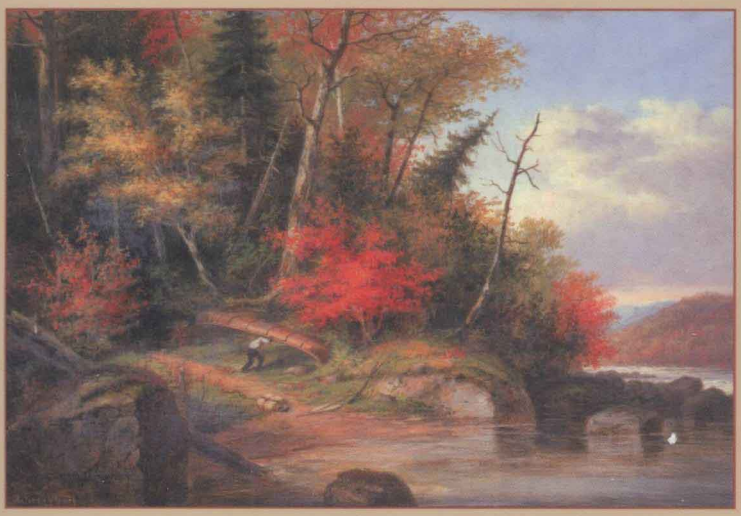
Roughing It in the Bush

Susanna Moodie



Edited by Michael A. Peterman

A Norton Critical Edition

A NORTON CRITICAL EDITION

Susanna Moodie
ROUGHING IT IN THE BUSH

AUTHORITATIVE TEXT
BACKGROUNDS
CRITICISM

Edited by
MICHAEL A. PETERMAN
TRENT UNIVERSITY

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To my editorial colleagues, Carl Ballstadt and Elizabeth Hopkins

Cheers,
Michael

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Introduction

Roughing It in the Bush tells the story of the seven and a half years (1832–39) that Susanna and John Moodie, recently married emigrants from Britain, spent pioneering in two locations in the Upper Canadian backwoods. In that regard the book speaks for itself, though the commentary Susanna provides throughout the text sometimes seems fragmentary and puzzling to contemporary readers. First published in London in February 1852, the book has enjoyed a growing prominence in Canada over its 150-year history, drawing both high praise and some resentment and hostility from succeeding generations of readers who have felt its influence and power. Indeed, in the first decade of the twenty-first century, *Roughing It in the Bush* is widely recognized as one of the most important nineteenth-century books written in and about Canada.

Given its many editions, steady sales, and cultural resilience, *Roughing It in the Bush* is comparable only to Thomas Haliburton's sketches of the talkative Yankee clockmaker Sam Slick, peddling his goods to and criticizing the gullible Bluenosers of Nova Scotia. Though it was not published as a book in Canada until 1871, *Roughing It in the Bush* was a best seller in Britain and the United States immediately upon its first appearances in 1852. Since 1871 its many Canadian editions have been steady sellers, and much more so since 1962, when McClelland and Stewart made the book available as an inexpensive and abridged paperback aimed at schools and universities.[1] Since that time it has become a cultural marker and interpretive challenge for many scholars, creative writers and students. This Norton Critical Edition reintroduces the book to audiences beyond Canada, particularly in the United States; in the process it calls attention to its publishing history; the outlook, sensibility and reliability of its author; and the diverse historical, cultural and literary responses it has evoked over time.

Roughing It in the Bush has gone through several textual alterations in its history, but one thing is certain: It has held the attention of Canadian readers generation by generation. As a journalistic commentator noted in 1885, one could no more leave Hamlet out of Shakespeare's play than omit Susanna Moodie and *Roughing It in the Bush* from a discussion of letters in Canada.[2] In 1952 Percy Ghent, a knowledgeable antiquarian, used the occasion of the book's centenary

1. Sales figures from the McClelland and Stewart archives indicate that the edition sold over 17,000 copies between 1962 and 1968.
2. Peterborough *Daily Examiner*, July 25, 1885.

to deem it a classic for both its "historical value" and "its literary craftsmanship and charm."[3] While there are today many more points of departure for such a "discussion" of English-Canadian letters, few early books loom larger than this one in its content and multiple messages; it cast a long and lingering shadow over the colony in which it was written, and continues to elicit attention from literary critics, creative writers and cultural commentators. Margaret Atwood's *The Journals of Susanna Moodie* (1970) is the most vivid and powerful example of a fascination that endures. Atwood noted a double voice at work in Moodie's writing and saw in that doubleness a cultural identity uneasily shared by many Canadians.

