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Introduction

You cannot dream the happiness I feel -
You even laugh, perhaps at my devotion.
Mine is no passing mood of merriment:
I am one entering a sanctuary,
Who bows with reverent knee.
The hut is ugly! Well -
A hut like this, shut in by leafy trees,
To me is precious. How it comforts me!
And when it thus lies hidden in a wood
Of pure young aspen - hungry was my soul
For shrubs and groves - small wonder that I sing
The songs that well up in my happy heart.
The soul's salvation is such foliage -
Fresh rippling water for the thirsty glance.
How sweet this growth when all is gray and old!
This sprouting forest - how it frees the mind
From nightmare of stagnation that means death;
Lightens the heart and lets the glad tears come,
And warms and cheers against all desolate.

Agnes Mathilde Wergeland From *The Hermitage*

This poem by Agnes Mathilde Wergeland, the first Norwegian woman to obtain a doctorate, and who immigrated to America to pursue a career, and eventually was appointed professor at the University of Wyoming, may serve as an introduction to the enthusiasm she felt for the American West. Like numerous other women, including some of her ethnic sisters, she embraced the opportunities the West offered. On the other hand, by delving deeper into these women's writings and reminiscences, as, for example their diaries and letters, we also find that far from all their experiences on the frontier were as rose-colored as this poem may suggest. In any case, the frontier represented a new place as well as a new mentality, to which these women had to adapt in all facets of life.

For many years, western women's historians focused mostly on Anglo-American women moving west from the eastern part of the United States. The focus of historians of western women on women in the West has increasingly included minority groups, such as Hispanic, African, and Native American women. Immigrant women, however, have, I feel, to a lesser degree been included in the history of western women, although scholars have written about immigrant women in general. Taking ethnicity into account, but not gender particularly, much scholarly literature exists about Norwegian immigrants, especially in the typical Norwegian settlements of the Midwest. Some have even done in-depth research on individual Norwegian immigrant women and provided detailed analyses of their lives. Very few have, however, ventured to do a comparison of Norwegian women on the American frontier. This thesis does just that. It compares and analyzes three Norwegian immigrant women's frontier experiences, and investigates how these women fit into the overall picture of immigrant and native-born women in the American West during the period in question. It gives some attention to their background, immigration, and westward movement, but focuses primarily on their initial experiences on the frontier in the period from 1847 to 1910. The three women are Elise Wærenskjold, who immigrated to Texas in 1847, Elisabeth Koren, who immigrated to Iowa in 1853, and Agnes Mathilde Wergeland, who migrated to Wyoming in 1902.

These three women had many similarities, but also important differences in background and experience. They belonged to the class of *de kondisjonerte* – people of position, rank, or quality – in Norway. That gave them a special position in community building in America. Despite sharing a similar ethnic and class background, their reasons for emigrating diverged, as did their experiences in the American West, to some extent because they came to occupy different roles on the frontier – as farmwoman, pastor's wife, and professor.

The time frame is limited to when these women emigrated and lived on the American frontier, from Elise Wærenskjold's immigration to Texas in 1847 through Agnes Mathilde Wergeland's first years on the Wyoming frontier, ca 1910. The main focus is on the period in their lives when they had to adjust to new circumstances on the frontier. Elise Wærenskjold's experiences until some time after she became a widow, and also lost one of her sons, right after the Civil War, are included, as that gives important insight into the hardships faced by many women in the American West. Agnes Mathilde Wergeland, who for many years struggled for a foothold in the eastern United States, grasped the opportunity for a university position in Wyoming in 1902. The main focus here will be from her time on the Wyoming frontier. Geographically, the study is limited to the Trans-Mississippi West, and focuses on

these women's adaptation to frontier conditions in their respective regions – the western part of the South, the Midwest, and the Mountain region.

The fact that they settled in three different regions – and even more, the gap in time – contributed to their diverging experiences. Despite initial hardships, they were all determined to remain in the West and make it their home. The American society, and especially the American West, changed considerably during the years in question. From a woman's perspective, the West, where women were in great demand, opened up new possibilities. For example, in some western states women were given the right to vote much earlier than the rest of the nation. An increasing number of women also began to enter the professional world, even if it was harder for immigrant women to do so.

In comparing and analyzing these immigrant women's experiences, there will be a focus on what united them: they were women, they were immigrants – from the same class and ethnic background – and they settled on the American frontier. Sharing experiences with other women, as well as other immigrants, the study argues that gender, ethnicity, and class were important dimensions for understanding how they adapted to the frontier. Three aspects of their gendered frontier life will be treated: home and family, work-life, and the community, and an attempt will be made to analyze how the dimensions of gender, ethnicity, and class intersect with these aspects.

1.1 Nineteenth Century Norway

In *Immigrant Minds, American Identities: Making the United States Home, 1870-1930,* Orm Øverland writes: "any attempt to study immigration and immigrant ideologies [...] must be based on an awareness of the significant differences in experience before and after the act of migration."[1] Also L. DeAne Lagerquist stresses that knowledge of the conditions the immigrants left, as well as the customs and expectations they brought with them, are important prerequisites for understanding how they adapted.[2] In order to understand these women's thoughts and actions in their lives on the frontier, it is therefore necessary to take a closer look at some aspects of the society they grew up in, and to what extent they acted against gendered expectations. The particular Norwegian cultural context these women came from is discussed below.

The three women belonged to the class of *de kondisjonerte*. The economic crisis after the Napoleonic wars broke down the Norwegian upper class, but a new elite emerged in the 1830's with basis in an urban *dannelseskultur* – an intellectual refined culture, like that on the Continent. A generation of academics brought this new culture into the Norwegian *embetsstand* (civil service). The Norwegian population in the nineteenth century thus consisted of two clearly separate classes: *de kondisjonerte*, and *almuen* – the common people. *De kondisjonerte* was the professional and intellectual elite composed of the clergy, military officials, and civil servants, in short, of the professions that required academic training. Since Norway was in a union with Denmark until 1814 and did not have a university of its own until 1811, many of the professionals, especially within the clergy and the government, came from Denmark until later in the nineteenth century. Around 1800 the Norwegian population was overwhelmingly rural. As many as 85 percent were peasants and made up the other class, *almuen.* This class consisted of *bønder* – farmers, who owned their land, and *husmenn* – cotters, who worked the land without owning it. Members of the elite were sometimes attracted to a Romantic idea of the rural life of the peasants, but on the other hand, they were disgusted by the lack of sophistication among country people.[3]

Beginning around 1815, the year Elise Wærenskjold was born, the Norwegian population began to increase more rapidly, and in the years between 1815 and 1865 it nearly doubled. This increase is explained in light of a decline in mortality, especially among infants. This decline in mortality was caused by a decline in poverty, better nutrition, and mothers' nursing habits.[4] With an increase in the number of children who survived to adulthood, farms became too small to sustain a family. How should the country with its meager resources be able to feed all the people? Migration became the main solution to this population excess. Although work migration had existed earlier, a new era of migration started in the 1840's, when the United States replaced northern Norway as the main recipient of immigrants. In the years 1865 to 1905 more than half a million Norwegians emigrated, while during the early years of emigration, 1825 to 1850, eighteen thousand Norwegians emigrated.[5]

Predominantly families emigrated in the early phase, while in the late 1880's and early 1900's it was more common that the emigrants were single men and women. In both cases the majority of the emigrants came from inland communities. Gender differences in the migration pattern depended to a considerable extent on employment opportunities, in rural communities as well as in cities. In the years after 1875, sixty percent of those who migrated from rural districts – *bygda*, mostly young people, went to America, and the remaining to cities and other densely populated areas. Men dominated among those who immigrated to America, while the

urban centers in Norway attracted many young women.[6] Emigration served as a safety valve in the struggle for scarce resources, and besides, in America the landless could acquire his own land. The pioneers cleared the way for later immigrants. Those who remained in Norway learned about America and the possibilities it offered through letters sent back to the immigrants' families in rural communities in Norway. Immigrant agents wrote guidebooks aimed at prospective immigrants about the favorable conditions in America, often to bitter resentment in clerical circles.

The process of migration thus had inherent push and pull factors. Economic necessity was an important push factor, but some also decided to emigrate for political or religious reasons. Some were out of step with society or had problems with the law. Restrictive sex roles in Norway, as in many other countries, made progressive women immigrate to America.[7] The torment of parting with relatives and friends, often forever, and the long and frequently dangerous voyage in a sailing vessel, did not deter people from trying to get a better life for themselves and their children in "the promised land."

In addition to the population increase, structural changes of social and economic character set large numbers of people in motion. During the course of the century, industrialization altered many people's lives. In subsistence agriculture there was no division between production and reproduction or between the female private and the male public sphere. The household served as a production unit, relying on the workforce of a husband and his wife, and where all family members were required to contribute to the family's needs. Still, gender determined the nature of a person's obligations and rights, often to women's disadvantage. With industrialization, and subsequently new economic growth, which would last until the 1870's, production units outside the home gradually replaced the family household enterprise, where the women had played a very significant role, in both farm work and the production of articles of consumption, such as clothing, butter, canned food, beer, candles, and soap. Married women's marginalized economic role in farm work was juxtaposed with the agricultural commercialization – *the store hamskiftet* – after 1870. This shift from an agricultural and home-based production, where men's and women's work were shared, to an industrialized society brought about a division of the work place and the home, which resulted in separate spheres for men and women. Human labor was to a high degree transferred to machines, where men took over much of the work that earlier had been performed by women.

Not only production work was removed from the home and the family. With the establishment of an educational system, as well as hospitals and social institutions, reproduction functions, which previously mainly had been performed by women, were

gradually transferred to public authorities. At the same time, these functions were professionalized, and thus masculinized. But new requirements in health, welfare and childrearing soon gave women new tasks. Raising housewives' knowledge about hygiene and domestic science as well as cooking skills became significant in a national health project.

The division between the workplace and the home, and the subsequent transition from a supply economy to a consumer economy took place from the middle of the nineteenth century, first among the upper classes. This change occurred not only in Norway, but in other industrialized countries as well, including America, where married women devoted themselves to the domestic sphere. The mother's role was emphasized. Medical science submitted a theory that women should avoid physically demanding work because of their reproduction role.[8]

With growing urbanization, a great portion of single women, on the other hand, was from the middle of the century in the work force. The majority were maids in the homes of the expanding middle-class. Women constituted an important labor supply in the industrialization process from the 1840's. The labor market was gender segregated, where men occupied all leading, technological and skilled positions, while low paid, unskilled routine work was left to women. The idea of the man as provider and the woman as dependent prevailed. For educated women, teaching became a common employment from the 1860's. In this way, they were able to support themselves while their employers enjoyed reliable and inexpensive labor, as women did not have the same opportunities for promotion as men.[9]

Domestic servants and factory girls being left to themselves in the city, beyond parents' control, were exposed to dangers as well as new opportunities.[10] In the middle of the century as much as one tenth of all births in Norway took place outside marriage. The high number of unwed mothers is partly explained by the population growth, which caused a scarcity of resources and thus increased mobility, and subsequently, freedom. Also in peasant communities, births outside marriage were common.[11] The condition of women varied by social class, but regardless of class, it was unusual for women to have power in society.

The majority of the poor people were women, and there was a growing concern for public expenses. Blom et al argue that economic motives were conspicuous in the reform movement that came about throughout the century. Fathers were economically responsible for their daughters until they eventually married, and civil servants, who were concerned about their daughters' future, were among those who saw better education opportunities for girls as a solution to their disadvantageous role in the labor market.[12]

Although not an agitator for equal education for boys and girls, Hartvig Nissen was a pioneer in strengthening education for girls. The *pikeskoler* – girls' schools – established after 1850, aimed at preparing girls from middle-class families for a life as wives and mothers in a cultured elite. Foreign languages, literature, religion, piano lessons, embroidery, poetry, and the fine arts were important subjects. This was termed *finkultur,* and according to school reforms pioneer, Ragna Nielsen, it was synonymous with the definition of *dannelse* – refinement, "possessing intellectual interests and being able to participate in conversations about the arts and literature."[13] Before *pikeskoler* were established, or where they did not exist, a governess or private tutor was hired. The girls' schools, often run by unmarried women, functioned as training centers for future teachers and governesses as well. In 1861, a seminar called *Guvernanteskolen* (The Governess School) was established at Nissen Pikeskole. This was aimed at girls who wanted to continue their education after confirmation.[14] Higher education remained sex segregated until 1896, when a new law on higher education gave girls and boys the same rights and equal training in all subjects. In 1878, *middelskoleeksamen* (middle school exam) was opened to women, and from 1882, *examen artium* (high school exam). In 1884, women were for the first time admitted to the university, and in 1890 to the teachers' colleges.[15]

Women in Norway, as in the United States, came to be assigned special responsibility for morality and faith. Although excluded from preaching and formal authority in church matters, women enjoyed the fellowship of other women in the more informal religious women's organizations, where they through handiwork and charity bazaars contributed economically to missionary projects. Haugeanism – the teachings of the lay preacher Hans Nielsen Hauge – broke with the strict sex roles of the state church. Hauge allowed women to speak in public and to preach. His own preaching was a breach with a state church decree from 1741, which forbade lay preaching and imposed state church ordained preachers to supervise all private religious gatherings.[16]

The religious, social work done by women was the precursor for women's involvement in philanthrophy and poverty relief. Initiated by middle-class women, this reached some extent from about 1860. These women worked within nursing and social care, among prostitutes, for the temperance cause, and the like. Feminist ideology could be expressed in temperance or mission movements. In a nationwide temperance organization, established in 1859, women were admitted on equal terms as men, and some of these women would be pioneers in the fight for women's emancipation.[17]

In the upper classes women were gradually included in an intellectual culture. This refined culture, resembling the Continental salon-culture, was prevalent in the Norwegian elite from the 1840's, and replaced a more debauched party culture. However, the economic and cultural boom, enlightenment and nation-building forged a new official elite, where women's roles again became marginalized compared to their participation in the more private salon-like culture.[18] Henrik Wergeland maintained in 1840 that "a thirst for liberty and patriotism" were feelings that were not compatible with "true womanhood." "However, such feelings could be accepted in cases where she held a strong 'nerve of piety in her disposition.'"[19] In the romantic period, feminine values were prevalent as symbols, but not until the late 1880's, did women become actors with their own initiatives.

In the course of the century, women's rights continued to be a contested issue, but in 1888, the first reform dealing with women's status in marriage was passed. This gave a married woman the right to dispose of her own income. Divorce practices were made more liberal from 1790. However, after a temporary curtailment from about 1830, the issue was again brought to the agenda with the liberal breakthrough in the 1880's, which resulted in a marked increase in the number of divorces. The most common reason for divorce was that the spouse somehow had disappeared, sometimes by emigrating. A miserable marriage was, however, not an accepted reason for divorce, but for separation it was. In the upper classes, marriage was a way of establishing and maintaining the connection between powerful families. Love and affection between husband and wife became increasingly important, however, within one's social class. John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women* (1869) laid the foundation for a more companionate marriage ideal.[20]

The relationship between the sexes was a frequent theme in the literature of the time. Women wrote religious literature, memoirs, letters, and poetry, but it did not become common that women wrote in their own name until the end of the 1880's. From the middle of the century, however, some feminist women stepped out of the norm and started to express their political views, as did Camilla Collett with *Amtmandens Døttre,* using the pseudonym Johan Dahl. The 1870's represent a new era when women started to express their views publicly, both in newspapers, magazines, and in political arenas. This was controversial, and it was regarded a threat against morality. The year 1884, an important year in Norwegian politics, marked the start of an organized feminism in Norway, and the request for suffrage became the feminists' most important issue in the following decades.[21] Economic independence was decisive for political influence. Income dependent suffrage was achieved in 1907, and universal suffrage in 1913.[22]

The Norwegian feminist movement is explained by two factors: First, demographical, social and economic conditions in nineteenth century Norway, and second, influence from abroad as a result of the enlightenment and the French revolution. Also the American feminist movement influenced the Norwegian feminists. Blom et al argue that education and new middle-class occupations had great influence on women's self esteem.[23] They further emphasize that the girls' schools were important in raising middle-class girls' knowledge and refinement. Some of these girls also spent time abroad. Economic changes from the middle of the nineteenth century gave unmarried women new opportunities in the labor market, which made it possible for them to choose not to marry. This well-qualified group of independent, educated women entered the feminist cause in the 1880's.[24]

Suffrage brought about many changes for women, but for the majority, their daily lives continued to be characterized by responsibility for home and family as wives, mothers, or maids. For women who emigrated, their lives in the United States were also influenced by continuity, according to Blom et al. The emigrants brought their culture with them, and women played an important role in passing on norms and values, and maintaining relations. To what extent this was true for the three women studied here, will be a central theme throughout the thesis.

1.2 The Three Immigrant Women – Background and Emigration

1.2.1 Elise Wærenskjold

Elise Tvede, later Wærenskjold, was born in 1815 in the Dybvåg parsonage in the diocese of Kristiansand, where her father, the Danish-born Nicolai Seiersløv Tvede, served as pastor. In addition, he, in the wake of the Napoleonic wars, took an active interest in community affairs, such as poor relief, agriculture and popular education.[25] Like other clergymen, educated at the University in Copenhagen, and with powerful family relations, he and his family belonged to the class of *de kondisjonerte*, where daughters were supposed to study foreign languages, literature, music and embroidery. So it also was with Elise, who studied German and French, the Bible and "proper" books, learned painting and fine needlework.[26]

However, this young lady had higher aspirations than entering her expected role as a subservient wife in accordance with the norm for women of her class and day. With a strong

belief in the freedom of the individual, she, even before she emigrated, distinguished herself as a woman of outstanding courage. A long time before women teachers became common in Norway, she, at age nineteen, established a private school for children in Tønsberg, and ran this school for three years. Later, she established a handicraft school for girls in Lillesand. She ignored the repudiation from the mayor that no woman should undertake such an enterprise, and she ran this school successfully until she emigrated.[27]

In 1839, she married sea captain Svend Foyn, who later founded Norway's whaling industry, but due to what she later termed "incompatibility," the couple separated in 1842, an act that at the time would make her a social outcast. According to Dr. Clausen, both had strong personalities, and Foyn disliked Elise's commitment to her own enterprises, which he regarded as not suitable for a "proper" wife. Besides, there are hints that he, like many men of his time, was fond of liquor, something Elise could not accept.[28]

Following her separation from Foyn, she became a member of a group of people who worked for progressive causes, and here the temperance cause was something she chose to devote herself to. In the 1840's, when she became the first female member of the Lillesand Temperance Society, she wrote: "That no women in our community had as yet become members of the society was no longer any deterrent for me but rather a potent motive for joining." She started her career as a writer in 1843 by issuing a temperance pamphlet.[29] She would later continue her temperance work in Texas.

