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Fictional Settlements: Footnotes, Metalepsis, the Colonial Effect

Elaine Freedgood

I AM GOING TO ARGUE THAT THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY NOVEL is anomalous using as an example an anomalous nineteenth-century novel. The anomalous novel, Catharine Parr Traill's *Canadian Crusoes* (1852), is not well-known now, although it was well reviewed and popular in its time, and for about fifty years thereafter. A genre fiction in at least two ways—as a young adult novel and as an adventure fiction—it is also an emigration novel, which may or may not be a genre. It was written in Canada by a pioneer who is often described as “British-Canadian” and who began writing children’s books at the age of sixteen to support herself and her family after her father died. The field, in Pierre Bourdieu’s sense, might best be described as that of “colonial letters.”¹ I mean “letters” in both the sense of *belles lettres* and in the sense of epistles written home.² Anglophone Canadian fiction and travel writing of the nineteenth century was not usually read by Canadians, but rather by Britons in Britain, who might or might not be prospective Canadians. The writers in the field of colonial letters who imagined and constructed fictional settlements such as the ones proposed in *Canadian Crusoes* “participate in domination, but as dominated agents; they are neither dominant, plain and simple, nor are they dominated.” Parr Traill, as the wife of a British army officer, is mildly privileged in the colonial social hierarchy, but just by virtue of having to participate in emigration, she is among the dominated citizens of nineteenth-century Britain. Her participation in the representation of empire is accordingly complex: her writing encourages emigration to Canada’s forested “north” and also depicts the intense hardship and tragedy that so often attends it.

Bourdieu has argued that “literary fiction is . . . a way of making known that which one does not wish to know.” We can bear novelistic revelations because they remain “veiled.”³ It is this figure that I wish to amplify and revise in what follows. I want to suggest a specifically “colonial effect.” The idea of the “colonial” in this effect must be understood both literally and figuratively. It refers both to the way in which the

novel helps us to imagine and colonize actual space, in part through the navigation of represented space, and it also refers to the idea of the colony as a place over which a fantasied domination can always preside. Dorothea Brooke longs for a “colony”; Gwendolen Harleth for an “empire”; *Robinson Crusoe* is of course not the first or last fiction in which such dreams come true.

As Edward W. Said spent much of his career arguing, most explicitly in *Orientalism* (1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), empire depends on substantial epistemological and narrative support. Novels are perhaps always in some sense colonies for their authors and readers: small worlds under the control of the author who makes them, and then the reader who can turn the pages or not, who can imagine the world represented or not, live in it for a time or not, can believe in this or that aspect of it or not. The colonial effect I want to describe suggests that part of the work that an imperial power requires from the realistic fiction that novels tend to proffer is precisely an important flexibility between fantasy and reality. Realism’s weird—although thoroughly naturalized—combination of fictionality and factuality, in its awkward form in the anomalous *Canadian Crusoes* and its elegant form in more canonical nineteenth-century novels, makes known that which we do not want to know about our world but which we must know at some level, or at some moments. In some sense, realism makes social reality known literally: actual places and historical events mingle with fictional places and people. Realism insists on some degree of reference. The delicate but persistent connection between fiction and reference makes the form of the nineteenth-century novel anomalous (and this form persists beyond the nineteenth century in any novel that continues to be realistic and thus referential). It is most obvious in a novel that is “misplaced” in Roberto Schwarz’s sense: a novel that is trying to tell its story outside the geographical and temporal precincts in which novels belong, which is to say in the modernity of the metropole.⁴ The colonial effect does not provide the “veil” of Bourdieu’s “literary effect”; rather, it allows us to choose between the fictional and the referential, it allows for an ontological imperialism that is a key complement to the work of empire that Britain engaged so vigorously during the reign of realism.

I. Small Pioneers

Canadian Crusoes was published in New York and London (it was not published in Canada until 1986, although it may well have circulated in Canada, since Britain and America supplied Canada with most of its

books in the nineteenth century). Parr Traill's works are often taught in Canadian grammar schools now, as part of the canon of nineteenth-century Canadian fiction. As Jane Stafford points out, "The literary historiography of settler societies necessarily focuses on local productions, the early signs of a national literature or literary canon. But we have little idea to what extent these local productions figured in the colonial reading experience."⁵ The novel is part of a Victorian discourse *about* childhood and a discourse directed *at* children, and it is also directed, in some sense, at readers who could never have read it—a group of what Carolyn Betensky has defined as "spectral readers"—the readers we imagine are reading or having read the same text we are reading and whom we imagine being affected by the fiction we are reading and whose imagined (spectral) feelings then become part of our own reading experience.⁶

Canadian Crusoes was published after Parr Traill's very successful memoir, *The Backwoods of Canada* (1836), a guide to domestic life which was, in colonial Canada, coterminous with being a guide to survival for white settlers. Both of these texts are hybrid in many ways: both works include practical advice of all kinds, including what is edible in the Canadian forests, which indigenous people are likely to be friendly, and "updates" on what land is "now" cleared and "under the plough." Both are also in part quite detailed and loving guides to flora and fauna, and at the end of her life, Parr Traill was able to publish works that were devoted entirely to nature writing, as she and the other European settlers of her region moved beyond issues of daily survival.