Susanna and her sisters

Susanna Strickland was born in Bungay, Suffolk in December 1803, the sixth daughter of Thomas and Elizabeth Strickland. The family had recently left London, where Thomas had been the manager of the Greenland Docks. In rural Suffolk he sought a retreat suitable to his delicate health, the needs of his family, and his genteel aspirations. In 1808 while overseeing his business interests in the nearby city of Norwich, he bought Reydon Hall, an Elizabethan manor house a mile from the coastal town of Southwold. His intention was to retire there and educate his children, who now numbered eight, including two long-awaited sons.

Over the next decade the Strickland family sought to become part of the local East Anglian gentry. Forced by reversals to address his ongoing business interests more often than he had hoped, Thomas kept a home and office in Norwich and was often absent from Reydon. The girls were educated at home, either in Norwich or at Reydon Hall. As much as possible the parents oversaw the process and encouraged the development of their mathematical abilities, domestic and gardening skills, and literary interests. Thomas's library was the seat of much of the latter activity. Hence in 1818, when Thomas suddenly died, writing was already a preoccupation of and a potential vocation for his daughters.

In fact, five of the six Strickland girls became published writers by the early 1820s, drawing on family connections to gain access to Suffolk and London literary markets and opportunities. Only Sarah (1798–1890), known as the beauty of the family, chose not to engage in the challenges of authorship. For the others, writing became an important component of their genteel lives; it allowed them to earn some income or "pin money" for their personal and familial needs, and it provided a socially acceptable opportunity to put their names before the public. As Susanna's sister Catharine nostalgically observed in the 1850s, the Strickland girls at Reydon Hall reminded her a great deal of the Brontë family; writing was in their blood and an atmosphere of support and muted competition prevailed among them.[4]

3. *"Roughing It in the Bush*: Centenary of a Classic," Toronto *Telegram*, April 8, 1952.
4. *"I Bless You in My Heart": Selected Correspondence of Catharine Parr Traill* (1996), p. 264.

Susanna Strickland was the most impulsive and romantic of the sisters. By the time of her first known publication, a juvenile novel entitled *Spartacus: A Roman Story*, published by Newman in London in 1822, her oldest sisters, Elizabeth (1794–1875) and Agnes (1796–1874), were already in the process of establishing literary careers based in London. Typically, when the older sisters were home at Reydon, they functioned as teachers and mentors, imposing a testy control on the younger trio, Jane Margaret (1800–1888), Catharine (1802–1899), and Susanna (1803–1885). For her part, Susanna could not bear to be simply the youngest writer among the sisters. As a poet she aspired to vie with the already-prominent Agnes. With an air of defiance and an inclination for hero worship (Napoleon and William Wallace and the aforementioned Spartacus were among her favorites), she set out to make a name for herself, despite her relative inexperience. She was soon sending out poems to magazines and newspapers, submitting her writing to popular London annuals, and penning other book-length cautionary tales for the burgeoning children's book market in London. Several gentlemanly writers and editors befriended her and encouraged her progress, among them James Bird, a Suffolk poet and historian who with his wife Emma ran a bookstore and pharmacy in nearby Yoxford; Thomas Harral, a family friend who edited a popular London ladies' magazine, *La Belle Assemblée*, to which Susanna often contributed; and Thomas Pringle, a busy Scottish writer, editor, and antislavery advocate then living in London with his wife Margaret.

Even as Susanna aspired to new levels of literary recognition, she underwent a religious awakening that strongly affected her outlook and focused the direction of her spirituality. Under the influence of a minister named James Ritchie of nearby Wrentham, she converted from the Anglican faith, so valued by her family, to Congregationalism, thus briefly alienating herself from several of her sisters. While seeking a less ritualistic and more personal relationship with her God through non-conformist thinking, she also received lessons in the art of still-life painting from Ritchie's wife. She was now in her mid-twenties and, despite the Suffolk quiet of her daily activities, it was an exciting time for her.

