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Mobility, Place and Identity in Women's Road Narratives

A Spatial Analysis of Mona Simpson's 'Anywhere but Here' and Barbara Kingsolver's 'The Bean Trees'

Miriam Baakil

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Abstract

Mobility, Place and Identity in Women's Road Narratives: A Spatial Analysis of Mona Simpson's *Anywhere but Here* and Barbara Kingsolver's *The Bean Trees*

This thesis sets out to explore women's road narratives in terms of mobility, place and identity. Since the publication of Jack Kerouac's masterpiece *On the Road*, road narratives have been a recurring feature in American literature and culture. However, the female aspect of this genre remains under-explored. Literary works by and of women on the road are generally overlooked. The muteness of this genre does not seem to occur due to a lack of literary works, but rather due to a lack of accessibility as well as public and critical attention.

My research will examine how the notion of class and upward mobility relate to the American tradition of traveling the road as it is presented in two central novels within this genre. The texts I will explore are Mona Simpson's *Anywhere but Here* and Barbara Kingsolver's *The Bean Trees*. Both explore the intricacies of life on the road as well as the desire for a better life. Moreover, central to these novels is that traveling seems to occur while they are relocating from one place to another, rather than driving as a means of only exploring the American milieu and landscape. I am interested in the nexus between space and mobility. Specifically, how this relates to traveling the road as well as the dynamics of the local environment of place. Likewise, I will look at how identity and personal development are reshaped by their encounters during their travels on the road, as well as by their settlement into a new location and circumstance. Furthermore, I will explore how relocation functions as a catalyst for a journey of personal reinvention both materially and psychologically. However, these novels not only question the notion of upward mobility but also reveal the social dynamics that obstruct these characters from ascending socially and economically.

Doreen Massey's contribution to social geography and especially space and spatiality rewrites our understanding of space and place as homogenous and static localities. Drawing on Massey's definition of space as "interrelations", "multiplicity" and always "under construction", I will focus on the complexity of social dynamics on a macro scale as well as the micro scale of social interactions. Additionally, since these novels are not restrained by the traditional road trip structure of departure – adventure – return, these novels are not either bound by the prospect of "the return". Hence, these narratives are able to explore the future of these characters as open and under construction. This enables the characters in *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* to engage with the dynamic spaces they explore during their travels, as well the embedded social structures of the places in which they eventually seek to position themselves. Even though these novels deal with these issues differently, these texts can be considered as potent critiques of the notion of relocation as an easy and unproblematic means of achieving upward mobility.

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Introduction

The American road has been well documented and celebrated. Intersecting road networks have become a means of traveling as well as connecting people. Well-known literary accounts of road narratives tend to favor male-centric perspectives. Kerouac's intense search for the hidden soul of America in *On the Road* (1957) and Steinbeck's meandering travelogue in *Travels with Charlie* (1962) are among the most celebrated accounts of the wonders of traveling the American road. However, there is an aspect of this wonderful genre of literature that has been missing, both in public and academic conversations, namely women who travel the road. Women's road narratives is one of those obscure literary genres, which have barely received any recognition or attention, let alone critical commentary. Although this genre suffers the consequence of silence as absence, novels started to emerge in earnest during the 1980s and 1990s. For instance Joan Didion's *Play it as it Lays* (1970), Mona Simpson's *Anywhere but Here* (1986), Barbara Kingsolver's *The Bean Trees* (1988) and *Pigs in Heaven* (1993), Beverly Donofrio's *Riding in Cars with Boys* (1990) and Erica Lopez' *Flaming Iguanas: An Illustrated All-Girl Road Novel Thing* (1997) to name a few. However, even though there was no talk of women's road narratives as a phenomenon or as an existing genre, some of the novels did receive attention when first published. Moreover, it is only very recently that these texts have started to receive critical attention and commentary in the context of genre study. Indeed, it would not be out of place to say that this genre is growing and has emerged because of the interest generated by a small academic circle. Today, in addition to quietly emerging as a literary genre of its own, collecting and retrieving texts is still an ongoing process in establishing the canon.

The Rise of Women's Road Narratives

The 1980s and 1990s stand as pivotal moments for the publication of women's road texts. Perhaps the answer as to why narratives of women's experiences on the road emerged during this period can be found by examining the ongoing women's movement that arose in the previous decades. The difference in preconceived ideas regarding men and women's

relationship with domesticity and cars was something the women's movement overtly contested and challenged (*Driving Women* 116). Indeed, Alexandra Ganser notes:

Significantly, a creative interest in the genre intensified in the 1970s, when the second women's movement in the US began to question the domestic ideals of the 1950s on a broad political scale. Similar to the first women's movement, challenging spatial boundaries became part of the feminist demand of access to the public; in this sense, "taking back the streets" became feminist theory put into spatial practice. In most women's narratives of the road, however, female heroes realize that this is not a simple mission. (*Asphalt Frontier* 156)

The dichotomy between domesticity and the road is a topic that has often been explored in women's road narratives. Although automobility might at times appear liberating in women's road narratives, these texts often confront and explore the nuance of mobility and domesticity coupled with the question of agency. Clarke elaborates "cars... have a history with the women's movement" and "by linking cars to the escalating feminist movement of the 1980s...the car continues to be an emblem of women's emancipation" (*Driving Women* 116). As Clarke further argues, "traveling by car forces women into a constant negotiation among home, family, and the road, highlighted by the increasing need for technological sophistication as both cars and road trips become more complex. Mobility, never easy, is both enabled and further complicated by the demands of automobility" (*Driving Women* 114). Because the car has historically been a central component of women's right to move and engage with society in a self-sustaining manner, it is only natural that the complexities which surround these topics are portrayed and depicted by writing both non-fictional and fictional literature about women, automobility and the road. The exact answer as to why the 1980s and 1990s have become vital periods in the publication of women's road narratives will have to be further examined, but perhaps as Clark and Ganser allude to, the feminist movement at the time might be a contributing factor.

Even though women's road narratives still do not share a status similar to their male counterparts, part of what makes these texts so successful on a narrative level is the manner in which the authors of these texts manage to incorporate elements of automobility into these narratives. As Clarke observes, "by exploring the presentation of the car in women's fiction, one can measure the extent of women's intervention in the age of the automobile. The intersection of women and cars provides a vantage point from which to trace the shifts and rifts in the notion of woman's place, agency, and identity across the century" (*Driving Women* 3). These writers manage to combine features of automobility into their stories in a way that does

not alienate the protagonists from their automobile experience. In addition to automobility, these works address a wide selection of topics from self-exploration and adventure, loss and illness, abuse, relocation and picaresque dream seekers. Central to these stories are women who display control and authority over their cars and futures. Furthermore, a positive aspect of this genre is that the canon consists of a diverse and unique compilation of texts. Women's road narratives span over an eclectic blend of literary forms and genres, for instance, young adult fiction, autobiographies and memoirs, novels and short stories as well as graphic novels, songs and movies. These stories cover and portray an array of complex narratives and life experiences, all concerning different aspects of life, automobility and the road. Hopefully, the ongoing academic work of establishing the canon will contribute to promoting the status and increase the accessibility of this genre, but more importantly these wonderful texts.

"The Lack of Female Road Narratives and Why it Matters": The Inspiration for Pursuing this Thesis

The muteness and absence of the genre have not gone unnoticed. In a personal essay published in the *American Reader*, Vanessa Veselka addresses how she missed reading stories of women travelers, that she could relate to when she herself spent time hitchhiking along American roads in the 1980s. The inspiration for pursuing this thesis arose when I came across Veselka's essay titled "Green Screen: The Lack of Female Road Narratives and Why it Matters" (2013). Veselka's passion for self-representation and diversity on the road stems from her own traveling experience.

Veselka paints a rather grim portrait of her own personal experience of traveling the road as a fifteen-year-old hitchhiker. During her travels, she once encountered a man who claimed he was the murderer of a young woman who had been found in a dumpster a few days earlier. Veselka herself had been present when the body was found (n.p.). Later in life, Veselka undertook her own investigation in order to try to identify the young woman as well as the man who claimed to be her killer. Her research did not result in any answers. However, Veselka elaborates, "...what I was learning from the FBI painted a landscape of extreme violence, one that matched the world of my memory" (n.p.). Veselka argues that the brutal reality that she recounts of her own experiences, as well as that of other women who travel the road, stems from a sense of cultural invisibility.

Consequently, she believes that this social exclusion originates from a lack of available national mythos or narratives of women travelers. Moreover, during her travels, Veselka came to realize that women on the road are in the worst-case scenario reduced to narratives of death, violence and abuse, and in the best-case scenario reduced to blatant invisibility. She further, explains "we sanction this invisibility, because her *visibility* forces a choice: whether or not to save her. Left with the pressure to rescue or run, it's just easier not to see. This is the exact place where narrative poverty renders women on the road socially invisible" (Veselka n.p.). Veselka's account of women's exclusion from national travel narratives serves as a poignant example of why there is a need for more representation of women travelers on the road. Veselka raises an important issue regarding the treatment and vulnerability of women who traverse public spaces on the road as well as the consequence of a lack of positive and encouraging narratives, which imagines a future for women on the road beyond violence.

However, rectifying mistakes or negligence in the portrayal of national mythos and narratives is not easily achieved, Veselka acknowledges, "there is no way to snap one's fingers and make mythology. There is no way to pry open a national narrative and insert an entire population" (Veselka n.p.). Moreover, she relates how she once came across a young man who had a copy of Kerouac's *On the Road*, "I remember it because I had never seen the book and asked him what it was about. He said it was about a guy who left all the bullshit behind and went out on the road. I immediately related" (Veselka n.p.). However, it was only years later that she finally did read the novel, she "...was stunned by how tame and well-funded Sal's journey seemed. I was well in my thirties before I could appreciate Kerouac, but I do now" (Veselka n.p.). However, a lack of self-representation in national narratives and literature remained a crucial issue for Veselka, "as a fifteen-year-old hitchhiker, my survival depended upon other people's ability to envision a possible future for me. Without a Melvillean or Kerouacian framework, or at least some kind of narratives to spell out a potential beyond death, none of my resourcefulness or curiosity was recognizable, and therefore I was unrecognizable" (n.p.). Veselka envisions that "one day, in a book or a film, a new woman appear, and she feels real. Not contrived or reactionary, she transcends the page or the screen" (n.p.). Unfortunately, during her hitchhiking years, Veselka did not get to enjoy the road texts that were published in the 1980s and 1990s. Because there are women's road narratives that do manage to transcend the problematic and violent fixed narratives that Veselka portrays from her own accounts of traveling the road. Nevertheless, even today the lack of exposure of these texts remains a central issue. Road narratives are not just tales about exceptional people who travel; they also reveal a

side of ordinary people and life. Women's road narratives unveil an already existing world and when people and stories are accepted and validated, they legitimize other stories and life experiences that move beyond certain tragedy. When people who are overlooked are recognized, we get closer to the actual fabric of life.

The poignant case for more visibility of women's road narratives raised by Vanessa Veselka both fascinated and compelled me to explore this topic further. Although Veselka's focus on the problematic aspect of how women on the road tend to be pigeonholed to reductive narratives, which only portray fixed stories of violence and abuse, is what inspired me to pursue this thesis, my locus of investigation will be different. By highlighting and exploring alternative narratives that portray women on the road in a more positive light, perhaps the perception of the inherent tragedy that seems to befall women on the road can be slowly undone.

The focus of my research will be on examining how the notion space and spatiality relate to the American tradition of traveling the road as it is presented in two central novels within this genre, namely Mona Simpson's *Anywhere but Here* and Barbara Kingsolver's *The Bean Trees*. Indeed, this thesis sets out to explore how the women in *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* are portrayed in regards to mobility, place and identity. In addition to exploring these larger themes, this thesis will specifically center on how these female characters respond to, position themselves and engage with the public and private spaces they encounter and construct themselves. Although both there are sequels to both of these novels, namely Simpson's *The Lost Father* and Kingsolver's *Pigs in Heaven*, they will not be taken into consideration in this thesis.

Road Texts: *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees*

Both of the novels that I will explore are not strictly road texts. Although *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* break from the traditional structure of the quintessential road trip, it is important to consider these novels in the context of the road genre. Moreover, it is impossible not to mention road narratives without alluding to Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*. However, as neither *Anywhere but Here* nor *The Bean Trees* attempt to challenge, rewrite or recreate *On the Road*, I will not place these texts against the context of Kerouac's work. Because *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* explore different avenues of traveling the road, it may be reductive to pursue a comparative analysis with *On the Road* as these novels do not share a harmonious correlation. As road texts, *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* deserve to be contextualized

within frameworks that do not place them in reductive descriptions, which restrain the possibility of what these novels have to offer.

Even though *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* differ from *On the Road*, these two novels do explore several similar features and themes. For instance, both novels explore the freedom and limitations of agency, automobility, life on the road as well as various aspects of domesticity. Both of these novels are considered as central texts within the genre of women's road narratives. Therefore, they are particularly interesting to compare as they do share so many similarities. Moreover, these shared themes and topics are dealt with very differently in the two novels. Besides, due to the recent formation of the genre, these novels have rarely been exclusively compared and contrasted together. Ann Brigham is the only critic that has exclusively compared and contrasted these two novels. She does so in her book titled *American Road Narratives: Reimagining Mobility in Literature and Film* (2015). Hopefully, my research may contribute to establishing an even deeper understanding of these texts in regards to how spatiality is represented in Simpson and Kingsolver's novels.

A Summary of Anywhere but Here

Movement and a resistance to settle anywhere are the catalysts for Adele and Ann August's path in life. The anachronistic structure of the novel opens with Adele and Ann on the road from Bay City, Wisconsin to Los Angeles, California in order for Ann to pursue a career in acting. Upon arrival in Los Angeles, the duo live out their extravagant daydreams until their financial situation forces them to scale back on their newly acquired lifestyle. Positioned as newcomers and outsiders, a lot of their time is dedicated to social scheming in order to gain access to the affluent communities of Beverly Hills. Ann who eventually becomes a student at Beverly Hills High School manages to fit in and adapt to their new life on the west coast with greater success than her mother. Social presentation and class performance become a default mode of operating for Adele in order to create and uphold a public façade and a manufactured class identity. The at times absurd attempts to achieve acceptance from people set Adele on a downward spiral. When her mental state starts to deteriorate, the gap between the real and the imagined starts to escalate. Over time, the blurred line between reality and fiction put a strain on the fragile mother and daughter relationship. Adele's inability to care properly for Ann becomes a pivotal moment for Ann to embark on a journey of self-realization for herself. As they grow further apart, Ann starts to envisage a future separate from her mother. With no

likelihood of returning to her native Wisconsin, Ann realizes the future is open for her to construct. The non-linear structure of the novel paints a complex picture of Adele and Ann spanning over several years, portraying their past in Wisconsin as well as their time in Los Angeles.

Anywhere but Here exposes the superficial allure of the romanticized myth of the west, and in particular Los Angeles. The prospect of fame and easy access stand as a contrast to the reality that gradually unfolds. The novel hinges on the subtle nuance between harmless daydreams and a harmful reluctance to acknowledge reality. The exhaustive, yet fruitless efforts to climb the social ladder amount to a sense of aimless mobility without upward mobility. Additionally, in the light of the enduring hope of social mobility and ascendance, the very structures that obstruct this process are put on display.

A Summary of *The Bean Trees*

The Bean Trees is a coming of age story centered on Taylor Greer, a young woman from Pittman County in rural Kentucky. To escape the stagnant life in her hometown, Taylor stays in school and works odd jobs in order to save up enough money so that she one day can buy a car and leave for good. When she has finally saved up enough money, Taylor purchases an old run down 1955 Volkswagen Beetle with no starter and no windows. Regardless of the state of her car, Taylor is determined to hit the road and head as far west as her car will take her. During a brief stop in Oklahoma at a roadside bar, Taylor finds herself in the middle of a life-changing dilemma. Abruptly, a woman shows up and places a fragile toddler in Taylor's car seat, and tells her to take the child and go. Stuck with a child she reluctantly accepts (later named Turtle), and no strategy for their future, Taylor takes to the road again. By chance, Taylor and Turtle end up in Tucson, Arizona, where they meet the warm and friendly Mattie, who runs a car and tire shop, and covertly assists and houses illegal immigrants, in a vulnerable position and in need of help. Taylor and Turtle find a place to stay with a newly separated single mother Lou Ann (also a native Kentuckian), and together they try to find their way and place in life. Even though Taylor is new in Tucson, she quickly forms new acquaintances and friendships, which later turn into a safe community. This community of outsiders, risk-takers and illegal immigrants, becomes a safe space, which stands as a contrast to the outside world. Through the support from their community, the unlikely mother and daughter pair begin a process of getting to know each other and grow closer, by confronting the severity of Turtle's past.

The Bean Trees centers on the healing powers of friendship and community, by rewriting the structure of the traditional nuclear family into one consisting of strangers who find each other through intersecting paths. The novel explores the nuance between agency and autonomy through the personal journey of Taylor. The challenges in starting over and carving out a new path by confronting an uncertain future function as an underpinning theme that runs through this novel.

The Purpose of this Thesis

This thesis sets out to explore how the notion of class and upward mobility relate to the American tradition of traveling the road. I am interested in the nexus between space and mobility. Specifically, how the dynamics of space and mobility relate to traveling the road as well as the dynamics of the local environment of place. Likewise, I will look at how identity and personal development are reshaped by encounters while traveling the road as well as how the main characters position themselves into a new location and life circumstance. Furthermore, I will explore how relocation functions as a catalyst for a journey of personal reinvention both materially and psychologically. *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* not only question the notion of upward mobility, but also reveal the social dynamics that obstruct these characters from ascending socially and economically. Even though these novels deal with these issues differently, these texts serve as a potent critique of the notion of relocation as an easy and unproblematic means of achieving personal transformation and upward mobility.

I will make use of the broad spatial themes of mobility, place and identity in order to examine these three wider aspects of spatiality in *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees*. To undertake this analysis I will make use of social geographer Doreen Massey's understanding of space and spatiality. By drawing on Massey's definition of space as "interrelations", "multiplicity" and always "under construction" (Massey 9), I will focus on the complexity of social and geographical dynamics on a macro and micro scale. Furthermore, I intend to investigate aspects of both physical and abstract spaces. In particular, I will explore how the dynamic interplay between spatial scales are presented in the two novels. Additionally, since these novels are not restrained by the traditional road trip structure of departure – adventure – return, these novels are not bound by the prospect of "the return". Hence, these narratives are able to explore the future of these characters as open and under construction. Thus, my query

into these topics will take into account and examine aspects of these novels that do not center exclusively on the road.

Overview of the Structure of the Thesis

The first chapter will give an overview of the contextual and theoretical frameworks of this thesis. This chapter will provide a brief account of the scholarly approaches to women's road narratives in general and how I intend to make use of these approaches in my analysis of *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees*. The second half of this chapter will focus on the theoretical frameworks that underpin the analysis of this thesis. I will introduce Doreen Massey's understanding of space and spatiality, as well as explain how I intend to integrate her conception of space in my analysis of the two novels. I will then proceed by giving a brief account of each of the three spatial themes on which this thesis centers.

The second chapter, focusing on mobility will explore how the women in portrayed in *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* encounter unforeseen scenarios on the road. I will examine how these experiences either expand their journey by enabling them to explore the environments that surround them, or to the contrary, intercepts their journey, and force them to alter the trajectory, which they had set out for themselves. This chapter will also examine how the car becomes a pivotal tool for the characters in *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* to engage with the myth of traveling west by exploring the open road and the consequences that arise as a result of it. The question of agency in relation to resettlement and movement, as well as the issue of how these characters carry the domestic sphere with them on the road will also be explored.

Chapter three, concerning place, will start by exploring how the main characters in *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* position themselves into a new place, namely Los Angeles and Tucson. Furthermore, this chapter will address how both of these novels portray an atypical road trip. The chapter will continue by examining how the main characters of both of the novels explore thresholds and borders of the public spaces they occupy and navigate, before moving on to a discussion of the interplay between public and private space. Moreover, this chapter will also address the issue of the car and automobility in relation to place.