Set in the late eighteenth century, *Canadian Crusoes* concerns two families: a Scottish family and a French one who intermarry and start a small "colony." Their children are playmates and three of them—the adolescents Hector, Catharine, and Louis—go after some errant cows one day, get lost themselves, and have to recapitulate the development of civilization. This is the classic adventure story written in and about nineteenth-century Canada: it rehearses the pioneering spirit of settlers, offers practical advice, and narrates development—the clearing of land. The teenagers fashion fish hooks and sewing needles, make all kinds of fur apparel, baskets, and traps. They build several shelters, from shed to wigwam to log cabin. Andrew O'Malley argues that the "children reenact a narrative of cultural evolution from primitive and nomadic to settler-agricultural societies."⁷ This of course marks them off from the Aboriginal people of Canada (who according to prevailing Victorian racial theory do not evolve), and is part of the legal basis of claiming land ownership in Lockean terms.⁸ The three children make surviving in the wilderness seem like a terrific adventure, with some hardship of

course, but nothing that can't be overcome with British endurance and French creativity. (Scottish identity is subsumed under British identity in North America.) After Hector rescues a Mohawk girl he happens upon who has been taken captive by an Ojibwa tribe, and whom the threesome name Indiana, Aboriginal ingenuity plays a significant part in the well-being of the Crusoes, and narrative acknowledgment of the importance of their invention and discovery of snow shoes, medicinal uses of plants, camouflage for hunting, dyes from berries, harvesting of wild rice, and so on, comes and goes in spurts of admiration, which alternate with sentiments like "I wonder who first taught the Indians to make canoes, and venture out on the lakes and streams. Why should we be more stupid than these untaught heathens?" a question Louis asks and then answers by constructing his own canoe.⁹

We might imagine that the novel is directed at potential emigrants to Canada: a place for the poorest British emigrants in the nineteenth century, and a place to which, between 1867 and 1917, eighty thousand English, Scottish, and Irish "orphans" were shipped and placed with families, not so much as adoptees but as farmhands and servants, sometimes as slaves.¹⁰ (The designation "orphan" in the Victorian period was applied to poor children very liberally; a lack of parents was not required.)¹¹ But the readers of *Canadian Crusoes* were not the impoverished Britons, children or adults, who emigrated to Canada. They were middle-class readers of periodicals like *The Art Journal*, *The Athenaeum*, *The Literary Gazette*, and *The Examiner*, in which it was advertised and favorably reviewed. One critic found it convincingly and usefully documentary: "Few of our readers, probably, are aware that scarcely a summer passes without some of the Canadian colonists losing children in the vast forests about them."¹²

Indeed, the novel seems to be retelling the tragic story of much nineteenth-century emigration to Canada not as farce, but as adventure. It is as if clearing dense woods, farming, and doing domestic work from absolute scratch is literally a kind of child's play and thus produces a story appropriate for children. In *The Backwoods of Canada*, Parr Traill gives details of the "domestic economy of a settler's life" which she describes as a "Robinson Crusoe sort of life" suggesting that her fiction is realistic in the sense that every settler in Canada starts from scratch: clearing land, starting up a farm, having to provide themselves with everything or else buy things at tremendous expense and difficulty from distant shops.¹³ It is no mistake that after *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Robinson Crusoe* was "throughout the nineteenth century among the most frequently recommended reading matter for the prospective emigrant, the protagonist himself representing the embodiment of Protestant self-reliance," Bill

Bell writes.¹⁴ He goes on to quote, however, a different argument for the usefulness of Defoe's novel: John Hill Burton, in *The Emigrant's Manual* of 1850, writes, "To teach the mechanic the use of inventive resources in an emigration field, there could be no better book than Robinson Crusoe."¹⁵ *Robinson Crusoe* is an allegory, but also a field guide, as is *Canadian Crusoes*, in which three children enact a story that proves what ingenuity, endurance, and courage can do, and which also gives quite specific tips for survival. The ratio of allegory and reality is awkward because both are so stark: virtues are named by national origin (ingenuity is French; obedience is Aboriginal; endurance is British); methods for hunting, fishing, and making baskets out of porcupine quills and birch bark are given in detail.

There is another sense in which *Canadian Crusoes* is documentary and that is in its transcription of a certain kind of childhood: that of the working children of the nineteenth century, especially the most feared and detested group, the independent street children who were seen to constitute a major threat to social stability. As a writer in the *Ragged School Union Magazine* put it in 1849: "If we forget or neglect them, we know not what the consequences may be. Lord only knows how long this land may escape the fearful visitations which now overwhelm a great part of the continent. . . . The revolution in France began with the lads of Paris."¹⁶ This group of children became the beneficiaries (or victims) of a rescue movement that put them into "ragged" and industrial schools, sent them to farms in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa, and in general brought under some form of social control children who were apparently without parental, state, or religious supervision. They were earning their livings (or not) by selling everything from flowers and watercress to shirt buttons and shoelaces, by running errands, picking pockets, turning cartwheels, sweeping street crossings, and doing anything else that came to hand. They were a mobile, ungoverned, and seemingly ungovernable group. As Elaine Hadley has shrewdly observed, these enthusiastic young capitalists were turned into wage laborers by the rescue movement, although many of the "orphan" emigrants had to forego wages altogether, becoming essentially slave laborers in the settler colonies.¹⁷ On the one hand, we have in *Canadian Crusoes* a novel representing bold, independent, and self-sustaining children making homes for themselves in a forbidding outpost of empire; on the other hand, a reality in which bold, independent, and more or less self-sustaining children are recognized as a threat to social stability. Emigration transforms small urban criminals into hardy colonial pioneers.

