, surrounding, environment, in the way that small concentric circles, like ripples, reverberate and belong to larger wholes, Cobb asserts what she calls the cosmological aspects of everyday life. Goodison's *From Harvey River*, as I have demonstrated, likewise asserts this concentricity through its portrayal of individuals in relation to larger, generational and societal spheres. Ondaatje's aesthetics of eclectic conjoining, present in the mosaic, collage or Cubist form of his memoir, invites the reader to navigate interconnected filial and affiliative webs. Like Cobb, Ondaatje has employed the term reticulate to express his conscious detachment from the linearity of logic and analysis – "the conventions of Western discourse" ("Mongrel Art") – and his preference for non-linear forms of structuring. Hoffman, more so than Goodison and Ondaatje, has demonstrated how the severing of bonds and falling "out of the net of meaning into the weightlessness of chaos" (*Lost* 151) can result in psychological trauma. Chapter VI has thus evidenced the psychological consequences that occur when attachments to home of origin are damaged or broken. It has elucidated, for example, how the age at which a person is uprooted from a home of origin matters.

In Chapter VII, "The Writing Process as a Transformative Act of Emplacement", I evidenced the ways in which displaced selfhood, a consequence of ruptured attachments to homes of origin, is re-emplaced through language and writing. Drawing from conceptualizations of writing as a creative means of grappling with lack and loss, I have argued that the writing of the memoirs is itself a constructive form of dwelling or abode-making. Both Goodison and Ondaatje conceive of their writing in this constructive sense of "making". Additionally, and especially

through Goodison and Hoffman's memoirs, I have shown the ways in which their writing can be equated with making as birthing. Naming, as discussed, is associated with empowerment or, contrastingly, disempowerment, as when, in Goodison, colonizers impose names, or language that does not fit, upon the colonized, and in Hoffman, where names are removed and replaced.

In *Lost in Translation*, as I have explained, the tropes of naming and birthing, and questions of disempowerment and empowerment, pertain particularly to second language acquisition. A significant turning point Hoffman identifies in her full integration of English, in which "words become, as they were in childhood, beautiful things," (*Lost* 86) occurs when, after finishing graduate school, she teaches poetry. Hoffman specifically references William Butler Yeats's "Among School Children" and T.S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," quoting from the latter. While Hoffman is not a writer of poetry (unlike Goodison and Ondaatje), her articulation of her experience as a reader and teacher of poetry affirms the intersectional relationship that exists between a written work and its reader, as well as Hoffman's integration of poetics. Especially salient in Hoffman's identification of the turning point in language acquisition is her employment of vocabulary usually associated with music, her first domain of artistic expression and passion, to convey the integration. As I have explained, the sensorial in Hoffman's memoir has strong aural and emotional valences. For instance, in her rendering of the transformative trajectory from her eye's "accustomed dry silence" to the opening of "an aural door," she likens poetry to musical stanzas:

> I hear their modulations and their quiet undertones. Over the years I've read so many explications of these stanzas that I can analyze them in half a dozen ingenious ways. But now, suddenly I'm attuned, through some mysterious faculty of the mental ear, to their

> inner sense; I hear the understated melody of that refrain, the civilized restraint of the rhythms reining back the more hilly swells of emotion, the self-reflective, moody resignation of the melody... I read, tasting the sounds on the tongue, hearing the phrases somewhere between tongue and mind. Bingo, I think, this is it, the extra, the attribute of language over and above function and criticism. I'm back with the music of the language, and Eliot's words descend on me with a sort of grace. (*Lost* 186).

The conjoining of two forms of art – music and literature – near the end of Hoffman's narrative of her linguistic journey is an affirmation of an achieved integration, and a tempered state of wholeness, but, more significantly, a testament to an important sensorial phase of language acquisition. Earlier in her narrative, Hoffman describes a previous phase when her relatively limited vocabulary facilitated critical thinking: "my mind, relatively deprived of words, has become a deft instrument of abstraction," explaining that, without "sensuous texturing, the geometries of my own perceptions have become as naked to me as the exposed girders of a building before the actual building hides them" (*Lost* 180). Hoffman's narrative can be conceived as a coming into being of language itself, in which a foreign language that is initially instrumental becomes sensually enriched over time, as evidenced by the memoir's final scene set in an Edenic garden. Hoffman's initial referencing of "river" as a cold, English word, contrasted with her use of "river" to describe her own blood (also in the final scene) further attests to the evolution of her relationship with English as expressed textually, and to integration. This evolution can also be conceived as the emergence of the subject through narrative in the sense of Ricoeur and, as such, a validation of subjectivity. This emergence, and the transformative aspects of the writing process

itself, have been key features of Chapter VII where my focus has been on the constructive and transformative capacities of language evidenced in the memoirs.