Through the kindly Pringles, with whom she often stayed in London, Susanna met John Wedderburn Dunbar Moodie, the former Scottish officer she would soon marry. An Orcadian of good family and a pensioned veteran who had served with the Twenty-first Northern Fusiliers during the Napoleonic Wars, John Moodie (1797–1869) had emigrated to the Cape Town settlement in South Africa in the early 1820s to join a Scottish group that included the Pringles. Farming there with his brother Donald for nearly a decade, he maintained his connection with Thomas Pringle, even though Pringle was forced in 1826 to return to London; his outspoken antislavery journalism precipitated his expulsion from the colony.

In 1830, John Moodie arrived in London with two aspirations—to complete a book about his African adventures and to find a wife. Thirty-three years old, he was already an author, having published an

account of his military service in the Netherlands during the Peninsular Wars. Susanna and John met socially at the Pringles' home and soon established a strong mutual passion that would sustain them through their various misadventures, successes and failures as immigrants to Upper Canada, and as writers, parents and prominent citizens in the colony.

While the courtship seems to have vied briefly with Susanna's recent religious conversion for her attention, the main problem facing their romance was money, the need somehow to establish for themselves a sufficient income on which to live comfortably in Britain. The fatherless Susanna had no dowry and only modest hopes of a small family inheritance. John was born into the Orcadian gentry, but the encumbered Moodie family estate, Melsetter, on the island of Hoy, offered nothing for a younger son. Months of uncertainty followed as John tested other family possibilities and tried to persuade Susanna to consider a life together on his South African farm. Recognizing that there was no immediate financial help in sight other than John's military pension, they agreed to marry solely on the basis of their love for each other. Their interim strategy was to leave London and settle temporarily in Southwold, the better to preserve their limited resources while Susanna enjoyed proximity to her mother, sisters and friends. However, with Susanna pregnant through the winter of 1831–32, the die was cast. Emigration, which had loomed as a strong possibility, now became a necessity.

The challenge of emigration

Still owning his South African farm, John Moodie kept up his hope of returning there to develop his property. However, Susanna was not attracted to life in so remote and dangerous a place, especially as John had described it in his manuscript. Moreover, by that time she had, through Thomas Pringle, grown acutely aware of the practice of slavery that was a fact of life in the Cape Colony. John Moodie was also sympathetic to the antislavery agenda that the Pringles advocated.

Alternatively, Canada called. The key was a family connection on Susanna's side. As an energetic seventeen-year-old, her brother Samuel (1805–1867) had gone to Upper Canada in 1825 to seek his fortune. After several years of hard work, he had made a promising life for himself and his young family through employment with the Canada Company and by trading astutely in available lands. In 1831 he had settled on Lake Katchewanook in the northern part of Douro Township. Douro was one of the "back" townships, the newly opened lands north of the townships along Lake Ontario or "the front." Sam's property was about ten miles north of the fledgling town of Peterborough and some fifty miles above Lake Ontario.

His letters home enthused about the great economic promise that lay in the development of the waterway that flowed southward from northern lakes like Stony and Clear through the Otonabee River, Rice Lake and the Trent River before emptying into Lake Ontario. Sam's

property was well placed along that undeveloped natural system. The Moodies were further enticed by Robert Reid, Sam's father-in-law and a substantial Douro settler, who visited Southwold as part of a business trip home to Ireland in 1831. He provided detailed information and encouragement to the couple. After additional consultation with William Cattermole, an emigration official who visited Suffolk in 1831, John decided, with Susanna's concurrence, to follow Sam Strickland's example. He made plans for them and their daughter Katie to sail to Canada, via Edinburgh, in the late spring of 1832.

The story of *Roughing It in the Bush* is the product of this life-changing decision. Clearly, Susanna did not want to leave England and would never have ventured across the ocean had there been a satisfactory alternative for her family's future. She had her mother and sisters in Southwold and, as her early poems and sketches make clear, she was strongly attracted to the Suffolk countryside of her childhood. Moreover, her writing career was progressing notably. In 1830 she had co-authored with her sister Agnes a collection of sheet music entitled *Patriotic Songs*. A year later, her first major book, *Enthusiasm, and Other Poems*, was published by subscription to positive reviews by the London firm of Smith, Elder. She continued to write for the popular literary and religious annuals and to produce cautionary tales for the children's book market. Moreover, through Thomas Pringle and others, she had been welcomed into a set of interesting writers, painters, and caricaturists in London. She was at best a hesitant emigrant; in *Roughing It in the Bush* she made her reluctance a major theme.