The group of progressive activists had other issues on their agenda in addition to temperance. As a member, Elise became highly aware of the limitations faced by both women and the poor in Norway. Since 1815, the year she was born, the country had experienced a steady population growth which caused pressure on available resources, and thus cast many of the common people into dire poverty. Solutions to the problems had to be found. Editor and owner of *Christiansandsposten*, Johan Reinert Reiersen, whose father had been a sexton in pastor Tvede's parish, was a zealous advocate for political reforms. As an agent for emigration, he had visited the Northern states and the Republic of Texas in 1843-44. Immigrant agents were important advocates for the migration process, and the following year he brought a group of Norwegians over to Texas from Norway. Before leaving Norway, Reiersen started to publish the monthly magazine *Norge og Amerika*, containing letters, reports, and articles on emigration, for which Elise Wærenskjold took over as editor until she herself emigrated. She later wrote to Professor Rasmus B. Andersen in Wisconsin: "No one wanted to put out such a dangerous sheet, that might lure people into migrating. To keep the paper alive, I undertook its publication."[30]

Without close relatives in Norway – her parents were by this time both dead, she was separated from her husband, and with no children or siblings – she decided to emigrate. But why would a woman of her class, who lived a comfortable life in Norway, emigrate? She never – at least not in the sources consulted here – gave a clear answer to this question, but several possibilities, or a combination of possible causes, can be suggested. First, she was a woman with a strong belief in the freedom of the individual. In this respect, the United States would better suit her ideology. Second, many of her letters written in Texas mention the equality between people in America, and the lack of such in Norway, and how she would not have her children grow up in a society divided by classes. Third, could it also be that she was stigmatized in Norway because of her most unusual decision to seek a divorce from her husband, or perhaps she had already made plans for the future with her fellow immigrant, Wilhelm Wærenskjold, whom she married in 1848. Russell writes that she supplied names of fellow passengers except Wilhelm Wærenskjold's, and that she did not explain to the Norwegian colony in Texas who he was.[31] "Why I have decided to go to America would be too farfetched to explain or to put in writing to a stranger, but if I am going to have the pleasure of getting to know you I will explain it to you. Also, I will have the opportunity to give you proof that the separation (from Foyn) was not caused by bad conduct on my part," she wrote in a letter to her Norwegian friend Gjestvang.[32] She never mentioned the topic again.

Irrespective of her reason for emigrating, we know that in March of 1847 she boarded the ship *Ygdrasil* in Drøbak and sailed to Havre de Grace, France, where she boarded another ship, *New England*, bound for New Orleans. She went as a single woman and at her own cost, which was quite unusual for a woman in this early stage of the emigration era, when mostly families emigrated. In her emigration company were Wilhelm Wærenskjold, farmer Andersen and student Buch.[33] Upon leaving Norway, she described her feelings thus:

> For a moment it was as if I left all the ones I love in Norway, maybe never to be seen again in this life. But whether we will gather again or not, I will remember with joy and gratitude every proof of friendship and goodwill I received. And all my warmest wishes will be for the good of my beloved Norway, the country where I spent my childhood and youth, the country that contains so many precious memories, so many beloved friends. It can never be forgotten.[34]

Although she never went back to Norway, she did not forget her friends, who she continued to write to for the rest of her life.

On the journey, she constantly had in mind how to advise others who would follow in her footsteps, by publishing the information in *Norge og Amerika*. One such piece of advice was what kind of provisions passengers ought to bring on the ship: bread, peas, potatoes,

bacon, ham, coffee, tea, sugar, rice, butter, flour, eggs, prunes and candles.[35] Securing provisions was a female task for the second and third class passengers, who had to cook their own meals. The Atlantic crossing on board *New England*, which, due to lack of wind, lasted from April 20 to July 10, was a trial with a lack of drinking water, hunger, disease and even death among the passengers. Altogether nine people died, and eight of them were children.[36] When she finally reached the Mississippi Delta after the long and difficult ocean journey, Elise wrote: "Sailing up the river is superb." However, while in New Orleans, she got sick herself with dysentery, and later emphasized in her writing the importance of being cautious and to bring proper remedies to cure illnesses. After having been assigned to dreary mid-deck arrangements on board *New England*, where one big room served as sleeping quarters, dining hall and living space for more than two hundred passengers, and without any form of privacy, she cautioned future emigrants not to trust the ship's owner and crew, nor the port officials.[37] Whether her poor travel arrangements was caused by deception, or because she chose to travel in the cheapest possible way is not known, but in any case, her travel experiences were a far cry from those experienced by the Korens, who as first class passengers enjoyed the most luxurious accommodations the ship could offer.

1.2.2 Elisabeth Koren

Else Elisabeth Hysing, later Koren**,** was born in Larvik in 1832, and died at Washington Prairie in 1918. Her parents were Ahlert Hysing and Caroline Mathilde Koren, the daughter of Christiane Birgitte Didericksen Koren also known as "Mother Koren." Only eight years old, Elisabeth lost her mother. Her father had studied theology and served as a teacher in Bergen before he became headmaster of the new *realskole* (middle school) for boys in Larvik. He was also a representative to the Norwegian Parliament, and for ten years the mayor of Larvik, besides serving in other positions of trust. The Hysing family lived in the first floor of a large old manor house – *herregaard*, while the school occupied the second floor. There was no school for girls where they lived, but Elisabeth received private lessons from the teachers of the school where her father was headmaster, and she had been taught to read and write English. She loved flowers and found great pleasure in working with her father in the garden.[38]

Elisabeth and Vilhelm Koren left Norway September 5, 1853 on the steamship *Constitution* to Kiel. From there, they took the train to Hamburg, where they were guests with the Norwegian-Swedish vice-consul Lund and his wife before leaving for America on board

the *Rhein*, a three-masted bark, on September 15. The bark roomed two hundred steerage passengers, thirty to forty second class passengers, and a small number of first class passengers, of which group the Koren's were a part. In her diary, Mrs. Koren related about the fellowship with, and the daily activities of their group: "We sat a long time about the coffee table and chatted, enveloped in a cloud of smoke; afterwards the gentlemen played whist and the ladies amused themselves as usual by solving riddles, the regular occupations here in the evening."[39] She wrote at length about the good meals they were served, in contrast to the lower class passengers, who had to bring provisions and cook their own food on the deck: "We had an excellent supper consisting of oysters, broiled chops, and potatoes," and "When it rains and blows all day long, as it does today, so that we cannot go on deck, we become quite alarmed at our good appetites and capacity for food. It seems as if we do nothing but eat."[40] In addition, she spent much time reading, as she was no doubt a lady with a taste for literature.

The relative luxury this group of first class passengers enjoyed on board could not save them from the dangers all the passengers faced on a stormy sea. They were, literally speaking, all in the same boat. After a frightful storm, she was reflecting over their smallness in the universe:

> We have had fearful weather. […] the sail went to pieces; and then, quite helpless, we were thrown about and rolled frightfully. […] It was an anxious day. […] It was a strange sensation to stand there on deck, where everything had been in such uproar. The sky was so fair; it seems to me I have never seen the stars so large and beautiful before. It was lovely to watch the phosphorescence in the sea. The ship lay and rocked without a single sail and with broken mastheads. Strange it was to stand there on the lonely ship in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, and then to think how easily a misfortune could have occurred earlier in the day, an event which God graciously averted.[41]

In the middle of the confusion, she, in describing their dinner, demonstrated that she possessed a good portion of humor:

> Dinner today was a comical affair. […] One of us had to hold the tureen; and each one, balancing his bowl in his hand, hurried to eat his soup before it landed in his lap. Then came the roast chicken; but the poor creatures doubtless fancied that they were alive, so restless were they on the platter. […] The steward had been careful enough to pour the juice off the beets, but the chicken gravy did not seem to like that and gave them a portion of its own fat; and just as I was thinking of getting some gravy for my meat, it came over very gallantly and gave me a little.[42]

As on board *New England*, sickness hit hard with an outbreak of cholera among the steerage passengers. Fourteen people died and were buried at sea. Although not hit by cholera, some of her fellow first class passengers suffered from seasickness and exhaustion, and she gave them consolation: "I am now through with my sick visits – the customary round I make every morning – and sit here waiting for coffee."[43]

After arriving at Staten Island, New York, on November 20, Elisabeth expressed her feelings thus:

> Yes, it was a joy once more to see land […]. But there was melancholy in knowing that this land was, after all, America; and the anticipation or joy that, especially during the first part of our voyage, I thought I would feel so strongly on reaching land, was not present in the degree I had expected, for here everything was foreign. There was no one waiting for us; it was not like traveling in Europe; still I was heartily glad and thankful that the voyage was safely over.[44]

She was here realizing the fact that she was starting on a new chapter of her life, separated from her old, known world, and with mixed anticipation for what lay ahead of her in a foreign land. Although physically separated from her family in Norway, the connection was maintained by writing, something that was of utmost importance to her.

1.2.3 Agnes Mathilde Wergeland

Agnes Mathilde Wergeland's early ancestors were fishermen. The Wergeland name came from Verkland – the name of a farmstead by the Sognefjord, Norway, where the family lived for generations. Seeking a career, Halvor Lassesen in 1782 left his family farm for Bergen together with his family, and in 1784 he left for Portugal, where no one heard of him again. Back in Bergen were his poverty stricken wife and three children. An uncle had the boys, Lasse and Niels, enrolled in a Latin school in Bergen, and changed their names to Lars Johan and Nicolai Wergeland, the name being a Danish form of Verkland. Lars Johan Wergeland went into the shoemaker trade, but he also wrote poetry and taught languages. His brother, Nicolai, became a minister, and was a prominent member of the Constitutional Convention at Eidsvoll in 1814. Among his descendants were the renowned poet Henrik Wergeland and his sister Camilla Wergeland Collett.[45]

Agnes Mathilde Wergeland's father was Sverre Nicolai Wergeland, son of Lars Johan Wergeland. He had married Anne Margrete Larsen in 1842, but left his family for America. Her mother worked as *oldfrue* – a kind of supervisor - at Gaustad Asylum in Christiania. Being the daughter of a smith, she was not well educated, but she was a hard-working woman who tried to secure an education for her children as well as helping the poor. Agnes Mathilde, or Mathilde, as she was called in Norway, was born in 1857, as the youngest of six children, of whom only three reached the age of maturity. Her oldest brother drowned at sea, and her other brother, Oscar Arnold Wergeland, became an artist after studies in Christiania, Copenhagen and Munich. His most known work is the painting of the Eidsvoll Constitutional Assembly.[46]

Mathilde grew up as a lonely child at the asylum where her mother worked. A childhood friend described her thus: “I can never recollect Mathilde having any other friend in her childhood but myself, who was much older than she. I am afraid her childhood was not very happy, I fear she was often very lonely. […] We often played in the woods as we both were very fond of flowers, birds and everything in nature.”[47] She early showed an interest in music, art and literature, but her mother did not approve of her daughter pursuing a career in this field. Instead, she wanted her to become a teacher. Mathilde received private lessons until she was fourteen, continued her studies one year in a parsonage and was confirmed in Christiania. The young Mathilde was determined to acquire an education, but the little money her mother earned was saved for her brother’s studies in Munich. With the help of friends, she finished Nissen’s School for Governesses in 1878, at that time the highest education available to girls in Norway.[48] The director of the school urged her to pursue her literary talent, but due to lack of money, she was not until later able to go abroad for further studies. In the meantime she had piano lessons with Edvard Grieg. Finally, an opportunity came for her to go abroad, and in 1883 or 1884 she went to Munich to pursue her studies in history and civilization, while continuing her interest in art and music.[49] Failing to receive stipends, friends helped her go on, and in 1888, she went to Zurich, where she obtained her Doctor of Philosophy degree in 1890 on old Icelandic inheritance laws[50] The University of Zurich was by that time the only institution in Europe where women could acquire that degree. Agnes Mathilde Wergeland was the first Norwegian woman to earn that distinction, although the study, according to Dr. Semmingsen, would not suffice for a doctorate at any university by today's standards.[51]

Nevertheless, having achieved her degree, there was no opening for women within her field in Norway. She felt compelled to leave her native land, maybe not solely because of the lack of opportunities for women scholars in general, but also because of her affiliations with the women’s rights movement. In October 1885, she confided to her diary: "I have heard that I have been impatient, too demanding, too inconsiderate in my endeavors."[52] And she continued: "I remember the 1880's [...] how I visited school superintendents and school directresses, but I never had an hour of employment at any school. I was labeled a radical. Just because I belonged to a progressive group, I was considered a dangerous person."[53] Already as a young girl she became acquainted with the leaders of the women’s rights movement, among them her relative Camilla Collett, with whom she shared many traits, and she wrote: **“**For many years my mother took me along to pay her visits. [...] Her relationship to me was distant, yet she was much nearer to my heart than any of my other relatives.”[54] She also met another feminist, Aasta Hansteen, with whom she would form a lasting friendship.

Aasta Hansteen had stayed in America from 1880 to 1889. Upon a request about possibilities in America, Hansteen wrote in a letter to Wergeland:

> America is the best place on earth for women. Here are the freest institutions and the freest intellectual climate. Here are hosts of prominent high-minded women, great in character, talents, work, and willpower. All this has created a large, broad platform where these women rise above the crowd. It is uplifting to see them and attend their meetings. There one feels the breezes of the future approach one with a strength and freedom like that of no other place on earth.[55]

However, Hansteen warned her friend about the difficulties in making a living in this land of opportunities, where the majority of Norwegian immigrant women worked as domestic servants, as many as 86 percent in 1920, according to Gabaccia.[56] "To earn anything by writing and teaching I believe is impossible," Hansteen advised her friend.[57]

While attending a woman's meeting in Copenhagen, Agnes Mathilde Wergeland learned that she had been awarded a scholarship at Bryn Mawr College, Pennsylvania, and on May 17, 1890 she wrote in her diary: "I have received the fellowship at Bryn Mawr. May it bring me luck. God grant it! - -"[58] She was a great admirer of Ibsen's works, and Merrill wrote that Wergeland had explained to her that Lona Hessel in Ibsen's play Pillars of Society had been a model and aspiration to her, and in a way caused her to make the United States her future home.[59] In September of the same year she left for America. Despite the resentment she felt against how she was treated in Norway, her deep love for her native land never ceased. Throughout her life, she continued to follow the national movement and political events in Norway.

To what extent were these women's roles and values altered in the West? In order to understand their thoughts and actions, and how they fit into the ongoing debate about women on the frontier, it is necessary to look at what scholars in western women's history have already uncovered.

1.3. Women on the Frontier

Ever since Frederick Jackson Turner launched his frontier thesis in 1893, suggesting that the frontier represented an area in which the settlers formed new, simpler, and more democratic, institutions and values, scholars have debated the meaning of the frontier. A more recent theory, first argued by Pomeroy, maintained that Euro-Americans, instead of adapting to

frontier conditions, rather reinstated eastern patterns. These two conflicting theories existed before women's history became a scholarly field. Where do western women, who also migrated to the frontier in great numbers, fit in? What values and attitudes did *they* bring to the West, and what did they leave behind?[60] In order to find the answers to the posed questions, historians of western women have turned to women's own writings, such as diaries and letters.

What was actually the frontier? Scholars of western women's history have brought about new definitions. In *The Women's West*, women's historians Susan Armitage and Elizabeth Jameson argue that there were many frontiers. On the early European American frontier, especially in mining and boomtowns, women were scarce, whereas families frequently settled the agricultural frontier. Julie Roy Jeffrey mentions in *Frontier Women* that some historians had renounced the term "frontier" altogether, because people were in constant motion. Still, she chose to keep the term but redefined it as "a place of cultural contact and interaction between groups."[61] In *The Female Frontier*, Glenda Riley introduces – as the title of her book implies – a female frontier. By this notion she maintains that gender more than region shaped women's responsibilities and life styles on the frontier.[62] In *A Place to Grow: Women in the American West*, Riley again discusses the meaning of the frontier. Was it a region with less than two inhabitants per square mile, as defined by the U.S. Bureau of Census? Or, did it imply the process of migrants settling among the native populations? Riley concludes that the term "frontier" in any case is a pejorative term because it is often associated with Anglo-Americans bringing civilization to the West, i.e. to the native populations, who did not consider themselves primitive and in need of being civilized. This implies an outdated "we-versus-them mentality," according to Riley. Instead, she suggests that "the American West" is a more appropriate term, spanning "region *and* mentality, place *and* concept," without giving some groups credit over others.[63] This thesis uses the terms "frontier" and "the West" interchangeably, referring to the locales in the Trans-Mississippi West where these Norwegian women settled.