The fourth chapter of this thesis will address issues of identity in regards to personal and psychological development. This chapter will center on how the gap between the real and the imagined, and how the main characters adjust to or reject the reality that is presented before

them. The main characters in both *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* are faced with experiences, which challenge their sense of self and their worldview. Traveling the road and moving to a new place are tied together with a desire for personal reinvention. Hence, the identity chapter will address the tension between the real and the imagined that arise for these characters in relation to personal development and self-presentation in relation to others. Furthermore, this chapter will examine the question of responsibility in regards to motherhood and violence.

Chapter 1

Approaches and Theories of Women's Road Narratives

Approaches to Woman's Road Narratives

Many scholars have commented on the overwhelming presence of male-centric road narratives. Roland Primeau is one of the first scholars to acknowledge that "most American road narratives have been lives written and published by white males" (107). Primeau suggests that the dominance of white male narratives is due to "Native Americans, African Americans, women, and other minorities have moved around North America for centuries but not usually in the manner of the road quest conventions" (107). Hence, "the automobile journey became the province of the white male – generally middle class, established, and free to embark on the kind of journeys around which road conventions would be shaped" (Primeau 107). Due to the underwhelming presence of diverse road narratives, Primeau chooses to place women's road narratives along with narratives of African American and Native American peoples as "diversity" narratives in a chapter titled "the American Highway and Cultural Diversity".

Critics like Alexandra Ganser has objected to Primeau's categorization and treatment of women's road narratives (*Roads* 50). She states, "Primeau's study sees women's road texts as a homogeneous group deviating from his own generic expectations...thereby reflecting the general tendency to overlook traditions like the feminine picaresque or early women's travel writing as possible sources and intertexts for, and as cultural kin to, women's road stories" (Ganser *Roads* 50). Although Primeau portrays women's road narratives as somewhat homogenous in his attempt to diversify the road genre, it is relevant to note that he does not devalue or dismiss the relevance of women's road narratives. Rather, he believes that women have been excluded from the road experience and narratives because "there were fewer women behind the wheel; male-dominated canons of American literature also discouraged women who did travel from writing or even thinking their stories would interest anyone" (Primeau 109). Although Primeau might have been inadvertently too narrow in his endeavor to map out the

road genre, he nevertheless acknowledges and highlights the disproportionate level of focus given to women's road narratives, both in terms of texts and critical attention.

Moreover, Primeau not only addresses the lack of diversity within the genre, he also claims that there is an underlying difference between men and women's road narratives,

American road narratives by women slow the pace, rechart the itineraries and reassess the goals within the conventions of the typical road quest...Women bring a calming influence to the American road. With not as many highs to seek and maintain, the accompanying lows are modulated. The quest is not so manic, the goals are more realistic, and the state of mind is more even (Primeau 115-116).

Primeau's claim of an essential difference between male and female road narratives has not gone unnoticed. Critics like Ganser and Paes de Barros, have criticized this stance as problematic. For instance, Paes de Barros notes, "for Primeau, despite laudable scholarly attempts to construct a more inclusive road, a more domesticated, gentle and feminized road, women are ultimately situated – as authors and characters – within the same traditional and sacred space of the [masculine] heroic and picaresque road. Women are constructed within generic expectations" (Fast Cars 2004, 3-4). A way of avoiding overgeneralizing road narratives in terms of similarities or differences in reference to gender is to move away from pinning texts against each other in such a way. The common denominator for these texts are characters who travel the road. Therefore, the focus should be on how the journey of said characters unfold, and the circumstances they find themselves in, instead of reducing these texts to fit a definitive prescribed mold. By emphasizing the uniqueness of each of these texts, as well as examining how these texts engage with the myth of traveling the road, we get a fuller understanding and appreciation of this genre and these wonderful texts. Both *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* participate in the road myth, but they also break away from the traditional structure of the road trip. The interesting thing about analyzing road texts is indeed to observe how texts individually both reject and engage with various aspects of the myth of traveling the road.

Even though Primeau's *Romance of the Road* (1996) is somewhat contested, it is but one of several texts that attempt to catalog road texts. The endeavor to address the lack of women's road narratives and to promote these texts has galvanized several critical works that have set out to map out the genre. Deborah Paes De Barros' *Fast Cars and Bad Girls* (2004), is one of the first scholarly texts centering strictly on women's road narratives. Paes De Barros focuses on women's road narratives as examples of texts that portray women as operating

outside of societal norms and occupying marginal spaces. By using nomadic theory, Paes de Barros argues women's road narratives "re-maps American space". Alexandra Ganser's thorough account of women's road narratives titled *Roads of Her Own* (2009) survey various texts in reference to gendered space and mobility. Ganser examines how women engage with the road and both participate and reject the American road myth. Ann Brigham's *American Road Narratives* (2015) explores both men's and women's road narratives. Brigham questions "the ways that we privilege mobility as a cultural mythology", she also challenges the "...idea that road narratives simply illustrate mobility..." (*American Road* 3-4). Brigham specifically explores the nuance of what she calls "women's troubling scale" by demonstrating for instance how domesticity functions as a central part of women's road texts. Brigham challenges the belief that domesticity and mobility are separate spheres. Rather, she argues that mobility forces the complexities of domesticity into the open (*American Roads* 107). In addition to cataloging and mapping out the road genre, the recent scholarship on women's road narratives has generally focused on both psychical and abstract spaces, agency, domesticity and automobility.

Women Occupying Marginal Spaces

The issue of women on the road and the question of liminal or marginal space have been addressed by critics like Paes de Barros. For instance, Paes de Barros argues that women on the road could be considered as "nomadic subjects" (*Fast Cars* 7). She defines the nomad as someone who "...moves only for the purpose of moving and creates a narrative that resists the linear mobility of the conventional road" (Paes de Barros *Fast Cars* 7). Moreover, Paes de Barros distinguishes the nomad from the migrant, based on the understanding that the nomad "...operates in opposition to the migrant who moves from one clearly defined destination to another..." the migrant is also someone "...who retains nostalgia for his 'origins', as he pursues a purposeful progress" (*Fast Cars* 7). In contrast, the migrant, according to Paes de Barros, for the nomad "... there can be no arrival", since "there is no fixed point of departure and no point of origin...", therefore "...the nomad resists the very sense of fixed territory..." (*Fast Cars* 7). Because there is "no space of origin", and "nomadic consciousness is the exploration of movement between borders", consequently, "the nomad can never really arrive" (*Fast Cars* 8). The women portrayed in *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* do "resist" the structure of the traditional road trip. Furthermore, the women in *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* do possess a sense of restlessness, which prompts them to pursue a journey on the road. However,

contrary to Paes de Barros definition of the nomadic subject, these women do have a have a physical place of origin or a "fixed point of departure". Moreover, *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* deal with the issue of "arrival" very differently. Adele and Ann in *Anywhere but Here*, do have a predetermined point of arrival, namely, Los Angeles. Although they have a clear geographical destination, it could be argued that the mother, Adele, inhabits a "nomadic" state of mind that prevents her from mentally "settle" anywhere, even though she has "arrived" in a geographical location. In contrast to Adele and Ann, Taylor in *The Bean Trees*, do not have a fixed or prescribed point of arrival. However, she does eventually end up or "arrive" in Tucson, Arizona, even though this happens by way of coincidence.

Although tropes of nomadism can certainly be identified in these two novels, there are critics who question whether marginality and nomadism can function as an overall framework for these texts. Brigham argues, contrary to the notion that "...the road releases travelers from the forces that have shaped them...", rather, "characters' movements [in road narratives] never take them beyond or outside social space. Instead, their movements expose and destabilize the spatial relations that define them" (*American Road* 108). She goes on to say, "such unsettling of definitional certainty offers the further possibility that spaces and spatial relations may be open to redefinition" (*American Road* 108). Rather than being cast as purely nomadic characters or texts, *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* do inhabit traits of both nomadism and social embeddedness. This hybrid of both nomadism and an embeddedness in social structures allude to the complexity of the journey these women undertake, and this nexus is something, which I will further explore in my thesis.

The Road, Domesticity and Agency

When analyzing road narratives, domesticity has often be seen as the binary opposite of traveling the road. However, in both *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees*, the domestic sphere seems to follow these characters on the road. The conversation regarding this issue seems to circulate around how aspects of domesticity relate to questions of individuality and agency in relation to mobility. A conflict seems to arise in regards to how characters manage to negotiate the perceived limitations of both the domestic and the road. As the car has been seen as a way of empowering women to take charge of their own lives and escape the confinements of the home, the shadow of the domestic sphere that seems to follow these characters might appear problematic. Particularly if the home and the domestic sphere are

perceived as the negated counterparts of mobility. However, by placing mobility as the opposite of confinement, the complexities of mobility remain obscured. As Clarke notes, "given the problematic nature of mobility, this sense of being tied down while mobile serves as a key component in challenging the claim that to be on the move is necessarily empowering and broadening" (*Driving Women* 113). Being on the road might release people from their daily domestic duties, but it does not exempt them from the larger societal structures, nor does it relieve them from essential "domestic" elements, like safety and financial matters. On the contrary, being on the road means having to engage and adjust to the anticipated as well the unexpected. Moreover, exploring how characters negotiate the interference between public and private matters, reveal how the interplay between the blurred lines of domesticity and mobility operate in the two novels. Issues concerning economy and domesticity, and differentiating between public and private spaces often feature as underlying factors that are addressed in road texts. The characters in *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* manage to depart from their homes and families without negating the domestic sphere they are leaving. However, the underlying presence of the domestic sphere in *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* do confuse the boundaries of the domestic and the road.

Issues of responsibility and obligations in regards to societal norms and demands are also underlying features in both *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees*, as both of these novels question the bounds of individuality and agency. Clark argues, "women drivers exercise a particular form of agency, granting them the freedom of independent movement, yet they remain subject to state regulations, financial status, domestic obligations, and simple opportunity" (*Driving Women* 113). The women portrayed in *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees*, possess a sense of agency and determination, which compel them to embark on a new adventure. It is precisely the fact that these characters remain somewhat bound and limited by societal structures, and still manage to exhort a sense of individuality and agency, which makes the nexus between domesticity and mobility relevant for analyzing these texts.

The car is both the object and vehicle, which enables these women to manifest and exercise their desires concerning resettlement. "The power of the machine grants a form of mobility hitherto unimagined for women" (Clarke *Driving Women* 4) and agency "...denote the exercise of actions that stem from individual choice, though that choice is mediated by social, political, and particularly, domestic forces" (*Driving Women* 113). In other words, traveling the road and individual agency is not so much limited by the perceived boundaries of the domestic sphere itself, as it is renegotiated by engaging with the environment and societal structures these

characters encounter while traveling. Clarke goes on to say, by "examining women's car trips, one often finds that women's mobility models women's agency as a combination of individual action and larger social and economic forces" (*Driving Women* 113). The boundaries of domestic space are central issues in both *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees*. However, the domestic does not have to be negated in order for these women to embark on a journey on the road. Furthermore, mobility or traveling does in no way promise a carefree existence for these women, as they do have to navigate the places they encounter.

The Road and Automobility

The rise of the automobile as an intrinsic feature in the domestic experience enabled people to move and travel in ways they had not been able to before. Deborah Clarke notes, the car "shapes and haunts our material lives" and the car offer "convenience", "comfort", and "power" (*Driving Women* 1). However, from the beginning, the car has been used differently by men and women, both as a mode of technology and as an object. For women, "in providing access to the public sphere – to work, to escape – the car transformed women's lives as profoundly as suffrage" (Clarke *Driving Women* 3). Clarke further explains, "almost as soon as they appeared, cars opened up a new world, both materially and imaginatively, allowing women a wider range of possibility in their everyday lives and their literature" (*Driving Women* 3). The introduction of the car has enabled women to redefine the way they construct their everyday lives. Clarke notes, "while men also gained tremendously from the rise of the automobile, their traditional access to the public sphere, exercise of individual power and agency, and relation to mobility and technology had never been as constrained as women's; for them it was more a shift of degree than of kind" (*Driving Women* 4). Contrary to men, the mainstreaming of the automobile enabled women to expand the scale and reach of the way they move and engage with public spaces. Nevertheless, "the shadow the automobile casts is a masculine one" (Clarke *Driving Women* 1). Even though, the car empowered both men and women on an individual level, in terms of both culture and literature, this change evidently manifested differently for men and women.

Automobility as a field of research is a relative newcomer to the study of spatiality and mobility. However, the car has been a pivotal feature in human mobility since the beginning of the twentieth century. Traveling the road by car has long been a way of experiencing the American landscape, but the automobile has primarily transformed the way people travel and

commute in their everyday lives. Women's road narratives have become a way of exploring how the emergence of the automobile has influenced women's lives. The automobile does not have to be an integral part of the road experience, but for *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* the car and other aspects of automobility serve as underlying themes on which the stories hinges. Although, traveling the road can be experienced by several modes of transportation; it is significant that the travelers portrayed in *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* do choose to utilize the automobile as their chosen means of transport. In this thesis, I intend to explore how the car and other aspects of automobility feature in both of the novels. I will examine how the car functions as a means of transportation while traveling the road, as well, as how automobility is an intrinsic part of their everyday lives.

The Myth of Traveling West

The myth of traveling west remains a strong tradition in America. Although, both *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* participate in this longstanding tradition, the myth of traveling west long predates automobile journeys. This tradition stems from frontier narratives from the late eighteenth century. The origin of this myth occurred due to the inaccessibility of the land (Greenfield 207). The only way to reach California was either by foot or by sea. However, by 1870 the introduction "...of the railways collapsed the six-month ocean or overland journey into a matter of a few days..." (Greenfield 207). Bruce Greenfield explains,

California's remoteness, beyond mountains and deserts, and its Mediterranean climate, reinforced the habit of generations of Americans and Europeans who regarded the American West as a land of exceptional promise, a place beyond accustomed limits. Its modern accessibility attracted millions to experiment with their particular versions of this mythology. Much of the travel writing about California both fosters and debunks the idea that it is a special place. (208)

Until this day, the West remains the land of "promise". Although, the American West is not considered as undiscovered frontier land anymore, for the characters in *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees*, the west remains an unexplored land and social space they have never experienced before. Greenfield argues, "...the automobile road narrative asserts a 'myth of independence' wherein each traveler...re-enacts 'the discovery and early settlement of the

country" (216). Even though the novels I will analyze depict life on the road very differently, one of the things they have in common is traveling west by car.

There are probably as many types of journeys as there are travelers. Traveling the road is often associated with "escape", "nomadism", "migrants", "travelers", "refugees" and "exiles" (Clarke *Driving Women* 112). Even though travelers might be distinguished and put into categories, each traveler constructs their own journey. According to Paes de Barros, traveling the road "is almost a manifesto of American cultural consciousness; it is the mythic representation of history and ideology. American road narratives enact our national drama and examine the very mythology of freedom" (*Fast Cars* 2). While each person constructs their own personal journey, they also consciously or unconsciously participate in established traditions, which have historic roots. The frontier narratives of the past, and what Paes De Barros calls the American "mythology of freedom" which underpins American travel narratives might be considered as the historical foundations, which modern-day road narratives are constructed on. The myth of traveling the road and the myth of traveling west are intertwined in *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees*, as both of these novels engage with these traditions.

The approaches outlined above are not an exhaustive presentation or overview of the existing criticism of women's road narratives in general or *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* in particular. Instead, I have chosen to focus on recurring topics in both the literary texts and the scholarly criticism, which I will explore further in my own research. The general approach to the genre has tended to gear towards cataloging texts, rather than stand-alone in-depth studies of texts. Important work by critics like for instance, Paes de Barros, Ganser and Brigham has focused on various aspects of gendered space, I intend to move beyond this particular reference point and instead operate with broader reference points of space and spatiality. Although I intend to follow the line of spatial research, my approach will be slightly different as I intend to anchor my analysis in the spatial themes of mobility, place and identity. Even though the topics of domesticity, agency, mobility, automobility and the myth of traveling west are issues, which have been addressed before, there are still research opportunities that remain to be explored. Furthermore, while *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* are among the texts most examined in this context, criticism of these two texts remain scarce. More importantly, there are few, if any accounts where these two texts have been compared and contrasted.

Moreover, I will consider these characters as operating inside of social spaces and being a part of the social make up, as this approach opens up these texts to examine the structures and

dynamics of both public and private spaces, as well as exposing how these characters are enabled and limited by the environments that surround them. Rather than considering these characters as strictly nomadic subjects, who operate outside general societal norms and structures. These women do not escape nor are they excused from the dynamics of the social spaces they explore. I will argue that it is relevant to consider the women in *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* as active participants in the social spaces they engage with because they are affected by these structures in various ways. I intend to explore how these novels negotiate the nuances and restrictions of the interplay between different scales of space, namely public and private spaces in relation to the three overarching themes of mobility, place and identity.

The Theoretical and Methodological Frameworks for this Thesis

The recent emergence of scholarly criticism of road texts coupled with the growing trends in spatial analysis renders the continuation of this work as an exciting opportunity to embark on various approaches of literary and social analysis as well as nuanced portrayals of road narratives. The much-documented spatial turn in the humanities, brought about by scholars from a broad cross-section of academic disciplines, have come to be of influence to the study of road literature. As Ganser notes "the role of spatialities for literary criticism has only recently attracted interest as an analytical lens through which textual articulations of society can be read" (Roads 59). Scholars such as Henry Lefèbvre, Michel Foucault, Edward Soja and Doreen Massey have all contributed to rewriting our understanding of space and spatiality. However, Massey's conception of space lends itself harmoniously as a framework for analyzing how space and spatiality are portrayed and function in *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees*. Moreover, my approach to space and spatiality will not be on space as a strict theoretical approach, but rather a method utilized to observe the abstract and physical dynamics of mobility, place and identity, in addition to social behavior.

Space and Spatiality

Doreen Massey has been a significant voice and contributor to the study of spatiality. Massey is perhaps most known for her influence on gendered space, laid out in her essay collection, *Space, Place and Gender*. However, as a framework for analyzing the social makeup as well as physical and abstract spaces in *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees*, I will make use of her more recent work *For Space*, which is a collection of essays meditating on the "revitalizing our imagination of space" (Massey). Massey challenges the traditional understanding of space as homogenous and static localities, by suggesting that space can be thought of in a more complex and interconnected approach.

Massey understands space based on three propositions. Namely, space as "interrelations", "multiplicity" and always "under construction". Firstly, what Massey posits by considering space as a concept of "interrelations", is that "we recognize space as the product of interrelations" and "as constituted through interactions, from the immensity of the global to the intimately tiny". Massey's second proposition stresses that we recognize and understand "space as the sphere of the possibility of the experience of multiplicity in the sense of contemporaneous plurality" as well as "the sphere in which distinct trajectories coexist" and "as the sphere therefore of coexisting heterogeneity". Massey further notes, "if space is indeed the product of interrelations, then it must be predicated upon the existence of plurality". Massey's third and last proposition understands "space as always under construction". The purpose for thinking of space in this way is "because space on this reading is a product of relations – between, relations which are necessarily embedded material practices which have to be carried out, it is always in the process of being made". Because space is always under construction "it is never finished" and therefore "never closed". Massey concludes by suggesting that we "imagine space as a simultaneity of stories-so-far" (Massey 9). Massey's agenda challenges existing assumptions of space, and to "uproot 'space' from the constellation of concepts in which it has so unquestioningly so often been embedded (stasis; closure; representation)" by re-imagining space by way of "settle it among another set of ideas (heterogeneity; relationality; coevalness...liveliness...)" (13). As *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* center on women who traveling the road by means of relocating to a new place, utilizing Massey's concepts of space opens up and allows for a nuanced approach of exploring these two novels in terms of the portrayal of both the public and private sphere. In addition to social relations and the construction of place and how the main characters relate to this.