II. Metalepsis

We don't experience it as weird to find fictional characters in factual spaces. It's just a normal part of the novel, certainly, and can occur without causing a stir in other genres as well. Sherlock Holmes lives in Baker Street; Pip walks by Smithfield Market; Daniel Deronda rows on the Thames. But this feature of realism is, strictly speaking, an instance of metalepsis—that is, a breakdown of the boundary between levels of narration. Metalepsis is defined by Gérard Genette as an intrusion of a narrator or character into a frame in which they do not belong; when omniscient narrators suddenly say “I” and thereby change their ontological status and limit their knowledge, or when characters walk off the stage and talk to members of the audience, or when a reader is murdered by the bad guy in the story he is reading. These are flamboyant instances of metalepsis which force us to reflect on narrative construction and our suspensions of disbelief. When we read that Holmes lives in Baker Street, a character has essentially moved from diegetic to extradiegetic space; or, he is suspended between two worlds that are superimposed on each other. The fact that Baker Street is within the diegetic doesn't solve the problem: you cannot, strictly speaking, have a real street within a fictional diegetic space. But of course we have them all the time. And many Holmes fans are happy to visit Baker Street to see where the detective lived and worked. Thomas Hardy's detailed mapping of Wessex, with its real and fictional coordinates, speaks to this problem in the language of fiction: you can think of Jude as you walk the streets of Oxford, but strictly speaking, he was not there—fictionally or literally (in the literal sense of literally—to the letter). Christminster may be Oxford, but the remove is important: simply having to find a referent makes Christminster fictional and leaves Jude in a fictional world—however interrupted by the palimpsestic reality of Dorset that hovers above, or below, the fictional maps that accompany the Wessex novels.

The breakdown of frames that occurs when fictional people live and walk and row in actual spaces has affiliations with the game *Second Life* and with transference in psychoanalysis. In both there is a kind of virtual play in which an actor has a kind of fictional agency in a world with realistic, which is to say restricted, limits, the philosopher J. David Velleman has recently argued.¹⁸ It's not like children playing at pirates—the sofa cannot be a ship and the coffee table an island, and then change the next moment when the game changes, into a spaceship and Mars, but the analyst can be your mother and in *Second Life* you can be a different gender, race, species, age, and/or shape—so that your own character becomes in part fictional. You then operate as a fictionalized

character in a world that is the same or structurally very similar to the one you live in; you can “literally perform fictional actions,” in Velleman’s phrase.¹⁹ You gain a kind of diegetic mobility in these practices: you are living both in your own diegetic space and in fictional space at the same time. To be able to violate the diegetic levels of your own life is both exhilarating and probably necessary to imagining new ways of being, or to working out old ones. Narratives frame us rigidly—we know this from genre theory as well as from psychoanalysis, medicine, law, and the history of anything and everything. But narrative frames also frame us rigidly. Diegetic space is claustrophobic—ontologically and narratively. We want sometimes to be on the outside looking in, or on the outside looking out. The breaking out of diegetic spaces gets enacted in various kinds of representations all the time—video games are one of the best examples now of this experience in which, as Laurie Taylor has written, “the player in play is present in more than one spatial domain.”²⁰ In fiction, we notice this phenomenon most when texts are comic and self-referential, and that means in the novels of the eighteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries. Such self-referential rupture often occurs in paratextual spaces; the footnote, the subject of much of this essay, especially tends to heckle the main text, embarrassing and undermining its authority.

The footnote is an extradiegetic space literally and figurally. In *Canadian Crusoes*, footnotes generate ruptures that are particularly important, I’ll argue, to the imagining of imperial space. First, however, I want to briefly discuss more typical fictional footnotes, to think about how they produce metalepsis, and what might be at stake in their narrative ruptures.

Henry Fielding footnotes *Tom Jones* liberally and comically with various adumbrations of the main text. The word “critics,” for example, is footnoted to explain that by it he means “every reader in the world” (Book VIII, chapter 1). The notes create a sort of side relationship between narrator and reader. It is almost as if there is a huge audience of average readers who are probably ignoring the notes, and then there is the special reader who will read the notes and share their ironies with the narrator—or perhaps even with the author himself. The footnotes split the audience (hypothetically) and the text literally in that they split the page; they also divide our attention and land us in two different temporal and geographical frames. There is the frame of the novel and its time and space, and the frame of the note and its time and space. There is a third dimension that becomes increasingly uncertain: the frame of our own time and space. Is that the same frame occupied by the narrator/commentator? In *Tristram Shandy*, Laurence Sterne, as we

would expect, makes this problem worse. The commentator who writes the footnotes for this novel is not Tristram Shandy, our narrator. We know this because in the footnotes we are notified that “Mr. Shandy” is incorrect about various things. Who is the commentator? Is *Tristram Shandy* a true story that is being narrated incorrectly? Or a hypodiegetic tale within a very sketchy frame?

Charles Kinbote, the insane narrator of Vladimir Nabokov’s *Pale Fire*, uses the literal pretext of the novel—*Pale Fire, a Poem in Four Cantos* by John Shade—to tell his own tangled stories—including one about his relationship to Shade, and one about his native land of Zembla. Zembla may not exist—even as a fiction, and his relationship to Shade probably does not exist in the form he imagines it. The notes, which increasingly ignore the poem as Kinbote becomes increasingly convinced that the poem is really his own narrative about Zembla, which he has told to Shade, take on a life of their own and seem to want to sever their connection to the poem, but of course the fiction of this fiction is that the notes exist and will see publication only because of the poem. They can only cast their pale fire because of *Pale Fire*. Kinbote, and Zembla, are historical losers: they cannot properly authorize their own narrative, and therefore Zembla, at least, is not allowed to exist historically (referentially): they have not received “permission to narrate,” or the “acknowledgment of a history,” the conditions on which a political existence becomes possible.²¹

The notes of Fielding, Sterne, and Nabokov ask us to think about where we are reading from, and where we go when we read, and about how the type(s) on the page take us to these various levels or frames, and how we know or can know what level or space we are in at any given moment. They question authority and authorship: metalepsis in the form of the footnote insists that what we are reading may be based on other texts, but those other texts may also be fictional. The basis of historical belief is undermined; realistic fiction is of course also thoroughly bedeviled. Is the fiction we are reading “probable”? Probably not. These self-referential fictions are more concerned with textuality—their own and the condition of textuality in general than they are with social, historical, and psychological probability and truth.