Mary Prince and Ashton Warner: awakening to slavery

Perhaps the most exhilarating of Susanna's early literary ventures occurred during an extended visit to the Pringle household. A convert to Congregationalism, she enjoyed the company of the open-minded and kindly Pringles. Indeed, she found in "Papa" Pringle a literary father figure and mentor. Pringle had been deeply affected by his South African experiences and what he saw as the curse of slavery in that colony. Returning to London, he wrote fondly about Africa even as he became an antislavery activist; by the early 1830s he was the secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society. Consistent with his views, he occasionally provided temporary shelter and employment for Caribbean slaves seeking their freedom in London. In his house on Clarington Square Susanna met both Mary Prince and Ashton Warner, and she was drawn to the poignancy and horror of their "simple and affecting narrative[s]."[5]

Heretofore she had been inattentive to the "criminality" of the system of slavery. Now having experienced the personal influence of the two visitors and having heard their stories, "the voice of truth and nature prevailed over my former prejudices."[6] Under Pringle's direction

5. *Negro Slavery Described by a Negro: Being the Narrative of Ashton Warner, a Native of St. Vincent's* (London, 1831), p. 6.
6. Ibid., p. 6.

and editorship, she served as amanuensis to both Mary Prince and Ashton Warner, recording their stories in autobiographical pamphlets that quickly became controversial publications in Britain upon their appearance in 1831. *The History of Mary Prince* proved so popular that it went through three printings that year; a fourth was in the planning stages when Thomas Pringle died suddenly in 1834. In recent years *The History of Mary Prince* has achieved a new level of recognition and prominence as "a groundbreaking oral narrative" and "the first known recorded autobiography by a freed West Indian slave."[7] As such it is studied in universities across the English-speaking world.

During this same period Susanna Strickland became Susanna Moodie. In ways she could not have anticipated, her views were broadening and becoming more liberal as her life changed. She had embraced a more personal religious outlook and had become a sharp critic of legalized slavery. It was a mark of her interest in and affection for "Black Mary" that Mary Prince was among the guests at her wedding to John Moodie on April 4, 1831, in London; "Papa" Pringle gave Susanna away and hosted the wedding dinner.

By the time their daughter Katie was born in Southwold on February 14, 1832, John and Susanna were well advanced in their plans to emigrate. Upper Canada had become their chosen destination. There lay, they convinced themselves, "independence and comfort," though they knew that they would have to devote years of effort and make many personal sacrifices to reach that goal. It was both a surprise and a support to them when they learned that Susanna's sister, Catharine Parr, had rather suddenly chosen to marry the widowed Thomas Traill, a Scottish friend of John Moodie; the newlyweds hurriedly made their own plans to follow the Moodies to Canada.

The Upper Canadian bush

Resistant as she was to any significant change, Susanna Moodie saw herself by 1832 as the loyal wife of an adventurous Scot; she deemed it her solemn duty to follow the challenging path they had mapped out together. However, the writer in her, ever alert to fresh subject matter, knew that there would be stories to tell and scenes to describe should they survive the ocean crossing and the transition to life in Canada's unsettled wilderness.

Once in Upper Canada she found little opportunity to write, though she, like John, occasionally jotted down poems in response to various events and feelings she experienced. With John serving as her 'agent,' they both sought out available newspaper and magazine outlets for their work. In their first three years in Canada, the Moodies placed pieces of their writing with the *Cobourg Star*, *The (New York) Albion* and its subsidiary *The Emigrant and Old Countryman*, a couple of short-lived Toronto magazines, Lincoln Sumner Fairfield's *The North*

7. *Nine Black Women, An Anthology of Nineteenth-Century Writers from the United States, Canada, Bermuda, and the Caribbean*, ed. Moira Ferguson (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 53, 48.

American (Quarterly) Magazine, and various London magazines and annuals, notably *The Lady's Magazine*, then edited by Susanna's eldest sister, Elizabeth.