Moreover, the three propositions outlined above loosely correspond to something Massey calls "the imagination of the spatial and the imagination of the political" (10), meaning that these propositions can be seen in the light recent approaches within the humanities. For instance, the first proposition of "interrelations" can be thought of in connection with "...a politics which attempts a commitment to anti-essentialism (Massey 10). In this context, relations "...are understood as embedded practices" (Massey 10). Massey goes on to say "rather than accepting and working with already-constituted entities/identities, this politics lays its stress upon the relational constructedness of things..." (10). In other words, "space does not exist prior to identities/entities and their relations", rather "...identities/entities, the relations 'between' them, and the spatiality which is part of them, are all co-constitutive" (Massey 10). The second proposition "multiplicity" corresponds to discourses of "difference" and "heterogeneity" (Massey 10). Massey explains "...the argument is that the very possibility of any serious recognition of multiplicity and heterogeneity itself depends on a recognition of spatiality" (11). Furthermore, the third proposition of space as a "process" which is "always under construction", can be considered in relation to "...political discourses on the genuine openness of the future" (Massey 11). This is a stance, which seeks to refute, "the grand narratives related by modernity" (Massey 11). Moreover, Massey elaborates, "in this open interactional space there are always connections yet to be made, juxtapositions yet to flower into interaction (or not, for not all potential connections have to be established), relations which may or may not be accomplished... *For the future to be open, space must be open too*" (11-12). I will make use of Doreen Massey's three propositions of space as "interrelation", "multiplicity" and "always under construction" along with the correlating ongoing discourses related above. Namely, "interrelations" and "relations" as "embedded practices", "multiplicity" as "difference and heterogeneity" and finally space "as always under construction" and therefore "open", in order to explore and contextualize both physical and abstract spaces of *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees*.

Massey makes use of words such as "trajectory"/"story" along with "difference"/"heterogeneity"/"multiplicity"/"plurality", which have already been used and accepted as established terminology within the cultural and social sciences. In order to avoid confusion, Massey clarifies her use and implementation of these terms. By "trajectory" and "story", Massey means "...the process of change in a phenomenon. The terms are thus temporal in their stress...their necessary spatiality (the positioning in relation to other trajectories or stories, for instance) is inseparable from and intrinsic to their character. The phenomenon in

question may be a living thing, a scientific attitude, a collectivity, a social convention, a geological formation" (12). Moreover, the "bundle" of words, "difference", "heterogeneity", "multiplicity" and "plurality", can be understood as "...the contemporaneous existence of a plurality of trajectories; a simultaneity of stories-so-far. Thus the minimum difference occasioned of being positioned raises already the fact of uniqueness" (12). This is not "difference" as opposed to for example ongoing political discourses of "class" (Massey 12). "It is simply the principle of coexisting heterogeneity. It is not the particular nature of heterogeneities but the fact of them that is intrinsic to space" (Massey 12). It is also important to note that this should be considered as, "...not negative difference but positive heterogeneity" (Massey 12-13). Massey's understanding of "trajectory"/"story" along with "difference", "heterogeneity", "multiplicity", "plurality", opens up an interesting way of assessing the nuances of social relation in the interplay between space and place, which highlight and widens the understanding of the complexity of the social interactions portrayed in *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees*. Until now, I have focused on space and spatiality in general terms, I will now move on to providing a brief overview of how I intend to frame and utilize the three underlying themes of mobility, place and identity in this thesis.

Mobility

Since the late eighties, a faction of the humanities has tended to contextualize social structures and human relations in terms of spatiality. The study of mobilities has emerged as a facet of this vast academic discipline. Scholars such as John Urry, Tim Cresswell, and Sidone Smith have contributed to the study of mobility. Social geographer John Urry has described the increase and interest in studies of mobility as "post-disciplinary" (6). As the study of mobility primarily centers on how various forms of technologies and activities intersect and influence our daily lives, it is only natural that the approach to the study of these phenomena reflects the complexity of social interactions coupled with various forms of technology.

However, it is relevant to differentiate between these different categories of mobility, since these categories display different varieties of mobility. Urry has focused his research on this field by sketching out various forms of mobility and how our lives intersect with various modes of movement. Urry outlines four distinguishable "mobilities" or features of mobility. First, mobility as "something that moves or is *capable* of movement". Second, mobility as a "mob, a rabble or an unruly crowd". Third, mobility as "upward or downward social mobility".

Fourth, mobility in the "longer term sense of migration or other kinds of semi-permanent geographical movement" (7-8). Because, these forms of mobility span over an array of human activities, these mobilities often intersect in our daily lives. My study will primarily consider the intersection of mobility as movement and mobility in terms of social mobility, namely the question of upward mobility. Both *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* engages with these two forms of mobility. In both novels, the main characters travel the road as a means of relocating. The motivation for leaving the place they grew up in is driven by a desire to improve their station in life, and hopefully ascend socially.

In order further to explore the nuances of mobility, it is helpful to distinguish the difference between mobility and movement. Social geographer Tim Cresswell has examined what he calls the "interface between mobile physical bodies on the one hand, and the represented mobilities on the other" (4), and he provides a useful distinction between "movement" and "mobility". Cresswell understands "movement" as "abstracted mobility" or "mobility abstracted from contexts of power" (3). Moreover, movement can be understood as "the dynamic equivalent of location in abstract space", in that movement and location are "countless, apparently natural, and devoid of meaning, history, and ideology" (Cresswell 3). Movement and mobility are distinguished by understanding movement as a neutralized activity, while mobility is a contextualized and a historicized act of movement. This thesis will primarily focus on the intersection of "upward" mobility and "migratory" mobility in relation to "automobility" as it is represented in *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees*. In particular, this thesis will explore the physical act of moving, namely by car, and what this mobility means and represents for the women on the road in *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees*.

Place

Within studies of geography, place has come to "signify meaningful segments of space", or put differently, "locations imbued with meaning and power" (Cresswell 3). In other words, place can be thought of as "a center of meaning" (Cresswell 3). The distinction between movement and mobility as described above can be complicated in that mobility can be understood as "the dynamic equivalent of place" (Cresswell 3). According to Massey "if space is rather a simultaneity of stories-so-far, then places are collections of those stories, articulations within the wider power-geometrics of space" (130). Moreover, places should not be considered as "points or areas in maps, but as integrations of space and time; as *spatio-temporal events*"

(Massey 130). Place can be understood as "...simply a coming together of trajectories...it is a uniqueness, and a locus of the generation of new trajectories and new configurations" (Massey 141). For Massey, "to travel between places is to move between collections of trajectories and to reinsert yourself in the ones to which you relate" (130). I intend to examine how a sense of place is portrayed in the novels. Furthermore, I am interested in how the main characters navigate place both in terms of a geographical location and as a social space. In other words, how they position and situate themselves within a new geographical location as well as how they insert themselves into new constellations of social embeddedness, both in terms of the public and private sphere.

Along with using Massey's three prepositions for understanding space and her definition of place, I will make use of her concept of "throwntogetherness". According to Massey, "what is special about place is not some romance of a pre-given collective identity or of the eternity of the hills. Rather, what is special about place is precisely that throwntogetherness, the unavoidable challenge of negotiating a here-and-now...and a negotiation which must take place within and between both human and nonhuman" (140). She further explains, "reconceptualizing place in this way puts on the agenda a different set of political questions. There can be no assumption of pre-given coherence, or of community or collective identity. Rather the throwntogetherness of place demands negotiation" (Massey 141). I will make use of the concept of "throwntogetherness" in order to explore how the main characters in *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* manage or fail to insert themselves into the social spaces of the new places they move to. Specifically, the concept of "throwntogetherness" allows for a complex reading for detecting the dynamics, which either prevent or make these main characters, succeed in their endeavor to construct their lives in a new place.

Identity

Although, Massey's understanding of space is an excellent framework for analyzing mobility and place, the issue of identity will be considered on a more narrow scale. The focus of the identity chapter will be on examining the tension the characters in *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* experience during the process of assessing and adjusting to a new place. Particularly in regards to personal relationships, personal development and the notion of a sense of self. Moreover, Peter J. Burke and Jan Stets explain that "an identity is the set of meanings that define who one is when one is an occupant of a particular role in society, a member of a particular group, or claims particular characteristics that identify him or her as a unique person"

(3). The identity chapter will consider how the characters in the two novels function within the various social spaces they occupy and how they adjust or fail to adjust to the new roles they perform due to the change of their social embeddedness and the new contexts with which they are confronted. However, the intention here is not to theorize identity, but rather to shift the point of reference from the broad scope of society to a more intimate study of the individual by examining how identity and personal perceptions are altered and changed by settlement in a new place.

Furthermore, by making use of Gadamer's concept of horizontality, the identity chapter will examine how traveling from one place to another challenge the characters in *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* to widen and adjust their personal horizons as well as their understanding of the world around them. Moreover, Burke and Stets elaborate, "people possess multiple identities because they occupy multiple roles, are members of multiple groups, and claim multiple personal characteristics..." (3). Hence, as individuals understand themselves, in relation to the roles they play in society, I will be working from an assumption that identities are not static or unified but rather formed by a multitude of fluid identities, which are related and connected to the social spaces and environments that surround individuals. Meaning, the positioning and formation of identities are not only fluid but also relational. In other words, traveling the road and positioning into a new place reshape or challenge the identity of the characters in *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees*. Particularly in terms of their preconceived understanding of themselves and their interpretation of the environments that surround them. Additionally, the level of their personal development relates to their success or failure to adjust to their new roles within the social structures into which they settle and occupy.

Chapter 2

~ Mobility ~

The Search for Personal Reinvention and Reenacting the Myth of Traveling the American Road

Traveling is both an external and internal experience. By utilizing the car as a mode of travel, the external and the internal experience are mingled. People traveling by train are removed from immediate and direct interaction with the land they travel through. Instead, they observe the landscape pass by, through the windows of a metal machine propelling them through the land. In contrast, travelers by car are confined to the car while driving, but the car also allows for a unique and personalized journey. Something as simple as stopping to refuel the car or stopping to find something to eat means that the driver is able to extend themselves beyond the metal case and machine they are operating and engage with the environment and social spaces. Train passengers are not able to seize this control, as all activities are carried out within the confines of the train. Furthermore, car drivers have the advantage of stopping and further exploring sights and environments as they choose. Primeau notes, "space on the road is not a passive background or a completed scene travelers merely pass through, but is itself an evolving interaction of the pastoral landscape and cultural symbols" (3). While train travel removes people from the land to passively observing the passing landscape, the car situates people back into the physical landscape. The car driver is able to reinstate control over their journey in a way other modes of travel does not allow. Like Primeau points out "space on the road is not a passive background", and in *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* traveling by car become both an external and an internal experience in that the main characters not only travel through the physical landscape, but they also engage with the places they travel through. Furthermore, they not only explore physical spaces, they are impacted both emotionally and psychologically by these spaces. Traveling by car permits the main characters of *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* to take intervals of brief or prolonged stops along the way, which reveal the dynamic background and social spaces of which Primeau speaks. For Adele and Ann in *Anywhere but*

Here and Taylor in *The Bean Trees*, being on the road opens up avenues of new possibilities that they were not privy to before.

Although traveling the American road occurs relatively early in both of these novels, it is relevant to consider these novels as road novels. The reason being, the significance their respective travels have on their life trajectory and their pursuit of personal and circumstantial transformation. Furthermore, the theme of automobility continues to feature in both of the novels after these characters have settled down. This chapter will examine how the main characters' decision to travel the road by car becomes a defining moment in their lives. This chapter will also consider the question of agency and autonomy, as these characters' decision to leave can be considered as an attempt to seize control over their lives and destiny. Furthermore, this chapter will consider how the two novels explore the nuances of traveling on the one side, and the question of domesticity on the other side. As the significance of motherhood is a recurring topic in both of the novels, this chapter will look at how the characters of Adele in *Anywhere but Here* and Taylor in *The Bean Trees* reconcile motherhood with their endeavors of personal reinvention.

The Notion of the West as a Place of Possibility and Personal Reinvention

The notion of reinvention of both a personal character and life circumstances are the catalysts that lead Adele and Ann in *Anywhere but Here* and Taylor in *The Bean Trees* on a journey westward. While traveling the road is a central feature in both novels, they do have different motivations for initiating their journey. The difference lies in their preconceived expectations of the future. Brigham notes, "from pioneer trails to the latest car commercial, the 'open road' has continually been perceived as a mythic space of possibility. In the vast United States, and in our vaster imaginations, the road offers new horizons to an individual liberated from the confines of home and society" (*American Roads* 4). The prospect of the possibility of something else drive both the characters in *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees*, but their expectation of the following outcome is noticeably different. Because these novels have such different starting points, the nature of their personal journey and development also differ. Regardless of the difference between their motivations and expectations, traveling west becomes the catalyst in their search for personal reinvention.

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Adele and Ann fantasize about the possibility of fame "we were driving from Bay City, Wisconsin, to California, so I [Ann] could be a child star while I was still a child" (Simpson 3). Adele and Ann are devoted to their dream of one day being able to move to California. As Paes de Barros notes, "for Adele and Ann the road first emerges as a kind of dream state, a path toward the fulfillment of fantasy" (*Fast Cars* 109). They nurture and entertain their dream of the west in several ways. For example, they become heavily invested in a contest launched by a chain of grocery stores called "the Red Owl Grocery Store" (Simpson 110). If they manage to win the contest, the prize money of ten thousand dollars would secure their trip to California. However, their determination to win the prize-money is more about the pursuit of the idea of what the money can offer them, than them actually being realistically able to win the contest. Eventually, this chance scheme falls flat, just like so many of their other spontaneous initiatives.

Regardless of how eager they are to travel to California, their decision to move to Los Angeles does not really seem to stem from a deep desire to be a part of the film industry. Rather, Adele and Ann's spontaneous enthusiasms and their following lack of commitment to their pursuit in winning the Red Owl contest is a foreshadowing of many of their half-hearted attempts to launch Ann's acting career. Like their commitment to the grocery store contest, and the idea of what the prize-money can offer, their desire to move to California is more about the perceived status of fame than acting as a profession. The myth of the west and fame in Hollywood are compelling to them, but they struggle to live up to their own expectations. As Brigham notes, "...this is a story of outward mobility as upward mobility" (*American Road* 127). Nevertheless, this vague and naïve daydream of Ann one day becoming an actor is what energize and guide the mother and daughter duo in their endeavors, it is the commitment and execution of their plans that come to corrupt their pursuit of social ascendancy.

The allure of the West leads Adele and Ann on a road trip where they try to renegotiate their life circumstances by way of utilizing the road as a path for experimenting with their personal presentation and class belonging. Paes de Barros observes that for Adele and Ann, "the road offers some promise of a space where anything is possible" (*Fast Cars* 109). The mother and daughter duo, seek out Scottsdale, Arizona because they have seen magazine features of colorful Arizona homes. Likewise, they get a room at an expensive hotel, "The Luau", because Adele had seen it listed in a magazine called "*Town and Country*" (Simpson 7). Being on the road enable the duo to live a lifestyle that they cannot sustain. Moreover, like their

infatuation with California, their interest in Scottsdale is based on a curated and commercialized presentation of the city. Their fantasy of Scottsdale compels them to explore the city during their trip, "we went out of our way to go to Scottsdale" (Simpson 7). Once they arrive in Scottsdale, their stay almost immediately gets prolonged. They have to stay over the weekend, in order to get their car fixed, due to a car accident. For Adele and Ann, being travelers erases any trace of their origin and their stay in Scottsdale presents an opportunity where Adele and Ann finally can live out the lifestyle they so crave.

Furthermore, being travelers means that the vacancy of a personal history can be exploited. In Scottsdale, Adele and Ann can experiment with their personal presentation and the perception of their financial standing without any considerable consequences. Their prolonged stay in Scottsdale becomes a rehearsal for their arrival in California. While they wait for their car to get fixed, they maximize their time, being still in the possession of Adele's soon-to-be ex-husband's credit card. The pair spends time in a luxurious hotel, where they sunbathe and indulge in elaborate meals. During their travels, they do not care much about their self-presentation. However, being situated in a nice hotel in Scottsdale reprioritizes their beauty regimen, "we'd each take showers and wash our hair, squeezing lemons in before the cream rinse. We touched up our finger and toenails with polish. That was only the beginning. Then came the body cream and face cream, our curlers and hair sprays and makeup" (Simpson 10-11). The elaborate rituals of preparation before engaging with anyone in Scottsdale, along with their excursions to "expensive shops" (11) and real-estate hunting, allow Adele and Ann to mirror the social spheres into which they want to insert themselves. Smyth notes, "during their first extended stop in Scottsdale, Ann and Adele involve themselves in shams in order to give themselves brief access to a higher economic class" (122). Their elaborate scheming not only allows them "access to a higher economic class", Scottsdale also functions as an arena where they can rehearse their arrival in Los Angeles. When they arrive in Los Angeles, the duo mirrors their actions in Scottsdale. They check into an expensive hotel, the "Bell Air Hotel", they go real-estate hunting for houses they cannot afford. Initially, they live well over their means. The extent of their arrival in Los Angeles will be revisited in the place chapter.

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In contrast, Taylor's motivation for leaving her home in Pittman County, in rural Kentucky stems from a desire to escape the destiny of a teenage pregnancy, that have followed so many

young women before her. "Mama always said barefoot and pregnant was not my style...it was in this frame of mind that I made it to my last year of high school without event" (Kingsolver 3). While still in high school, Taylor got a job at Pittman County Hospital. With the money she earned, she managed to help her mother with rent, and save up money for a car. "In this car I intended to drive out of Pittman County one day and never look back, except maybe for Mama" (Kingsolver 11). Taylor works persistently towards her goal of one day being able to leave her hometown. Brigham observes that for Taylor "...to be stuck in her hometown means to be stuck in the home" (*American Road* 115). Although Taylor does not come from a troubled home, she does not feel that staying in Kentucky will provide her with many opportunities in life, beyond being a wife and a mother. Seemingly contrary to her classmates, all Taylor wants is to not be sucked into the vacuum of the rural county she grew up in.

However, unlike Adele and Ann, Taylor's sheltered life in rural Kentucky did not instill her with grandiose daydreams and expectations of what life outside of Pittman County has to offer. Taylor does not have a clear idea of where she wants to go. "I had looked at some maps, but since I had never in my own memory been outside of Kentucky (I was evidently born across the river in Cincinnati, but that is beside the point), I had no way of knowing why or how any particular place might be preferable to any other" (Kingsolver 12). Even though Taylor does not have any particular place in mind when she leaves her old life behind, she did make a promise to herself "...I would drive west until my car stopped running, and there I would stay" (Kingsolver 12). Brigham notes, "her promises enact the aspirational, pioneer spirit of the road trip..." (*American Road* 116). Much like the generations of pioneers before her, Taylor embarks on a journey that promises uncertainty. For Taylor, this uncertainty signifies the opportunity for a different life. While Adele and Ann undertake a journey that is an idealistic and daydream driven adventure, Taylor embarks on a more measured and grounded journey. Nevertheless, for the characters in both of these novels, traveling west become the solution to their desire for a new life.

Taylor begins her journey and new life by renaming herself. This change symbolizes the initiation of her personal reinvention. Taylor muses, "...a name is not something a person really has the right to pick out, but is something you're provided with more or less by chance. I decided to let the gas tank decide" (Kingsolver 11). She decides to change her name from Marietta "Missy" Greer to the name of the first place she has to stop and refuel her car. However, she does not completely surrender this decision to chance, "I came pretty close to being named after Homer, Illinois, but kept pushing it...and coasted into Taylorsville on the

fumes. And so I am Taylor Greer" (12). Taylor concludes, "...I had some part in choosing this name, but there was enough of destiny in it to satisfy me" (12). Taylor's unconventional means of changing her name from Marietta "Missy" to Taylor, encapsulates her willingness to accept the unknown. Changing her name is a sign of rebirth, she is moving into this new phase of her life, by leaving behind the past. Moreover, Taylor manages to display a sense of autonomy and a sense of assertiveness in constructing her own future. As Himmelwright notes, "...the name change certainly marks Missy's desire to 're-create' herself, or at least her attempts toward that re-recreation, but it also marks Missy's renegotiation of her own success at leaving Pittman County, and...her ability to claim her own autonomy due to her escape" (126). Taylor demonstrates a sense of autonomy, while also accepting that there are things, which are beyond her control. As Himmelwright further notes, "this [name] change further marks Taylor as a creative participant in her new identity" (126). Much like the assertiveness, Taylor displays regarding her name change, her tenacity and determination enable her to push forward in other situations as well. The balance between agency on the one hand and faith on the other hand is a central conflict, which *The Bean Trees* tries to resolve. Throughout the novel, Taylor faces challenges that leave her questioning her belief system. Even though she struggles to make sense of things and come to terms with the reality surrounding her, she never gives up. The personal development and transformation Taylor undergoes will be revisited in the identity chapter.