Sir Walter Scott’s footnotes mark an epoch in the history of fictional footnotes because they are *not* entirely satirical or self-referential. They, of course, come at the beginning of a century when self-referential hilarity takes a long holiday. But Scott actually appends two kinds of footnotes to his novels. In one kind, he satirizes antiquarian knowledge and prose. These notes are provided by fictional scholar/commentators like the pompous antiquarian Laurence Templeton in *Ivanhoe*. Such notes sug-

gest that reading Scott's fictions as history would be absurd; indeed Scott expected readers to understand that Templeton was a fiction and, given his dedicatory epistle to Jonas Dryasdust, it would be hard to imagine a reader who would think anything else. But there is another kind of note, especially after the apparatus that Scott devised for what he called the *Magnum Opus* edition of the *Waverley* novels, which was published between 1828 and 1832, and which included new introductions, extensive additional footnotes, and glossaries. In these notes, which his publisher called "illustrations," solid referential information is given: certain places—especially places—are "vouched" for by the narrator; the novel is shown to be based on fact. A waterfall where Flora MacIvor and Edward Waverley meet, for instance, is explained to us in a note as taken from that of Ledoard "at the farm so called on the northern side of Lochard and near the head of the Lake, four or five miles from Aberfoyle . . . one of the most exquisite cascades it is possible to behold."²² This is a radical if anomalous moment for the fictional footnote, I would argue, and for fiction/fact metalepses more broadly. Scott's apparatus, Robert Mayer has argued, suggests that "the problem of novelistic reference . . . cannot be dismissed as the misapprehension of naïve readers. . . . Scott's historical romances—neither for the first or last time in the history of the novel—advance the inescapable, if paradoxical, claim that the novel can be, and is, both fiction and history."²³ Scott, in leaving this paradox unresolved, makes possible a use of footnotes, and a use of metalepsis, that are key for the nineteenth-century novel. Scott's metalepsis suggests the opening of a circuit between fact and fiction; a sort of canal or passage that allows for a particular kind of representation and a particular kind of reading of that representation.

Parr Traill annotates her fiction with footnotes, which at first seem rather random and even haphazard in their content. They provide Latin names for plants, indicate indigenous fish, suggest a recipe for a berry tart, and detail which places have been cleared since our threesome got lost and are "now" under cultivation, and by whom. There is one footnote that struck me as especially strange and estranging. Louis finds some partridge eggs, and after the word "partridge" there is a footnote which reads: "The Canadian partridge is a species of grouse, larger than the English or French partridge. We refer our young readers to the finely arranged specimens in the British Museum, (open to the public,) where they may discover 'Louis's partridge.'"²⁴ Now, obviously the text is trying to be educational, and it is more than a little bit propagandistic on behalf of Canadian emigration; indeed, the lost children come across so many delightful berries that that wilderness so often imagined as cold and daunting comes to seem like a giant muffin in waiting. The footnote,

as a specific kind of metalepsis, creates what Genette has described as a “zone between text and off-text, a zone not only of transition but of transaction.”²⁵ A transaction between narrator and reader occurs in which a door into the narration is opened for us to walk through, as it were: you can see actual parts of this story in a museum near you; you might eventually emigrate to its actual location.

Parr Traill’s footnotes in general, and this one in particular, estrange the ordinary relationship between fictionality and factuality that we usually glide by in the novel. In the preface the author recalls not only Defoe, but also Aristotle and Victorian ideas of verisimilitude in noting that “human sympathy irresistibly responds to any narrative, founded on truth, which graphically describes the struggles of isolated human beings to obtain the aliments of life.” In Victorian ideas about verisimilitude, it is not “reality” that is at issue so much as it is a fidelity to what is true, and what is true is more likely to be found in what is typical than in what is specific to some one instance of reality. This is what establishes what we think of as reference. The “truth” of *Canadian Crusoes* seems to be indemnified by the footnotes. But an author writing about an unknown place—a chronic problem of the colonial author—must also fill in what would be implicit or understood by simple descriptions in other writings. Usually this would just happen in the text itself, but Parr Traill attaches a paratext and in so doing creates a metaleptic erosion of realism because it threatens the boundary between fictionality and factuality. Realism often depends on a seemingly seamless relationship between a world we know and characters we don’t. In Parr Traill’s footnotes, when she discusses land that is settled “now” by historical Canadians, she introduces historical time and historical people into a fictional frame (and thus breaks it). Genette has written that metalepsis is troubling because it seems to suggest that “the extradiegetic is perhaps always diegetic and that the narrator and his narratees—you and I—perhaps belong to some narrative.”²⁶ This would suggest that there is some larger narrative that includes *Canadian Crusoes* and its readers. And of course there is such a larger narrative: the British colonization of Canada. So that what might be the troubling aspect of metalepsis in a metropolitan context becomes useful in the colonial one. Not only is the diegetic space of the novel opened to us; our diegetic space is opened as well. We might step out of it and enjoy exercising our creative survival skills—first in fantasy, but possibly later in fact.