Roughing It in the Bush took more than a decade to develop in Susanna's mind. John Moodie first pitched the concept in 1835 to Richard Bentley, the London publisher of his two-volume *Ten Years in South Africa* (1835). Initially, however, Bentley was not encouraging. Hence the idea lay fallow while Susanna's sister and bush neighbor, Catharine, put together a manuscript of her emigration experiences from 1832 to 1835. It appeared in London as *The Backwoods of Canada* (1836), a volume in the "Entertaining Knowledge" library of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge. No doubt Susanna took note both of its considerable success as an emigration account written specifically for women and of the several misconceptions that Catharine's book contained.[8] For her part, Susanna began writing poems for pay for John Lovell's *The Literary Garland*, a Montreal magazine, before she was able to leave the bush, but until she moved to Belleville she had insufficient time to work on longer prose pieces or to begin an account of her personal experiences in the bush. Distance in time and space would prove important in her later writing. Moreover, her final year in the bush proved a harrowing experience.[9]

Living comfortably in the town of Belleville in the mid-1840s and having established herself as a writer of serialized fiction for *The Literary Garland*, she was ready to begin writing the sketches that became *Roughing It in the Bush*. Her goal was to offer a more personal, probing, humorous, and accurate record of bush experience than her sister's optimistic and pragmatic account. She would write from an unabashedly female perspective and would not avoid the painful admission that emigrants of genteel outlook and background, like themselves, were ill-equipped to be workaday laborers in a struggling backwoods economy. Such people were doomed to failure if they chose to commit their limited capital and efforts to the pursuit of success in the bush. Indeed, by March 1839 the Traills had confirmed that verdict in their own case by finally selling their bush farm and moving to the nearby town of Peterborough.

Shaping the book

Susanna's organizing strategy was to use the then-popular sketch form to present her travels and the places she had visited, particular characters she had met along the way, and local customs and events she had observed or experienced. The sketch form allowed her a casual, leisurely, personalized, and anecdotal approach. She kept to chronology as much as possible, even as she realized that it was in the very nature of the sketch form to introduce temporal disjunctions to the

8. The Patrick Hamilton Ewing Collection (PHEC) at the National Library of Canada contains a copy of Catharine's presentation copy to Susanna; it is dated 1837.
9. See excerpts from Susanna Moodie's letters to her husband during 1839 in the "Backgrounds" section.

narrative flow. She also organized her story into two sections or volumes, one for each distinct experiment in settlement the Moodies undertook. The chapter headings and content suggest that she made some effort to parallel events and experiences from Volume I to II, from their first settlement near the Lake Ontario "front" to their years of "roughing it" in Douro Township.

The first volume accounts for a change in the Moodies' original plans based on advice received during their stay in the town of Cobourg. After weighing the pros and cons of going directly to their land grant in the backwoods where, they were warned, the unbroken forest prevailed and resources for settlers were limited, they chose to buy a partially cleared farm in Hamilton Township, about eight miles west of Cobourg and four miles east of Port Hope. There they stayed until February 1834. Beyond their struggles to adapt to new conditions, the most persistent problems they encountered were social. They found themselves plagued by the rude antics and anti-British hostility of their "Yankee" neighbors. Even lower-class English settlers like the O——s (see "The Charivari" chapter, beginning on p. 128) took advantage of their genteel British assumptions and goodwill. At the same time they found few residents of their own class and background who were willing to socialize. As such, they came to regret the distance between themselves and Susanna's siblings, Sam Strickland and Catharine Parr Traill, who lived so many miles to the north.

Volume II recounts the Moodies' relocation to their land grant in the Douro backwoods, a move they later came to see as their most foolish decision as emigrants. By then, John had bought more land adjacent to his original grant and had contracted for the construction of a log house on a low ridge above Lake Katchewanook, about a mile north of the Traills' homestead. Here in the spring of 1834, during what Susanna called their "halcyon days of the bush," they cleared land as their financial resources allowed and awaited further news about the promised development of the Otonabee River waterway, on which they had positioned themselves. However, unanticipated and nearly overwhelming problems loomed. With the persistent threat of cholera affecting ports in Britain and Canada, immigration to Upper Canada slowed noticeably. Moreover, as a result of the pervasive Depression of 1835–36, real-estate values and markets for farm produce stagnated, leaving the Moodies up a proverbial backwoods stump. John's decision in 1834 to sell his military pension for money to improve their backwoods property proved a grievous loss under these worsening conditions. There was little cash in the backwoods and the economy had slowed to a crawl.