Movement as an Exploration of Autonomy and Agency

What constitutes a travel narrative is the chronicling of a journey from one place to another. *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* portray narratives of characters who want to escape places that they perceive to be enmeshed by a sense of stasis. Movement and personal determination become the gateway for leaving behind these spaces. However, the bounds of agency and autonomy in regards to personal freedom are tested once these characters enter the road. The intention here is not to philosophize the bounds of personal autonomy and agency, nor to enter into a critical conversation regarding the question of personal freedom. Rather, my line of inquiry should be considered along with Deborah Clarke's clarification for her use of agency in her analysis of women's road narratives. She considers agency "...to denote the exercise of actions that stem from individual choice though that choice is mediated by social, political, and particularly, domestic forces" (Clarke *Domesticating the Car* n.p.). I intend to

explore how these characters "exercise" their individual choice while they are on the road, as traveling is not a completely private activity. I will consider agency in terms of the main characters not being devoid of societal, financial and political restraints, but how despite these restraints, they still manage to act upon their desire for personal change.

Meaning, the characters in *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* are affected by the social spaces they frequent. The impact of their encounters on the road does not necessarily become an imposition on their overall journey, but it forces them to act. The resistance they encounter along the way should not only be seen as an inherent limitation on their freedom. More importantly, it is relevant to consider how they exercise their agency. Clarke also observes, "women drivers exercise a particular form of agency, granting them the freedom of independent movement, yet subject to state regulations, financial status, domestic obligations, and simple opportunity" (*Domesticating the Car* n.p.). Even though these characters display a sense of personal autonomy and agency, their travels present unforeseen challenges.

Traveling by car allow these characters a sense of freedom in determining the trajectory of their travels. Clarke states "...women's agency is shaped by the vehicle that moves the female body" (*Domesticating the Car* n.p.). However, driving provides a space where these characters can dwell, but once they situate themselves into embedded social structures; the bounds of their autonomy are tested. For Adele and Ann, the state of their finances put a damper on their newfound freedom. For Taylor, being on the road turns out to be both a more monotonous experience than she had predicted, and eventually, it confronts her with the very scenario she tried to escape.

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Anywhere but Here begins with the duo on the road in a white Lincoln Continental, of which Adele is abandoning the remaining down payments. Their haphazard departure from Wisconsin "we were running away from family. We'd left home" (Simpson 3), do anchor their journey somewhat. Because, Adele is in possession of her soon to be ex-husband, Ted's Mobile credit card, "...and we used it whenever we could" (Simpson 5). Ted's credit card subsidizes their journey, "there was one chain of motels that accepted Mobil cards. Most nights we stayed in those, sometimes driving three or four hours longer to find one, or stopping early if one was there" (Simpson 5). The credit card allows them to actualize their dream of California, but it also grounds their elaborate fantasies, as the motels they stay in are substandard, "they were

dull motels, lonely, and they were pretty cheap, which bothered my mother because she would have liked to charge high bills to Ted" (Simpson 5). Primeau observes, "*Anywhere but Here* exploits the richness of America's metaphor of motion but warns also of its limitations and dangers" (113). Because, the credit card is their main source of finance on the road, they are pushing their faith. Ann in particular worries about the state of their finances, "I worried about money. And I knew it was a bigger system than I understood. I tried to pick the cheaper thing, like a superstition" (Simpson 7). Their fragile financial state could be seen as a limitation on their endeavors, as they are not able to do the things they had imagined. Their road trip is in some part determined by their financial restraints. Even though they are not able to afford better accommodation while they are on the road, Adele does get a thrill from using her husband's credit card. Regardless of their financial limitations, this stolen credit card enables them to move forward. Upon their arrival in Los Angeles, they do have some security in that Adele has a job waiting for her. Nevertheless, being on the road does become a matter of chance.

Traveling by car means that Adele and Ann are operating the technology themselves and therefore are able to assert control over when and how they want to travel. Primeau states, "everywhere in this book, driving is a metaphor for the constant motion of their lives (Primeau 114). However, the journey imagined and the journey traveled are vastly different. Although Adele has promised an elaborate journey, few adventures actually come to fruition, "she said there'd be an Indian reservation. She said that we'd see buffalo in Texas. My mother said a lot of things" (Simpson 3). On their journey to California, Scottsdale does stand out as an anomaly. Although they do not get to live in luxury for the majority of their trip, they are moving closer to their end goal of California, as their road trip is finite, and they do have a fixed point of arrival.

Moreover, their journey on the road does not only function as a form of rehearsal where they can experiment with their personal presentation before their arrival in Los Angeles. It also functions as an intermediate space where their mobility temporarily enable them to manifest the pretense of their fantasies, especially in Scottsdale. However, the remainder of the trip presents a foreshadowing of their life in Los Angeles. Just as they are dependent on Ted's credit card on the road, they come to depend on the grace of others in order to continue living in Beverly Hills. For instance, they are allowed to rent the Keller family's backhouse only because their son, Peter is a friend of Ann. Even though their checks often bounces, the Kellers let them stay because they have come to like Ann. Nevertheless, being on the road opens up opportunities

for Adele and Ann to orchestrate the pretense of their desires, regardless of how ephemeral this may be.

The question of autonomy and agency does not only pertain to Adele and Ann as a whole, in regards to their surroundings and finances, it also relates to the dynamic between the mother and daughter pair. The opening of the novel cements the tension between the duo, "we fought" (Simpson 3). In many ways, the opening words are a statement the rest of the novel attempts to convey. On several occasions, Adele stops the car, often when their disputes escalate beyond regular quarreling, and leaves Ann on the side of the road. "...my mother would pull to the side of the road and reach over and open my door, 'Get out, then', she'd say, pushing me" (Simpson 3). Greiner observes, "...Adele fails to read the paradox that her quest for freedom imprisons Ann: 'They tried – to make me and more than that, my child, into their mold. I had to let myself and my daughter go free. And mold it another way' (531)" (89). Even though they both share the dream of leaving Wisconsin and Ann becoming a child star, it is Adele who keeps the momentum going. More importantly, just because they have decided to act on their dream, does it not mean that their past troubles and disputes are left behind in the Midwest. Adele's erratic behavior often comes at the expense of Ann. This is something that will be explored further in the identity chapter. However, the tension between Adele and Ann expose the nuance of the power structure between the two. In public, they often operate together as a duo. Their display in Scottsdale stands as a testament to that. However, privately, and especially in confined spaces like their many apartments, or in the car, their disputes often escalate and come to the fore.

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Taylor's station in life means that she cannot afford any luxury while being on the road. Regardless of the state of her car, driving her old beat down 55' Volkswagen Bug with "no windows to speak of, and no back seat and no starter" (Kingsolver 10), enables Taylor to shape a journey of her own choosing. The car is not only a means of traveling; she also intends to sleep in her car. Moreover, unlike Adele and Ann, Taylor is not swayed by a glossy presentation of places she has not visited before, "these brochures I naturally did not trust as far as I could throw them out the window. Even Pittman, after all, had once been chosen an All-Kentucky City, on the basis of what I do not know" (Kingsolver 12). Compared to the road trip of Adele and Ann in *Anywhere but Here*, Taylor's journey is more open-ended. Her lack of planning and

clear direction, other than the fact that she is driving west, renders her future radically open. Since there is no end goal or fixed point of arrival for Taylor, her new circumstance means that every spontaneous action that she makes will construct the trajectory of her life.

Instead of seeking out places presented in brochures or travel magazines, Taylor allows the road to determine where she drives. Urry observes, the car "... promotes the notion of convenience rather than speed." (Urry 134). However, for Taylor, once she has begun her journey in earnest, she realizes that driving through the Great Plains of Oklahoma proves to be rather challenging,

...I did not know anything about the Great Plain. The sight of it filled me with despair. I turned south from Wichita, Kansas, thinking I might find a way around it, but I didn't. There was central Oklahoma. I had never imagined that any part of a round earth could be so flat. In Kentucky you could never see too far, since, there were always mountains blocking the other side of your view, and it left you the chance to think something good might be just over the next hill. But out there in the plain it was all laid out right in front of you, and no matter how far you looked it didn't get any better. Oklahoma made me feel there was nothing left to hope for. (Kingsolver 12)

As a road novel, *The Bean Trees* is attentive to the effects and impressions of being on the road. Taylor is not only embarking on a journey of personal transformation, she is also visiting places and landscapes that she has never experienced before. Simultaneously, the open landscape of the Oklahoma Plain symbolizes Taylor's open future. The despair Taylor experiences by leaving her safe surroundings in Kentucky behind by entering into new sights and topographies, underlines her internal insecurity regarding her own future. Being on her own, she is confronted with the enormity of the American landscape, but she is also confronted with the challenges of adapting to surroundings that she has never experienced before.

The repetitive rhythm of being on the road for long periods collapses time and space for Taylor. She cannot quite remember all of the places she has passed through on her journey. She tries to recollect where she started her day "I tried to recall where I had been at sunup that day. It was in St. Louis, Missouri, where they have that giant McDonald's thing towering over the city, but that didn't seem possible. That seemed like about a blue moon ago" (Kingsolver 15). By driving for long distances at a time, the perpetual visuals of the passing landscape bleeds together prohibiting Taylor from singling out one place from another. Consequently, being on the road collapses time and space for Taylor.

Driving by car not only collapses time and space, it also expands spaces and local environments. Regardless of Taylor's newfound freedom, and being on her own for the first time in her life, she cannot escape the social forces around her. She is subjected to unforeseen events during a brief rest stop at a bar in Oklahoma. Taylor is attentive to her surroundings when she enters the bar, "the place was cleared out except for two men at the counter, a white guy and an Indian...I noticed another woman in the bar sitting at one of the tables near the back" (Kingsolver 15, 16). However, she has not realized that the people around her, has observed her as well. Taylor is an outsider and being in the middle of rural Oklahoma late at night, she had drawn attention to herself. Although Taylor has been able to experience her freedom when she has been traveling the road by herself. The moment she stops, and enter a social space, that she does not personally intend to disrupt, she experiences that her newfound freedom and personal space are being infringed upon.

The moment Taylor engages with an unfamiliar social space, she has to adjust to intrusions from the environment around her. After some coffee and a burger, Taylor gets back in her car to get ready for a long night of driving, "I sat with my hands on the steering wheel for a few minutes trying to think myself into the right mood for driving all night across Oklahoma" (Kingsolver 17). While she is resting in her car, she is startled when the woman from the bar is knocking on her windshield. The woman is carrying a blanket, "she opened up the blanket and took out something alive. It was a child. She wrapped her blanket around and around it until it became a round bundle with a head. Then she set this bundle on the seat of my car" (Kingsolver 17). The woman is pleading with Taylor to take the child and leave, "just take it" (Kingsolver 17). Now, Taylor is confronted with the very circumstance she worked so hard to avoid, namely the responsibility of a child, "are you saying you want to give me this child? ...If I wanted a baby I would have stayed in Kentucky" (Kingsolver 18). While Taylor previously was more concerned with paying attention to the men in the bar, the woman in the back of the bar has observed Taylor from a distance. She has identified Taylor as an outsider, and reliable enough to be trusted with the responsibility of her niece. In *The Bean Trees*, breaking away from the familiar is not portrayed as an easy and problem free solution to life. Taylor who sets out for the west in her newly acquired car and her saved up money, prepared for a new life, has come into a situation where her newly gained autonomy is challenged.

Taylor is forced into an ultimatum where she has to make the best out of limited options. Either to go back to the bar with the child and drive off, leaving the unknown child behind. Alternatively, she can take on the responsibility of the child, which has been bestowed up her

by the unknown woman. Taylor contemplates leaving the child behind, "just set it [the child] on the counter with the salt and pepper and get the hell out of here. Or I can go someplace and sleep, and think of something to do in the morning" (Kingsolver 19). Brigham argues, "mobility... does not produce a story of reinvention or transcendence; instead it instigates the performance of troubling revelation" (*American Road* 112). In *The Bean Trees*, Taylor's journey proves to be a contested path, where Taylor experiences a brief moment of personal freedom, before being thrust into a situation that challenges her path of personal reinvention. The bounds of her autonomy are suddenly minimized, and the scope of her agency is reduced to an unwanted ultimatum. In this situation, Taylor is unable to act. She thinks about her options for so long that the only option of leaving the child behind fizzles out, "while I was deciding, the lights in the bar flickered out. The Budweiser sign blinked off and stayed off. Another pickup truck swung around in the gravel parking lot and headed off toward the highway" (Kingsolver 19). When the bar closes, Taylor does no longer have the option of abandoning the child. The only remaining option is to take on the responsibility for the child, at least until the next day. Up until this point in her life, Taylor has lived a somewhat sheltered life back in Kentucky, now when she is engaging with the world outside of what she is familiar with, she comes to realize that this existence proves to be far more challenging.

The Road: Motherhood and the Issue of Domesticity

The underlying presence of domesticity in *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* confuse the boundaries of the domestic sphere and mobility on the road. Sidone Smith argues that the car was not only a part of people's everyday lives but also a means of escaping it. She notes, the "...automobile functioned as the engine during the routines of middle-class life and norms, it simultaneously functioned as a vehicle of escape" (169). In regard to *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees*, a central question that arises then, is how can the characters in these novels embark on a journey of escape by way of traveling the road, when they do not seem to separate from the structures which they seem to want to depart? On the one hand, these women are certainly "escaping" or leaving the routines of their past lives, but the matter of a supposed separation from domesticity is not a straightforward issue in either of the two novels. Because, on the other hand, they are also seeking out new environments to which they intend to occupy and participate. Meaning, as they leave one place, they are prepared to engage with another. What they are unconsciously seeking is not necessarily an escape from domesticity, but rather

the prospect of situating themselves into new social spheres and spaces. Conclusively, for the characters in *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees*, traveling the road serves as an integral element in achieving the transformation that they seek.

As the characters in *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* seem to carry the domestic with them on the road, it is relevant to consider the nature of how domesticity functions in the two respective novels. Brigham notes, "on some level...these narratives follow the premise that the road promises individual liberation and transformation. However, the road does not necessarily deliver, revealing a false dichotomy between home and the road" (*American Road* 111-112). Furthermore, the nature of these texts means that these novels do not necessarily seek to negate or oppose domesticity altogether. Rather, because *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* are not traditional circular road narratives, the underlying feature of domesticity that runs through both of the novels occurs due to the structure of their travels. The fact that these stories are not portrayals of a traditional road trip mean that the matter of domesticity will operate differently in these novels. Considering these novels through the lens of a strict dichotomy between home or domesticity and mobility, divert the significance of how the matter of domesticity and mobility intersect. As Brigham argues, these novels do reveal the "false dichotomy between home and the road", and by exploring the complexities of this nexus, these novels manage to refuse the notion that these spheres are divided, even on the road.

The issue of motherhood is presented very differently in *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees*. However, it is a central topic in both of the novels. Brigham argues, "the fact that domesticity trails female protagonists on the road is the problem, but it is also the point. Mobility, as it were, brings domesticity out into the open" (*American Roads* 107). In *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees*, the subject of motherhood is closely linked with the matter of domesticity. In *Anywhere but Here*, Adele and Ann's problematic relationship with domesticity and the domestic sphere are related to their lack of rootedness, on the one hand, and their incessant obsession with their goal of achieving social ascension, on the other hand. The duo relishes the thought of one day being able to come into the possession of expensive and aesthetically pleasing real estate. However, their station in life means that they can only entertain their extravagant ideas by way of fantasy. Moreover, Adele's pursuit of personal reinvention does not entail leaving her daughter in Wisconsin. Rather, Ann is an integral part of this pursuit. Furthermore, their exit from their home in Wisconsin means that the duo is left to their own devices. They cannot escape each other, and the tension between the two escalate throughout the novel. In *The Bean Trees*, Taylor's necessity for occupying a more permanent

domestic space while traveling the road is directly linked to her acceptance of taking responsibility of Turtle. However, the matter of accepting motherhood and maternal love are issues that develop throughout the span of the novel. For both of these novels, the question of domesticity is an underlying feature of their travels. Moreover, the matter of how domesticity and motherhood intersect on the road are presented very differently in the two novels.

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In *Anywhere but Here* Adele wants to break away from her family and hometown. Her pursuit of a new life does not include leaving her daughter Ann behind, "...I saw you looking like that, unhappy, sluffing around like a little old man, and I thought, nothing is worth it, you're my jewel. Honest, Honey, you are. You're my absolute precious, long limbed jewel. I have to get you somewhere they can see you" (Simpson 91). Rather, her search for transformation is coupled with her aspirations for Ann. Ann explains how her mother is coaching her so that she is prepped in case she should ever meet an agent, "my mother thought me how to diet and smile right so all my teeth showed and to practice, looking in the mirror. I knew how to eat right so if a Hollywood agent came to Bay City, he would pick me. I thought of it every meal. Every meal I didn't chew with my mouth open because I didn't want the Hollywood agent to pick another girl" (Simpson 64). Ann functions as a tool for Adele to realize her dream of inserting herself and Ann into new social spheres that do not mirror her own upbringing. Greiner notes, "Simpson uses the tensions of the mother-daughter relationship to explore the darker side of the American need to head west in order to convert dreams into life" (82). Even though Adele claims that she only wants what is the best for Ann, she puts a lot of pressure and expectations on Ann from a young age. She attempts to mold her daughter into her perception of elegance. She sees Ann as her little gem that she can flaunt in front of other people. Moreover, Adele instills the dream of fame in which Ann eventually becomes implicit.

However, there is an ominous side to Adele's hopes and dreams for Ann. Whenever Adele believes that Ann fails to deliver on her expectations, she often times turns to both verbal and physical abuse of Ann. The extent of the abusive relationship between the pair will be picked up in the identity chapter. However, the dream of Ann becoming a child star in Hollywood is not the only way Adele uses her daughter in hopes of ascending socially. Upon their arrival in Los Angeles, Adele begins a meticulous operation of social scheming in order

to secure that Ann can get into Beverly Hills High School so that she can socialize with the affluent kids in an organic way. The matter of how the duo positions themselves in Los Angeles will be revisited in the place chapter.

Even though Adele and Ann travel in order to get away from their home in Wisconsin, they are still infatuated with domesticity. Smith explains, "in their automobiles people sped away from the domestic constructions of home and the deadening routines of a rampant consumerism, and headed out across the land in search of new experiences" (169). However, in *Anywhere but Here*, Adele and Ann seek out domestic spaces and consumer culture. While the mother and daughter duo are on the road, the interior designs of homes in Scottsdale lead them to explore the city's real estate scene. "We loved the colors: pink, turquoise, browns, rich yellow. The insides of the houses had red tiled floors, clay bowls of huge strawberries on plain, rough wooden tables" (Simpson 7). Regardless of the fact that they do not intend to buy any of these homes, it is not enough to look at these homes in magazines, they have to infiltrate and investigate these spaces physically. Their real estate endeavors in Scottsdale foreshadows their infatuation with unattainable properties in Los Angeles. However, in Scottsdale, they can indulge in this fantasy without any real life responsibilities or consequences.