To get a complete understanding of western women's history, all races and classes, and both sexes need to be included. In conventional western literature, women were portrayed as helpmates to men, or civilizers of the male dominated western societies. Folklorist Beverly Stoeltje, in her article "A Helpmate for Man Indeed" presents three images of western women: refined lady, helpmate, and bad woman. Armitage maintains that women were active in community building by selecting community projects and raising money, but according to the stereotype, women were passive, while men, who took care of the formalities in the public

sphere, were given credit for the entire projects. The images depict women as young, white American wives and mothers. Breaking down the stereotypes has been important in getting a complete picture of western women's history.

In trying to answer the question of whether – or to what extent – women brought their culture and values to the West, several answers have been suggested. Sandra Myres gave credit to Turner's thesis. She thought that the frontier was liberating for women. However, many scholars think that there was no real change in gender-roles on the frontier. Dee Brown, in *The Gentle Tamers* (1958), argued that women – the Victorian civilizer – brought eastern culture to the frontier where a civilized society was re-established. Thus, Brown supported the argument of some western historians that there was more continuity than change on the frontier. Julie Roy Jeffrey also found that western women tried to live up to the Cult of True Womanhood, in which women were supposed to be pious, pure, domestic, and submissive. The West was, in her view, *not* liberating for women.[64] In *A Place to Grow: Women in the American West*, Glenda Riley agrees that women's roles in the West were more subjected to continuity than to change. In doing so, she reminds the reader of the flexibility of the concepts "continuity" and "change," as they might have different connotations for different scholars. The question is, she writes, whether the changes caused by the introduction of the market economy implied continuity or change in women's *perceived* roles and values. She stresses the importance of *comparing* western women with women in other regions. Whether the market economy brought about continuity or change in women's perceived roles, it altered their lives in many ways. A great number of women entered occupations outside the home, sought education, and entered the public arena by, for example, engaging in women's organizations. Some women believed that female suffrage was the key to women's increased power.[65]

In *The Female Frontier: A Comparative View of Women on the Prairie and the Plains* Glenda Riley argues that gender, more than region and era, shaped women's responsibilities and life styles on the frontier. While men's frontier experiences depended on the region's natural resources and thus whether they were farmers, miners, or merchants, women's experiences in general revolved round domestic chores, childbirth and child care, which transcended both region and time. Despite exceptions to this general pattern, due to various factors such as class, ethnicity, education, and marital status, she concludes that the similarity of women's work, and thus female norms, prevailed. The female frontier, she maintains, is one of many frontiers with its own culture and value system – such as the mining frontier, the

farmer's frontier, and the urban frontier – and it is essential to "an understanding of the full implications of women's participation in America's westward movement," she concludes.[66]

Riley's study is a valuable source for this thesis because it investigates the experiences of a variety of frontierswomen, where the variables of ethnicity, race, marital status, age, social class, and religious affiliation are represented. Absent in Riley's research are Native American women though, as they are in the thesis, except for a brief description of how the three women perceived the native population. The thesis focuses on the Norwegian women's experiences, both in relation to each other as well as to other groups of women on the frontier, and Riley's research bridges these groups, as well as the regions and eras in which they operate. Because her research deals with more or less the same aspects of women's lives as the thesis: home-life, employment, and community, the three women's experiences are seen against Riley's findings.

1.4 Immigrant Women

Just as historians of western women have provided theories on western women, other scholars have directed their research on immigrant women. One of these is Donna Gabaccia, who defines a prospective immigrant as a person who has some knowledge of the world, and has both a desire and the ability to migrate. She lists four migration patterns for women: First, refugees, a category in which women have been well represented. Second, those migrating with their husbands who intend to settle permanently in the United States. In this category, the sex ratio has been balanced since husband and wife were traveling together. Third, she speaks of women who remained in their homelands while their husbands and fathers emigrated, and who eventually followed. The forth and last category embraces those who emigrated alone, in which young, single women have been well represented. The women in this thesis belong in the second and forth category.

It is necessary to point out that many scholars place immigrant women in the category of the least privileged women, and apparently fail to recognize that some of them were well educated, middle-class women, such as the women studied in this thesis. Class distinctions among immigrant women are recognized by Gabaccia, who writes that experiences differed not only between men and women, but also between groups of women depending on variables

such as class, ethnicity, and time of migration.[67] There was an enormous variation in the level of education and literacy among nineteenth century immigrants. The majority of educated women immigrants had middle-class parents, and came from homes that employed servants.[68] This was presumably true for at least two of the women studied in this thesis. A woman's background and position in her homeland played a significant role both in how she traveled as well as in her adjustment to a new life in America.[69]

In dealing with how the migration and settlement process differed for men and women, Gabaccia maintains that especially in work roles, domestic duties, and communal affairs – the aspects treated in this thesis – their lives have diverged, as women's and men's responsibilities mostly have been complementary. Maxine Seller Schwartz, like Gabbacia, acknowledges that immigrant women's encounter with America differed from men's in the roles, opportunities, and experiences of several arenas, such as in the family, the workplace, the community, and the nation.[70] Initially, immigrant women shared experiences with female kin and neighbors.[71] Elisabeth Koren, for example, shared some experiences with the farm-women in the Washington Prairie settlement, although her diary reveals that she belonged to a different class.

Scholars of immigration have analyzed how immigrants adapted to their new life in America. In "The Uprooted" (1951) Oscar Handlin argues that immigrants could not again become members of a community like the one they left.[72] While Handlin focused on the emotional struggle the immigrants faced, later scholars have instead pointed to ethnicity as a resource in the immigrants' process of adaptation. John Bodnar, for example, explains the immigrant experience with the concept of transplantation. As the immigrants sought "a degree of meaning and control" in their lives, they transplanted their familiar institutions. Like Gabaccia, Bodnar asserts that there were two separate but related Americas, that of the working class and that of the middle-class. The power and influence exercised by the middle-class through institutions in the community was the glue that kept the ethnic enclave together and gave the immigrants a sense of belonging in America. This ethnic culture was a dynamic culture confronting factors such as ethnicity, religion, tradition, class, and progress, as it constantly responded to changing needs and opportunities.[73] As pastor and pastor's wife, the Korens had a special position through the ethnic church in forging such an ethnic culture, but through active community participation, Elise Wærenskjold and Agnes Mathilde Wergeland played active roles in preserving their ethnic culture as well. In *In America the men Milk the Cows*, Lagerquist refutes the assumption that Norwegian Americans assimilated easily into American culture. Rather, she maintains that the strong preservation of their homeland culture

caused ethnic retention.[74] The Norwegian American ethnicity was linked to Lutheranism, both within church and education. A shared cultural background eased the immigrants' adaptation to the American society, into which they gradually were molded.

In *The Minds of the West: Ethnocultural Evolution in the Rural Middle West, 1830-1917,* historian Jon Gjerde deals with "the juxtaposition of cultural patterns – the minds – and environmental possibilities in a region diverse in cultural traditions and rich in resources – the West – that was replete with tension, conflict, even paradox."[75] Gjerde's study explains how the cultural traditions differed between European immigrants and migrants of Yankee background in the rural Middle West. Of special relevance for this study, these traditions disclose differences in power structure within the European and Yankee family respectively, which had great impact on women's roles, as well as the larger society. Although Gjerde's study is limited to the Middle West, where only Elisabeth Koren of the women dealt with in this study settled, some of his ideas are applicable also to explaining Elise Wærenskjold's and Agnes Mathilde Wergeland's frontier experiences.

Gjerde describes the West as an area open to liberal individual freedom. However, the open space also gave immigrants room for transplanting their traditions to secluded ethnic settlements. Religious institutions formed ethnic communities, which sometimes were challenged just because of the freedom of religion and the subsequent influence from the larger American society. Elisabeth Koren and Elise Wærenskjold, who both lived in Norwegian settlements, write about unpleasant encounters with people of a faith divergent from their own. However, the two women's experiences also diverged, as the settlement in which Elise Wærenskjold lived, for long periods was without a pastor of their own faith, while Elisabeth Koren's husband served as pastor in the Washington Prairie and adjacent settlements. By establishing institutions of parochial education and faith, ethnic leaders sought to control the infusion of American ideas into their ethnic settlements. Both Elise Wærenskjold and Elisabeth Koren emphasize the importance of maintaining their own religion. However, gradually, the open environment of the West transformed the immigrants' minds, causing ethnic units to become included in the larger pluralistic American society, where immigrants were able to take part in the political debate. Gjerde argues that immigrants developed a "complementary identity" because their allegiance to the United States and their cultural traditions enforced each other. Before Norwegian immigrants entered the United States, the country had implemented a system that embraced freedom of the individual. It is a paradox, however, as Gjerde also mentions, that this individual freedom did not apply to women and children, or slaves for that matter – just white Protestant men, who were

suspicious of other religions and more corporate cultures, which they feared would break down their republican ideals.[76]

In addition to dealing with the western minds on the community level, Gjerde operates with two distinct family patterns, or typologies[77] as he denominates them: one Yankee typology and one European American. These typologies manifest a parent-child relationship and reflect the ideological difference of individual versus corporate tradition in the United States and Europe respectively. In America, Michel Chevalier argued, progress rested on the spirit of republicanism and individualism. In Jacksonian America, "a farm" he writes, "is an inviolable republic in the state; each individual is a republic by himself in the family." Moreover, the American farmer spared his wife the hard work unsuitable to women, he concludes. The corporate family ideal had lost its power and was replaced by a contractual relationship between individuals. Horace Miner maintains that, among ethnocultural groups, the corporate ideal was prevalent well into the twentieth century.[78]

The core of these traditions consisted of the divergent power relations between family members. While the Yankee typology praised the freedom of the individual, the European American tradition maintained a patriarchal system, giving the husband and father authority over the wife and children. This latter system implied that the whole family worked together on the family farm, which in fact was a family enterprise. Americans criticized what they saw as lack of affection between husband and wife in such relationships, and the exploitation of the labor of the wife and children, often at the expense of the children's, especially daughters', education. Settlements were subjected to aspects of both continuity and change, both on a household and a community level. Through the shift from solely wheat production to mixed farming, family household labor maintained its importance. Yet, the transition from what Gjerde terms a "household mode of production" to a market economy brought about tensions between generations, as well as changes in gender roles, and as time passed, new ideas could not be prevented from filtering the ethnically insulated settlements and transforming them.[79]

Elise Wærenskjold and Elisabeth Koren both lived in ethnic farm communities, although they occupied different roles: as farmwoman and pastor's wife respectively. Elisabeth Koren's diary gives a vivid picture of the daily life among the settlers in the community, at the time apparently far removed from intrusion of Yankee influence. Her husband, the pastor, was a key person in cementing the ethnic traditions, providing a sense of continuity in the immigrants' lives. Without this unifying force, the settlement was more susceptible to influence from the larger American society, as can be inferred from Elise

Wærenskjold's letters. To what extent Gjerde's, and other scholars' ideas are prevalent in these communities will be discussed in the following chapters.

1.5 Sources

Sources in Women's History

Elizabeth Jameson argues that sources have been a problem in interpreting western women's lives. Census and other public material provide some important facts, but they cannot give us a complete understanding of women's lives or a description of the work they did.[80] Women's history sources, such as diaries, letters, journals, memoirs, novels, poems and oral histories, provide valuable information to get a more complete picture of their pioneer experience. Women's diaries have shed light on women's daily lives, activities and emotions, although some private concerns might have been left untold. When historians find traces of Victorian values in western women's writing, we need to remember that not all women did write. According to Armitage, taking class and ethnicity into account, most western women did not adhere to the ideology of True Womanhood. Myres lists four types of diaries: the travel diary – depicting a major historic event, the public journal, the journal of conscience, and the diary recording daily events. The two first categories were principally written for a wider audience, while the last two were only intended for private use.[81]

America-letters

In the early years of emigration, peasant and farming communities in Norway had little knowledge about the world beyond their own. As a result of economic growth and a general enlightenment of the population throughout the nineteenth century, Norwegians learned about conditions in America through the immigrants' writing. America letters, frequently shared by whole communities, and often published in newspapers, served as a valuable source of information on emigration in the 1840's and 50's. They counterbalanced the anti-emigration sentiment and refuted negative reports about America. Still, most writers were cautious about giving advice on immigration because they did not want to be held responsible if the immigrants did not succeed in America.

Although America-letters represent a unique historical source about immigration and the immigrants' experiences in America, they do not tell everything or everyone's story. What

do we expect – or at least hope – to learn from America-letters, and what should we *not* expect them to tell us? H. Arnold Barton raises a number of questions: First, how representative was the preserved material? Second, who *did* write home and who did not? Øverland writes that only a minority of the immigrants wrote letters. Multiple reasons can be suggested. For most of the common people, writing was hard, and their pioneer lives as, for example, servants, or farmers, did not give them much leisure time. Until the 1860's, when international postal conventions were established, sending and receiving letters was very expensive. Undoubtedly, the high cost was a reason for sharing letters, or for not writing at all. Education and social background, economy and living conditions, as well as the strength of family ties between America and Norway were important factors in determining whether an immigrant wrote letters or not. The majority of the letters went to farm communities, where the ties to ethnic communities in America were strongest. Øverland suggests that the successful immigrants were more likely to write than those who failed. To the degree the unsuccessful wrote, he tended to describe his situation in more favorable terms than what was true. Third, *what* did the immigrants write home about, and *when* did they write? Øverland maintains that the content of the letters depended on class affiliation. Working class people tended to write about daily trivia and barely mentioning personal issues, while educated immigrants wrote more about personal feelings. This also reflected their ability to write more fluently. It was common to write on a letter for days, and even weeks, before it was sent. Fourth, the content of their letters depended on the correspondents, whether it was a confidential message to a friend or it was intended for publication in the press. Biases abound, and the immigrant letters have to be compared with other kinds of sources. The immigrants' personal accounts contribute little to the statistics on immigration but they bring the history of immigration down to the humane level, which will be essential in this thesis.[82]

Women's Literary Traditions

In his article "Literary Traditions of Norwegian-American Women," J.R. Christianson argues that "American culture is rich, diverse, and strong precisely because it has deep roots in many other parts of the world." He supports his statement by describing the literary traditions of Norwegian American women writers in the century 1850-1950, and analyzing how this tradition has continued first through transitions from Norway to America and from the Norwegian to the English language. He defines traditions as a collective enterprise: "the accumulative memories, habits, and experiences of a given group of people."[83] Christianson states that the literary tradition these women represented, which was well established in

Decorah in the years before World War I, was not "an innovation on the American frontier; they had deep roots in the literary activities of Norwegian women of this class during the nineteenth century."[84] The tradition had its roots among *de kondisjonerte* in Norway in the beginning of the nineteenth century, and from there it followed the elite immigrant women to America, as well as providing a growing number of female authors in Norway, of whom Camilla Collett was the most famous.

In the early period in question, Norwegian American women's writing more often took place in the parsonage or the farmhouse than in scholarly circles. Among the women writers who carried this Norwegian literary tradition to America, we find Elisabeth Koren. A granddaughter of Christiane Koren, who was a member of the salon-like culture and a prominent advocate for this literary genre earlier in the century, the young Elisabeth kept a diary from her Atlantic crossing and overland travel, as well as from her first year on the Iowa frontier. It includes a combination of elements from three of the categories listed by Myres: the travel diary, the journal of conscience, and records of daily events. In addition, she wrote letters to her family in Norway. Extracts from her diary and letters were published by her children in Decorah, in 1914, in the original language. A complete translation of the original diary to English was done by Nelson in 1955. Here, the last entry is from December 3, 1854, nine days before she gave birth to her first child. Did she discontinue her writing when she became a mother with a baby to dote on? A good part of the diary reveals her loneliness because her husband, the pastor, was away for days or even weeks, traveling to other settlements, but when the baby was born, she was no longer alone. The diary also tells of her longing for a home on her own, and when finally moving into the parsonage, her days are filled with work. She may no longer have had the time to relate her daily activities, or the need to express her feelings. However, she continued to write letters, and extracts of five letters to her father in 1855 are included in the English version of her diary. The diary was not intended for publication, and when Mrs. Koren gave her consent to it sixty years later, she called her entries “simple, unadorned notes.” Just because it was not intended for publication, it can be assumed that she was honest in describing her feelings, as well as her daily activities and relations to the people in the settlement. This makes the diary even more reliable as a historical source, describing the primitive conditions she encountered as a pioneer woman, far removed from her comfortable life in Norway.

A biography of Agnes Mathilde Wergeland's life *Agnes Mathilde Wergeland: Glimpses* was compiled by Maren Michelet and consists of observations by friends of Wergeland, and extracts from her letters, papers, notebooks and diaries. Michelet’s book was

published, in English, in 1916. Dr. Wergeland wrote numerous scholarly works as well as poetry and autobiographical material, but due to her allegedly reserved nature, she did not feel comfortable disclosing her innermost feelings to the outside world. Because of this, we are left with what others have compiled and written about this outstanding pioneer woman. The sources therefore have to be used with some caution. The main sources on Wergeland consulted in this thesis are Michelet's book and, to a certain extent historian Ingrid Semmingsen's article "A Pioneer: Agnes Mathilde Wergeland, 1857-1914."

Elise Wærenskjold had a life-long writing career, starting in 1843 with the publication of a pamphlet on the temperance issue. For some years before she emigrated, she edited the emigration magazine *Norge og America.* From Texas, she wrote personal letters to friends in Norway, as well as letters and articles intended for publication in newspapers and magazines. In her writing, she refuted any unfavorable statement about Texas, as well as fighting for causes that were important to her: be it temperance, the slavery issue, or the overall well-being of her community. A great many of her letters have been compiled in the collection *Fra Amerika til Norge: Norske Utvandrerbrev,* I-IV, 1838-1884, edited by Orm Øverland and Steinar Kjærheim. *The Lady with the Pen*, edited by C.A. Clausen, contains a collection of her letters, written between 1851 and 1894 or 1895. A great many of these letters were published in various newspapers and magazines, both in Norway and the United States. Øverland and Kjærheim's collection of America-letters and *The Lady with the Pen* constitute the main sources on Elise Wærenskjold in this study. However, credit should be given to Charles H. Russell for his work *Undaunted: A Norwegian Woman in Frontier Texas,* which has been consulted for information missing in the available letters, especially on her background, emigration, and westward travels.