Questions of parts and wholes have informed this thesis on different levels, ranging from Cobb's connecting of the perceptive world of the child with the cosmic, to Hoffman's integration of English, to the circularity present in *From Harvey River* in cycles of birth and death, to not only Ondaatje's aesthetics of fragmentation, but his referencing of cyclical weather patterns (drought at the outset of *Running in the Family* and rain its final word) and the healing that takes place in his relationship with his father. Healing is often viewed as the closing of a circle, and solace and consolation, referenced by Ondaatje and Goodison both, are forms of emotional affect associated with this closure. As I have explained, all three memoirs take as starting points experiences of loss, be it through the deaths of family members or geographical displacement from homes of origin, or both, and conclude with forms of resolution, however tempered or partial. Wholeness can thus be associated with emotional affect in respect to the achievement of varying states of well-being evidenced at the end of the memoirs.

Questions of wholes and parts are also fundamental to memoir as a genre, as explained in Chapter I. While an autobiography portrays a whole life – and, as I have detailed, *Lost in Translation* contains more elements of this genre than do the other two works – memoir concerns itself with fragments or parts of lives rather than wholes, as well as the lives of others. It is my assertion that while *From Harvey River* and *Running in the Family* focus on the lives of others, specifically parents, a striving for wholeness exists within them on the aforementioned levels of the completion of life cycles, among others. I have thus come to see the striving for wholeness as a tensive feature inherent to these works, leading me to wonder if it is present as such in other examples of the genre.

In this thesis I have brought to light the importance given to direct, sensorial experience in the memory-based writing of Goodison, Ondaatje and Hoffman. This experience, originating in childhood, is dealt with constructively and re-constructively through a creative, fluid and life-affirming process whereby the past endows and reendows the literary present, be it that of the writer or reader. The three memoirs, in embodying such sensorial, situated experiences and knowledges through their poetics, affirm a sensual relationship to the world. As this relationship is additionally affective, involving affective bonds, the memoirs further affirm, as previously stated, an ethics of care.

As concerns an ethics of care, the works – and this thesis in its study and understanding of their dynamics – raise questions that I believe pertain not only to the past but to the future. I refer particularly to questions surrounding engagement with and care for surrounding environments and nature during childhood and throughout life. In his essay "Housebroken", the contemporary environmental writer George Monbiot addresses the subject of the removal of children from the natural world, and excessive time spent in front of screens, raising questions around situatedness. The feminist scholar Donna Haraway uses the term "situated knowledge" in her argument that all knowledge comes from situated positioning and in calling for a sensual relationship to the world rather than a disengaged, instrumental one. The memoirs demonstrate the influence of situated knowledges on the imagination. Language that draws sensorially from a place of origin reestablishes mental connections to that place through the imagination, and the three memoirs, in embodying these situated knowledges through their poetics, affirm a sensual relationship to the world. In so doing, they validate place, land and earth-based experience. As the environmental writer Robert MacFarlane explains, "We have come to forget that our minds are shaped by

the bodily experience of being in the world – its spaces, textures, smells and habits – as well as by genetic traits we inherit and ideologies we absorb. We are literally 'losing touch', becoming disembodied, more than in any historical period before ours" (*Landmarks* 74). Questions this thesis raises concern the honouring of our material, sensorial relationship with the natural world in which we are embedded, amidst the prominence of an increasingly virtual world. The three memoirs evidence affective ties to, and love for, the material reality of originary places, homes and family, its continuity through memory, and its re-endowment through writing.

As I conclude this thesis and look ahead, I see new areas of interest and research vistas in regard to situated, sensorially based knowledges in their confluence with emotional affect. While Goodison and Ondaatje reference solace and consolation – responses to loss – the memoirs also reflect joy associated with what Chawla terms "ecstatic places" that endow memory. Martin Jordan, whose work I have referenced alongside Chawla's in Chapter V, relates positive relationships with places to early love relationships. This aspect of emotional affect, in its confluence with memory and the imagination, and as evidenced in all three of the memoirs, is an area that merits further study. My interest in subjective, imaginative and non-instrumental relationships with places and nature includes not only poetic dimensions but, more broadly, aesthetic ones. The field of environmental aesthetics, in its broadest sense of encompassing not only natural environments but human and human-influenced ones, opens thought-provoking avenues to understandings of these imaginative and non-instrumental relationships. Such avenues are inclusive of the aesthetics of everyday life, addressed in Chapter II, where I have drawn from the work of Yuriko Saito to frame Goodison's honouring of the ordinary. They also relate to the philosophical stance of the loving gaze and ethics of care that I have detailed in this thesis.

The three unique, and literary, memoirs that have been the focus of my study offer perspectives on aesthetic engagement with situated, sensorially based knowledges and experience that also encompass the cultural, expatriate and exilic. Exilic experience, as I have explained, implies a double perspective that does not see things in isolation. This connects with the interrelational aspects of the works that I have underlined. As I have demonstrated, the memoirs achieve, and offer to the reader, new, linguistically constructed, forms of emplacement through a multi-panelled tableau, or fabric, of memory, the imagination and language. In so doing, they attest to the ways in which literature, and specifically poetics, can serve as a rich and edifying means of coming to terms with geographical displacement through the capacity of language to create new forms. They also open up fresh and interesting questions around situated knowledges themselves, their nature and their value.

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