Hence, Adele arranges for her and Ann to go looking at houses with a real estate agent called Gail Latterfine. While Gail is driving them to a viewing Adele fraudulently declares that they "were just moving from Bay City, Wisconsin and that she was looking forward to the warm air" (Simpson 12). From the beginning, Adele is planting little lies to create a believable backstory for her and Ann. Moreover, in Scottsdale, Ann is introduced to wealth and homes she has never experienced before, "...I could tell this was something we'd never seen before. We didn't have houses like this in Bay City. A maid opened the door, a woman I knew was a maid from her black short dress and white apron. We'd never seen a made before, in person, at least I hadn't, I didn't know... about my mother" (Simpson 13). Moreover, while she has a brief moment to herself, Ann inspects the room of the girl who used to live in the house. She imagines what her life would have been if she were able to live in a home like this, "I leaned back and imagined the girl away at college. I thought if I lived here, with this bed and this bulletin board, the regular desk and dresser, I would have this kind of life. Nothing to hide" (Simpson 14). Being in a stranger's private space, and consuming the details of their life, leads Ann to entertain the idea that if she did have the opportunity to live there, she would no longer have to uphold any façade. Unlike her mother, Ann feels conflicted with upholding the façade and performance that Adele constructs. Ann displays a level of self-consciousness and guilt over their fraudulent

behavior, "all of a sudden it seemed sad, leaving Scottsdale. Suddenly I really did like Gail" (Simpson 17). For Ann being able to live in a nice home means that she could live a more secure and honest life. Even if that life is only a fantasy. Contrary to her mother, Ann is not at ease with the way the Adele uses people like Gail Latterfine in order to live out her pipedreams.

Adele's need to get an intimate experience to satisfy her own curiosity leads her to operate like a con artist. Brigham argues that in *Anywhere but Here* "...the infiltration of domesticity on the road seems to function in a variety of ways. It renders the domestic a performance..." (*American Road* 136). Just like their elaborate beauty rituals while staying at the Luau hotel, Adele seeks to insert herself into spaces where she can put up a fraudulent display of her social station. Adele enjoys being guided from room to room by Gail, the real estate agent, and the woman who owns the house as if she is considering buying the property. Ann observes her mother, as she is gazing around the house, "what about the appointments?" My mother cupped her hand around a painted Mexican candleholder on the kitchen table. 'Are they for sale too?' Because they all go so well, they're what *make* the house" (Simpson 14). Adele's inquisitiveness and attention to detail, not only upholds her personal performance, it also legitimizes the validity of the fraudulent narrative she is spontaneously constructing. Adele further perpetuates her charade when she asks "could we put in a bathhouse? I'd love a little cabana over there" (Simpson 15), and later discloses, "...my husband's coming in next week, and of course, he'll have to see it, too." (Simpson 15). Real estate hunting becomes an arena where Adele for a brief period of time can entertain the idea that she has manifested the life she craves. Supposedly, a stable life in an extravagant home with a reliable husband.

Adele's intention in seeking out these homes is not due to necessity; it is a means of sustaining her daydream of a higher station in life. The idealized version of life she seeks serves as an ironic tension that exposes her hyperbolic strive for social ascendancy. The discrepancy between Adele's actual financial means and her station in life underlines her lack of a realistic worldview. Adele relishes these temporary segments of time where she can exploit her lack of social embeddedness to her advantage. However, Ann is horrified by her mother's flexible relationship with truth and reality, "I was reeling, as if I'd just woken up to trouble, when she said her husband. The sentence went through me like a toy train, three times around the track and no time, coming in, could I picture it right. Ted sure wasn't coming. Not after we'd used his credit card like we had" (Simpson 15). Although they both like to imagine alternative versions of what their lives could be like, Ann does not display the same lack of inhibition as her mother, when it comes to actually constructing a false premise for engaging with strangers. The issue

of domesticity on the road in *Anywhere but Here* is intertwined with Adele and Ann's quest for personal transformation. Although they depart from their home sphere in Wisconsin, they do not abandon the notion of domesticity. Rather, Adele actively seeks out stranger's homes and private spaces as a way of briefly manifesting and enter into a mirage, which is an alternative version of her own life, where she can briefly imagine that she has attained the life she desires.

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Taylor's departure from her childhood home is not a sign of rejection of her mother nor the home she created for them. Therefore, her decision to leave is not an act of rebellion, but rather an impulse upon which she acts. Moreover, Alice, Taylor's mother, does not obstruct her daughter's desire to leave her home or Pittman County, "well, if you're going to have you an old car you're going to know how to drive an old car" (Kingsolver 11). Instead, Alice teaches Taylor all she knows about taking care of cars, so that her daughter will be better equipped to take care of her newly purchased car, should something unforeseen occur along the road. The mother and daughter bond remain strong after Taylor's departure. Growing up with an encouraging and capable mother in her life has prepared Taylor to take the next step in her life. More importantly, because her mother has been so supportive throughout her life, Taylor has a good understanding of what a safe and loving home is supposed to be like.

Taking on the responsibility of the unknown child forces Taylor on a new trajectory in life, and subsequently robs her of her innocent view of the world. Murrey argues, "...the strongest example of irony in any of Kingsolver's novels, is motherhood" (157). However, in *The Bean Trees*, it is important to note that just because Taylor takes on the responsibility of the unknown child, she later names Turtle, does it not mean that she automatically takes on the role of being the child's mother. Paes de Barros argues "...the child's obvious need, and the mysterious development of Taylor's maternal love initiate Taylor into motherhood" (*Fast Cars* 112). However, when Taylor take on the responsibility of Turtle, she is confronted with the cruelty of the abuse the vulnerable child has been subjected to, "when I pulled off the pants and the diapers there were more bruises. Bruises and worse." (Kingsolver 23). Taylor later discovers that the abused child is indeed a girl, "a girl, poor thing. That fact had already burdened her short life with a kind of misery I could not imagine. I thought I knew about every ugly thing that one person does to another, but I had never even thought about such things being done to

a baby girl" (Kingsolver 23). For Taylor, the abuse that Turtle has suffered awakes a sense of responsibility and a need to protect. Taylor is choked by the brutality that she has uncovered.

Having been raised in a loving and safe home environment has equipped Taylor with a sense of responsibility. When she learns the severity of the abuse Turtle has suffered, she feels physically repulsed, "I doubled up on the floor at the base of the toilet and tried not to throw up" (Kingsolver 23). Even though Taylor initially decided to postpone the decision of whether she would take responsibility of Turtle until the next day. Taylor feels so disgusted with what has happened to Turtle, that she is unable to abandon the child to someone else. Although, Taylor, later on, come to accept the role as a mother for Turtle, initially it is a need to protect a vulnerable child that leads Taylor to take on the responsibility of Turtle. Rather than a "mysterious development of...maternal love". The irony, of course, is that Taylor has come into the possession of a child when she worked so hard to avoid this very circumstance. However, when Taylor is confronted with this situation, she feels obligated to protect this defenseless child. On the road, taking on the responsibility of a child becomes a choice for Taylor, rather than a consequence of her circumstances of growing up in rural Kentucky.

Moreover, Kingsolver does not romanticize the myth of traveling west. Rather, she exposes the financial and societal factors Taylor is forced to confront. Accepting Turtle does not technically prevent Taylor from a life on the road. However, it does change the nature and course of her travels. Taylor's car is not only a means of transportation; the car also functions a temporary accommodation while she is on the road. Smith argues that the car as a "... metallic carapace becomes a prosthetic device...an extension of the body into and through space" (Smith 170). Taylor's car is not only the technology and machinery, which propels her forward, the fact that she is technically homeless means that the interior of the car becomes her domestic space while traveling the road. This provides Taylor with a great sense of freedom, as she is not dependent upon anyone but herself. However, this also leaves her in a vulnerable position due to the poor condition of the car, especially the lack of windows. Moreover, the presence of Turtle means that Taylor has to find other sleeping arrangements, "my plan had been to sleep in the car, but naturally my plans had not taken into account a wet, cold kid" (Kingsolver 20). Sleeping in the car subjected to the cool Oklahoma night will not suffice as a sleeping accommodation anymore. Whereas the car functioned as a protective shell, which shielded her from the outside world, taking care of a small child mean that they have outgrown Taylor's initial domestic and protective space.

The necessity of having to find alternative sleeping arrangements alters the scope of Taylor's journey. Taking on the responsibility of Turtle leads Taylor to make a prolonged stop in Oklahoma. Due to her financial state, Taylor cannot afford to pay for a motel room. Seeking out a place to stay for the night, she circles in on "the Broken Arrow Motor Lodge". "There were four or five motels pretty much in a row, their little glass-fronted offices shining out over the highway like TV screens. Some of the offices were empty. In the Broken Arrow Motor Lodge, there was a grey-haired woman, bingo" (Kingsolver 20). She singles out the old woman, in the hope that she can rely on her kindness. Because Taylor cannot afford to pay for her stay, she has to plead with the woman behind the counter to let them stay there for free, "I'll take anything you've got, and I'll clean up after myself, and tomorrow morning I'll change every bed in this place. Or anything else you want me to do. It's just for one night'" (Kingsolver 21). However, when Taylor has established a connection with the old woman, whose name is Mrs. Hoge; she is upfront about her situation, as she has no intention of exploiting her kindness or taking advantage of her. Mrs. Hoge sympathizes with Taylor and allows her to stay the night free of charge. Eventually, Taylor ends up working at the Broken Arrow to save up some money, and help the Hoge family over the Christmas season. The need to find new sleeping arrangements that substitute her car transforms the nature of Taylor's road trip. Previously Taylor could enjoy a level of independence that meant that she did not have to worry about domesticity when she was on her own, as her car functioned as her domestic space on the road. However, Taylor has entered into a completely different circumstance, which changes the scope of her autonomy. Now, she has a child that is dependent on her, meaning that the need for a more permanent domestic space is more pressing.

The prolonged stay at the Broken Arrow leads Taylor to intersect with social spaces that she otherwise would not have explored. Clarke argues, "...Taylor transforms motels from business establishments to domestic spaces" (*Domesticating the Car* n.p.). For Taylor and Turtle, the Broken Arrow becomes a "temporary domestic space" or a "domestic transit-place" (Clarke, *Driving Women* 129). Taylor's earnestness not only allow them to stay for one night, but the motel also becomes a temporary place of work, as securing an income, in order to provide for herself and Turtle, also becomes a priority. Furthermore, Taylor and Turtle are invited into the Hoge family's domestic space. Being tied down to a place might seem like a limitation of Taylor's travels. However, it is her choice to adjust the premise of her journey. Since Taylor did not have a clear objective when she set out on her journey, other than the fact that she wanted to move to another place, means that Taylor eventually would end up having

to establish a more permanent domestic space other than her car. Taylor leaves Kentucky in order to avoid a life of stasis, not domesticity. Although, the Beetle function as a domestic space before, Taylor and Turtle outgrow the tiny space of Taylor's car. Creating a temporary domestic space while staying at the Broken Arrow does not necessarily infringe upon Taylor's mobility. Taylor did not leave Kentucky in order to enter into a perpetual state of mobility. Rather she left in order to create a different life for herself. The nature of Taylor's journey means that her domestic arrangements keep changing depending on her circumstances. Meaning, Taylor actively determines the premise of her journey, regardless of unpredicted impositions from external forces.

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In their own ways, Both *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees*, not only participate in the tradition traveling west but also reveal the limitations one might experience when entering new and unfamiliar spaces. Whereas relocation in *The Bean Trees* is portrayed as a way of avoiding the confining space of rural Kentucky, it is dealt with differently in *Anywhere but Here*. The mother and daughter duo of Adele and Ann want to leave Bay City, Wisconsin in order to realize their shared dream of fame in Los Angeles. The fact that these women chose to travel the road by car, is essential to these stories, and automobility is essential for how these stories unfold. Traveling the road can often symbolize transformation and an expansion of personal horizons. Brigham notes, "...the road endures as a realm of possibility and promise. This association begins with its spatial character. As a space and a symbol, the road represents expansiveness and open-endedness" (Brigham, *Critical Meeting Places* 15). Even though traveling the road often inspire and promote a positive and optimistic prospect for the future, the actual journey might present unexpected and unprompted challenges along the way. The discrepancy between the journey imagined and the journey traveled causes unforeseen tension. While on their journey, the characters in *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* undergo a journey from innocence to experience. Neither of these road narratives portrays the road as a perpetual path of travel. These characters arrive at a destination, although that destination is different from the one they initially departed from. It does not seem like these characters are trying to escape the notion of domesticity. Rather, they want to increase their circumstances in life. Both *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* manage to intertwine the domestic with

traveling the road and by doing so they manage to upset the rigid dichotomy of the domestic as an inherent place of stasis and the road as an unquestionable place of freedom.

Chapter 3

~ Place ~

Atypical Travel Structure and Positioning into a New Place

The characters in *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* seek to alter the foundation of their life circumstance. Although traveling the road becomes the means, which initiates this process, a new stage of their journey emerges when they eventually begin to settle into their chosen point of arrival. Moreover, simply moving to a new place does not exempt the characters in *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* from being subjected to the interference from social dynamics and structures. Moving to a new place demands action in order to establish the foundation of they seek. According to Massey, place can be thought of as the "integration of space and time" (130) and "a coming together of trajectories" (141). Furthermore, Massey talks about "the event of place" (140). What she means by this is that place in terms of space is not a thing. Rather, place can be thought of as "...the coming together of the previously unrelated, a constellation of processes..." (141). Massey explains that the concept of throwntogetherness can be understood as the intersection of multiple simultaneous trajectories. She further elaborates, "the throwntogetherness of place demands negotiation" (141) because there is no "pre-given coherence", "community" or "collective identity" (141). Place and the event of place are significant features in both *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees*. Furthermore, place as a space and arena of negotiation manifests very differently in the two novels. Nevertheless, for the characters in *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* arriving at an unfamiliar place and inserting themselves into new social constellations prove to be challenging. Initially, the novelty of a new place instills a sense of liberation due to a lack of familiarity. However, the characters in both of these novels have to confront their lack of knowledge about the place they have arrived, as well as learning about how unfamiliar power structures manifest and unfold.

Navigating new social spaces present unforeseen challenges, which force the main characters in *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* to reassess and adjust to their new surroundings. According to Massey, "place...does...change us, not through some visceral belonging (some barely changing rootedness, as so many would have it) but through the

practicing of place, the negotiating of intersecting trajectories; place as an arena where negotiation is forced upon us" (154). Hence, this chapter will examine how the characters in *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* handles relocating from one place to another. In addition, this chapter will explore how these characters fail or manage to become a part of the embedded social structures into which they seek to position themselves. Furthermore, settling into a new place not only change these characters personally, it also alters the nature of their mobility.

Positioning into a New Place and the Dynamics of Throtogetherness

The absence of a circular travel structure allow *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* to explore a future where the main characters have to come to terms with their personal development while they are in an unfamiliar environment. Primeau notes, "many road narratives stop before the return trip is completed and the difficulties of reentry begin, others make the arrival home a central ingredient of the plot." (129). However, in *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees*, Primeau's argument regarding the question of "reentry" is replaced by how the main characters enter new and unfamiliar places, namely the cities of Los Angeles and Tucson. This new stage in their lives centers on how they manage to reinvent themselves in a new place. Rather, than how they manage to re-immense themselves back into the structures of the life and place they left. Furthermore, the locus of arrival occurs relatively early in the narrative for both *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees*. Meaning that for both of these novels, the majority of the story takes place after the conclusion of their road trip. Moreover, according to Massey, "arriving in a new place means joining up with, somehow linking into, the collection of interwoven stories of which that place is made" (119). Instead of being confronted with the issue of reentry, the characters in *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* are confronted with having to "join up" with a new place as well as navigating their future positioned as outsiders in a new social space.

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Adele's romanticized idea of Los Angeles is forged by an idea of the city as an essential and fixed entity. Rather, than Los Angeles as a social space that is produced by the simultaneity of

intersecting trajectories that she has to participate in, or more importantly adjust to. Moreover, Adele's naïve approach to the city is manifested upon their arrival in Los Angeles. Adele and Ann reenact the actions they orchestrated in Scottsdale, Arizona. For instance, they live at the expensive Bell Air Hotel, they eat meals that they cannot afford, and they scour the real estate market by exploring properties that they will never be able to rent or purchase. Even though the fantasy of Los Angeles initially remains intact, there is an ever growing undercurrent of reality that is about to break the surface, " for the first three weeks, we stayed at the Bel Air Hotel, but that was too expensive, so we moved to another, smaller hotel on Lasky Drive" (Simpson 173). Heller notes, "Adele's attraction to the finest hotels and luxury houses for sale leads her along a series of debts, fraudulent real estate inquiries, and short-term residences" (40). Adele and Ann do not only have to downscale on their living arrangements in order to continue living in Beverley Hills, they also gradually have to adjust their understanding of the city.

Slowly the reality of moving to a new place begins to unravel when Adele gets a rude awakening on her first day of work. Before they left Wisconsin, Adele manages to secure herself a job as "a special education teacher in the Los Angeles Public School District" (Simpson 173). However, Adele is horrified when she gets back to the Lasky Hotel after her first day working as a teacher, "I can't teach there, Honey. They sent me to Watts. That car going in the parking lot with barbed wire all around. They have electric fences. I'm telling you, Ann, we're lucky I'm alive" (Simpson 174). Until now, Adele's perception of Los Angeles has been of the city as an imaginary place perpetuated by the idea of the glamour that Hollywood has to offer. But, when she has to enter a rough neighborhood and teach in a public school, she is confronted with the reality of poverty in a metropolitan city like Los Angeles, "they have a big wire fence around the school, it's like a prison. They give you a card you put in to open the gate. And Annie, those kids were like this, taller than I am.' ...She whispered, 'And all black. I can't go back there, Ann'" (Simpson 174). All of Adele's plans and schemes have gone into planning their much-anticipated arrival in Los Angeles. She has been so caught up in her manufactured version of the city and what it has to offer that she has failed to actually consider how it would be like to interact with embedded spaces of the city, and more importantly, where she belongs in terms of her station in life, "...that's what this school system does. They get the poor person from out of town and stick them there in the ghetto, where no one else will go. And I suppose they can get away with it. People come all the way out here, and then what are they going to do?" (Simpson 174). Working as a teacher means that she is far removed from the extravagant lifestyle she seeks. Once they have actually arrived in Los Angeles and begun to

navigate the city, reality begins to kick in and now Adele can no longer work on perfecting her daydream, she has to respond to the reality, which has manifested in front of them.

Regardless of her shock concerning her new job, for Adele, Los Angeles quickly becomes a social space that she seeks to conquer, "when we moved to California, we didn't know anybody" (Simpson 173). As newcomers to the city, they undergo a process where they try to familiarize themselves with this unknown social space, "we tried to meet people. My mother asked about kids at school and about their parents, but nothing seemed to come of it" (Simpson 180). Although they try to link up and insert themselves into the social environment of the city, it is difficult for the duo to form new relationships. Once they meet another family who also moved to Beverly Hills from Bay City, Wisconsin, "... [they] asked my mother about news in Bay City and my mother told them what she could, but they didn't seem to know the same people" (Simpson 181). Even though the Flatow family is an opportunity to create new acquaintances, Ann elaborates, "nothing came out of that visit, either. We didn't see them again" (Simpson 181). For Adele and Ann, the Flatow family represent the old and they are far more interested in forging relationships that will lead them on a new path. In many ways their initial struggle to become enmeshed in the "throwntogetherness" of the city stem from the fact that they are far more concerned with the prospect of what they can potentially ascend to in the future, that they neglect to form genuine relationships in the present.

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After their brief stint at the Broken Arrow Motor Lodge in Oklahoma, Taylor and Turtle head back to the road again. Because Taylor still does not have any predefined point of arrival, her journey on the road remains radically open. However, the moment Taylor crosses the state line to Arizona the landscape entralls her:

The clouds were pink and fat and hilarious-looking, like the hippo ballerinas in a Disney movie. The road took us through a place called Texas Canyon that looked nothing like Texas, heaven be praised for that, but looked like nothing else I had ever seen either. It was a kind of forest, except that in place of trees there were all these puffy-looking rocks shaped like roundish animals and roundish people. Rocks stacked on top of one another like piles of copulating potato bugs. Wherever the sun hit them, they turned pink. The whole scene looked too goofy to be real. (Kingsolver 35)

The landscape becomes a signal of entry into a realm and space, which Taylor is keen to explore further. Arizona presents itself as a magical place she spontaneously feels like she needs to involve herself, "whether my car conked out or not, I made up my mind to live in Arizona" (Kingsolver 25). The significance of Taylor's introduction to the landscape leads her not only to decide to explore this place; she concludes that she wants to live in Arizona. In contrast to Adele and Ann who have concocted an elaborate idea of Los Angeles, Taylor does not have any preconceived ideas about Arizona or Tucson. Rather, the physical landscape and the topography immediately attracts her to this place. Consequently, Taylor's lack of established ideas regarding the places she traverses renders her susceptible to the visual display of the physical landscape, rather than an abstract idea of a place.