Thus by the fall of 1837 the Moodies found themselves embarrassingly impoverished, tied to a large piece of property that awakened little market interest. They now had four young children—two daughters and two sons—to feed and clothe, and immediate prospects seemed grim. As such, they had to revise their genteel assumptions and rely increasingly on their personal resourcefulness. John Moodie's two military appointments (in 1838 to the Niagara district, and in 1839 to

Belleville and the Victoria District) came like blessings from above, providing a new source of income to a family plagued by debts and the daily struggle merely to survive. Despite its dangers and the immediate fears it aroused, the Rebellion of 1837 in the Canadas raised Susanna's hopes that her family might manage to find its way out of its trying situation. It also gave new direction to her flagging literary prospects.

The winter of 1839 proved a decisive time for Susanna in her lonely struggles. Another winter like it, she wrote to John, "will pile the turf over my head."[1] *Roughing It in the Bush* is a book of many moods, but its underlying feeling, as alive for her when she wrote her sketches as when she experienced them, is the sense of helplessness and entrapment that overtook her during that last long winter. Alone on the farm with only a female servant (Jenny Buchanan), Susanna and her children fell victim to several life-threatening illnesses, mastitis in her case and typhus and scarlet fever in theirs. While the book skirts these specific problems by means of two descriptive paragraphs,[2] the discovery of Susanna's monthly letters to John from January through July 1839 provides the reader with a much more detailed and harrowing sense of that dark period in her life. Available in full in *Letters of Love and Duty: The Correspondence of Susanna and John Moodie*, several of these letters are excerpted in the "Backgrounds" section of this edition to provide readers with a fuller sense of that final winter. Only when John Moodie received his appointment as the sheriff of Hastings County late in 1839 was he able to move his family to the town of Belleville.

Notable aspects of Roughing It in the Bush

A number of the sketches comprising *Roughing It in the Bush* first appeared in *The Literary Garland*, the most durable of Canada's pre-Confederation magazines. Susanna Moodie had eagerly begun to contribute to it while still in the bush; once in Belleville she became one of its most prolific writers, producing serialized fiction on a yearly basis, along with occasional poems. In 1847, Susanna submitted six "Canadian Sketches," which eventually became nine chapters of *Roughing It in the Bush*, Volume I. As well, for *The Victoria Magazine*, which she and John edited in Belleville for a year (1847–48), she wrote "A Visit to Grosse Isle" and "Quebec." In their original form, these magazine sketches show variants in phrasing, word choice, and selection of incident that suggest Susanna's sensitivity to differences in the taste and expectations of her Canadian and English readers.

Roughing It in the Bush is a work of several hands. It contains four sketches and several poems by John, suggesting that the Moodies saw the project as a family affair in which John's role was to offer helpful context for his wife's personalized sketches, contribute some serious and lighthearted poems, and provide audiences with information suit-

1. The letter is dated July 16, 1839. See *Letters of Love and Duty*, p. 159.
2. See the last paragraph of "The Whirlwind" and the first paragraph of "A Change in Our Prospects."

able to a male emigrant's interests and needs. A third contributor was Sam Strickland, who provided Susanna with a few anecdotes about Canadian "hurricanes" and with a wider range of backwoods experience than the Moodies could claim. It was Susanna's book to be sure, but it was bolstered by contributions that she felt would give it greater reach and authority.

Roughing It in the Bush is in fact the middle book in a trilogy of the Moodies' emigration experience. Two years after *Roughing It* appeared, Richard Bentley published *Flora Lyndsay*, a novel by Susanna. In a letter to her publisher, she described it as a thinly veiled work of fiction based upon their marriage and difficult decision to emigrate, their careful preparations, their trip to Edinburgh, and their long voyage across the Atlantic. She told Bentley, "I took a freak of cutting it out of the MS. and beginning the work at Grosse Isle."[3] In another letter she assured him that Flora's story is "no fiction."[4]