Wærenskjold's letters contain practical information about her daily activities and the society she lived in. She does *not*, like Elisabeth Koren, write at length about her feelings, but she clearly expresses her opinions on a variety of topics. Confiding ones thoughts to a diary was different from writing for a wider audience. However, Wærenskjold's letters to her friends reveal her longing for a cultural belonging. Contrary to a number of other women's sources, these three women's writings are reliable in the sense that these women were able to express themselves well. The thesis gives much attention to their own expressions, and in commenting their statements, the women's own terms are often used. Because of their middle-class status, their writings might be biased and need to be balanced against other women's perceived experiences. In applying these women's own writings about their experiences on

the way to, and on the frontier, the thesis compares their experiences, and with the help of secondary sources, places their experiences in the context of western women's life patterns.

Placing these three women in the cultural context of nineteenth century Norway, followed by their emigration to America, establishes a background for understanding how they adapted to the frontier. Chapter two of the thesis initially gives some general background of women in the westward movement, and women's role in the home and in the family on the frontier. Following the three women's westward travels, a gendered analysis of their experiences related to home and family life is the main focus here. Work-life for women on the frontier with special focus on the three Norwegian women is the theme in chapter three. Chapter four deals with these women's role in community building, as well as their relations to other people in the community, and how they portrayed other people. Transcontinental issues and ties to Norway were important to them, and this is also included in chapter four. Their adaptation process will be a central aspect throughout the thesis. Chapter five sums up the findings in the previous chapters, and highlights the main similarities and differences of these remarkable women.

2

Home and Family

2.1 Women in the Westward Movement and in Frontier Homes

The great westward migration during the nineteenth century represented a new experience to all who participated in it. Who were these migrants? They were women, men, and children, from the eastern seaboard of the United States, and immigrants from a number of different countries, who first had undertaken a perilous sea crossing. The individual migrant belonged to, and shared experiences with, more than one group. From a gendered point of view, Norwegian immigrant women in the westward movement and on the frontier shared experiences with Anglo-American and minority women in the United States, and with immigrant women from other countries. As immigrants, regardless of sex, they shared experiences with other immigrants, adjusting to a new country. Ethnicity and class were of great significance for how these women perceived their overland travels and their settling on the frontier.

For the immigrants, adjustment to a new life in America started the moment they had completed the ocean journey and set foot on American soil. However, the journey did not end at their port of entry. For most immigrants, weeks of traveling still lay ahead, often with more hardships than the Atlantic crossing. Until about 1850, the majority of Norwegian immigrants sailed in to New York. Before the Civil War, New Orleans was, next to New York, the second most popular port of entry[85] From New York, the most common means of transportation was by steamboat up the Hudson River to Albany, and with canal boat through the Erie Canal to Buffalo. Arriving by steamship in Chicago or Milwaukee, the migrants had to organize other

means of transportation for their travels further west, although some had traveled by covered wagons all the way, an alternative that was cheaper and which allowed them to bring more of their belongings to the frontier, where most goods were scarce.[86]

While migrants continued to pour into the Midwest, the new country in 1840 was the land of the Oregon and California territories. For women, this transcontinental voyage represented an extra burden in many ways. They had to work hard during the journey and often had to do chores that were primarily men's work. Even if women engaged in men's work, they did what they could to perform their tasks like they had done in their former homes and to preserve their female culture. As a result of the heavy workloads on the overland trails, children were often neglected, and accidents happened frequently. The journey was hardest of all for women who were pregnant, and for those who traveled with small children. Birth and death went hand in hand. When someone died, there was no time to stop on the trail to grieve; they had to move on. Accidents due to lack of supervision was one kind of trial. Sickness was another, which would become a heartbreaking torment to the mothers who had to leave behind their children who had died from the many diseases. Glenda Riley suggests that women on the westward trails challenged the nineteenth-century stereotype that women were weak and only capable of functioning within the secluded sphere of their home.[87]

The westward movement – whether their destination was just west of the Mississippi, or the West Coast – served as a transition to and an integral part of the immigrants' lives on the frontier. Regardless of cultural background, where they came from, age, class, and time of migration, immigrant women faced similar problems. They had to adjust to an unfamiliar environment, be it a severe climate, transportation obstacles, poor accommodation, sickness and death, unfamiliar food and clothing, a new language, and often, new customs and values. Both physically and psychologically the first years in America represented hardships for most women immigrants.

According to nineteenth-century ideology, women were confined to their domestic sphere and their secluded settlements, while men traveled to nearby towns, for supplies, work, and so forth. This isolation made women lonesome. Children were a comfort to the loneliness women felt, but the responsibility of rearing children on the frontier represented an extra burden. Homesickness was a common problem. For those who emigrated early, it was unlikely they would ever see their dear ones overseas again. This pain of separation was expressed in many immigrant letters, and their only consolation was their faith that they would be reunited in "the coming world." Some Norwegians settling on the flat prairie longed

for familiar mountains, woods, or seas of their place of birth. The language problem aggravated the loneliness. Women living in ethnic communities continued to communicate in their native language, while other immigrants suffered from loneliness and shyness because they were not able to speak English. Women coming from the more educated classes, on the other hand, had been taught foreign languages. Still, a foreign accent exposed them to discrimination. In addition to the physical and psychological challenges women faced, the values they brought with them from a more civilized society were challenged on the frontier.[88]

As time passed, most women overcame their initial hardships and adjusted to the frontier. The hope for a better future helped them adapt. Although middle-class women may have lacked many things in the beginning, their material standard soon improved.[89] Writing letters and diaries helped women cope with their isolation and loneliness. Letters from home were extremely important for these women, as were the ethnic press, keeping them informed about the situation in their countries of origin. Ethnic neighborhoods, organizations, and the ethnic church played important roles in their process of adaptation, as did material goods they held dear. Some found consolation in nature, or by bringing their instruments. First and foremost, building a new home in the West, and establishing a family – or a life-long relationship – gave new meaning to their lives. In this chapter, the three Norwegian women's experiences related to travels, home and family are related.

2.2 Elise Wærenskjold

Having crossed the Atlantic and arriving in New Orleans, Elise and two of her travel companions, Wærenskjold and Andersen, boarded the paddle wheeler *St. Helena*, which was to take them up the Mississippi and Red River to Alexandria. Because they paid the lowest fare, they were again assigned to the least comfortable quarters, on the cargo deck, and Elise reported: "I cannot think of a worse way to travel as it is incredibly dirty and the engine gives off terrible steam and heat. You can imagine what it is to be sick in a place like that." In addition to low-fare passengers, called "deckers," the cargo deck was filled with freight, such as cotton bales, logs, furniture, fuel for the steam boilers, and the like, as well as serving as alleyway for baggage and other passengers. This stood in start contrast to the upper deck, where the passengers were served excellent food, and could enjoy the comfort of well-

equipped private quarters, or salons for socializing with their equals.[90] Despite their miserable accommodations, they made some pleasant discoveries while on board *St. Helena*. They enjoyed the southern landscape with its exotic flora and fauna, and the fascinating, and ever changing character of the Red River.[91]

Arriving in Grand Ecore, they had some ninety miles of impassable woodland, swamps and rivers to cross before reaching Nacogdoches. Making themselves understood was an additional problem as none of them spoke English, but Elise spoke both German and French, and in Grand Ecore they met a German who helped them rent a wagon, four horses and a guide. To their great surprise, their guide turned out to be a Negro slave, and he would be their leader on this difficult trail for five days. Thus, they were exposed to unfamiliar – and for them frightening – circumstances in many ways, and since they did not know the language, not the road, they did not have a choice but to put their trust in the Negro.[92]

The next shock came when he in the evening stopped the wagon, and, as described by Elise: "made signs to us that there were good beds under the trees."[93] Terrified, they spent the night there, but later realized that their fears were exaggerated. Elise wrote:

> After we had succumbed to the will of our black master...we lit a fire and prepared a simple evening meal, whereupon Wærenskjold and I decided to keep watch during the night. Andersen arranged himself in between all the boxes in the wagon. Wærenskjold and I spent a strange night in an agitated mood because we imagined all kinds of nonexistent dangers partly made up by fear of snakes, and partly by fear of humans. From the swamp and the trees there was an uninterrupted cacophony of sounds from frogs, turtles, and birds that disturbed the silence of the night most fearfully.[94]

The next nights they lodged in homes along the trail, which, with the exception of one place, would turn out to be awful and very expensive, and Elise advised her readers: "It is much smarter to sleep under the open skies when the weather and season permit." Their guide had introduced them to the traditions in their new land and turned out to be both trustworthy and skilled. Under his guidance they safely reached Nacogdoches. Regretting her initial attitude toward him, Elise admitted: "Our fears were probably quite stupid, but they were rooted in our lack of knowledge of conditions and customs in this country."[95]

The homes they encountered in this wilderness, also the home of her friend Thomine Grogaard, who had immigrated with her husband and ten children in 1845, in the first group of Norwegian immigrants to Texas, were of an inferior standard. Small one-room log cabins, with a dirt floor and no windows, were common. A plank loft often served as sleeping quarters. Cooking was done on an open fire in the fireplace or directly on the dirt floor, or sometimes in a separate cooking house. Observing the venture of cooking over an open fire, Elise utters: "Altogether, I find that people here care very little about the things that make life

pleasant." The fireplaces provided uneven heating, and with no windows to let in light and air, she recommended prospective settlers to bring "windows, both the frame and the glass, as well as a cooking stove and good wood burner." The food was not what she was used to either. The regular bread was cornbread. Food prices were high, the quality poor, and water had to be drunk with caution. These were new experiences to Elise, who had grown up in a parsonage in Norway, and who was used to cooking on cast-iron woodstoves.[96]

Elise's final destination was the Normandy colony, established by Johan Reinert Reiersen, but because the territory west of Nacogdoches was unsettled, it was hard to find transportation, and besides, it took time to gather the farm equipment needed for breaking new land. Like many other migrants, she was also struck by sickness. Finally, after staying in the Grogaard home for three months, a Dane offered Elise and Wærenskjold his oxcart to Normandy, a seven days ride. The trail was rugged and swampy, like it had been between Grand Ecore and Nacogdoches, and only the biggest rivers had bridges. Others had to be forded. Not expecting to find the same standard of either housing or roads here as she was used to in Norway, she commented: "roads like this in most countries would be considered impassable, but here they are quite good," and on October 10 they reached Normandy.[97]

Empresario Charles Fenton Mercer had been given public land for bringing settlers to the new territories. The Mercer colony covered a huge area where a male settler, after first having cultivated the land for three years, was granted 640, or 320 acres, respectively, according to whether he was married or not. Anyone settling in the Mercer colony between February and October of 1848, would be eligible to this land grant. Reiersen claimed land in Kaufman county, where he founded Prairieville, whereas Wærenskjold settled in Four Mile Prairie in Van Zandt county. In a letter to Taale Andreas Gjestvang from Johan Reinert Reiersen on April 1, 1848, Elise added a note that she had decided to stay in Texas and buy land in conjunction with Wærenskjold and Staack.[98] In another letter to Gjestvang, dated June 2, 1849, she announced that she had bought a farm near Reiersen, and that she the previous fall had married one of her countrymen.[99] According to Charles H. Russell, Elise and Vilhelm Wærenskjold got married on September 10, 1848. At this time, he writes, Elise was still married to Sven Foyn. Although they were separated in 1842, their divorce was not effectuated until January 1849. Russell argues that she, an intelligent woman, was fully aware of the date of her divorce, and thus that she was a bigamist. Russell explains her hasty marriage to Wærenskjold to the "Mercer colony window," open only until October 1848, and which endowed 640 acres to a married couple.[100]

Did Elise and Wilhelm marry of love, or to acquire a large piece of land? In *Foreign and Female*, Doris Weatherford argues that immigrant couples, even refined marriages, did not assume companionship and shared experiences. The women often referred to their husbands by using their last name, an indication of the formal relation that existed between the two.[101] In a number of Elise's letters, even to her close friend, she referred to Wilhelm by using his last name. As Russell also suggests, her letters reveal that she admired and respected Wilhelm, but there was no sign of romantic feeling toward him in her writing. Their marriage seemed to be of the Norwegian old-fashioned kind, dominated by practical issues, revolving around property, home, and family. The land would provide a nice livelihood, in which she would find her own niche as a farmwoman.[102]

Shortly after her arrival, she described the conditions in the settlement, where everything was still in its raw beginnings. With money, she thinks, it would be possible to arrange a living far better than what was customary in frontier Texas, for example, by building a good house and a barn for the animals, raise wheat and rye, and get provisions, such as coffee, sugar, and rice, directly from New Orleans. According to Russell, Elise and Wilhelm probably built their second and permanent home in 1850.[103] This implies that they lived in a temporary house before building a home that seemed to be larger, and of a considerable better standard than the ordinary log cabin. Several years later she gives a description of the house: "I have a fairly large house [...]. One of my chimneys is built of stone and the other of brick, and I have a kitchen range and a stove. For these stoves we use only iron pipes that go up through the roof."[104] The kitchen range and stove provided heating, as well as ample space for cooking and baking, a clear improvement from cooking on an open fire in the fireplace, like she had encountered on her way west. For immigrants unable to afford such luxuries as a kitchen range or a stove, she recommends that they bring implements for cooking in their chimney fireplaces.

Already on her way west, Elise Wærenskjold had been thinking about how to secure food in her new western home. Russell writes that Elise's observations about the westward journey are corroborated by the comments of landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, who traveled on horseback through Texas in 1853, although their descriptions diverge on one point: vegetation. Gender differences emerge as she described flowers and vegetables along the way, while he merely mentioned the bigger trees, which grew in abundance in the Nacogdoches Wolds.[105] As food preparation was a gendered undertaking, she was on the outlook for plants to bring to her future garden.

In her frontier home, it seems that she was constantly thinking of how to transplant familiar crops, because, as she writes "the constant consumption of the same kind of food at every meal is extremely tiresome."[106] This could easily be coped with, she advised prospective immigrants, by bringing "good apple-, pear- cherry-, and plum trees, likewise currant, gooseberry, black currant, raspberry, and strawberry."[107] Moreover, she added that garden seeds of various kinds should be brought, and not to forget, grapevines, in the case these could be obtained in a foreign port.[108] On her advice, immigrants brought victuals with them, which finally made her able to make food and drink she had missed in Texas, such as ale:

> We have many good things in Norway that are lacking here […]. I haven't been able to get a simple thing like ale until recently because of the lack of yeast; but as the last immigrants brought yeast with them, almost all of us brewed ale for Christmas, and it has never tasted so good to me as now. I haven't tasted a glass of wine in four years. If I could get fruit, I would certainly have wine and juice, too.[109]

As time passed, thanks in great part to her own civilizing efforts, many goods became available in Texas, but some things could not be had, and remained a memory of past times in Norway: "I miss the delicious fish of Norway so much. I have not eaten fish cakes since we lay in Drøbak, waiting for a favorable wind, she wrote forty years later."[110]

Of clothing, only cotton was plentiful in Texas, and she recommends that immigrants bring warm clothes of wool, and bedding, as it could be hard to keep warm at night. "The feathers used in feather beds cost $.75 per pound; thus a feather bed would run into some $20," she writes.[111] Good furniture was expensive and hard to find. Thus, she recommends bringing at least some pieces of furniture from Norway, in addition to a stove, pots and pans, which she complains is very expensive and of poor quality in New Orleans, which is the nearest town where she can buy those.[112] Apart from providing provisions to make frontier life more comfortable, Elise did not write much about her house and housework, but rather about her farm work and her children.

Becoming a frontier mother would bring her much joy, but also anxieties. In May 1851, Elise gave birth to her first child, Otto Christian Wilhelm Wærenskjold. Her hopes for her little son she relates thus in a letter to her Norwegian friend, Mrs. Thomine Dannevig, on the third day of Christmas, 1852:

> My wishes for my little Otto's future are very modest. All I ask is that he may become an upright and able farmer, possessed of such knowledge as every cultured man should have. I have always had a liking for farm and country life, and if one is otherwise happy in his position, I cannot imagine a more pleasant or more independent state, for in this country a tiller of the soil is respected as much as anyone else, be he official or merchant. This is not as in Norway, where the farmers constitute a lower class.[113]

Her devotion to her role as a mother, and to farm life, is confirmed in the same letter: "My greatest joy is Otto, and I also have a great satisfaction in seeing our various domestic animals thrive and multiply."[114] Her second son was born in December 1853, and in the fall of 1858, Elise gave birth to her third child, also a son. In a letter to Thomine Dannevig on October 16, 1858, she expresses her relief that the delivery went well:

> You probably heard from your brother, to whom I have written a couple of times this summer, that I again expected a little boy, and now I can tell you, God be praised, that the little baby arrived happy and well on the fourth of this month. I cannot tell you how glad I was that everything went well because, after all, I am no longer young, and I was worried for fear I might have to leave my beloved children. Neither Wilhelm nor I have a single relative in this country, so it isn't easy to say what he would have done with the children if I had died.[115]

The anxiety she expressed concerning childbirth was real, as many women died during pregnancy and childbirth. Immigrant women were likely to engage a midwife, who often was an immigrant herself. In Norwegian settlements it was customary that women assisted each other during childbirth, and Elise comments: "I can truly say that the neighbors here are very kind to each other on occasions such as this, for they look after one another and provide food. That is to say, our neighbors in the country; the city women, on the other hand, follow the American customs."[116] Nevertheless, according to Lagerquist, assisting at childbirth could be one of few contacts between Norwegian immigrants and native born women if a Norwegian-born woman was not available.[117] More immigrant women died in childbirth than their American counterparts, according to Weatherford. Frequent pregnancies and heavy work, as well as lack of hygiene during childbirth could be explanatory reasons.[118] However, class needs to be taken into consideration here, as that likely would modify the statement. First, middle-class women normally did not engage in ardous farm work, although Elise Wærenskjold probably did. Second, as a result of better education, the sanitary conditions were better in middle-class homes.