Reference is weirdly introduced in a reference-like apparatus, bringing together two senses of the word—reference as the connection of a word to something in the world, and reference as authorized information. The footnotes drive toward a kind of indexical substantiality: this

landmark refers to the place on which you can now find this farm; this partridge can be found in the British museum. This weighty factuality encourages readers to enact a production of space that thematizes the work of colonization. Readers map an imagined space (that of the fiction) onto an actual space (the Rice Lake Plains of what is now Ontario). But both spaces were as yet imaginary to most British readers of *Canadian Crusoes*. A fictional space must be mapped onto an unknown space, which is therefore for all intents and purposes also fictional—it has no referent to which the reader can refer, or by which the reader can verify the verisimilitude of the text, that is to say the kinds of referents to which readers might compare, either from personal experience or, far more likely, previous representations, the details Parr Traill supplies. So unlike the London streets, Yorkshire moors, or Midlands towns of other fictions such readers might encounter, the landscape is not part of a set of conventional or already read descriptions.

When the everyday is strange, fiction can't function without a domesticating apparatus. Sometimes, perhaps most of the time, the strangeness of a new place or people is overcome by assimilating it and them to the forms of realistic fiction: certain kinds of descriptions, conversations, and plots take place that assure readers that the place and people in question are much like other places and people. Marriage plots, for example, migrate successfully as do certain kinds of landscape description.

But the partridge footnote is not domesticating; instead it is especially radical in its metaleptic torque. It informs us about the Canadian partridge, refers us to the British museum, gives information on visiting that museum, and then turns against its own strenuous documentary effect with the playful conclusion that readers may see "Louis's partridge." These two words are in quotation marks, returning the partridge to the same ontological status as Louis—who has never been anything but fictional. Suddenly, the author seems to worry that her young readers will take her story literally, even though she seems to have been taking her own story literally and offering them a guide to edible foodstuffs should they emigrate to Canada and also get lost.

Parr Traill is creating Canada, and a very specific region of it—the Rice Lake Plains—for her readers. She cannot rely on these readers' stocks of knowledge of everyday life. They are all Crusoes in the natural world of her story, although they are not Crusoes in the genre that is the robinsonade—the world of that genre they can surely navigate well by 1852. Parr Traill teaches us about what we will see, and what we can imagine we would want to see, if and when we arrive in Canada. And she also creates a process of seeing between metropole and colony: seeing begins in the British Museum, as the lama in Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*

gets his eyeglasses from the British curator of the museum in Lahore. The collecting of data—of partridges, for example—holds together an empire and makes space imaginable and then readable, and then, finally physically inhabitable.

The proof is in the partridges, which can be returned to fictionality: you can visit a Canadian partridge in the British museum and imagine that it belongs to Louis, but Louis and the partridge are held in trust in the quotation marks of fiction, in which they are both true, available, and can be seen, forgotten, remembered, and reimagined, and again, forgotten. The dialectical elements of what Henri Lefebvre has described as the production of space are all in play: spatial practice, representations of space, and representational space interact in the reading of the fiction and its footnotes: the characters enact spatial practice as they navigate a real wilderness; the footnotes offer a “scientific” representation of the space; the descriptions within the fiction create representational space, as do the reactions of the characters, and reactions of the readers and of what Betensky has described as “spectral readers” to the beauty and berry-fullness of the Rice Lake Plains.²⁷ In this case, the spectral readers are all the potential emigrants to whom *Canadian Crusoes* seems to be addressed, but for whom a six-shilling, gilt-edged book was hardly an imaginable possession. But in imagining such readers being improved by this text, the middle class Briton who does not have to go to Canada can agree with the massive emigration plans, including those for children, that are going forward all around them, and can also imagine, yet again, that poverty is a choice—the poor can go to Canada and eventually own their own farms (maybe—many ended up as tenant farmers or squatters on First Nations land because of the difficulties, and expense, of clearing land).

Christopher Prendergast has written that “a universe in which all signs were indexical would be a very semiotically safe place indeed. Similarly, a literary text organized according to the same principles could rest assured of its complete mastery of the intelligible world.”²⁸ For a pioneer and writer like Parr Traill this is a practical matter: the footnotes attempt to create indexical signs in order to write into place a reality that she must both present and represent. One author cannot supply both parts of a mimetic fiction—that is to say, she cannot give us both the object of representation and its representation—and have it continue to be mimetic. If, as Moshe Ron has argued, the aspiration of mimesis is to present not a semblance of the real world, but a semblance of true discourse about the world, Parr Traill presents both the true discourse (the representation of space—which occurs in the factual footnotes) and then the semblance thereof—representational space,

which occurs in the fictional text.²⁹ Her strenuous attempt at making an unknown place seem real to her readers, of making its space desirable, founders, for us productively, on the double demand fictions like hers labor under. This is perhaps why the children's story is the genre of empire par excellence: the probable can be strained in the service of whimsicality, facts can be supplied clumsily under the aegis of pedagogy, illustrations can be more plentiful than in an adult text, instructions for museum-going can be supplied.

Fielding, Sterne, and Nabokov all suggest that one appeals to authority at one's peril. Their notes also, however, create an apparently extrafictional conversation between reader and narrator, or between reader and annotator—whoever that may be. The notes are part of the fiction, but the outermost diegetic shell of the fiction becomes uncertain since the author of the footnotes is either unknown, is the narrator—whoever that is—is fictional as in Scott's Laurence Templeton, or like Nabokov's Kinbote, is mad. Fictional footnoters are diegetically and ontologically elusive and may partake of any or all of these qualities, and we may only be able to make out some of their relevant features. How many layers must we eliminate to get free of fictional diegesis and find fact, find our way out of someone else's narrative and back into what we hope is our own?