The marketing success of *Roughing It in the Bush* made Richard Bentley eager to have a post-bush sequel. He asked Susanna to provide readers with an informed look at life in settled Canadian towns as opposed to the bush. Working quickly while recuperating from a dangerous illness, Susanna cobbled together *Life in the Clearings versus the Bush* (1853), a collection of sketches about her Belleville experiences and recent travels to Toronto and Niagara Falls. Among them she included a few pieces that she had originally intended for *Roughing It in the Bush*, including "Michael McBride," which she had pulled from the *Roughing It* manuscript in response to Catholic criticism it received in a Montreal newspaper. The others were sketches—"Jeanie Burns" and "Lost Children"—which had been requested by Bentley in London, but had arrived too late for inclusion. For all its variety and despite Susanna's enthusiasm for it, *Life in the Clearings* proved a disappointment in London; however, sales of the American edition, published by DeWitt and Davenport in New York, were more encouraging.

Since its publication, *Roughing It in the Bush* has elicited both positive and antagonistic responses, generation by generation. Initially it sold so well that in 1853 the Moodies received reports that its American sales rivalled those of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.[5] Lydia Sigourney, one of the most popular American writers of the day, sent Susanna an affectionate fan letter, asserting that *Roughing It* was able to create more interest than a work of fiction could. In Canada, however, there was much criticism; the book seemed to warn darkly against emigration and to complain too much about everyday colonial conditions. One prominent Toronto reviewer deemed its author "An ape of the aristocracy" in her hauteur and preciousness.[6] Three years later Susanna summarized her frustration with Canadian readers in a letter to Richard Bentley:

3. Letter to Richard Bentley, dated late spring, 1853. See *Letters of a Lifetime*, p. 130.
4. Letter to Bentley, September 3, 1853. See *Letters of a Lifetime*, p. 131. Susanna toyed with two fictional names for herself, first Flora MacGregor and then Flora Lyndsay.
5. Letter to Richard Bentley dated late autumn, 1853. See *Letters of a Lifetime*, p. 136.
6. Charles Lindsay, *Toronto Examiner*, June 16, 1852. See below, pp. 405–07.

> . . . You don't know the touchy nature of the people. . . . Will they ever forgive me for writing *Roughing It*? They know that it was the truth, but have I not been a mark for every vulgar editor of a village journal, throughout the length and breadth of the land to hurl a stone at, and point out as the enemy to Canada. Had I gained a fortune by that book, it would have been dearly earned by the constant annoyance I have experienced since its publication. . . .[7]

While the book went through several English and American editions, it was not published in Canada until 1871.[8] Since then it has seldom been out of print. Its record of emigration and pioneering experience, its personalized drama, its apparent contradictions of purpose and mood, and its persistently humorous responses have held readers' interest over the decades. Numerous Canadian writers, such as Robertson Davies, Margaret Atwood, Carol Shields, Tom King, Julie Johnston, Elizabeth Hopkins and Timothy Findley, have included Susanna in their novels, plays and poems, and two recent films have celebrated her life and legacy.[9] For many, *Roughing It in the Bush* suggests, if not defines, something of the nature of the Canadian imagination and the struggle to adapt to life in a northern environment. For others, it has given rise to a preoccupation with the author herself. Was Susanna Moodie, as Northrop Frye observed, "a one-woman British army of occupation"? Was she a too-shrill and persistent complainer? Was she an English snob who could not and would not adjust to frontier conditions? Or was she an astute observer of backwoods manners and morals? Was she a heroic pioneer and an extraordinary woman in her own right? Was she a writer of limited talent who somehow, through the intimacies of memoir and autobiography, unlocked the best of her talent?

No single view encompasses what Susanna Moodie has to say and what she represents. Rather, she stands as a persistent and challenging enigma for readers old and new.

7. Letter to Richard Bentley, August 19, 1856. See *Letters of a Lifetime*, pp. 169–70.
8. The Centre for the Editing of Canadian Texts (CEECT) volume of *Roughing It in the Bush*, ed. Carl Ballstadt (Carleton UP, 1987) offers a full account of the history of the various editions of the book in London, the United States and Canada. There were several re-issues published in the United States prior to 1900. The first Canadian edition appeared in Toronto in 1871 under the imprint of Hunter, Rose.
9. See Patrick Crowe's *The Enduring Enigma of Susanna Moodie* (1997) and the CBC film of *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Lives of Susanna Moodie and Catharine Parr Traill* (2004), based on Charlotte Gray's biography of the sisters.

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