Many aspects of women's issues revolving around pregnancy, childbirth, and birth control were taboo or shrouded in superstition.[119] A number of women's diaries do not mention their own or others' pregnancies. Victorian standards of modesty imposed restrictions on women, but in contrast to most women at the time, who mentioned a new baby only after it was born, Elise's letter reveals that she had communicated that she was expecting a baby. Farsighted and outspoken as she was, she might have found the rigid Victorian norms ridiculous.

Immigrant women bore more babies than American-born women. This was caused partly by lack of information on birth control, and partly on values. In general, immigrant

women were considered inferior to their husbands, who in the patriarchal value system ruled over wives and children. Children were seen as gifts from God and they constituted an invaluable labor supply on the family farm.[120] Why then would five years pass between Elise's two youngest children? As an educated woman, she might have possessed more knowledge of birth control than the average immigrant. Thus, class might have been important in the matter, as birth control information *was* available. Women shared information about contraception, pregnancy, and birth. Birth control information appeared in print in the United States until 1873, when the Comstock Laws made it illegal.[121] Moreover, it is likely that she was more her husband's equal than immigrant women in general.

In the early settlements, birth and death went hand in hand. Immigrants were suspicious of hospitals and physicians. Weatherford uses the example of Elise Wærenskjold, who praises almost everything in Texas, but who has no faith in the doctors:

> Otto has been well all summer […]. Niels and Thorvald, also, have been cured of their fever, but Thorvald suffers daily from toothache as a result of all the calomel the doctors gave him when he was feverish. […] How many times I have wished that we had as good doctors here as we had in Norway![122]

Little did Elise know that Thorvalds's toothache would cause his death a couple of months later. According to Russell, the calomel given him to cure his fever sickness might have loosened his teeth, and subsequent poor oral hygiene caused an infection in his body that ultimately took his life.[123] Preventive medicine was first and foremost done for contagious diseases that threatened rich and poor alike, while, for example, dental care was non-existent.[124] Out walking with his mother, the boy quite suddenly fell unconscious beside her, and died a few days later. In a letter to her sisters-in-law, February 2, 1866, Elise communicates the sad news:

> This time the news I have for you is very sad. It has pleased the Lord to take from us the dearest thing we possessed on this earth, our most beloved child Thorvald. Of course, I love all my children beyond words; but Thorvald was so much younger than the others, and he was such a sweet, lovely child that he was his father's and his mother's favourite [sic].[125]

Even her son's tragic death Elise believed was part of God's plan. She thought his death was a reminder to be prepared for death and judgment, and she longed to be with him once more. In the same letter, she continues: "I know that my little Thorvald now is happy with God – surely much happier than we could ever have made him here on earth – but I miss him so terribly. Yet I am calm and composed in my grief."[126] The day before he died, he had asked his mother questions about death and resurrection. Deaths among infants and children were common, and instead of searching for medical explanations, mothers accepted them as God's

will. The belief that the child would be relived from earthly trials gave the mothers consolation.

Sickness was not the only cause for the many deaths on the frontier. Accidents of various kinds, and violence, took many lives as well. Times were tough. For Elise, the year 1866 would be especially hard. In January she had lost her youngest son, whom she mourned immensely, and in November, her husband was stabbed to death, leaving her a widow with total responsibility for the ranch, and for her surviving sons. Wilhelm had been a justice of the peace, and despite her grief, Elise found consolation in the fact that "he died innocent, grieved by many, respected and admired by all who knew him, not only our countrymen but also Americans."[127]

With death so near, her fear, again – like when she gave birth to Thorvald – put an extra strain on her and a deep concern of what might happen to her sons if she should die: "Only God knows which of us will be next. If I should be taken from the children before Otto, at least, is of age, it would be very hard for them in many ways." After twenty years in Texas, she still had more confidence that her friends in Norway would bring up her sons than anyone in Texas:

> It would be quite different if I were in Norway, for there I have both relatives and faithful friends whom I know I could count on. Here I am alone in a foreign land where I have no assurance that anyone would assume the responsibility of providing a Christian training for my Children or of safeguarding their inheritance.[128]

Taking the high estimate of her Norwegian acquaintances into consideration, it was clearly extremely disappointing to her that her friends in Lillesand did not show her their sympathy by writing to her when she lost her son and her husband. Her remaining sons' future was her prime concern, and her faint hope of visiting Norway had vanished with the death of her husband.[129] Although her financial situation as a widow at times was precarious, she managed to cope with her losses, and continued to run the farm in cooperation with her sons.

2.3 Elisabeth Koren

Coming from the cultured elite in Norway, Elisabeth Koren had a better conception than most immigrants about what to expect in her new homeland, even if everything was foreign. Before starting on their travels toward the West, she and Vilhelm were able to enjoy New York's

cultured life. Although class distinctions were not as prevalent in America as in Norway, travel arrangements in the settled areas varied considerably, from the most miserable accommodations to sheer luxury. Unlike most immigrants, who, because of limited means, crowded together on cargo decks on riverboats, the Korens traveled in the most convenient way possible. They went by train from New York via Albany to Buffalo, and through Ohio to Chicago. Still, the train coaches were crowded with a diverse group of people, about whom Mrs. Koren commented: "The coaches were filled with an unpleasant mixed company, which one must put up with here where there is only one class. Near the large cities it is all right, but as we get farther west, the passengers are mainly farm folk." Here she clearly expressed a disdain for farm folk, among whom she would live the rest of her life. Traveling through Ohio, they see "long stretches of woods and uncultivated land where occasionally one spies a wretched little log cabin, and sometimes a man in the woods with an ax over his shoulder." These statements revealed that she was getting close to the frontier, but "the prairie nearest Chicago was more cultivated and settled; large orchards were planted there."[130] Chicago was at this time a flourishing frontier town, and upon reaching it, they took the omnibus to the Matteson Hotel, which was a first class hotel. Vilhelm looked up pastor Unonius, a Swedish Lutheran Pastor, who worked among Swedes and Norwegians in Chicago after first having founded a Scandinavian settlement in Wisconsin. She writes:

> Everything in this hotel looks very grand and costly. Who would believe that when Pastor Unonius came here twelve years ago there was no trace of a city, and he had to live in a wretched log cabin? Now it is a flourishing city with shops just as fine as New York's, if not finer. Naturally one gets the same impression here, as everywhere on our journey, that everything is still in its beginnings.[131]

The steamships on the Great Lakes offer luxurious accommodations to first class passengers, and she enjoys the luxury on the steamer from Chicago to Milwaukee:

> This is a remarkably fine steamer. The upper saloon, where we are – there are two decks – is extremely large, lacquered white with richly gilded borders and carvings, four large, handsome chandeliers, several gilded mirrors. The floor is covered with expensive carpets, and there are mahogany tables with marble tops, velvet-upholstered sofas and chairs. Doors along the walls open into the cabins. The passengers, however, are not at all suited to this elegance – a mixed company here as everywhere.[132]

She goes on to describe the people on board: "One sees all kinds of shoes, too, some small, narrow, and polished as if made to thread upon silk and velvet; others large, heavy, dirty, whose owners should be forbidden to walk upon these lovely carpets."[133] Since she mentioned the "mixed company" both on the train and on the steamer, one wonders if she was not aware

of the fact that the majority of immigrants and other low fare passengers were confined to the cargo deck on the steamers, and freight cars on the railroads.

Migrants on the Iowa trail were typically farm families who migrated from other locations further east, or from other countries, to engage in farming in the rich soil of the Midwest. In contrast to those who migrated on the overland trails to the Far West, the Iowa-bound migrants traveled through an area that was more settled, and thus they had the opportunity to buy supplies and lodge at taverns along the way. Norwegian settlers in the area provided free lodgings and food for old acquaintances arriving from Norway. There was close contact between clerical families in the Norwegian Synod, and when arriving by wagon in the early Norwegian settlement of Koshkonong, the Korens stayed a couple of days with the Norwegian pastor Adolph C. Preus and his wife. This is the first parsonage Mrs. Koren visits in America, and she writes: "The parsonage is a fairly large log cabin with whitewashed walls and unbelievably simple furniture; but it is cozy, and the Preuses are unusually kind and friendly."[134] In Spring Prairie, they visited another Norwegian pastor, Herman A. Preus, and his wife, Linka, whose company Mrs. Koren would greatly enjoy, and eager to learn, she asked Linka for advice about the American ways. When staying in frontier hotels and taverns, she marvels at the food they are served. Dinner consists of "the usual pie and roast turkey, not to forget all the side dishes which are found on an American table – beets, cold meats, cucumbers, conserves, and I know not what." However, she is not at all impressed by the service: "One has to be his own servant in these taverns. Two things are considered luxuries here; namely, a bellpull in the bedroom and candle snuffers."[135]

Approaching the frontier, the pastor's wife – like everyone else – had to make do with what she could get, and with great courage, she faced the next stage of her journey, where no trains or boats, but a privately arranged horse drawn carriage would take her across the prairie and along impassable roads on icily cold winter nights. The travel brought some unpleasant incidents, but also extraordinary experiences of a sublime character:

> We drove across a very extensive prairie just as the sun went down. Here for the first time we had an opportunity to get a full view of an American sunset. […] When we had driven a bit farther, we saw a glare far away upon the prairie. "There goes a prairie fire," said Lars [the driver]. While we were talking of this, Vilhelm said, "Turn around." I did so, and saw the full moon rising over the horizon. Its light had a marvelous effect upon the black prairie, heightened even more by the prairie fire on the other side. There was an air of unreality in driving here, especially as the moon soon hid itself behind the clouds and we could no longer see the road.[136]

Mrs. Koren felt the greatness of the universe, here on the vast prairie as she did on board the ship in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. "We had no idea about the road, and drove with the

stars as our guides […]" Tired, they reached a tavern and the landlady accompanied them "upstairs to a little room," but "there was no chair, no washstand, and what was worse, no stove, so that it was icy cold – and we had been looking forward with joy to a good, warm room after the cold day!"[137] Despite cold rooms, and miserable road conditions, she seemed to take it with humor. Driving through a valley, she described the rough ride:

> The road, which of course was bad after we left the prairie, now became quite impossible. The wagon tilted far to one side, with two wheels almost in the air. I had to lie crosswise in it and had plenty of trouble holding myself in and seeing that the umbrella did not become enmeshed in the wheel or entangled in the stuff that lay in the back. Thus it went, now up, now down, in fairly deep snow over a hill. […] I sat there half laughing and half crying, as patiently as I could, and prepared for an upset at any moment.[138]

On some parts of the journey she was exposed to real perils, as for instance on the river crossings. The Mississippi had to be crossed by canoe or ferry, or on the cracking ice, as no bridges were built until the late 1860's.[139] On the Wisconsin River they had to walk to the edge of the ice before crossing in a canoe, whereas the Mississippi was crossed on the ice, with the horses unhitched and Mrs. Koren seated in a buggy. Safely across, they moved on to Washington Prairie, which would be their future home.

Norwegian immigrants had settled northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin in the 1830's and 1840's. By 1850, westward moving immigrants had crossed the Mississippi and started to settle areas in Iowa and Minnesota, and Norwegian immigrants had established colonies in the Clayton, Allamakee, Winneshiek, and Fayette counties in northeastern Iowa.[140] Iowa had become a state in 1846.[141] The same year, Ole Valle arrived in northeastern Iowa, and his letters would spur further Norwegian immigration to this area, mainly to Winneshiek County. Twelve families had settled there in 1850, in the Washington Prairie settlement. The settlers were mainly from the Norwegian districts of Voss, Telemark, Sogn and Valdres. Many of them had first lived in Wisconsin. The first immigrants who came directly from Norway, came in 1853.[142] Two of them were the Korens. Unlike the first settlers, who had to find a piece of land on which to set up a dwelling, they were expected and welcomed as lodgers with the parishioners in the congregation. They had to wait a long time for the parsonage to be finished, and lived in the homes of others from December 21, 1853, to October 1, 1854.[143]

The typical lodging in frontier settlements was the log cabin, with only one room and a loft. These were crowded as they, in addition to the family, frequently housed recently arrived relatives and friends until these could secure a lodging of their own. Having to share crowded

sleeping quarters with strangers was indeed a new experience to the young Mrs. Koren, who also commented on how cold it was:

> Ugh! How cold it was to go to bed that night in the breezy loft where, besides us, Nils's sister-in-law, Kari, and her three children are sleeping! The space that is not taken by the beds is filled with the family's clothes, chest of drawers, meal sacks, etc. Such was the appearance of our first bedroom in our new home."[144]

Even if the frontier log cabins were primitive, they were luxurious compared to dugouts or sod houses that many early settlers on the three less prairies constructed. After visiting a dugout, Elisabeth Koren concluded that it was "not so bad as one might think."[145] Whatever dwelling they lodged in, women strove to make them homelike and cozy. In the Egge cabin, for instance, the sleeping quarters are "partitioned off by a shining chintz curtain with large variegated flowers, which win universal admiration from those who visit Helene; they think they are 'frightfully fine flowers.'"[146] Women on the frontier took great pride in their curtains, a symbol of the civilization they tried to establish on the prairies.[147] The living room houses a mirror, a clock, which never shows the right time, a lamp, consisting of a dish with melted fat and a piece of cloth for a wick, bookshelves, a table under each of the two windows, and three stools of black walnut, moved about where they are needed. The kitchen has a stove, and round about hang the kitchen appurtenances, including the Korens' candlesnuffers. The walls are plastered and covered with newspapers. The loft serves as storage space for food, extra furniture, tools, and clothes.[148] Such was the interior of the Egge cabin, in which the Korens lived during their first months in America.

The prairie climate represented a new experience to, and an additional strain on, many frontierswomen. Migrants settling in the Midwest had to cope with the constant threat of natural disasters. The severe climate sometimes destroyed crops and buildings, in addition to putting people and animals at risk. Women worried about their children, and their homes, as well as their cows, pigs, and chickens. In her diary, Mrs. Koren frequently commented on the extreme weather, how cold it was in the cabin, the oppressive heat in the summer, thunderstorms and lightening worse than she has ever experienced before, and the many frightening prairie fires. When blizzards struck, snow drifted through cracks in the walls, and nor could the poor housing keep out heavy rain:

> It was a frightful storm and came with unbelievable speed. [...] The little brook, which usually flows unnoticed, was swollen to the size of a river with many branches. In the springhouse everything was thrown helter-skelter; milk and cream joined forces with the brook. [...] Our place was a sight! The floor was a pond, so I had to tiptoe about with great caution, holding up my dress and finally sitting down in the rocking chair; I was fortunate enough to find a somewhat dry place for my feet. The hail beat so hard against the windows that we expected them to be broken at any moment, and the rain streamed in through the curtains and across the

> table, soaking them thoroughly. We had to pull the bookcases and bed away from the walls and cover them with towels, for the rain came through the walls and ceiling.[149]

Mrs. Koren was extremely fascinated about the beauty of nature, and when the storm abated, she marveled at the brilliancy of the sky:

> When at last the rain let up and we could go outside, the sky was aglow with a brilliancy of color hard to match. There was not a color or shade missing. The cloud formations were most wonderful and beautiful; no matter where one looked, there was endless variety. The lightning, which still continued, was blue and very sharp. No, I shall not easily forget that afternoon. Those who are old-timers in the country say they have never had such a storm.[150]

The prairie fires were new to her, and even more frightening than the storms: "Yesterday we had a prairie fire near us. [...] I get quite frightened when I see them so close at hand, for I have not yet become used to fires of that kind."[151] Even if the fires caused anxiety when approaching the home, they could also be a spectacular scene when watched from a distance:

> In the evening I watched the prettiest fire I have yet seen. It began quite near us but gradually drew farther away and took on the appearance of a distant conflagration which had sprung up not in one but in many places; here flames, there smoke, farthest off a sudden puff of flame, only a weak reflection in the sky, and in the center a great sea of fire. The whole thing cast a magic illumination on the landscape and formed a rarely beautiful scene.[152]

In a letter to her father she laments the heat of the Midwestern summer, and she misses the Norwegian climate: "Ugh, how oppressively hot it has been these last days! The stove has been moved out of the kitchen; all the windows are open and covered with mosquito netting. Oh, if we only had the same climate as at home!"[153]

In addition to the severe climate, insects and animals pestered women. Mosquitoes and flies were a constant nuisance, but occasionally a toad, or even a snake, would enter the house. Elisabeth Koren is terrified to find one in her home: "No, this is really too much! Toads – one could stand them – but a snake, ugh! A snake in the house! That is what we had here today."[154] However, grasshoppers, which came in swarms and devoured crops and everything in their way, were the most feared of all vermin. Because it was not until the 1870's that grasshopper swarms did most damage in the Midwest, Elisabeth Koren does not write about them in her diary.