III. Navigation

Johanna Drucker has argued that “navigational elements”—page numbers, illustrations, footnotes, and other paratextual items—“participate directly in the production of semantic aspects of the story being told.”³⁰ They also teach readers how to navigate the split spaces of a text that contains fiction and then other elements that may not be facts, but which are extradiegetic: page numbers, for example, are often part of the navigational and semantic equipment of my undergraduates, who write things like “John Rokesmith proposes to Bella Wilfer on page 568,” or Anthony Trollope, who ends a chapter in *Barchester Towers* with this caveat: “Mr. Slope, however, on his first introduction must not be brought before the public at the tail of a chapter.”³¹ Alex Woloch has brilliantly read this confession as a collision between the sense of Mr. Slope as human and the sense of Mr. Slope as letters on a page with insufficient character space.³² Thus paratexts (including paper) of all kinds make navigation of textual space include the diegetic and extradiegetic; the fictional and nonfictional join together seamlessly and often weirdly. Stories happen on pages and in chapters. Similarly, footnotes ask us

to read in many different times and spaces at once and to bring them together in creations that are both literary and imperial in their design. Novelistic navigation on the imperial plan allows for trespasses that do not require domestication: characters, readers, and narrators can exist in more than one domain at one time. Marriage proposals, accidents, deaths occur on pages; characters arrive at the ends of chapters. Humans can annex textual worlds and naturalize the idea that members of their species live on and in paper. It is no weirder than living in Canada—first in fiction and then in fact. Actual readers and their spectral companions work through the diegetic and extradiegetic spaces of pages, and then can imagine, or recapitulate that experience in imagining emigrating to Canada, and then perhaps in finally emigrating to Canada.

In *Canadian Crusoes* it might seem that we have no such problem. The footnotes are clearly factual, educational, practical, if a bit random in their information (why the Latin names of plants? To prove that Canadian flora has been classified and thereby suggest the industry and division of labor that has occurred there?). We are not in the hands of a fictional footnoter, but a practical and literally pioneering one. In opening the seam between the factual and the fictional with such a lack of irony, squeamishness, or narrative anxiety, Parr Traill suggests how useful it can be to have diegetic boundary crossings undertaken in an explicit, serious, and unfussy manner. The metalepses of the factual footnotes are firmly embedded in fiction—in a robinsonade no less, a genre that has been certifiably fictional for a long time. A factual new world is being fictionally explored and in the kind of story—a robinsonade—that guarantees the ultimate frame in which all boundary crossing will be recontained. The robinsonade thematizes the very containment it can now enact as a genre—that is to say, it is a fiction that has a history of passing as fact, but has become securely installed in the firmament of fiction and so can contain any amount of factuality and remain fictional. It is also a fiction of empire that was imagined in the nineteenth century as both spiritually and practically useful to the colonist. The postcolonial critique of *Robinson Crusoe* in the twentieth century might be described as rewriting as ideology the nineteenth-century recommendation of the text as handbook.

Hector, Catharine, and Louis may be lost, but the fictional and factual referents of the berries, fish, and game they gather, kill, and eat can be found—again and again. The landmarks they pass can be revisited, and the condition of the terrain updated. The work of reading fiction set in factual space involves, like the work of colonization and the productions of space that attend it, finding, seeing, imagining, refinding, and reimagining, and finally inhabiting, in endless sequences of cognitive

and physical adjustment. In the integration of new information into the doxa, the partridge can always be re-collected, recollecting. And it can also always be re-lost: refigured as fiction, as “Louis’s partridge.” That final step—the refictionalizing of the referent—is perhaps one of the most important jobs of the novel in and around empire, and crucial to the storage, in cultural memory, of its history. The story of the survival of Hector, Louis, Catharine, and then Indiana as well, is a story that narrates at every turn all the features of what could have been their possible and probable demise. Instead they succeed in clearing land, building a home with a hearth, converting a Mohawk to Christianity, and returning to their natal home—always the object of their desire. This ending also insures, for the credulous reader (the kind of reader this fiction actively produces, that it might educate her), that their adventure is returned to the realm of the fictional: they are home now, that long mishap is over. Implicit in the emigration adventure is a story of a return home, with emigration figured as the temporary snafu of getting lost.

Catherine Gallagher has written about *Middlemarch* that the subtlety of its “movements among referential levels, together with their frequency and seeming candor, the softening and hardening from instances to generalities and back again, reassures the reader that this fiction is always connected to the stuff of the real, that the type may be ideational but it has fed on life.”³³ We might imagine that George Eliot’s “footnotes” are integrated into the main text; metalepsis is caulked over by the integration of fiction and fact, an integration that more awkward, less at-home novels can’t produce. Examples of this in *Middlemarch* include the detailed information on the stethoscope, dissection, philology, Rome and the Vatican art collection, and so on: on many of the things and issues in the novels which recent editors have footnoted for us, often with what would have been Eliot’s footnotes—that is to say, they cite her own research and experience. Eliot’s own footnotes survive in her notebooks and “quarry”: she is a wonderful example of the process I want to suggest precisely because there literally are notes to be found in her case. Eliot’s extraordinarily energetic pursuit of the factual gives her most referential moments their oomph—that sense that the fiction is indeed “connected to the stuff of the real.”