Just like Adele and Ann in Los Angeles, Taylor does not have any acquaintances in Tucson. Upon their arrival, both Taylor and Turtle are starting over in an unfamiliar social space, "this is a foreign country," I told her, "Arizona. You know as much about it as I do. we're even steven" (Kingsolver 37). In contrast to Adele and Ann who are far more concerned with plotting how to insert themselves into social spheres that they believe will enhance their likelihood of success in life, Taylor is able to forge new friendships in the present moment. One of the first people she meets when arriving in Tucson is Mattie, the owner of a tire shop. Due to driving over some glass on the road, Taylor decides to stop and get her tires checked. Even though getting her tires looked over is a spontaneous endeavor, Taylor ends up forming a lasting friendship with Mattie. Moreover, Taylor initially stays at the Hotel Republic. Most days she and Turtle go to The Burger Derby for something to eat. Spending time there, Taylor befriends a girl named Sandi who works there, "Sandi usually worked the morning shift alone, and we got to know each other. My room in the Republic has a hot plate for warming cans of soup, but sometimes I ate out just for the company. The Burger Derby was safe. No one there was likely to ask you where you were holding your tension" (Kingsolver 49). Taylor and Turtle's experience of being outsiders in a new place is completely different to Adele and Ann's experience in Los Angeles. Due to Taylor's matter of fact approach to life, she is able to form a rapport and friendships with the people she encounters in a way that Adele and Ann never fully mastered.

The social space of Tucson is not a place that Taylor seeks to conquer strategically. Rather, she is fascinated with how different Tucson is from the place she grew up, "...living in the hustle-bustle of downtown Tucson was like moving to a foreign country I'd never heard of. Or a foreign decade. When I'd crossed into Rocky Mountain Time, I had set my watch back

two hours and got thrown into the future" (Kingsolver 46-47). Even though Taylor sets her watch back two hours, literary setting back time, she experiences the dynamically embedded simultaneity of place; or rather, the throwtogetherness of place as so different from what she is used to that, she might as well have arrived in the future.

Compared to the paralysis of place that Taylor experienced back in Pittman County, sense of place in Arizona stands as a stark contrast, "downtown Tucson was lively, with secretaries clicking down the sidewalks in high-heeled sandals, and banker and lawyer types puffy-necked in their tires, and in the evenings, prostitutes in get-ups you wouldn't believe" (Kingsolver 47). The city space of Tucson is a crowded space. In Tucson, Taylor meets and observes the temporaneous intersection of intermingling people. However, even though Taylor continues to be captivated with rapid dynamics of the new space that she has entered, she is also aware of her lack of connectivity, "in Tucson, it was clear that there was nobody overlooking us all. We would just have to find our own way" (Kingsolver 47). Although Taylor and Turtle are new to the city, they do not remain positioned as outsiders and onlookers for a long time. Because unlike Adele and Ann, Taylor is able to immerse herself in a small community, even though she is living in a large city. In other words, Taylor and Turtle are thrown into the mixture of intersecting trajectories of the city when they are forging new relationships and friendships with people like Mattie, Sandi and Lou Ann Ruiz.

Metaphors of Place: an Exploration of Public and Private Space

The significance of place in *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* becomes relevant, due to these road narratives being centered on outward exploration and resettlement. Brigham notes, "when definitions of space are understood as beyond negotiation, two things happen: power is exercised, and power is hidden. Making definitions of space appear predetermined and permanent, as in defining the home as private and asocial, is an act of power. But that same power is hidden because the spaces seem natural, not created" (*American Roads* 108). Both of the novels portray the complexities of both public and private space. Neither of these novels portrays public or private space as realms beyond negotiation. However, the significance of public and private space is dealt with very differently. In *Anywhere but Here*, public space becomes an arena where Adele and Ann actively seek to perform a fraudulent sense of social and class belonging. While the private sphere and domesticity in *Anywhere but Here* are portrayed as a claustrophobic space of tension and conflict. Public space in *The Bean Trees* is

at times depicted as a contested arena that stands as a contrast to the safety and community of the domestic space Taylor constructs. Furthermore, both of these novels expose the myth of place by portraying a tension between place as imagined and the reality of living in a new place.

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Public space in *Anywhere but Here* becomes an arena for renegotiating class belonging. Los Angeles becomes an intricate place, which Adele and Ann subtly navigate with the intention of strategically positioning themselves within the urban landscape. The hotel on Lasky Drive does not suffice as a permanent home, which subsequently continues their sequence of real estate hunting, "We met Julie Edison the way we'd met other real estate agents. My mother called and said we were looking for a house" (Simpson 180). Rather than circling in on affordable options, Adele and Ann embark on an elaborate exercise in scanning the prime real estate in Los Angeles, "weekends, we toured Beverly Hills mansions for sale. We saw houses with five bathrooms and only one bedroom, houses with tiny kitchens and ballrooms..." (Simpson 181). As Brigham notes, "the move to California represents the chance to leave her working-class roots behind and live among people she [Adele] feels much more 'naturally' aligned with" (*American Road* 128). However, the ongoing illusion that they can afford to live among the higher echelons of society gradually begins to wither, as several of their real estate agents refuse to comply with their requests when they have to downgrade from the Bel Air Hotel to the Lasky House, "all of them but Julie stopped calling" (Simpson 181). Nevertheless, social scheming and strategy continue to be a habitual pastime for Adele, their arrival in Los Angeles, allows her to put her skills to good use, aided by her real estate agent Julie.

Finding a prime locating for a home eventually becomes intertwined with a meticulous effort to secure that Ann remains within the Beverly Hills High School District so that she can mingle with the affluent kids in Beverly Hills in a natural setting. While Adele and Ann are on a visit to Julie, the real estate agent, they all partake in the effort, "'so you're going to need an apartment.' From her pink lacquered file cabinet, Julie took out a map of Beverly Hills. She squeezed between us on the couch...we listened and memorized, alert, to all she could tell us" (Simpson 184). As localities in the topography signify social status, it becomes crucial that they manage to find a place to live that not only secure Ann a place at Beverly Hills High School but also project a sense of prestige. Brigham observes that in *Anywhere but Here*, "...street addresses provide the contours of mobility..." (*American Road* 137). Upon their arrival in Los

Angeles, when they are still living at the Lasky House, the duo is acutely aware of the significance of them living south of Wilshire. Wilshire Boulevard represents a geographical border that Adele and Ann seek to transgress. Although they can move freely across this threshold in a literal sense, they never fully manage to transcend this border economically. Eventually, Julie manages to find Adele and Ann a home within the Beverly Hills School District. However, Adele's obsessive demands for improving their newly acquired one-bedroom apartment on South Elm Drive becomes a sign of her internal discomfort over her overspending and her current financial situation. They decide to give up the apartment and downgrade to a more affordable living arrangement, which leaves Adele in a better financial situation, "so maybe that was it all along, maybe we just couldn't afford our apartment" (Simpson 188). For Adele, Los Angeles is a place she has dreamed and fantasized about for a long time. However, when navigating the city, she learns that her station in life means that her circumstances do not reflect her meticulously crafted mirage of reality.

Regardless of the pushback, Adele experiences in trying to position into and navigating the city, Los Angeles continues to remain an abstract idea of a place where all of her dreams have the potential to come true. However, the contrast between her desire to achieve her ideals and reality, manifest in her discomfort about dwelling in the domestic spaces she acquires. Before giving up the apartment on South Elm Drive, Adele continually exclaims, "I JUST CAN'T LIVE LIKE THIS!" (Simpson 186), in response to the shutters being a shade off from the color that was promised and the state of the shag carpet. Furthermore, even though they live in the apartment for a few months, Adele never buys any furniture or decorate the home. The apartment is a domestic space they occupy, but their failure to thrive in this space symbolizes Adele's unease regarding what her life currently represents. Brigham notes, "... the homes Adele constructs, are always in flux. They never represent stability, be it familial, emotional, or economic. The domestic instability is caused by the knowledge that, no matter how new and improved, each home can never be the ideal. Adele does not desire stability; she desires the ideal" (Brigham *American Road* 132). Even though Adele and Ann continually keep moving from one apartment to the next and at times even live north of Wilshire, transgressing the threshold they have mark as a place of status, they continue to remain static on the social ladder. Because they never manage to stay long enough at each place in order to work their way up either socially or economically. In other words, Adele's inability to embrace reality pragmatically by way of working and saving money as a way of upgrading herself economically means they keep moving, but they never ascend financially or socially.

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Even though Taylor is captivated by the splendid geography of Tucson, public space in *The Bean Trees* is not only depicted as a positive space. There is a recurring theme in the novel in regards to the potential dangers of occupying public space. For instance, Turtle is attacked by an anonymous urban predator, when she and her elderly neighbor, Edna Poppy is spending time at the Roosevelt Park. Himmelwright notes, "those places which appear to be the safest may hide dark elements of violence and destruction" (Himmelwright 133). Although the park is in a central area that is adjacent to both Jesus is Lord Used Tires and Lou Ann's house the attack still occurs. Edna manages to fight off the attacker, but due to her visual impairment, she is unable to see or identify the assailant. Furthermore, due to Turtle's past trauma, the horrifying incident set her back quite a bit, "Edna Poppy was sitting on the sofa with Turtle in her lap, all in one piece as far as I could see, but Turtle was changed. All these months we had spent together were gone for her. I knew from her eyes: two cups of black coffee" (Kingsolver 165). In *The Bean Trees*, the danger of occupying public space comes from unknown aggressors. The incident with Turtle and Edna at the park is not the only example of interference from unknown invaders.

Before Taylor arrives in Tucson, she has to pull over to an abandoned gas station to seek shelter from a sudden hailstorm. Because of the windowless car, Taylor and Turtle step out of the car to seek cover from the intense weather. While they wait for the hailstorm to pass, an unknown man keeps infringing on their personal space. The stranger keeps stomping on insects while he is lecturing Taylor about why the insects have suddenly come out of the ground, "'we had a lot of rain lately,' the guy said. 'When the ground gets full of water, the critters drown out of their holes. They got to come up and dry off'" (Kingsolver 38). Taylor gets annoyed by this unwanted attention and thinks to herself, "this I don't believe. I never could figure out why men thought they could impress a woman by making the world out to be such a big dangerous deal. I mean, we've got to live in the exact same world every damn day of the week, don't we?" (Kingsolver 38). Moreover, the infringement Taylor is experiencing occurs during extreme weather. Likewise, the incident with Turtle and Edna in the park occurs right after a stint of intense weather, namely the first rain of the summer. Just like the insects that come up from the ground when Taylor and Turtle were seeking shelter from the hailstorm, the male attacker who assaults Turtle in the park creeps up from nowhere in the aftermath of unusual weather. Taylor comes to know that the violation of personal space and cruelty of men comes from unknown aggressors in public space.

While in *Anywhere but Here*, domestic space is portrayed as a place of tension, in *The Bean Trees*, the domestic sphere in Tucson is seen as a place of community and healing. Ganser notes, "...the Southwest might be harsh in terms of environmental conditions, to which the texts frequently allude, but it nevertheless is transformed into an alternative, care giving and nurturing social space, the 'matriarchal community'" (Ganser, *Roads* 120). Furthermore, in contrast to the complex environment and the potential danger of occupying public space, the domestic space that Taylor and Lou Ann constructs is a space of safety and nurturing. Taylor and Lou Ann cooperate in taking care of the children. In many ways, they work so well together that Taylor feels the need to establish some boundaries:

'Lou Ann, I moved in here because I knew we'd get along. It's nice of you to make dinner for us all, and to take care of Turtle sometimes, and I know you mean well. But we're acting like Blondie and Dagwood here. All we need is some ignorant little dog named Spot to fetch me my slippers. It's not like we're a *family*, for Christ sake. You've got your own life to live, and I've got mine. You don't have to do all this stuff for me'. (Kingsolver 85)

Although, not all domestic spaces in *The Bean Trees* are presented as safe spaces. For instance, Turtle's past and the violent incident with the Hardbine family in Kentucky allude to the dangers of toxic domestic spaces. However, the home that Taylor and Lou Ann construct become a safe domestic space. Even though Taylor feels a need to establish some boundaries between how she and Lou Ann operate, they continue to work together in establishing a stable domestic space. Brigham notes, "part of the novel's point seems to be to show an alternative with domestic spaces organized by and around women" (*American Road* 117). Along with their neighbors Edna Poppy and Virgie Mae Parsons and Mattie, Taylor and Lou Ann create a community of female providers and protectors. In many ways, *The Bean Trees* rewrites the structure of the traditional nuclear family without altogether deconstructing the concept and value of family and close community bonds.

Place and Automobility

In *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees*, traveling the road is replaced by the desire to settle down in a new place. However, in both *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees*, the tropes of automobility and automaticity extend beyond just traveling the road. Although these themes run through both of these novels, they manifest differently. In *Anywhere but Here*, the mother

and daughter duo substitute traveling the road by driving and exploring the streets of Los Angeles. Their failure to accept the reality of their life circumstance lead them to embrace driving, as dwelling in their car temporarily fashions a sense of escape and freedom. In *The Bean Trees*, Taylor's automobility is altered due to her car breaking down upon her arrival in Tucson. Regardless of Taylor's lack of access to an automobile, the theme of automobility continues to be explored in other avenues.

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The city of Los Angeles is not only an urban environment that Adele and Ann have to navigate and position themselves socially; the duo also spends a significant amount of time familiarizing themselves with different areas of the city. For instance, the duo meander through affluent neighborhoods, as a way to continue indulging in their daydreams "we rode through the quiet residential streets with big houses and green slatted tennis courts. We both liked to look at those houses" (Simpson 180). Brigham notes, "for Adele, the road story of transformation and reinvention materializes at the local scale, for the streets is the scale of aspiration" (*American Road* 137). Adele and Ann prefer to dwell in their car to spending time in their claustrophobic domestic space, which is a place that is an unwanted symbol of their social station and stagnation in Los Angeles:

We used to drive at night, we didn't have anything else to do. We didn't like to be in our apartment. There weren't places we could sit and do things. If I read my homework on the bed, there wasn't anywhere for my mother to go. The sofa in the living room was old and uncomfortable. I didn't like both of us to be on the bed. So we drove around in the dark. (Simpson 234)

As the location or state of their home do not reflect the status they seek, the car becomes a symbol of status they comfortably can project in public. Primeau notes, "the American car has always been more than just transportation: it is status, success, dreams, adventure, mystery, and sex..." (5). The Lincoln Continental is not only central to their decision to move to California, the car also becomes a showpiece of their lives in Los Angeles, "what my mother had thought before in Bay City was true; it helped to have a car we weren't ashamed of. There was so much else we had to hide" (Simpson 180). Clarke notes, "she [Adele] falls in love with what the car represents: status and the good life" (*Driving Women* 161). In *Anywhere but Here*, The Lincoln

becomes a false symbol of status and wealth. Their car, rather than their address, functions as an extension of themselves, with which they are comfortable.

The majority of the driving in the novel features the streets of Los Angeles. Hence, in *Anywhere but Here*, the scale of Los Angeles remains vast, due to the fact that Adele and Ann frequently drive around the city. The novel's attention to detail and specificity regarding topography also reinforces the magnitude in terms of a sense of place. Moreover, Elkin notes, "...the flâneur, or the 'one who wanders aimlessly', was born in the first half of the nineteenth century, in the glass – and – steel – covered *passages* of Paris" (3). In her book titled *Flâneuse: Women who Walk the City in Paris, New York, Tokyo, Venice and London*, Elkin explores the significance of the female counterpart of the flâneur, namely the flâneuse. Elkin has found that "...the *flâneuse* is not merely a female *flâneur*, but a figure to be reckoned with, inspired by, all on her own. She voyages out, and goes where she's not supposed to...she is a determined, resourceful individual keenly attuned to the creative potential of the city, and the liberating possibilities of a good walk" (22-23). Although Adele and Ann prefer to dwell in their car as opposed to walking the streets of Los Angeles, there are similarities between how the flâneuse explores urban landscapes and the way the mother and daughter duo explore and navigate the city of Los Angeles. Moreover, Featherstone proposes that the changes in which we move and explore the world around us expand the way in which flânerie occurs and how the flâneur operate (910-911). Featherstone questions whether the flâneur only have to be limited to strolling the streets as a pedestrian (911). He argues that the modern way of life offers new arenas that expand and alter the scope of flânerie. For instance, Featherstone wonders if the flâneur now can be situated inside the automobile while gazing and exploring the urban cityscape, "is flânerie possible as one is enclosed in a moving vehicle with varying degrees of sensory deprivation? Can cruising in a car, or being stuck in a traffic-jam in Los Angeles or São Paulo, in any sense be regarded as a form of flânerie?" (911). In Adele and Ann's exploration of the urban landscapes of Los Angeles, the concept of flânerie and the automobile get intertwined, rendering them as automobile flâneuses.

The idea of the automobile flâneuse might perhaps seem like the antithesis of flânerie in that wandering and strolling the streets of the city are thought of as intrinsic to the concept of flânerie. However, the automobile flâneuse is someone who uses their car to explore cities and urban landscapes as opposed to walking by foot. In contrast to the pedestrian flâneuse, by being situated within the confines of the car, the automobile flâneuse can enjoy a barrier of protection from the physical environment and the public. For instance, Adele and Ann

habitually use the car as a means of escaping their undesired and dysfunctional domestic space. Besides, Adele often refuses to engage with people when she is not her perfect self. On one of their nightly runs for ice cream at Baskin Robbins, Adele pleads with Ann to go in and get the ice cream for them, "I can't Ann.' There was real panic in her voice. 'Someone could see me like this.' She was wearing a terry-cloth jogging suit and tennis shoes. Her hair was pulled up in a ponytail" (Simpson 401). Within the confines of the car, Adele is shielded from the possibility of having to engage with people, while also being able to enjoy a sense of mobility that liberates her from the discomfort she experiences at her domestic space. Additionally, the scale of mobility the automobile flâneuse reaches is exponentially increased by utilizing the car as a mode of transport. Adele and Ann enjoy meandering through the city and gazing at the cityscape, "we drove down Sunset and slowly through the quiet northern streets in Beverly Hills. Sometimes we parked and beamed the headlights over one lawn. Houses in Beverly Hills still amazed us" (Simpson 234). In Los Angeles, Adele somehow remains positioned as the outsider, the onlooker who gazes and takes in the spaces she frequents. Like the flâneur or flâneuse, she never fully immerses herself in the spaces she occupies. The difference in Adele and Ann's failure or success in immersing themselves in the embedded social spheres of Los Angeles will be further explored in the identity chapter.

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The breakdown of Taylor's car upon her arrival in Tucson alters her sense of mobility. Because Taylor cannot afford to purchase new tires, she has to leave her car with Mattie at Jesus is Lord Used Tires, which subsequently means that the scope of her mobility has decreased. The significance of Taylor's lack of access to a car is that she is more bound to the spaces she occupies, which also enables her to familiarize herself with local spaces in Tucson.

The manner in which Taylor situates herself in Tucson leads her to intersect with other people and form lasting relationships. In contrast, because Adele and Ann are so reliant on the Lincoln and drive so often they are not situated or bound to a place in the same way as Taylor. Adele and Ann never manage to integrate properly with any community in Los Angeles, the same way Taylor becomes immersed in her local community in Tucson. Furthermore, in *The Bean Trees*, a sense of place is scaled down and more intimate compared with the vast sense of place in the depiction of Los Angeles in *Anywhere but Here*.