The climate, noxious animals, the monotonous landscape, the crude housing, and the lack of supplies made many women long for their former homes. Like numerous other frontierswomen, Elisabeth Koren endured spells of homesickness and loneliness out on the open prairie. Men more than women traveled to neighboring towns, while the women remained at home. Transportation could be hazardous on the frontier, due to the severe weather conditions. After heavy rain, bridges had to be rebuilt before crossing. Where no one

could be consulted for directions, it was easy to get lost when driving in the dark. The common means of transportation was by horse and sleigh in the winter, and by horse and wagon in the summer. An ox-team was sometimes used for transportation as well. Accidents happened frequently, and the women worried about their husbands when they were out driving and did not come home by the time they were expected.[155] Since the pastor was away from home for days, or even weeks, at a time to serve his many congregations, Mrs. Koren – even when not alone – felt quite lonely at times and a melancholy mood fell upon her. She longed for her husband and was the more rejoiced when he returned from his many travels. Occasionally, she wrote about her concern for him on his travels in all kinds of weather, but nevertheless, she displayed a confidence that Vilhelm would return safely. The primitive living conditions add to her homesickness, but it is obvious that she loves Vilhelm immensely, and as long as she can be with him, life is good:

> I am no longer homesick when I get a letter. [...] But there was a time this winter, when Vilhelm was away, that I simply could not endure the thought of home at all; the contrast was altogether too great. But a longing to return or a wish that we had not come – such a thought I have never entertained. I have Vilhelm here – what more can I want? And whenever I thought of him, then I was happy again and could not understand how a moment earlier I could have been so downhearted. And how can I be really distressed when I am with him whom I love so much, and who I know loves me? In this I have the best of all possessions and am always happy, whatever the outward circumstances may be. I only hope I may be for Vilhelm what I so dearly wish to be.[156]

Although adjustment to new conditions could be stressful on many marriages, the isolation on the frontier could promote egalitarianism and true friendship as well, as experienced by the Korens.[157]

While some women returned to former homes, most of them were determined to stay in the West and somehow learned to cope with their initial hardships. Writing and reading was important to Mrs. Koren. In adapting to frontier life, she also found great comfort in the natural environment. She is fond of walking, in all kinds of weather, and is much delighted with nature's beauty; a gorgeous sunset, flowers, trees and birds:

> I do not understand why all at once I can become so sad, or depressed, or whatever I should call it. It starts with a longing for Vilhelm, then everything about me seems so empty; I become rather faint and have to take a little walk and look around. That helps sometimes, especially when I happen to see something beautiful, as when today I saw a new kind of bluebird, with white underbody and light-red breast – that helps. [158]

The prairie could also be beautiful:

> Oh, what beautiful light effects! I happened to glance out, threw down my pen, and ran out so as not to miss any part of the lovely scene. The light and shade which the sun cast over the prairies tonight, especially over the scene nearest us, were surely something for an artist.[159]

At length, she describes the variations of wild flowers, and birds she has seen, and the bright sparkling of the fire-flies: "It is a pretty sight, when darkness falls, to watch all these countless, lightning-like, bluish sparks in and over the prairie grass.[160] Especially, she liked to take walks to the parsonage land, rejoicing over the beautiful location, and dreaming of her future home: "We talked of how we hoped to have things here, and what a joy it will be when we are in our own home and I am expecting Vilhelm from one of his trips and have arranged the room cozily and have the tea table set."[161] The hope and expectations for a better future with her beloved Vilhelm, in their own home, gave her strength to endure her hardships.

The fact that she would have to live in temporary lodgings for almost a year before moving into the parsonage was an extra burden on the pastor's wife. Her diary reveals that the people in the community made visits to each other often. Hospitality and mutual helpfulness characterized these people, but it is clear that Mrs. Koren does not feel at home among these farm people when she in her diary of Sunday, February 5, 1854, writes:

> It will really be good to have one's own home – how trying such visits can be sometimes, especially on Sunday! Here I sit; I cannot read or busy myself with anything if I am not to offend the guests. I can indeed talk to them, and do so, too, and it is probably my own fault that I find these conversations of so little interest. This is not always true, to be sure; but at times the wish to have a cultured person to talk to becomes very strong. My thoughts prefer to linger elsewhere, and [sic] find it intolerable to have to turn back to cattle and swine. Perhaps it will be no different when I have my own home and have similar visits. Oh, yes, it will surely be different. Then I shall be mistress in my own home! Yes, that will be glorious! And then when the pastor returns from his journeys, there certainly will be rejoicing![162]

In this situation, when her husband was away, and she was left with the farm people, or alone, it can be argued that she felt somewhat alienated and uprooted. Because of her special position in the community, she was particularly careful not to offend the parishioners: "I sat and read and knitted, and was tired of having to stop so often because first Suckow, then Aarthun dropped in; it is hardly proper for me to continue to read then – in any event I dare not do it, for I do not want these good men to have any cause for criticism."[163] Being a guest in other people's homes, she had to adjust to their habits, including the food, although efforts were made to treat the pastor and his wife in the best possible way.

Just as women on the frontier worked hard to make their small cabins or dugouts into cozy and comfortable homes, their houses also served as work places for themselves. Especially in the early years of frontier living, the dearth of supplies posed a challenge to many women who had to use all the ingenuity they possessed to transfer the available foodstuffs into tasty meals. Pork is the staple in the diet and is eaten at every meal, to which Mrs. Koren comments:

> We cannot say that we live so exceptionally well here. The dishes vary from boiled pork, rare to well done, with coffee in addition (milk when we can get it), good bread and butter. To this are added now and then potatoes, which are now all gone; fried onions, once in a while; and, above all, the glass jar of pickles. That is our meal, morning, noon and evening. But our appetites seldom fail.[164]

The Korens often received food from the parishioners, and any variation to the daily pork was always a welcomed gift. She disliked the tea, and commented on the poor groceries:

> In an effort to get tea somewhat as it should be I took it upon myself to make it; but it is no easy task with such poor tea, and I had no great luck with it, either, especially since Helene, without my knowing a thing about it, filled the kettle with water. We had to drink it, thin as it was, and talked about what poor groceries one gets in this country.[165]

Each move is an improvement compared to their previous housing arrangements, and at the Sørlands, she writes that there is "plenty of room, neat housekeeping, and a very tidy housewife, who excels at setting a table with cakes and pies." After two months, they moved on to the Skaarlia farm.[166] Here they enjoyed having a little house to themselves, where Mrs. Koren did her own housekeeping. She clearly expressed their happiness at finally enjoying some privacy, even if they lacked the most necessary implements with which to run a household:

> The coffee mill, spurtle, and four tin cups formed the sum total of our domestic equipment – nothing to cook in or on, and not a bite of food. True enough, we had forty dollars in gold, but of what use was that? Guri, however, had left two chairs, we ourselves had one – in other words, something to sit on; and so we sat down. [...] we drank a little wine, and had quite a splendid time as we sat there in the midst of all the confusion. Then it struck us that it might be time to bring some order out of chaos. We packed and unpacked [...] At last we were through, fairly well satisfied with our little room, and especially with being by ourselves.[167]

With no food in the house, they went over to the old cabin to get a bite to eat, and the description shows that their pioneer mentality did not fail them:

> I climbed on a table for a little milk; Vilhelm found bread and butter and cake; and then we had our meal, standing in the middle of the floor, Vilhelm with his hat cocked on one side like a tipsy sailor; I in my white cap and violet dress, which could hardly be called clean, and my knitted shawl wrapped about me, a bit of food in one hand and a bowl of milk in the other.[168]

In a letter to her father she described their house at Skaarlia, where they had a rocking chair, and of special importance, boxes that functioned as bookcases for their many books. She was greatly pleased to have acquired a stove, and also a shed in which to prepare food, as it was too hot to cook inside the cabin during the summer. Preparing meals on the frontier, where both food and equipment were scarce, required a good portion of ingenuity:

> I was really at a loss to get some barley soup for Vilhelm while he was sick. Ground barley and oats are not found here; I hope they can be had in Wisconsin. Well, it was no use to stand there helpless; I got some barley, dried it, ground it in my coffee mill, and made soup. Then I

> had to find something to mix with it; the only solution was to cook some dried apples and use the juice from them – one has to do the best one can.[169]

At times she laments the lack of variety of food: "I wish I knew what we ought to have for dinner. That is a very difficult matter. [...] Oh, that I had some new potatoes and a little mackerel from home! It is really boring, this constant puzzling over tiresome food."[170] However, most of the time she demonstrates her humorous disposition:

> Our dinners – well, they are certainly remarkable, quite in a class by themselves. If we live long enough, we shall surely often look back with amusement to the time when we kept house at Skaarlia's. Here is our dinner today, for example. It consists of *tykmelksuppe* (a very frequent dish), boiled potatoes, and ham. Here we sit then, we two, at Vilhelm's little table [...], with a napkin for tablecloth, a tin dish for a soup tureen, and bowls instead of soup plates. All goes genially, with a little teasing now and then.[171]

The neighbors and the candidates for confirmation brought them food gifts of various kinds, and they had a springhouse, in which to keep butter, milk, cream, bacon etc. This was a kind of house the early settlers built by a spring or well in order to keep the food cool.[172] Fish was plentiful in the rivers of the Midwest, but was seldom eaten as it was "difficult to send for them." She writes: "It will be good to have an errand boy, as we must have when we get the parsonage – one of the candidates for confirmation."[173] On her walks she looks for foodstuffs in nature: "The hazel bushes are loaded with nuts. There is surely an abundance of fruit here, if only it is possible to gather it."[174] The watermelon was a new and exciting discovery.

Material goods brought to the frontier were important to women. These items had a civilizing effect and served as a link to the past.[175] Mrs. Koren was thrilled when their baggage, which they had to leave behind on their travels, finally arrived. Especially she enjoyed seeing again pictures of their dear ones in Norway:

> We were glad yesterday to get our baggage, but are still happier today to find that our things are in very good condition; nothing is damaged. [...] How gay it was to unpack and see all our things again, both old and new, but especially the daguerreotypes. God be praised for all the dear faces we have with us![176]

However happy she is to have their baggage, she cannot fully enjoy the familiar items until she has unpacked in her own home, and her longing for that becomes even stronger: "No, a young wife certainly is not benefited by being so long without a home of her own to look after."[177] In a letter to her father, September 18-20, 1854, she writes: "Well, when we move into the parsonage, [...] it will be as if a new life is beginning, a new sphere of endeavor for me. How I rejoice at the prospect!" Building a home with precious things from Norway meant preserving their culture and bringing civilization to the frontier.[178] On October 1, after many

delays, they finally moved in, and here, in her own home, she thrived more and more each day as they got their things in order:

> How pleasant it was to unpack here at the parsonage! It was different from the old shed at Sørland's with all its whitewash and the sheep bleating around us. We hung out the table linen, carried the books and silver downstairs, and then, perhaps most delightful of all, put up the bookshelves and arranged the books. Oh yes, I forget; first we ate bread and butter, washing it down with water, which Sven [Gullikson] (the errand boy – my comment) had been good enough to get. God grant we may have many meals just as happy as this first one! Many people had been here all this time; now at last they had gone, and we were alone - alone in our first home! Now for the first time I begin to understand rightly what "home" means, our own home, which becomes dearer to me day by day.[179]

The parsonage had a bedroom, a living room, a kitchen, and a loft, according to Nelson.[180] While her husband, the pastor, was traveling to his many congregations, she was the matron of the parsonage. But the pastor was also considerate of furnishing their new home, and brought from Decorah "knives, dishes, jugs, and I know not what, besides two stoves and the things from Lansing. So we had the house furnished all at once, she wrote.[181] She praises God for their new home and is commenting on the coziness, often recalling last year at Egges and how much better this is:

> We could not be happier if our home had been arranged and furnished with the greatest elegance than we are with it now in all its simplicity. […] And how pleasant it is to have a bedroom, and in the morning to go into a tidy room to a breakfast table all set, instead of first having to clear away the toilet articles before the table can be set, and then having to sweep the floor! We have really learned to prize all such little things, for such they are indeed, which at home it never occurred to us to think about. God be praised that we are now so well settled [...]. Now Vilhelm has left again; he started this morning. God be praised for every hour that he was home! […] Would he could look in to see how pleasant it is! The fire in the stove is burning merrily, the moon is shining in through the curtains, and I am sitting in the middle of the room, where I have moved my little table. It is snug and cozy.[182]

She is exceedingly content with her new home, and enjoys the added duties it entails, allowing her to be a true housewife, and she writes: "In a way it is as if I had just been married."[183] The family was the main focus of women's lives. Most prairie women married and bore many children.[184] Elisabeth Koren never mentions her pregnancy directly, but nine days before she gives birth to her first child, she confides to her diary:

> Vilhelm undoubtedly wonders at times how things will go, whether we shall get through safely, and whether I am a contented child or a silly one, as when he was home. Oh, no – I am now sensible and well satisfied to have Anne here. [...] We talk very sensibly; I receive good advice and instruction.[185]

Anne must have been a woman who assisted her during her childbirth. The danger associated with giving birth on the frontier was clearly what she had in mind when she wrote "whether we shall get through safely." If nineteenth-century ideology restrained women from writing

about their pregnancies, they wrote the more about their babies when they were born. In a letter to her father, January 28, 1855, Elisabeth Koren writes:

> I have now neither politics, literature, social life, nor any such thing to write about – just my own little world; and that comprises only Vilhelm, the baby, my home, and its immediate surroundings, including such appurtenances as the horse, dog, hens, and other animals that we have. […] Yes, it is a different matter to be left home now; even if Vilhelm is away, I am no longer alone, for I have the baby to occupy me. And in addition I have so many other things to do, when I can, that the days pass very swiftly. […] That sweet little child! You cannot imagine how happy she makes me.[186]

Finally, after a year of hardships on the frontier, both acquiring her own home and being blessed with a child, gave her life a new meaning.

2.4 Agnes Mathilde Wergeland

The fur traders William Sublette and Robert Campbell had established Fort Laramie at the junction of the North Platte and Laramie rivers in present day Wyoming in 1834. In the end of that decade, the heyday of the Rocky Mountain fur trade had come to an end, but these mountain men's operations and establishments of western outposts would play a significant role in the next phase of westward migration. Worried about British activity in Oregon Territory, Jedediah Smith and his partners David Jackson and William Sublette had written to President Andrew Jackson's secretary of war, John Eaton, in 1830, urging the use of their pioneer route to settle the Far West. In 1841, Thomas Fitzpatrick guided the first Oregon bound wagon train along the route that would be known as The Oregon Trail, on which Fort Laramie would play a significant role as a supply station.[187]

It was to this legendary place in the West that Agnes Mathilde Wergeland migrated half a century after the wagon trains went through there in great numbers. After being granted the scholarship at Bryn Mawr College, she had immigrated to America in 1890. By this time, both crossing the Atlantic and traveling westward in the United States had become easy compared to when Elise Wærenskjold and Elisabeth Koren immigrated. The majority of those who emigrated from Norway in the late 1800's and early 1900's were single, and Agnes Mathilde Wergeland was one of these. Although most single female immigrants later married and formed traditional nuclear families, some remained single by choice, finding friendship and emotional support from other women. Many professional women and women who

devoted themselves to progressive causes formed close ties with colleagues who shared their commitments. Immigrant women, who remained unmarried in order to pursue a career, often formed close contact with native-born women, who in a way served as role models. Such contacts often turned into life-long female friendships, so-called "Boston marriages."[188]

As a professional and progressive woman, Dr. Wergeland formed close relationships with two American women, first Katherine Merrill, with whom she shared a home in Chicago. Later, in Wyoming, she established a life-long friendship and built a home together with Grace Raymond Hebard. According to Michelet, Dr. Wergeland and Dr. Hebard were women of "kindred spirits." The great problems of humanity, and woman suffrage were causes that occupied their minds. Both had a taste for literature and poetry, loved birds and flowers, and had a passion for art and music. It can be assumed that Dr.Wergeland was not interested in marriage, as women were in great demand in the West. There could be multiple reasons for her neglecting marriage. First, her own father had abandoned his family, and she grew up with her mother as a lonely child. True enough, she had two brothers, but they were much older than she was and had left home before she came of age. Thus, she had no male role model. Second, from an early age, she had an intense zest for academia. In the nineteenth century, and well into the twentieth, women were not supposed to be equal to their husbands in academic pursuits, which meant that women who acquired higher education often rejected marriage. A large number of the female teachers who came to the West were not married.[189] If they eventually did marry, they would often have to give up their career. It is unlikely that Dr. Wergeland would give up her career, which she had struggled so hard for. Besides, a man, whose wife was his academic equal, would feel emasculated. He was supposed to be the breadwinner. Thus, men might also have shunned her because of her profession. But why did she live with a woman? There could also be multiple reasons for that. For many years, as a student in Europe, and later in the eastern United States, she had struggled hard in order to support herself economically. Generally, women earned less than men, and could not afford a decent living on their own. This must at least have been the case until she acquired her position in Wyoming. Thus, sharing a home with another woman could make the dream of a nice home become reality. Some sources indicate, however, that Dr. Wergeland's relationship to Dr. Hebard was emotional, which of course does not necessarily mean that it was physical. According to Merrill and several people who knew her, Dr. Wergeland was of a reserved nature, and did not easily make contact with others. Being an immigrant added to her problems. Forming a close friendship with another woman, with whom she was able to share moments of joys and sorrows could simply be a way of coping with loneliness. In the

nineteenth and early twentieth century, intense female friendships were considered proper and even conventional, even for married women. Gradually, this changed, and in the 1920's, "companionate marriages" became the ideal, while others were labeled deviant. In her article "The Female World of Love and Ritual," Carroll Smith-Rosenberg launches the idea of women's emotional and physical relationships that we today would term lesbianism. According to Linda Gordon, women's entry into the work force and their ability to support themselves was the most important factor in the development of lesbianism.[190] However, at the period in question, the term lesbianism was still not a concept, even if some women who formed close female friendships might have been lesbians. In her *hovedfag* thesis, Lise B. Løken repudiates any insinuation that Dr. Wergeland was a lesbian.[191]

Being both an immigrant and a woman, Dr. Wergeland had two strikes against her. Facing initial problems both at Bryn Mawr and in Chicago, she found a confiding friend in Katherine Merrill, who was able to see her qualities behind the foreign dress and foreign accent. Merrill taught her friend English, introduced her to American manners and in innumerable ways helped her adapt to the American way of life. An article written by Merrill, who knew Miss Wergeland better than anybody else at the time, gives us some insight into her hardships:

> To the students she did not appear companionable. She did not possess the light-laughing manner of American college youth. The younger among them, incapable of recognizing her worth, thought her queer; the older were conservative, opinionated, or self-absorbed. All, knowing that she hailed from the country whence come many of our servants, expected her to commit social blunders, and criticized sharply any small error, not realizing that what is social finesse in one country it [sic] not necessarily such in another.[192]

Michelet suggests that the difficulties Miss Wergeland encountered in the beginning of her career in America may have been caused by misunderstandings due to lack of knowledge of the English language as well as perceived inferior status as a foreigner. Her reserved nature might have added to her difficulties in being accepted, but a student friend described her as a woman with "a loving soul condemned to a life of loneliness. Far away from native land and family she was working and making her way heroically with no complaint or sound of suffering, but the suffering and longing were there.[193] Full of patriotism for her homeland, Miss Wergeland in her loneliness undoubtedly thought about Norway, but with a hint of bitterness, she revealed: "I was not given the privilege of serving my own land. Circumstances have placed me here and not there."