I would like to extend Gallagher’s argument to the case of this particular colonial fiction, and then to realist fiction more broadly, to suggest that in works like *Canadian Crusoes*, the real remains firmly connected to the stuff of fiction and can be returned to that ontological realm at imaginative will. In other words, the connection of fiction to the real is complemented by the connection of that real *back to fiction*. Such fictions invite the willing, the grateful suspension of *belief*. There were always

aspects of the imperial endeavor about which various Victorians might well have wished to believe that much of what they had heard, read, or imagined might not be true; might not be real. The clearing of what was called Upper Canada and is now Ontario was not a jolly adventure for anyone concerned: its possession must be haunted by the dispossessions that had to be achieved in order for white settlement to succeed.³⁴ Other arduous, violent, and genocidal aspects of empire building are worked through in various literary modes. Patrick Brantlinger, in *Dark Vanishings*, has argued that the proleptic elegy contributed materially to the genocide of indigenous peoples throughout the British Empire.³⁵ The realistic novel creates an open circuit between fictionality and factuality, between fiction and history, and thus gives us the choice fiction *or* history. A haunting example of this useful instability is given by Christopher Herbert in *War of No Pity: The Indian Mutiny and Victorian Trauma*.³⁶ In the “mutiny novel,” the genre that the British developed in response to the Mutiny, or Rebellion, he writes,

historical personages walk fantastically in under their own names from the supposed world of historical reality to play roles in the fictional dramas of make-believe protagonists; sometimes these historical personages mask themselves . . . in fictional incognitos that the reader is weirdly enough meant immediately to penetrate; sometimes historical documents, whether identified as such or not, are introduced verbatim into the made-up stories; and in all these stories, imaginary people move in the milieu of historical reality.³⁷

The metalepses of fiction make possible an ontological flexibility in cultural memory, an open circuit between fact and fiction that contributes to the imagining and undertaking of the work of empire, again and again.

As the example of the mutiny novel suggests, a novel need not split off a paratext to manifest metalepsis. I'd like to extend the narratological sense of this term to include what has been naturalized as the mixing of fictional and factual elements in realism. In some fiction the meta-*leptic* threshold is quite low: in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* for example, the “real” places named are few in number, direct referential lines are scarce once we leave Europe. In Trollope's *John Caldigate*, a novel of Australian gold mining, place names are plentiful and there is a sense that one could trace the gold that redeems a family seat in Cambridgeshire back to almost its exact point of origin in New South Wales. The intensity of the connection to the real is also the intensity of the connection to fictionality: the excursion toward the world proffered by referentiality comes with a return ticket to fictionality. *Heart of Darkness* ends in a famously unrepresentable horror, which leaves us out

in the world in search of the referent of this horror—we can't return to the fiction comfortably without it. (This is part of why this novel, and modernist novels in general, are so much more "interpretable" than all the realistic ones that precede them: we are unhindered by final referents.) *John Caldigate* ends with the birth of a second son to secure the line of entail at Folking, the estate redeemed by Australian gold—a comfortingly novelistic ending after many gritty details of the global transfer of wealth, and the lives sacrificed to it along the way. We have the choice to return to the marriage plot of the nineteenth-century novel and leave Australia in the extradiegetic space we have traversed freely in our reading experience, as we can return the partridge to the quotation marks that make it belong to fiction. This work of creating an open circuit of referentiality for the realistic fiction that is in, about, or around empire makes it possible to live in various relationships to places that must always be produced, reproduced, forgotten, and remembered. Realistic fiction promises that the past can be stored in various ontological compartments; that it can be shifted around to suit various moments of national and imperial aspiration and enterprise. Part of our admiration of the historical plenitude and referential density of such works may be founded on the return ticket to the fictional the nineteenth-century novel always proffers in its very referentiality. *Heart of Darkness* leaves us wondering about some unnamed horror—to which the novel refers all too vaguely. Eliot, Trollope, Parr Traill, among many other realists of the nineteenth century, name names and the names of actual places and deliver us from that Conradian (modernist?) fate. These novelists write the world as negotiable: as a place where we can get around obstacles one way or another and as a place in which we can transfer information, and even ourselves, from one ontological state to another.

We can appreciate this ontological flexibility in a novel like *Canadian Crusoes* precisely because of its awkwardness, its failure to integrate its footnote material seamlessly into the fictional space as more canonical novels seem to do. For Bourdieu, the realist novel effects in its readers a "negated, unavowed understanding, which is no mere half-understanding but rather an understanding which is at once total and null."³⁸ Children, many of them living as slaves, helped to clear and settle the colonial spaces of the nineteenth century that were figured as wilderness. As the *Eclectic Review* critic notes, we do not often think of how many children, among many other kinds of human beings, were lost in Upper Canada. We have those children represented for us in *Canadian Crusoes*. Such fictions offered an understanding that could be total and null, since the idea of fiction could always be used to cancel the reference that was so literal as to need no translation. They allow us to witness the ontological

choices that other, more canonical fictions render so minute as to be imperceptible. But the anomalous novel is finally the formal and generic partner of its canonical counterpart: both realize the work of the mainstream realist novel, which is to provide us with reference that can always be returned to the fictional realm in which it is enclosed—materially, ontologically, and by the self-referential and unrealistic fictions that surround it on all sides. Thus the anomaly of the nineteenth-century novel: its always-realized promise of reference; its guaranteed option to return apparent factuality to fictionality. The colonial effect is operative in all domains, and between them, as an ontological fix for the unendurable, the unimaginable, for the truth in fiction.