Even though Taylor's sense of mobility has changed she continues to be surrounded by automobility and other people who live mobile lives. For instance, Taylor begins to question why there are so many Spanish-speaking people around Mattie's tire shop, "Mattie's place was always hopping. She was right about people always passing through, and not just customers, either. There was another whole set of people who spoke Spanish and lived with her upstairs for various lengths of time. I asked her about them once, and she asked me something like had I ever heard of a sanctuary" (Kingsolver 78). Eventually, Taylor gets a job at Mattie's tire shop, where she does not only meet people from different walks of life, she is also confronted with the fact that the world beyond her experience can be an unforgiving place. Brigham notes, at Mattie's place, "...the domestic does not symbolize permanence, stasis, or the known. Instead, it functions as a place of revelation that explicitly works to destabilize the traveler. Introducing new predicaments, Mattie's space exposes what Taylor does not know and challenges her to rethink her assumptions and worldview" (*American Road* 121). At her place, Mattie shelters illegal immigrant from South America. Even though Taylor grows up poor in rural Kentucky, at Mattie's place of multiple intersecting trajectories, she meets and learns about the lives of people who have lived far more challenging lives compared to her own humble upbringing. The impact of Taylor's changing worldview will be further addressed in the identity chapter.

The garden in Mattie's backyard is a symbol of coexistence and a tension between opposites. When Taylor stops at Jesus is Lord Used Tires for the first time, Mattie takes her to the backyard to show her some purple bean vines, which Taylor has never seen before:

Outside was a bright, wild wonderland of flowers and vegetables and auto parts. Heads of cabbage and lettuce sprouted out of old tires. An entire rusted-out Thunderbolt, minus the wheels, had nasturtiums blooming out the windows like Mama's hen-and-chicks pot on the front porch at home. A kind of teepee frame made of CB antennas was all overgrown with cherry-tomato vines. (Kingsolver 45-46)

Mattie's backyard is a symbol of confusing boundaries and thresholds. In Mattie's garden two elements, which are often at odds with each other, namely the natural world and mechanics manages to not only coexist but also become harmoniously intertwined. Brigham argues that by sheltering illegal immigrants Mattie confuses the boundaries of public and private space. Furthermore, Brigham argues, "Mattie's use of space exploits practices that are used to divide and organize spaces, pitting an ideology of separate spheres against itself" (*American Road* 119). Brigham further elaborates, "like Taylor, we come to find out that Mattie's space is

multiple things: an auto shop, a home, and a political sanctuary that harbors Guatemalan refugees. As a domicile, workplace, and safe house, it exists at, and brings together, scales of the home, neighborhood, city, region, nation, and globe" (*American Road* 119). Mattie's place is a space where unlikely trajectories not only intersect but also coexist.

Moreover, Mattie's place is not only a place that challenges and troubles spatial scale by confusing the boundaries between domestic and public space by way of politicizing the domestic sphere. Mattie's garden is a symbol of the composition of the unlikely relationships and community of which she is the protector. By being a tension between opposites, the backyard is a kind of disrupted Edenic garden where people instead of being cast out for being sinners, come to seek refuge from a life of persecution. Clarke notes, "for Kingsolver, auto care is associated with a woman [Mattie] who not only fixes broken tires and broken cars but attempts to fix broken people as well" (*Domesticating the Car* n.p.). In *The Bean Trees*, the physical environment in Mattie's garden reveals the connectedness and complexity of the human relationships associated with this place. The people who are situated at the tire shop construct their own community of people and strangers who are thrown together by way of their circumstances.

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By continuing the story of these road narratives after the main characters have reached their point of arrival, these stories expand the scope of what traveling and personal reinvention come to mean for these characters. Furthermore, even though the characters in *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* seek a life on the road as a means to alter their life circumstance, settling down in a new place also becomes a vital feature in this process. The characters in both of these novels are faced with having to join up to a new place as well as immersing themselves into unfamiliar embedded social spheres and spaces. Additionally, arriving in a new place not only alters these characters sense of mobility, the significance of public and private spaces take on a new meaning.

In *Anywhere but Here*, public space becomes an arena of exploration that Adele and Ann seek to navigate and conquer. However, their reluctance to accept their positioning on the social stratum lead them on a somewhat disruptive path. They not only continue to seek out real estate they cannot afford, they also end up reaching beyond their economic means when they acquire their first apartment, which leads them to a situation where they continually have to scale down their living arrangements. Subsequently, this leads to their rejection of the claustrophobic domestic spaces, which they occupy. Because of the state of their unstable

domestic space and the location of their addresses, do not reflect the status they seek, the Lincoln Continental becomes an extension of themselves, which they are comfortable displaying in public space. However, the Lincoln is not only a fraudulent visual display of status and wealth, the car also becomes a means of escaping their cramped domestic spaces. The duo prefers to dwell in their car in order to gaze and explore the cityscape of Los Angeles as a way of breaking away from the reality of their lives.

In *The Bean Trees*, Taylor is captured and mesmerized by the stunning visual display of the Arizona landscape. Although Taylor's fascination with the landscape leads her to settle down in Tucson, her approach to the city is far more realistic compared to Adele and Ann's method of engaging with Los Angeles. Because Taylor is able to immerse herself and take part in the production of space in Tucson. Consequently, this leads her to take part in constructing a small community in Tucson. However, the breakdown of the Volkswagen Beetle renders Taylor in a situation where the scope of her mobility decreases. The result of this means that she becomes more familiar with the spaces she traverses. Furthermore, through the portrayal of Taylor's point of view, *The Bean Trees* depicts a hybrid version of America, where Mattie's tire shop function as a place of intersection trajectories of people who have immensely different lives.

Chapter 4

~ Identity ~

A Journey from Innocence to Experience

and an Exploration of Horizontality

The journey that the characters in *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* embark on is not only an exploration of outward mobility, it is also a process of personal development. Traveling the American road and positioning into a new place lead these characters on a transformational path. The change they undergo is both of a psychological and emotional character. By situating themselves in new social constellations, the characters in *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* become a part of spatial spheres and social relations with which they are entirely unfamiliar. Burke and Stets explain, "Identity theory seeks to explain the specific meanings that individuals have for the multiple identities they claim; how these identities relate to one another for any one person; how their identities influence their behavior, thoughts, and feelings or emotions; and how their identities tie them to society at large" (3). Although this chapter does not seek to theorize the concept of identity. Nonetheless, the focus of the identity chapter will be on how these characters come to terms with themselves in regards to the new environments, which surrounds them. It is through interaction and relation with social spaces and other people that the characters in these two novels undergo a process of personal transformation, which leads to them having to change their understanding of themselves, i.e. their constructed identities.

Moreover, this chapter will examine the main characters personal development and changing worldview in the light of the concept of horizontality, which derives from the philosophical discipline of hermeneutics. In his seminal work *Truth and Method* (1975), Hans-Georg Gadamer talks about the concept of horizontality and personal horizons in regards to how people interpret history and the world. Although Gadamer talks about the concept of horizons in relation to hermeneutics as a framework for interpreting history, the identity chapter will consider the concept of horizontality in relation to an individual's interpretation of the world around them and their understanding of themselves. Moreover, Nenon notes, "...every

interpretation is possible only against the backdrop of a perspective that the interpreter brings to the reading or, one could say, the horizon of the prejudgement that is typically not identical with that of the original text" (248). The characters in *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* interpret the world around them based on their established understanding of the world and their constructed prejudices. However, by entering into a new space, they have removed themselves from the social structures with which they are familiar. Consequently, this means that they not only have to adjust to the new premise of their circumstances but also adjust to the new information and perspectives with which they are confronted.

The Tension between the Real and the Imagined

In *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees*, sense of self and identity are intertwined with the characters' need to relocate to a new place. However, their engagement with the new place they chose to settle down results in a conflict between the real and the imagined. This conflict leads to a psychological struggle, which subsequently has implications for their life circumstance.

Nenon notes:

The notion of the horizon is explicitly introduced as a metaphor for the way that intellectual understanding mirrors everyday perceptions of visible objects in that they always and inevitably take place from a perspective that opens up a space within which some things can easily be seen but which also sets the limits beyond which things cannot easily be seen without additional efforts or movement. (248).

The tension between the real and the imagined leaves these characters in a state of discomfort and disarray, due to the confrontation of their established worldview. By expanding their personal horizons the characters in *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* are forced to confront their preconceived ideas of themselves and the world around them. However, there is a big difference in their ability to confront and resolve the issues presented before them.

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Adele never fully manages to rebound from her the shattering of her illusion of Los Angeles. Adele's inability to widen her personal horizons and adjust to her situatedness and changing circumstance subsequently leads to her personal breakdown. Adele's identity is based on her desire to fit in with the social sphere in Beverly Hills. However, in *Anywhere but Here*, there is a dramatic tension in regards to Adele's inability to adjust or reimagine her identity. Moreover, Adele is willing to bend her identity and reality in order to gain acceptance from people she admires. For instance, when their proprietor, Nan Keller comes for a visit Adele upholds the façade that she is able to afford plastic surgery for Ann. Nan states, "I was sketching other noses, just to see what could happen with a surgeon" (Simpson 415). Adele is so fascinated with Nan's portraits of Ann with different alternatives of noses that she puts off a presence that she actually could plastic surgery for Ann. Furthermore, Nan continues to elaborate on the different options of noses and surgeons while Adele nods along, "oh, we don't want that" (Simpson 415), in response to the option of Doctor Brey, who apparently only makes cliché noses. Ann observes how skilled Adele is at upholding her charade, "my mother acted so humble with these people" (Simpson 415). Whenever Adele interacts with other people she prefers to present herself through the gaze she wants to perceive herself. However, Adele's heavily manufactured sense of self and public performance leads to her gradual psychological collapse. Adele struggles to maintain the image she wants to project of herself in order to impress other people. Because Adele is unable to commit to permanently reinventing herself, she falls back to her old destructive patterns. In other words, her constructed mirage of herself only manifests for short intervals. Additionally, her inability to accept her financial limitations leads her to cling on to her illusions, which ultimately prevents her from altering her view of herself. In many ways, Adele's personal horizon remain narrow because she continues to stick to her version of reality.

The extent of Adele's disingenuous interaction with people and her warped view of the world leads to a deterioration of her mental state, which subsequently leads to a collapse of the discrepancy between the real and the imagined. The danger in Adele's obsessions comes to a climax and is fully exposed during her intense fixations on Josh Spritzer and Dr. Leonard Hawthorne. When Josh Spritzer rejects Adele, she seeks out his psychiatrist. However, when the psychiatrist refuses to see her, she seeks out the psychiatrist of Josh Spritzer's son, Dr. Leonard Hawthorne. Ann observes that her mother, "drove to see him at his office, three afternoons a week, each time dressed as if for a date" (Simpson 419). Adele's inability to accept rejection leads her to transfer her obsession with Josh Spritzer onto Dr. Hawthorne, "it's going

to be wonderful,' she said. She sank down against her car seat after she told me, her chocolate almond cone almost touching her chin. 'You are finally going to have everything. We'll have a big house and you'll have all the clothes you want '" (Simpson 421). Paes de Barros notes, "she confuses her fantasies with reality, insisting... that any day her psychologist is going to marry her and make them rich" (*Fast Cars* 107). However, Adele's romantic infatuations are not benign. As the gap between reality and her make-believe world is escalating, Adele's ability to evaluate the relations she has with people around her decline. Adele is unable to realize that her regular meetings with Dr. Hawthorne are not moments of romantic courting or secret rendezvous, but therapy sessions that Dr. Hawthorne give her out of sympathy and concern due to her vulnerable mental state. The paradox of Adele is that she spends so much time being captivated by her constructed version of reality that this eventually leads to a blurring of the line between what is real and what is imagined.

Furthermore, Adele's fragmented sense of self and mental state traps her in a state of narcissism. The confused lines between reality and fiction prohibit Adele from not only accepting reality but also acting on real demands and propositions put before her. For instance, when Ann finally gets an audition to star in a television show, which they both have been waiting for since before they move to California, Adele refuses to drive Ann to Westwood for the audition. Adele forms a half-baked lie about going to work when she is really going to see Dr. Hawthorne even though he has distanced himself from her by severing ties with her, "I'm sorry, Ann but my work is just more important than your audition. We have to live and you don't even know if you'd get the part. It's your first one, you probably wouldn't. Let's face it you don't really look Iranian." (Simpson 434). Instead of supporting Ann's chance of realizing her dreams by making sure that she gets to the audition safely, Adele prioritizes her obsession of potentially marrying Dr. Hawthorne. In other words, Adele prefers her fantasy and skewed version of reality to Ann's actual chance of success.

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Taylor's lack of experience of the world outside of Kentucky leads her on a path of discovery and maturation. However, when Taylor breaks away from what is familiar to her, the foundations of her worldview is challenged due to her encounters people with different points

of view and life experiences. The personal stories of Estevan and Esperanza along with the attack on Turtle spirals Taylor into a state of personal self-doubt and psychological distress:

'There's just so much damn much ugliness. Everywhere you look, some big guy kicking some little person when they're down – look what they do to those people at Mattie's. To hell with them, people say, let them die, it was their fault in the first place for being poor or in trouble, or for not being white, or whatever, how dare they try to come to this country.' (Kingsolver 170).

Brigham notes, "the knowledge Taylor gains about Estevan's and Esperanza's lives is devastating and unwelcome, but also transformative, since their disclosures prompt her to redraw the parameters of her world. Taylor undergoes a rescaling of her own identity, so to speak, as she begins to make connections between experiences" (*American Road* 122). However, before Taylor manages to come to terms with her altering personal horizons she goes through a period of rejection of reality. She closes herself off from everybody by staying in her room, only coming out when she has to go to work.

Unlike Adele who clings on to her convictions, Taylor is willing to adjust and come to terms with her changing worldview. Although she closes herself off from the world for a period of time, she manages to undergo a sense of personal transformation. Himmelwright notes, "Taylor's adventures multiply as she gains a greater understanding of the challenges of those individuals who live around her. Her naiveté quickly explodes when she learns of the plight of illegal aliens like Estevan, who tells Taylor one evening what happened to him and his wife in Guatemala" (133). Although Taylor has a naïve view of the world due to her sheltered upbringing, it is relevant to note that this naivety does not culminate from a place of ignorance. Rather, her narrow worldview stems from a lack of personal experience. Moreover, Taylor is able to move beyond her sense of paralysis and mental anguish. Aided by her good friend Lou Ann, Taylor begins to accept that there are things beyond her control. Instead of focusing on what she cannot control, she starts to become aware of the things that are within the capacity to change.

Even though Taylor undergoes her personal and introspective transformation, she still manages to express empathy and understanding for the people around her, "I remembered my pep talk to Esperanza a few months before, and understood just how ridiculous it was. There is no point in treating a depressed person as though she were just feeling sad, saying, There now, hang on, you'll get over it. Sadness is more or less like a head cold – with patience, it passes. Depression is like cancer" (Kingsolver 173). Unlike Adele who becomes completely self-

absorbed by her mental distress, Taylor manages to face her vulnerabilities while also realizing that there are other people who are in an even more vulnerable position than she is. Moreover, while Adele's confusion with the distinction between fiction and reality renders her in a state of dysfunction. Taylor's acceptance of reality renders her with a sense of purpose. Because at the other end of Taylor's transformational process she begins to not only accept her love for Turtle as motherly love, but she also decides to help Estevan and Esperance to a safe location where they can have a chance to start over a new life. Taylor personal challenges makes her realize that she is not one to walk away from a difficult situation. Taylor's strong moral code secures that she does not let her personal upheaval get the better of her.

Responsibility: Motherhood and Violence

The recurring theme of motherhood that runs through both of these novels centers on the contested relationship between mother and child. However, the manner in which this unfolds is vastly different in the two novels. Whereas Adele and Ann in *Anywhere but Here* gradually grow apart, the unlikely mother and daughter pair of Taylor and Turtle in *The Bean Trees* grow gradually closer by eventually fulfilling the roles of mother and daughter. Another distinction between the two novels relates to the matter of responsibility and protection. While Taylor initially accepts the responsibility of Turtle based on a need to protect and shield her from the brutality of her past. Adele, in *Anywhere but Here* often times functions as the main source of destabilization in Ann's life. There is a significant contrast in how Taylor and Adele function as providers, as well as how they construct their domestic space.

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Ann is left in a vulnerable position because of Adele's fragmented understanding of reality due to her inability to reject her constructed fantasy of social ascension. Additionally, Adele has an unhealthy dependency and a need to control Ann. For instance, on several occasions she threatens to commit suicide if she does not get her way. Before Ann's first date with a school friend named Ronnie, Adele suddenly calls with the proclamation that she is going to have an accident on the highway because Ann does not love her anymore. Ann insists that she loves her

mother, but Adele continues her monologue by exclaiming, "no, you really don't, Ann. I know. And I've tried, believe me, I've tried. I've done all I can do. And I can't help you anymore. You'll be better off without me. You're strong, you're stronger than you think. I know you" (Simpson 380). Adele's breakdown is galvanized by her spending forty dollars on a Christmas tree that has just fallen off the roof of her car, "this big beautiful tree bounces on the road and it splinters into a million pieces. And that's where it is, all over the highway. A million smithereens. I paid my last money for it" (Simpson 380). Adele is so distraught that she has just spent all of her money on the destroyed Christmas tree that she is threatening to commit suicide because she believes that Christmas is ruined, "I'm giving up. I'm driving up the coast and off the cliffs at Big Sur. It's supposed to be pretty there. Remember I always wanted to see them? I'm just going to have an accident". (Simpson 380). The extent of Adele's emotional and psychological manipulation of Ann is gradually exposed over the course of the novel. While they reside in Wisconsin, Ann has a social safety net, provided by her grandmother Lilian and her aunt Carol, even her stepfather Ted. Living in Los Angeles Ann is situated in a far more vulnerable position. Furthermore, in Los Angeles, the severity of Adele's erratic and dysfunctional behavior is highlighted by the fact that Ann is completely dependent on Adele. There are no extended family or support system to care for Ann in Los Angeles, all she has to rely on is her unstable mother.

Adele's unstable behavior strains her relationship with Ann. Whenever life does not live up to Adele's expectations, she punishes Ann verbally and physically. Furthermore, Adele's lack of boundaries leads to her violation of Ann's personal space and safety. When Adele experiences rejection from the men she is pursuing, she often inflicts her internal turmoil onto Ann. On one occasion while Adele was still in therapy with Dr. Hawthorne, suddenly one night Ann hears her mother rummaging around in their apartment, "all of her knocks and wandering would end up in my room, but there was nothing I could do except wait. There were no locks on any of our doors. Finally, she came. She wasn't wearing anything but a dirty gray sweat shirt. She squatted on my carpet, bare-legged, rocking" (Simpson 424). Due to an unsuccessful meeting with Dr. Hawthorne Adele is in a terrible state and a fit of rage that she releases by beating up Ann, "she covered her hand with her sleeve before she hit me. I used everything, hitting hard, loose, not seeing what I was doing. And in a few minutes she fell off the side of my bed. I was getting stronger than she was" (Simpson 424). Heller notes, "Adele's narcissistic greed is most powerfully expressed in the deeply conflicted impulses that distort her perceptions of the boundaries between herself and her daughter" (38). Adele projects her life expectations

onto Ann. However, whenever Ann fails, it infuriates Adele, because it is not really Ann who fails, but Adele herself, as she sees Ann is an extension of her. Moreover, because Adele sees Ann as an extension of herself, she penalizes Ann for the rejection and disarray she experiences whenever her fantasies do not come to fruition. Paes de Barros notes, "the mother who leaves Ann out on the side of the road, the mother who hits her, is also the woman with whom she is lovingly entangled. This affection, and the fact Ann claims they are alike, is a significant part of the relation as the abuse" (*Fast Cars* 108). The toxicity of the unhealthy mother and daughter relationship comes to the fore during Adele's episodes of unhinged rage. Additionally, when the veil of her illusions evaporates she blames Ann for her own personal shortcomings.

In her good moments, even though Adele supposedly only wishes the best for her daughter, her execution of her endeavors often exploit Ann. At one point Ann recalls, a rather disturbing childhood memory from their time back in Wisconsin where Adele had taken her to a place to get her picture taken "...I must have been six or seven. I hated the way my hair looks in the pictures, up in a bun, and my forced big smile, the way my leg tilts, posing. It's funny for me to think of us in that dim place by the highway, taking nude pictures of a seven-year-old with a colored beach ball" (Simpson 442). Adele struggles to establish boundaries between what is appropriate and what is not appropriate. However, Ann becomes the victim of all of her failed and inappropriate endeavors.