Already in possession of a doctorate from the only European university where she could then have obtained it, Dr. Wergeland gave lectures on the History of Civilization during

the Middle Ages at the University in Chicago, but not even after the publication of her treatise "Slavery in Germanic Society during the Middle Ages," which according to Merrill made her a chief authority on medieval history in the United States, did she secure a position at the university. After twelve years of disappointments, she was still without a permanent position from which she earned enough to live an adequate life.[194] Finally, she was offered a position at the University of Wyoming, and on June 20, 1902, she wrote in her diary: "Today I received a telegram of appointment at Wyoming. A stroke of illumination in the midst of deepest darkness concerning that place. Oh, may it be a good thing, something I shall not regret. May God be thanked with an ever faithful heart that an opportunity has at last come."[195]

Why did she grasp the opportunity of going west? Many single women before her had gone west as teachers or missionaries. Encouraged by Catharine Beecher, women teachers would have a civilizing effect on the West and at the same time secure their careers. Besides, Dr. Wergeland longed for the fresh mountain air, as she could not so well endure the intense summer heat in the east. Nevertheless, it was not without a little sadness she left her friend and their home in Austin, and on August 15, she writes: "Off at last! I am drifting farther and farther west. Rather downhearted. Our flat at Austin seems palatial and on the whole everything seems so uncertain and unpleasant to contemplate."[196] On her train journey westward, her loneliness gradually disappears and she appreciates the western landscape: "The ascent from Cheyenne to Laramie is interesting and even inspiring. I found Nebraska interesting with ranches of grazing land stretching for miles and miles with herds of cattle in groups leisurely straying all over. The air is delightful!" she writes.[197] Even if Laramie had been a major supply station on the westward trail several decades before, Dr. Wergeland comments on its frontier character and civilizing efforts:

> There are some very fine people in this town, but somehow the place has the frontier character, struggling, painfully struggling upward, slowly acquiring something of the gifts and grazes of civilization. The best thing far in advance of the little town are the mountains which far away to all sides of the vast plain show up, snowy tops to the south and west, blue ranges and grayish golden hills to the east and north. They give you the benefit of being near to something with the breath of greatness, of dignity and of power.[198]

In 1900, Wyoming's population did not exceed a hundred thousand, and the town of Laramie had only eight thousand inhabitants. The transcontinental railway went through town, and would contribute to its growth.[199] Laramie would be Dr. Wergeland's home for the rest of her life.

Dr. Wergeland had dreamed of some day owning her own home – a Norwegian style cabin, and in 1905, she and Dr. Hebard started to look for a location in where to build their home together. They bought a lot near the University, followed the building process eagerly, and devoted themselves to the project. They name their home "The Doctor's Inn," and Dr. Wergeland comments: "The house proves a great pleasure. The rooms are quite old-fashioned with their dark doors and their light walls. The whole seems sombre, dignified and Dutch; pleasant to behold."[200] Each had their sanctums on the upper floor, made to their individual taste. Dr. Wergeland's study room contained her beloved piano, her desk, books, and favorite pictures. Outside her room was a balcony encircled with flowers, and with a view of the surrounding landscape that Dr. Wergeland liked so much. With regret did she in later years watch new houses being built, shutting out the magnificent view. In the garden she had planted two spruce trees, which were named "Aasta Hansteen" and "Norway." There was also a rose bush and a crabapple tree. The birdhouses had been given names from Norway: Eastland, Westland, and Viking Lodge." Here lived the bluebirds, orioles and wrens. The two friends shared their delightful home for nine years, through happiness and sorrows. Dr. Wergeland wrote a poem she called "My Home," in which she expressed her gratitude toward her home and everything that it comprised – her companion, her music, and pictures of cathedrals she had visited, views from Norway, her favorite artists, her brothers paintings, and Wyoming landscapes, a red lamp that had followed her to many countries, and the birds and flowers, which meant so much to her.

As a representative of "the new woman," who chose career over marriage, she also engaged in sports activities, introduced to her by Dr. Hebard. This helped her adapt to a new life in the west, in addition to music, which always had played an important part in her life. Before she had her own piano sent to her from Chicago, she played at the piano in the University auditorium, and she wrote in her diary: "Spent most of the day at the piano. It is a beautiful one, although worn and ill-treated. I suppose it amounted to nothing, but it can sigh and jubilate with the mellowness of a cello. Arts are given us to lift us above our sorrows."[201] Women adjusted to the frontier by bringing their instruments, as for example a piano, and she soon had her own sent to her from Chicago. Not until she could play her piano in her own room at the Doctor's Inn could she fully enjoy it because she felt that playing for others disclosed her soul.[202] In later years, she played the zither, which she brought to her cabin in the mountains, Enebo, and on her walks she often brought a harmonica. Contemplating the blessings bestowed upon her, she writes in her diary: "The last day of the year has come around once more. When I think of last year, when I was alone and how I struggled for hope

and assurance – how much I have been blessed with since then."[203] Finally her dreary life had been brightened, and she had successfully adapted to a new life in the West.

2.5 Ethnic Women in Frontier Homes

Immigrant women initially faced many hardships, both on their travels west and in their frontier homes. As women, they shared many experiences different from men's experiences. Women's roles, experiences, and perceptions also differed among themselves depending on a number of factors, such as age, class, marital status, and so forth. The majority of immigrant women was, or soon became, wives and mothers. On the frontier, becoming a mother represented both pleasures and anxieties. Although women might have shared information between themselves, the nineteenth-century middle-class ideology of true womanhood imposed restrictions on information on pregnancy, contraception, and birth. Immigrant letters and diaries normally did not mention a new baby until after it was born. Although writing a great part of her diary when she was pregnant, and giving detailed descriptions about daily trivia, Elisabeth Koren avoided mentioning her own, or others' pregnancies. Even if she and Vilhelm had to move a couple of times because the host was pregnant, she did not mention it, and only at the end of her diary did she briefly allude to her own condition. In contrast, Elise Wærenskjold had mentioned in a letter that she expected a baby. Both women expressed anxiety on giving birth, which could be perilous on the frontier.

However brief or absent the mention of pregnancies and childbirth, women wrote the more about their babies, who broke women's loneliness and compensated for the separation from friends and relatives in their homeland. Children formed a link to the new world and in the process of Americanization. To their mothers, the children represented joy and comfort, but also anxieties. Rearing children, which could be hard on the frontier, was left to mothers, who spent long periods alone with the children when their husbands were traveling. This was the case with both Elise Wærenskjold and Elisabeth Koren, although Elisabeth Koren's diary ends shortly after she became a mother. However, it must be assumed that pastor Koren continued to travel much also after the baby was born. Children's safety and upbringing were mothers' prime concern. Elise Wærenskjold, who suffered the death of both her youngest son and her husband, expressed fear that she would die, leaving her children alone before they

were old enough to take care of themselves. Living in a foreign country without close friends and relatives added considerably to her anxiety.

Single women without children were spared the anxieties, but also deprived of the blessings children represented. Married and single immigrant women's lives diverged in other ways as well. While married immigrant women lived in ethnic neighborhoods, and rarely crossed the boundary into the American society, single immigrant women often formed close ties with American women, who often served as role models. This was the case with Agnes Mathilde Wergeland, who shared her joys and sorrows with American women.

Relationships between married couples varied, and different reasons could be suggested. While Elisabeth Koren described her husband in romantic terms and frequently lamented how much she missed him when he was absent, Elise Wærenskjold seemed to have a more practical relationship to her husband. This could nevertheless partly be caused by the women's differences in character. Elise Wærenskjold did not write much about either her house or her feelings, but mostly about practical issues. Neither did she write romantically about the beauty of nature. In contrast, both Elisabeth Koren and Agnes Mathilde Wergeland showed a more romantic disposition when writing at length about the coziness of their homes, a beautiful sunset, birds, and flowers, as well as about their personal feelings. However, the fact that Elise Wærenskjold wrote letters and the two other women diaries needs to be taken into consideration here in that it was easier to confide ones thoughts to a diary than in a letter. But it is surprising that Elise wrote so little about her house, which was such an important part of women's frontier lives. From her writing it is obvious that she was a very active woman, who took part in the farm work besides community building projects and her writing. Maybe her role as a farmwoman made her too occupied with the farm business to care about the coziness of her home, which was so important to both Koren and Wergeland.

Even if Elise Wærenskjold was not a romantic person who excelled at making her home cozy and romantic, she nevertheless cared about having a practical home, as she advised immigrants to bring all kinds of commodities to their future home in the West. Both she and Elisabeth Koren commented on the simple furniture, and the poor food. In *Foreign and Female,* Weatherford writes about the abundance of delicious food immigrant women enjoyed in America, but on the frontier it could be quite the contrary.[204] Both Elise Wærenskjold and Elisabeth Koren lamented the lack of variety in their frontier diet, and constantly sought to obtain the necessary ingredients for a more varied diet like they had been accustomed to in Norway. However, on her way west, Elisabeth Koren mentioned the variety of food found in American taverns.

In general, women's lives on the frontier were hardest in the beginning and improved as time passed.[205] For Elisabeth Koren, the transition to the frontier might have been harder than for many other women. First, she lived in the homes of others for almost a year before she had her own home. The idleness she experienced, as well as having to cope with rough farm manners, clearly contributed to her hardships. Second, in contrast to the farm families she lodged with, she came from a cultured background and was used to more luxuries from her Norwegian home than could be obtained on the frontier. For a person who found comfort in reading and writing, it must have been annoying that the only light was "a wick in a saucer." Third, because she was the pastor's wife, she had a special position in the community and had to be careful not to offend the parishioners. Getting her own home, in which she could be her own matron, and becoming a mother, gave her life meaning, and thus she seemed to have adapted well after the first year. Agnes Mathilde Wergeland, who struggled for twelve years before she could secure a position on which she could live an adequate life, must have suffered a great deal. The poverty she had to endure was at least not a problem for Elisabeth Koren, even if money could not buy what she missed on the frontier. Next to their families, the dearest of all was the link to the homeland, through letters, books, and the ethnic press. Portraits of close relatives in Norway were among the dearest belongings, and happy remembrances of past times made the new home into a meaningful one.

3

Work-Life

3.1 Women's Work-Life on the Frontier

Women engaged in a number of occupations on the frontier. However, In *The Female Frontier*, Glenda Riley argues that women's employment differed substantially from that of men.[206] Women's work was generally limited to areas considered appropriate for women, although a few crossed the line into the men's domain. While women's primary concern in every location was to care for the home and family, men's work depended to a larger extent on region and era, whether they settled on the mining or ranching frontier, or as professionals in frontier towns.

Women's work depended on education, class and marital status. Teaching was seen as an appropriate occupation for women. Especially unmarried, educated women worked as teachers, although some continued to teach also after marriage. Encouraged by reformer Catharine Beecher, teachers moved to the West to start a career.[207] Since teaching increasingly was performed by women, the pay remained low, and the resources were scarce. Another acceptable career for nineteenth-century middle-class women was writing. Some worked as newspaper correspondents, or wrote articles for journals, and some worked as editors. Some female writers had feminist sympathies and participated in the great reform movements of the nineteenth century.[208] Sewing constituted a proper undertaking for many frontier women who possessed the necessary skills. Because women on the frontier had been deprived of many luxuries, fashion became an important means of bringing civilization to the West.[209] A few women also worked in professional careers. Apart from work that required

some sort of skills or education, women held a variety of jobs. As caretakers of home and family, they tended the sick, delivered babies, worked as cooks, or domestic servants. Some women ran boarding houses, or raised produce for sale, and in this way contributed substantially to the family economy. A great number of women farmed, either on their own or together with their husbands.

Work was an important part in the adaptation process for the three women in this study. As a farmwoman, Elise Wærenskjold raised crops and tended to the animals and seemed to enjoy immensely her life on the farm and the hard work it implied. Elisabeth Koren, who in the beginning lodged in the homes of the parishioners, rejoiced when finally being able to perform her role as a pastor's wife in her own home with all the work it entailed. Agnes Mathilde Wergeland devoted her life to teaching, and to the work for women's rights.

3.2 Elise Wærenskjold

Since the domestic realm was the principal focus of frontier women's lives, much of the other work women engaged in have often been overlooked. Although contributing to the family economy, a married woman was registered in the census as "Not Gainfully Employed."[210] However, Elise Wærenskjold can under no circumstances rightfully belong in this category. From the very start of her life as a farmwoman, she was engaged in a number of income producing activities on her Texas ranch. Although she was not used to this kind of work from Norway, she expressed a great pleasure "in seeing our various domestic animals thrive and multiply."[211] She thought animals had souls and feelings. The killing of animals, either for self-defence or to get food, should be done as gently as possible.[212] Her devotion to her animals and farm work is reflected in her writing, as she gives much more attention to that than to her domestic role as a housewife.

Elise and Wilhelm Wærenskjold started to raise livestock and crops. The rich soil made farming easy, and no manure was needed. They just ploughed and sowed. During the first years, they did not have to feed the animals because "the grass was extremely good and only cultivated land was fenced."[213] This is confirmed by Gjerde, who writes that farm families fenced off their cultivated area in order to let livestock grace in adjacent fields.[214] The Wærenskjolds' farm business was prospering. In 1857, she gives an account of their

livestock: "We do not plan to sell the cows, just the steers, until we can acquire about two hundred calves a year. This spring we can expect about seventy. […] We have four mares, a horse, and a mule. […] We have sixty-two sheep, and this month and next we are expecting many lambs."[215] According to Russell, Elise and Wilhelm were among the wealthiest people in the area with 940 acres of land, 150 cattle, and 185 sheep.[216]

In addition to the customary domestic chores ascribed to women, farmwomen assumed responsibility for the garden produce and the smaller domestic animals. Already on her way west, Elise had planned her future garden, where she raised melons, peas, sweat potatoes, pumpkins, beans, carrots, parsley, radishes, lettuce, turnips, and cress. As seeds could not be bought in pioneer Texas, she advised prospective immigrants to bring seeds from Norway. Grapes, plums, and cherries grew wild.[217] Of poultry, Elise had various kinds: "hens, turkeys, guinea hens, geese, and two kinds of ducks."[218] She also raised chickens, and bartered farm products, as markets were far away. Butter and eggs, fruit and vegetables were sold in exchange for products not made at home.[219]

Some farmwomen took on chores that were not entirely female in character, although tending crops and animals could be seen as an extension to women's domestic chores. Elise Wærenskjold did more than tending her garden and poultry. Like other immigrant farmwomen, she did not step away from hard work. She milked the cows, helped shear the sheep, and took part in other farm chores. Although she did not write about her domestic duties, she must have been responsible for washing and ironing clothes, churning butter, baking and canning, in addition to rearing her children. She did have hired help, but it must be assumed that she at least was responsible for supervising the work. Since labor was scarce, it was often necessary for farmwomen to work outdoors. In a letter she reports getting up before sunrise, and together with her German maid, milking eighty-one cows before breakfast.[220] However, this did not imply as much work as in Norway, she admits, because the calves sucked the half of the milk directly from the cows.[221] Instead of the predominant view that women were too fragile to do hard work, Elise thought the hard work she did on her Texas ranch had a good influence on her health.

Women who ran farms owned by their husbands were regarded farm wives rather than farm owners.[222] Since Wærenskjold owned one third of a saw- and lumber mill in Brownsboro, and spent as much time there as at home, and in addition had undertaken to build the courthouse, Elise must have been virtually responsible for most of the farm work. She also relates that she frequently has business errands when Wærenskjold is away. In a letter to Thomine Dannevig, she reveals that if Wilhelm should die, she would be able to keep

and continue the agricultural business, as they do not have much debt, nor credit. She adds that she keeps track of any animal additions and losses and knows just as well as her husband how many cows, horses and sheep they have.[223] Little did she know how soon she would become a widow. Women who continued to run farms after the death of their husbands had to support themselves and their children. Fortunately, children in immigrant families provided extra labor on the farm, and she praised her sons for helping with the animals.