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NOTES

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1 Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, ed. Randal Johnson (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1993), 164–65.

2 Catharine Parr Traill's *The Backwoods of Canada*, for example, is subtitled *Being Letters from the Wife of an Emigrant Officer, Illustrative of the Domestic Economy of British America*.

3 Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, 158.

4 Roberto Schwarz, *Misplaced Ideas: Essays on Brazilian Culture*, ed. John Gledson (New York: Verso, 1992).

5 Jane Stafford, "One of these curiously compounded works criticism stops at": New Zealand's First novel and the Problems of Acclimatization." Unpublished ms.

6 Carolyn Betensky, *Feeling for the Poor: Bourgeois Compassion, Social Action, and the Victorian Novel* (Charlottesville: Univ. of Virginia Press, 2010).

7 Andrew O'Malley, "Island Homemaking: Catharine Parr Traill's *Canadian Crusoes* and the Robinsonade Tradition," in *Home Words: Discourses of Children's Literature in Canada*, ed. Mavis Reimer (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier Univ. Press, 2008), 82.

8 O'Malley points out that building more "permanent" houses can be understood, along with tilling the soil, as the kind of investment of labor into the land that constitutes rightful ownership according to Locke's theories in *Two Treatises of Government* (O'Malley, "Island Homemaking," 86n13).

9 Catherine Parr Traill, *Canadian Crusoes: A Tale of the Rice Lake Plans*, ed. Rupert Schieder (Montreal: McGill Univ. Press, 2002), 90.

10 See Roy Parker, *Uprooted: The Shipment of Poor Children to Canada, 1867–1917* (Bristol, England: Policy, 2008).

11 See Lydia Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans: Poor Families, Child Welfare, and Contested Citizenship in London* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers Univ. Press, 2006). Murdoch documents the Victorian preference for removing poor children from their parents wherever possible. She also complicates this picture by including the use of the orphan system by poor parents to temporarily (ideally) feed or educate their children.

12 *The Eclectic Review* 5 (1853): 113. In an appendix, Parr Traill recounts the historical case of Sarah Campbell, a child from Windsor, Ontario, who wandered off into the woods

- and was lost for twenty days. (See *Canadian Crusoes: A Tale of the Rice Lake Plains* [Boston: Crosby and Nichols, 1862], Appendix A.)
- 13 Catharine Parr Traill, *The Backwoods of Canada* (London: Charles Knight, 1836), 95.
- 14 Bill Bell, "The Scottish Emigrant Reader in the Nineteenth Century," in *Across Boundaries: The Book in Culture and Commerce*, ed. Bill Bell, Philip Benet, and Jonquil Bevan (New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll, 2000), 127n9.
- 15 Bell, "The Scottish Emigrant Reader in the Nineteenth Century," 127n9.
- 16 "Speech of the Rev. W. Arthur (of Paris) Delivered at the Annual Meeting of the Exeter Buildings' Ragged Schools December 5, 1848." *Ragged School Union Magazine*, February 1849, 27.
- 17 Elaine Hadley, "Natives in a Strange Land: The Philanthropic Discourse of Juvenile Emigration in Mid-Nineteenth-Century England," *Victorian Studies* 33, no. 3 (1990): 427.
- 18 J. David Velleman, "Bodies, Selves," *American Imago* 65, no. 3 (2008): 405–26.
- 19 Velleman, "Bodies, Selves," 407.
- 20 Laurie Taylor, "When Seams Fall Apart: Video Game Space and the Player," *Game Studies* 3, no. 2 (2003), www.gamestudies.org/0302/taylor.
- 21 David Barsamian, ed., *The Pen and The Sword: Conversations with Edward Said* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2010), 51–52. Barsamian and Said are discussing here the difficulty for Palestinians of establishing their history.
- 22 Walter Scott, *Waverly* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1864), 286.
- 23 Robert Mayer, "The Illogical Status of Novelistic Discourse: Scott's Footnotes for the Waverly Novels," *ELH* 66, no. 4 (1999): 937.
- 24 Parr Traill, *Canadian Crusoes*, 25.
- 25 Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1997), 2.
- 26 Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 1990), 236.
- 27 Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991). I owe my understanding of Lefebvre to Jini Kim Watson, *The New Asian City: Space, Urban Form and Three-Dimensional Fictions* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, forthcoming).
- 28 Christopher Prendergast, *The Order of Mimesis: Balzac, Stendhal, Nerval, Flaubert* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1986), 46.
- 29 See Moshe Ron, "Free Indirect Discourse, Mimetic Language Games and the Subject of Fiction," *Poetics Today* 2, no. 2 (1981): 17–39.
- 30 Johanna Drucker, "Graphic Devices: Narration and Navigation," *Narrative* 16, no. 2 (2008): 121.
- 31 Anthony Trollope, *Barchester Towers* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983), 21.
- 32 Alex Woloch, *The One vs. The Many: Minor Characters and the Space of the Protagonist in the Novel* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2003), 12–13.
- 33 Catherine Gallagher, "The Rise of Fictionality," in *The Novel*, ed. Franco Moretti (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2006), 1:336–63.
- 34 See Mavis Reimer, "Introduction: Discourses of Home in Canadian Children's Literature," in Reimer, ed., *Home Words*, xi–xx.
- 35 Patrick Brantlinger, *Dark Vanishings: Discourse on the Extinction of Primitive Races, 1800–1930* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 2003).
- 36 Christopher Herbert, *War of No Pity: The Indian Mutiny and Victorian Trauma* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2008).
- 37 Herbert, *War of No Pity*, 277–78.
- 38 Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, 160.