Moreover, the culmination of both the past and present abuse leads Ann with a growing need to separate herself from her mother. Greiner notes, "Ann abandons [her] mother to develop selfhood, just as Adele deserts family to head west. Simpson exposes the danger of absorption in the mother-daughter bond" (84). Throughout the novel, the mother and daughter duo, gradually grow further and further apart. Consequently, this leads to Ann's complete separation from her abusive mother. Ann's gradual claim to individuality is manifested in an act of defiance against her mother. One day, Ann decides to get her hair cut at a hair salon against her mother's wishes and incessant pleading, "'Oh, Honey, no. Don't, Ann. You'd be crazy to get more than a little trim...that's what's cute about you, Honey. And don't think that doesn't matter at college, too, believe me. Really, it's the truth, Ann.'" (Simpson 446). Although Ann has been an obedient student of her mother's for years, now Ann has begun her silent opposition and rebellion against her mother, "'I'm just telling you. For your *information*. I'm not asking for advice. I'm just saying. I'll be gone between eleven and noon. You better find something to do with yourself, that's all'" (Simpson 446). This act of defiance functions as a symbol of Ann claiming her individuality and independence from her mother. Paes de Barros notes, "the relationship

between Ann and Adele is tightly woven, unbreakable even in its dysfunction. The two women fight in order to get away from one another, while knowing this escape is impossible" (*Fast Cars* 107). Although it takes eighteen years for Ann finally to be able to distance and separate herself from her mother, she manages to do so successfully. During the conversation regarding the haircut, Ann is finally able to deflect the power her mother has had over her for so long. Furthermore, this exchange occurs shortly before Ann goes to the east coast for college and when Ann finally manages to sever ties with her mother, she does not see her for years.

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The attack on Turtle at the Roosevelt Park drives Taylor into a state of psychological flux. Taylor feels so guilty about her inability to protect Turtle from harm that she fears Turtle will never fully recover, "I've just spent about the last eight or nine months trying to convince her that nobody would hurt her again. Why should she believe me now?" (Kingsolver 168). Furthermore, Taylor is not only distraught about what happened to Turtle, she begins to question whether she is fit to be her guardian, "what makes anybody think I can do anything for her?" (Kingsolver 169). However, during a conversation with her good friend Mattie, Taylor begins to realize that there are worse scenarios Turtle can be subjected to than staying with Taylor. Both Lou Ann and Mattie challenge Taylor's assumption that she is capable of protecting Turtle from all of the dangers in the world. Lou Ann explains, "You can't promise a kid that. All you can promise is that you'll take care of them the best you can, Lord willing and the creeks don't rise, and you just hope for the best. And things work out, Taylor, they do. We all muddle through some way" (Kingsolver 186). Taylor begins to accept that she cannot rewrite Turtle's past of mental and bodily violation, but she can ensure that she gets a stable future. Although Taylor has always been a responsible person, she continues to learn how to balance and negotiate the spectrum of autonomy and agency in regards to what she has to let go of and what she can control.

Despite her self-doubt and confusion, Taylor does not reject Turtle. When Taylor learns that she has no legal claim over Turtle, she decides to find a way to win over the system. However, several scholars have commented on the problematic manner in which Kingsolver chooses to resolve the issue of Taylor's adoption of Turtle. For instance, Ganser elaborates on the apparent opposition created between Taylor and the Cherokee Nation. Ganser notes, "the expansionist doctrine of Manifest Destiny remains largely intact: in order to accomplish her quest to claim new territory for femininity and motherhood beyond patriarchal patterns of the

nuclear family, Taylor has to 'win against the Indians'" (126). Furthermore, Kingsolver's agenda in challenging and rearranging the nuclear family structure manifests as Taylor's exploitation of the official system. Brigham observes, "...Taylor goes outside the law in order to have Turtle incorporated as a subject within it" (Brigham *American Road* 125). The process of becoming Turtle's legal guardian thrusts Taylor on a problematic journey, which makes her initial road trip seem benign in comparison. However, Brigham further notes, "*The Bean Trees* ends with the celebration and white fantasy of a pan-racial identity at scales from the individual to the community, a fantasy realized through a reenvisioning of the domestic as the realm of mothers and daughters" (Brigham, *American Road* 125). Nevertheless, the problematic manner in which Taylor has to correct the wrongdoings from the past leads her to commit an act of misconduct in the present. However, the consequence of Taylor's haphazard adoption process is addressed in the sequel to *The Bean Trees*, namely *Pigs in Heaven*. However, as this novel has not been taken into consideration in this thesis, the continuation of this storyline will not be addressed here.

Moreover, while on the first road trip, Taylor accepts responsibility for Turtle. However, on the second road trip to Oklahoma, Taylor accepts motherhood. When the newly formed mother and daughter duo are on their way back to Tucson, Arizona after finalizing the adoption, Turtle is looking her adoption papers. Taylor informs her, "'that means you're my kid,' I explained, 'and I'm your mother, and nobody can say it isn't so. I'll keep that paper for you till you're older, but it's yours. So you'll always know who you are'" (Kingsolver 232). Himmelwright notes, "...Taylor has...created a new identity for herself by becoming a mother. She has turned her back on an individualistic approach for one of nurturing help and assistance through community" (135). Although Taylor initially accepts Turtle due to a need to protect the abused and vulnerable child, Taylor does develop a sense of maternal love and compassion for Turtle beyond a sense of responsibility. Taylor's growing love for Turtle leads her to accept both responsibility and motherhood.

A Study of Parallel Narratives

Anywhere but Here and *The Bean Trees* are a meditation on parallel lives. The polyvocal structure of these narratives portray narratives of intersecting lives. In *Anywhere but Here*, the majority of the narrative is presented through Ann's perspective. However, interspersing narratives from her grandmother Lillian and her aunt Carol add to the complexity of the story. The additional narratives not only provide supplementary stories of the lives of the women in the August family, they also challenge the narrative provided by Adele at the very end of the novel. Although the shifting multiple points of view is utilized less in *The Bean Trees* compared to *Anywhere but Here*, it nonetheless functions as a device to underline the multiplicity of interesting trajectories that Kingsolver chronicles.

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Whereas Ann undergoes a process of maturation, Adele's inability to accept the reality gradually unravels and is eventually exposed by her hyperbolic point of view in the very last chapter of the book. Denenholz Morse observes, "the...crucial difference from the norm in this mother-daughter configuration is that the natural roles are reversed. Ann often has to be the adult, and Adele assumes the role of the irresponsible child" (70). However, Adele perceives herself as an exemplary mother, "It's the most important, beautiful, fulfilling thing I've ever done in my life, being a mother. And I look at her and think, Hey, I didn't do such a bad job" (Simpson 529). Even though Adele's sees herself and her relationship with Ann through rose-tinted glasses, the juxtaposition of the complementary points of view and Ann's own narration puncture Adele's credibility. For instance, Adele hits Ann in the face during one of her violent episodes after Nan Keller discloses to her that Josh Spritzer has been seen about town with someone else. After the episode, Ann relates the psychological distress she feels regarding her mother:

"she hates you. She hates you more than anything she is and she's tied until she kills you, it's that deep in her. She will stay. And you know you have to get up. You want to close your eyes and be dizzy, let this blur dark, tasting the blood in your mouth like a steak, and let her come back to you and touch you softly, lead you to your bed, tuck you in, care for you" (Simpson 418)

Grainer notes, "not until the conclusion of *Anywhere but Here* does Simpson reveal Adele's voice, knowing that the mother's point of view will be read ironically because it is tagged onto the daughter's story" (Greiner 89). The reader has been prepared for Adele's point of view for the entire duration of the novel. Read against the other points of view presented by Ann, Lillian and Carol, Adele's version of events stand out as a skewed depiction of reality compared to the other perspectives presented in the novel. Moreover, at one point, Lillian, Adele's mother discloses that there has always been something unusual about Adele, "...there was always something not quite right with her. I remember there was something far back, I think even when she was a baby. She was never all there. She did odd things even when she was real, real little" (Simpson 157). During Adele's chapter, the inconsistency of her monolog highlights the irony in her inability to construct a reliable narrative. Moreover, it is evident that Adele's consistency in her flexible relationship with truth and the reality has manifested in her belief system and reasoning of the world. *Anywhere but Here*, moves between portrayals of Adele's spontaneous enthusiasms and harrowing depictions of manipulation and abuse. The anachronistic structure of the novel contribute to emphasize the oscillating extremes of Adele. However, it is left to the reader to determine if they choose to accept Adele's narrative as reliable and untrustworthy.

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The Bean Trees is not only a portrayal of Taylor's personal journey; the novel also addresses the effects people who are thrown together due to intersecting trajectories. Clarke notes, "The refugee subplot foregrounds Kingsolver's awareness of the many forms of mobility and unsettles what could otherwise be read as a sentimental tale of female empowerment" (*Driving Women* 128). Taylor indirectly learns about violence in the world through the people she encounters. Although the novel centers on Taylor's journey of coming to terms with her shifting worldview, the shifting narration of the novel does aid in highlighting the multiplicity of the hybridity the novel attempts to convey. Murry argues, "in this modern female rite of passage, the free-spirited Taylor Greer breaks away from the matriarchal community in Kentucky, establishes her independence as a loner, becomes a part of the matriarchal community in Tucson..." (Murrey 161). Because Taylor chooses to immerse herself in established social constellations, her interactions with other people expose the underlying complexity of society.

Through Taylor's point of view, Kingsolver manages to address several potent issues like illegal immigration, sexual abuse and domestic violence without shoehorning her agenda. However, the shifting point of view does not have the same impact in regards to interpreting the meaning of the text compared to the polyvocal structure of *Anywhere but Here*. Rather than creating a tension in the text, the shifting narration in *The Bean Trees* supplement and confirm the overall agenda of the novel. Namely, to communicate the effects and complexity of the social construction of points of view that are often times overlooked. *The Bean Trees* takes the ordinary and turns it into a harrowing portrayal of abuse, loss and personal transformation.

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The characters in *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* have to deal with the realization that the reality is different from the preconceived assumptions they imagined. By dwelling in the gap between the real and the imagined there seems to occur a mental state where the main characters portrayed in both *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* have to accept or reject the reality with which they are confronted. During this process of negotiating with the self, these characters go through an experience, which either compel or discourage them to act. Even though the characters in both *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* seek to alter their life circumstances by way of traveling the road and resettlement, their personal and psychological change does come at a price. In both of these novels, the main characters struggle with the alternation in their view of themselves and the world. The change they are undergoing is not only related to the passing of time but also the new stimuli and horizons they are confronted with by settling down in a new social sphere and place. *Anywhere but Here* is a story of a mother and daughter how attempts to move from the periphery to the center but fail to handle the demands of their endeavor. Furthermore, Adele is so invested in her daydreams that it prevents her from accepting reality, which subsequently leads to her daughter's need to establish a sense of independence by separating herself from her mother's influence and control. *The Bean Trees* centers on Taylor's coming of age story. Taylor's interaction with the world beyond Kentucky challenges her understanding of the world around her, which sends her into a state of flux. However, Taylor's willingness to alter and expand her personal horizons leads her to not only

mature but also accept motherhood. Adele and Taylor are two portrayals of unconventional mothers. However, while Taylor accepts reality, Adele continues to manipulate reality.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have looked at the genre of women's road narratives by exploring the significance of mobility, place and identity in Mona Simpson's *Anywhere but Here* and Barbara Kingsolver's *The Bean Trees*. The main objective of this undertaking has been to examine how the dynamics of space and spatiality are portrayed in the two novels. Furthermore, this thesis has analyzed how aspects of physical and abstract spaces relate to the intersection of public and private spaces in *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees*. Both of the novels explore the interplay between the blurred lines of domesticity and mobility. However, neither of the two novels attempts to negate the notion of domesticity. Rather, the main characters seek to change their circumstances by way of renegotiating the nature of their social embeddedness. Both *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* engage with the myth of traveling west by traveling the road as means of seeking a form of personal and circumstantial transformation. However, the main characters quest for both psychical and social mobility proves to be a challenge. Their engagement with unfamiliar embedded places and social structures challenge and affect their pursuit of social transformation and social ascendancy.

The mobility chapter centered on the relation between mobility in terms of both traveling the road and the question of the main character's social station and positioning. Even though the women portrayed in *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* proved to be somewhat restricted by the social structures, which surround around them, they still manage to maintain a level of agency which enables them to act and exert control over their journey. However, engaging with social spheres that are previously unknown to them, alter the nature of how their journey unfold.

In *Anywhere but Here*, Adele and Ann embark on a journey from the American Midwest to California in the pursuit of fame and upward mobility. I have suggested that in *Anywhere but Here*, Adele and Ann seek out Scottsdale, Arizona in order to transform the city into an arena where they free from consequence can rehearse and experiment with their personal presentation before their arrival in Los Angeles. Their fraudulent display allows them to enter into social spaces where they can act and perform as though their extravagant physical appearance and financial means are aligned. Moreover, the duo exploits their lack of social embeddedness when

they are exploring the real estate scene in Scottsdale. Their excursion to a property that is well outside of their economic means reveals the extent to which Adele is willing to alter her personal history and narrative in order to get access to social spheres that she otherwise would not have been privy. Furthermore, throughout their journey, the discrepancy between the duo's financial means and their actual social station create an ironic tension, which reveals their lack of rootedness in reality. Their intense desire for inclusion in higher socio-economic spheres leads them to adjust their personal presentation and narrative according to whom with which they engage and come into contact.

Although Taylor in *The Bean Trees* does not have a pre-decided point of arrival, she is keen to travel west. By managing to break away from the social stasis, which seems to linger in her rural hometown, Taylor is able to construct a future, which differs from the faith of so many of her peers, namely the occurrence of an unwanted teenage pregnancy. However, once Taylor hits the road, she quickly realizes that driving alone proves to be more challenging than she had anticipated. Taylor is intimidated by the topography of the open landscape when she drives through the Oklahoma Great Plain. Even though Taylor sought a life on the road in order to get away from unwanted family constraints, when she enters a bar in rural Oklahoma she is subjected to a scenario, which challenges her new found autonomy. Subsequently, this forces her to reevaluate the nature of her travels.

Engaging with unfamiliar social spaces becomes a test of character for Taylor as she is confronted with the very scenario she worked so hard to escape. However, when learning the severity of the abuse the unknown child has suffered, Taylor willingly choose to take responsibility for Turtle. Whereas Taylor had previously slept in her car during her travels, she now has to find not only a source of income but also a more permanent form of accommodation. Moreover, accepting Turtle not only alter the nature and trajectory of Taylor's road trip, it thrusts her into social spheres that she otherwise would not have explored.

The place chapter explored how Simpson "debunks" the notion of California as a place where one simply arrives by continuing the story of Adele and Ann after their arrival in Los Angeles. Greenfield argues, "much of the travel writing about California both fosters and debunks the idea that it is a special place" (208). *Anywhere but Here* is a story that challenges the perceived simplicity of the American Dream. Adele's failure to consider the reality of her own life and her initial resistance to acquire knowledge about the city beyond the affluent neighborhoods and hotels she reads about in her magazines eventually leads to her refusal to detach from her imagined version of her life and the city of Los Angeles. Adele has a sense of

nostalgia for a place that does not exist and the discrepancy between the imagined life and the reality of life highlights the naivety in Adele's pursuit of happiness. In many ways *Anywhere but Here* mocks and parodies the idea that if you do the right thing at the right time you will succeed in life.

Being outsiders in Los Angeles permit Adele and Ann to create a persona and project a mirage of class in public space, which allow them temporarily to entertain the idea that they have reached the goals they set out to achieve. However, eventually, the impact of the reality they live is manifested in their claustrophobic domestic space. Furthermore, I suggested that the characters of Adele and Ann have a resemblance to the flâneuse who wonders and observes the city. However, Adele as an automobile flâneuse makes use of her car in order to familiarize herself with the cityscape of Los Angeles. Moreover, the fact that Adele is so dependent on her car also means that she remains somewhat socially excluded from the city, even though she has an intimate knowledge of the external environment of the city.

Although the visual display of the landscape captivates Taylor, once she arrives in Tucson, Arizona, she realizes that she has to adjust to her new surroundings. Just as Simpson debunks the romanticized illusion of the west as a place of inherent success, Kingsolver challenges the notion that resettlement is an easy feat. Furthermore, In *The Bean Trees*, Kingsolver manages to not only challenge the notion of the traditional nuclear family, the novel also manages to champion the idea of people being able to create a loving community through circumstance. In contrast, family bonds and relationships without love and respect are presented as dangerous and toxic, as in the case of the Hardbines in Kentucky and Turtle's family back in Oklahoma. Furthermore, in *The Bean Trees*, the stable domestic space that Taylor and Lou Ann constructs stand as a contrast to the depiction of public space in the novel. Although the scenery often is depicted as fascinating and appealing, public space in *The Bean Trees* can also become an unsafe arena, as in case of the attack on Turtle. However, Mattie's tire ship remains a place of refuge, not only for Taylor and for Turtle but for the illegal immigrants, Mattie is sheltering. *The Bean Trees* centers on the stable and nurturing communities women like Taylor, Lou Ann and Mattie construct.

The identity chapter shifted the point of reference from the larger spatial themes of mobility and place to a more narrow focus on the personal development of the main characters as individuals by utilizing the concept of horizontality to illustrate the main characters altering and expanding worldview. Because embarking on an outward journey of exploration and resettlement challenges the worldview of the characters portrayed in *Anywhere but Here* and

The Bean Trees. However, Adele in *Anywhere but Here* cling on to her ideals of a better life at the expense of the suffering she is inflicting upon her daughter, Ann. Moreover, Adele's declining psychological state, which prompts episodes of abuse and violence leads to the gradual separation of the mother and daughter pair. Even though Ann is dependent on Adele when they first move to Los Angeles, she gradually feels a need for personal freedom and individuality, which begin her process of distancing herself from her abrasive mother. I suggested that Ann's decision to cut her hair despite her mother's intervention demonstrates Ann's success in separating from her mother.

In *The Bean Trees*, Taylor's journey into the world beyond Pittman County challenges her understanding of the larger world. Moreover, Taylor's inability to protect Turtle and prevent the attack in the park along with the life stories and experiences she hears from people like Estevan and Esperanza leads Taylor into a state of personal turmoil. However, the personal distress she is experiences becomes the catalyst for her finally accepting the responsibility of motherhood. Instead of rejecting the responsibility bestowed upon her by Turtle's aunt, Taylor gradually manages to balance what she can control and what she has to let go of or accept. Although Taylor's process of legalizing the adoption of Turtle is problematic, Taylor and Turtle find a sense of safety and healing in each other's company, which ultimately brings them closer with both of them accepting the roles as mother and daughter.

Mona Simpson's *Anywhere but Here* and Barbara Kingsolver's *The Bean Trees* highlight the complexity of the social spaces within which the main characters are situated. Both of these novels explore how the main characters position into and navigate social environments that they have never occupied before. I have suggested that the women portrayed in *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* do not seem to want to escape their previous situated embeddedness altogether, but rather to alter and potentially expand the boundaries and borders of the social environments with which they engage. In *Anywhere but Here*, Simpson challenges the notion of effortless progress and social ascension. The main characters of Adele and Ann are consumed by their daydreams and fantasies about the idea of what California has to offer. However, by exposing the fallacy of the preconceived notion of the west that Adele and Ann have concocted, the novel gradually reveals the difference between reality and the fragility of ephemeral daydreams. In *The Bean Trees*, Kingsolver seeks to alter the construction of the traditional nuclear family. However, this is not achieved by simultaneously negating the constructs of domesticity and community. Rather, personal progress and healing are found by creating and forming stable and safe domestic spaces, where the severity of the past can be confronted. By

leaving her home in Kentucky, Taylor comes to find her worldview and belief system are being challenged by what she learns about the larger world around her. However, by gradually learning what she can control and what she has to leave to faith, Taylor starts to construct a foundation from which she and Turtle can grow closer and stronger. The women portrayed in *Anywhere but Here* and *The Bean Trees* push boundaries and cross borders regardless of their initial intentions do not come to full fruition. However, the characters in both of these novels seek to renegotiate their life circumstances by way of utilizing the road as a path to relocating to a new place and social environment, which consequently enable them to alter their life circumstances.

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