Elise Wærenskjold's life as a farmwoman on her Texas ranch offered many pleasures, but also severe hardships. The climate posed a constant threat to crops and animals. However much she praised the Texas climate, the winter of 1860 was "a most unfortunate one for Texas", she wrote. A sudden frost destroyed all her crops. "In November it was very warm and trees and plants were in luxuriant growth, when we had a sudden severe frost one night. In the evening it was still so warm that it was uncomfortable to use a blanket; in the morning, cabbage, wheat, turnips, fruit trees, and the like were frozen – things which never used to freeze here. Not only were the leaves frozen but entire [sic] trees […] were killed by the frost," she lamented. Since snow remained on the ground for several days, „the poor starving cattle, which had nothing to eat, were nearly covered with ice," and "a great many cattle, pigs, and sheep died," she reported.[224]

Other natural disasters could be equally harmful. For the early settlers, wheat was the most important crop, especially in the Midwest, according to Gjerde. Elise's letter shows that wheat was an important crop also in Texas. In the Midwest, the wheat harvest went into a decline in the 1870's due to bugs and natural disasters, and in the late 1860's Elise recounted her losses caused by swarms of grasshoppers:

> I had sowed fifteen bushels of wheat, but the venture failed because we were struck by an Egyptian plague – grasshoppers. They came here towards the end of October and left us only when they had eaten up everything green. A most unusual spell of drought followed; we were unable to plant again until just before Christmas. Then in the spring, came a new spawn of grasshoppers that ate the sprouting wheat. When they were big enough to fly, they disappeared. The wheat had cost me $50 – so it was a great loss. Moreover, I lost over half my sheep as a result of starvation, five horses, and twenty-seven milk cows, not to mention the colts. The dry grass, which the grasshoppers couldn't destroy, was burned by the prairie fires, causing us great trouble.[225]

The Civil War posed an extra burden on farmwomen whose men fought in the war, while their wives cared for children, and ran the farm. Elise described how women also were busy spinning and weaving clothes for their husbands and sons in the Army.[226] Not only did women loose their husbands' labor and income, but their absence made women more vulnerable to thieves and raiders as well. During the war, Elise, like many other women, had

been left alone with total responsibility for home and family, and in addition, she had the ranch to take care of. In the winter of 1863-64, she lost forty-seven cows and many calves. The next year turned out better, "partly because the winter was not so severe, and partly because I fed the cows more corn," she confirmed. She bought corn for cloth, she wrote, and she added: "Wærenskjold was away so I did as I pleased," a statement that confirms her autonomy.[227] All retail trade stopped during the war, she wrote, but she bartered for goods, and wool from her many sheep represented her best exchange product. Toward the end of the war, some products came in from Mexico, but the prices were prohibitive, while their farm products still "sold at the old prices."[228] Still, Elise Wærenskjold did not endure as great hardships as many other women whose husbands were in the army. She reported having "a German maid all the time, and, in addition, a Negro woman a good deal of the time." She also hired Negroes to work the farm or rented it out.[229]

The war barely over, Elise suffered two more consecutive blows. Losing her youngest son was a psychological torment, and becoming a widow left her in an uncertain financial situation. But she did not give up farming. Being engaged in the farm business also when Wilhelm was alive had given her the necessary skills for running a farm. In 1869, she gives an account of her farming business in a letter to her sister-in-law:

> This year we have twenty-two acres of cotton, fourteen of corn, six of rye, and seven of wheat. [...] We have between two and three hundred hogs, and last winter we sold about $300 worth of hogs and bacon. [...] We have also sold some oxen and ninety-three wethers. [...] In addition to this, I sold turkeys last fall and got $25 for them, all told. Now that I have paid off my debt, we manage fairly well.[230]

In her later years, she continued to tend to her animals, and her garden, which did not fail her: "I have harvested several hundred bushels of peaches," she writes.[231] Continuing to raise a variety of vegetables, she admits, "I practically live off the garden."[232]

Throughout her life as a farmwoman she continued her writing career, which she had started in Norway. Besides letters, she wrote articles for newspapers on a number of subjects, especially giving advice to prospective immigrants. As a widow, her financial situation was at times precarious, but in later years, she added to her income by teaching school.[233] "Things will be simple and frugal, as are my clothes, but you know that I have never been fond of luxury," she wrote. Most of all she missed "no longer being able to afford books."[234]

3.3 Elisabeth Koren

Elisabeth Koren, like some other pastor's wives, had to wait a long time for the parsonage to be completed, and as long as she lived in the homes of others, she could not fully enjoy her role as a frontier pastor's wife. However, she tried to do the best out of her situation by reading and writing as well as knitting and crocheting, and taking tramps in the vicinity. She also reported spending a great deal of time sewing, which was a time consuming enterprise.

Sewing was seen as a proper activity for women, and being an educated woman, Elisabeth Koren had been taught this skill, and she was frequently asked to sew garments for the people in the settlement.[235] Immigrants arriving in their native costumes on American shores were scorned, and to be accepted, they quickly changed style. This was a process of becoming an American, and sometimes also a prerequisite for getting a job. However, this was a matter of class. While most immigrants did not question the American ways, educated immigrants and natives alike, disregarded what they considered poor American taste.[236] Middle-class Norwegian immigrant women, for example, sewed their own garments. Elisabeth Koren offered to teach the skill to others as well: "Anne admired the "awfully pretty sleeves and collar" which I had on, and wished very much her daughters could sew so that they might have something pretty for confirmation. I offered to teach them the art, at which they were greatly pleased," she wrote.[237]

While living in the Egge household, she helped with some of the lighter household chores, as for example looking after the children: When Helene is out "I have my attention divided between this task of writing, Kari and Per, and a milk pot which I am to keep from boiling over. [...] I am very hungry, and am going to set the table [...]."[238] She relates teaching Kari the A, B, C's, and giving her "some idea of knitting."[239] But when the housewife, Helene, wanted to scrub the floor, Mrs. Koren resorted to the outdoors to avoid the abominable smell of lye.

From the beginning of her time on the frontier, Elisabeth Koren assumed responsibility for her own and her husband's clothing: "When Vilhelm had gone, I began to starch my clothes. I did not finish my ironing until it was almost dark. (It is not easy to iron shirts for the first time)," she confesses.[240] When the pastor was about to leave for the settlements, she packed his belongings, and baked communion wafers, a typical pastor's wife task. Starching and pleating clerical ruffs was also included in the pastor's wife's duties.[241] However,

fulfilling her proper role as a pastor' wife would have to wait until she had acquired her own housekeeping, and more and more, she longs for the parsonage to be finished:

> I wish very much I could keep house and make Vilhelm comfortable and thus have some more interesting occupations than I do now. I can always find things to do, of course, but they are only little trifling things which do not satisfy, or I am merely helping Eli - but now it will be better, for I am to start quilting. I could find enough to do, now that we have received our baggage, it is true, but that had better wait until we have our own home. No, a young wife certainly is not benefited by being so long without a home of her own to look after.[242]

Pastor's wives came from a refined background, and enjoyed domestic help, who were frequently candidates for confirmation. A young girl often helped with housework, while a young boy helped outside. Frequently, the servants lived in the parsonage, where room, board, and clothing were provided. It was hard to get help on the frontier, and especially skilled help, but serving in a parsonage was a learning process for young people. In frontier communities, where water had to be carried in and out, washing clothes was an ardous and time-consuming task. Before Mrs. Koren had domestic help, she asked a woman in the settlement to do her washing, and at the same time agreed to hire one of her daughters:

> I […] confided to Anne how tired I was of all the soiled clothes; these she has now promised to take care of. Then it was agreed that I shall have one of her daughters when I move, which pleased them very much. Anne thought I would have to take them one at a time so that they would not be jealous of each other.[243]

Working in American households or in other middle-class homes was a way for the Norwegian American girls to acquire household skills, and at the same time it served as a step toward their own middle-class status. After having moved to Skaarlia, Mrs. Koren, in a letter to her father, mentions having one of Anne Aarthun's daughters in service, "so you may be sure that I begin to feel my dignity as a housewife. I have begun to bake bread, too," she proudly relates.[244] Teaching the girl proper housekeeping made her busy: "It seems to me that I am very busy now, especially teaching my girl, who has never seen other housekeeping than that at Aarthun's and is quite bewildered by everything I undertake and by the new dishes she has never seen before."[245] This statement reveals that Mrs. Koren belonged to a different class than the farmwomen. The heavier chores were often left to the domestic help, while the pastor's wife supervised the work and planned and provided the meals. Although exempted from arduous farm chores, Mrs. Koren frequently related about the farmwomen in the settlement, carrying water, milking the cows and caring for the animals. Even when they were pregnant, they continued to perform the customary chores, although Mrs. Koren's allusion to this fact is simply that "Helene had not been very well for a couple of days," and that the heavy work was "too much for her now."[246]

As educated women, pastor's wives were trusted medical advisors. Mrs. Koren was trusted in having skills in medicine, and people came to her for advice regarding their ailments. "People believe we are skilled in medical matters," she writes.[247] After first showing great modesty, she consults her books and gives advice, and is thanked heartily for the service.[248]

When moving into the Washington Prairie parsonage, Elisabeth Koren took great pleasure in transforming the building into a cozy home, in which she excelled as a housewife. Finally, after almost a year of waiting for the house to be completed, she was the matron of the house. She was aware of the demands on her as a resourceful housekeeper, but related with enthusiasm of all the chores. Getting the house in order required many hands:

> What activity in the house, and how industrious everyone has been today! The carpenter made kitchen benches and shelves […], Caroline scrubbed and cleaned. […] and tomorrow we shall bake - and I, I have gone back and forth from one thing to the other. [...] then I pickled onions and put down beets, placed the kitchen utensils in order, sewed the down quilt, trimmed my hat, and did no end of things. [...] How pleasant it has been, all of it![249]

She seemed to enjoy the task of arranging her new home as she wrote: "I should not have had so much pleasure, indeed, if I had come to a house with everything ready."[250]

In their parsonages, pastor's wives occasionally provided food and lodging to their husband's colleagues, and to large groups of workers. Frequently, weddings were held in the parsonage too. Planning and preparing food for a great many people, both guests and servants, was one of Mrs. Koren's most labor-intensive tasks, even if her domestic help prepared much of the food. She reported putting down salt pork for the first time, and making headcheese: "That was a job - making headcheese! It was the first time I had tried such a task, and it was really very difficult."[251] She was pleased to receive many food gifts, such as "carrots, potatoes, eggs, butter, prairie chickens, and, not to be forgotten, Mother Katterud's leg of dried mutton."[252] Plenty of food was needed, as during the threshing, she had "twelve men for meals." "Fortunately," she wrote, "they did not all stay overnight, for some of them were our nearest neighbors, who came to help us of their own good will."[253] Sometimes she was taken by surprise and in a hurry had to make the necessary preparations, as, for example, when a bridal couple and their guests entered without notice:

> Caroline came in and said that two wagons full of people were driving toward us. [...] I saw Vilhelm hasten toward me; then I knew what the situation was and hurried to clear the table and make the usual preparations before the large bridal party came in. There was a baptism, too, and Vilhelm talked so long with two of the group that I thought the soup would cook away entirely.[254]

In addition to housework and food preparation, Mrs. Koren planned her garden. In a letter to her father she writes: “I gather seed wherever I go.” She asks him whether it would be possible “to obtain lily of the valley pips and white narcissus bulbs from home,” as she “should like very much to have some domestic flowers.”[255] She is also thinking of transplanting strawberries and grapes.[256] Like many other rural women, Elisabeth Koren also had poultry. “I now have one on fourteen and one on eighteen, and soon the largest hen will have twenty for her pleasure. We are likely to have a whole poultry farm, aren't we?” she writes to her father.[257] With all the chores connected to her housework, garden, and her little baby, Mrs. Koren had become too busy to keep up the writing in her diary.

3.4 Agnes Mathilde Wergeland

Teaching school was one of the most respected work for educated women, but some carried it a step further and entered professions other than public-school teaching. Agnes Mathilde Wergeland, who had acquired her doctorate in Zurich was hired as a university professor at the university of Wyoming in 1902. In addition to teaching, she engaged in writing poetry and articles on a variety of subjects, both in American magazines and Norwegian periodicals.

Scholarly work and work for women’s rights constitute Agnes Mathilde Wergeland’s known work-life. Shortly after her departure for Wyoming, she writes to her friend Aasta Hansteen:

> Now I must tell you that I have been appointed Professor of History and French at the University of Wyoming – a new and small institution, but I shall buckle down to good hard work and do my share in building it up so that it may be just as good in its kind as any of the others which boast of years, standing and dignity. The salary is better than I have formerly had […] and what is more interesting: Wyoming is one of the few free states where the question of the vote once for all has been satisfactorily settled. Now I have an opportunity to see this state of affairs at first hand.[258]

In response to a letter she wrote to her friend Dr. Benjamin S. Terry in Chicago, who urged her to apply for the position in Wyoming, he writes that he was afraid she would find the people in the West so different from what she was used to that she would "hunger for the East and its ways". And he continues: "But I am sure that the sense of being one of the builders not only of a great state university but of the state itself through the ever widening and deepening

influence of its university must in itself be an inspiration to much that leads to the very highest idealism."[259]

The University of Wyoming was founded in 1886. It had from the beginning been open to both men and women, but, still in 1906, it was a small institution with less than two hundred students. The intent of this state institution had primarily been to "improve education in agriculture, research, and technical education," according to Semmingsen.[260] Dr. Wergeland found the university library to be a good one for so young an institution, and she writes: "I spent this morning in the library. I like to be there. I like the books and the view."[261] In describing her initial work at the university, Michelet uses the metaphor of a pioneer who labored doggedly in order to break "the virgin soil and plows the first furrows."[262] When she later taught only college and graduate students, she could devote herself more to the teaching of her particular field of study. Those who knew her tell more or less the same story about her. Because of her reserved nature, it took time to get to know her, but as time passed and she was able to show her many qualities, she was highly praised by students and colleagues alike. Her colleague, Dr. June E. Downey, describes her thus:

> I recall her first appearance among us. Her somewhat abrupt manner, her unconventionality, her slight foreign accent, pronounced at times of shyness, made her at first seem somewhat alien and remote. But gradually as the years passed, the people of the little University town came to appreciate her unusual qualities of mind and heart.[263]

In 1906, she gave a seminar course of Norwegian and French drama: Dumas, Maeterlinck, and Ibsen, at the Laramie Carnegie Library, attended by University professors and the people of Laramie alike, including dignitaries such as the Dean of the Cathedral and church ministers. She lectured to them about the political, economic and social conditions of Norway. Camilla Collett had inspired Ibsen in his idealization of women, as for instance in "The Doll's House." Dr. Wergeland's interpretation of the play reflected her own views on feminist issues. The course was a success, in which she served her country of birth, and at the same time gave her new land this legacy. According to how students and colleagues described her, she was always well prepared, and she displayed a patient but demanding manner in her teaching. Dr. Wergeland was a pioneer among women, and in the professional arena she gave her greatest contribution to society as a teacher and scholar.

3.5 Ethnicity and Women's Work-Life on the Frontier

In the nineteenth century, with access to cheap land, more than half of all immigrant women, particularly of Scandinavian and German background, settled in rural areas. Historian Theodore Blegen describes the life of a Norwegian farmwoman on the Great Plains in the 1840s:

> The farmer worked hard, but his wife worked harder. She did the housework, cared for the children, prepared the meals, helped to care for the cattle, pigs, sheep, and chickens, milked the cows, churned the butter, made the soap, did the canning in summer and fall, prepared cheese, carded and spun the wool, wove cloth, dyed it with homemade dyes, knitted and sewed clothing, mended mittens and socks. On occasion she pitched in and helped to rake hay or load the grain… She bore children year after year, and she cared for the sick when her home was struck by disease.[264]

Just as different family patterns ruled power relationships, they also set standards for labor practices. On farms, men's and women's work were differentiated but complementary. From the middle of the nineteenth century, Anglo-American women's main responsibility was housework and childcare, while the men worked in the fields and tended to the cattle. Poultry production and maintaining the garden remained in the care of the women. While younger children, regardless of sex, performed smaller tasks, such as herding cattle, older children were socialized into the customary labor gender roles. While girls learned the domestic skills, as well as gardening and other woman's chores, from their mothers, sons helped their fathers in the field. These labor patterns continued also after the market economy had entered the farming community, although technological innovations challenged the hierarchical family structure.[265]

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, Anglo-American women had worked in the fields, like European American women continued to do long after their American sisters had retreated to the domestic sphere. As Michel Chevalier wrote in 1839: "It is now a universal rule among the Anglo-Americans that the woman is exempt from all heavy work, and she is never seen, for instance, taking part in the labours of the field, nor in carrying burdens." And he continues: "It is the glory of the *English* race that they have every where, as much as possible, interpreted the superiority of the man to the woman, as reserving to the former the charge of the ruder and harder forms of toil."[266] Americans believed in the doctrine of separate spheres for men and women, a system in which husband and wife performed distinct, but complementary tasks. Seen from a European American point of view, American women were lazy because they did not work in the field like European American women did.

Immigrant women, on the other hand, were criticized for violating Victorian standards. Families of European or Yankee background, respectively, did not strictly adhere to one or the other of these typologies, but according to Gjerde, they tended to do so. Elise Wærenskjold constitutes an example of a woman who carried on the European American tradition in work roles, although she also challenged patriarchal power.

In describing the ethnic differences in work roles, Gjerde relates from Hamlin Garland's "The Creamery Man," a story of the relationship of Nina, the daughter of a German farmer, and Claude, the American Creamery man. Claude says to Nina: "A woman's business ain't to work out in the hot sun – it's to cook and fix up things round the house, and then put on her clean dress and set in the shade and read or sew or something." In marrying an American, she – like many other immigrant daughters – adapts to American culture, which not only influence labor roles, but also the system of authority and autonomy in the household. Parents often disapproved of "new patterns of conjugal affect and intergenerational discontinuity," whereas the young women themselves often welcomed such changes.[267] Elisabeth Koren, who as a pastor's wife, was exempted from hard physical work, followed to a larger extent the American pattern than the average Norwegian immigrant woman.

Immigrant women's occupational choices depended on factors such as education, skills, family status, and time of immigration. The majority of unmarried Norwegian women immigrants worked as domestic servants in American, or other middle-class homes. In the 1890's as many as eighty percent of these women worked as domestic servants.[268] This occupation offered room and board, and served as an apprenticeship to American household customs. Frequently, immigrant women were discriminated against because of appearance as well as sex and ethnicity."[269] Agnes Mathilde Wergeland suffered discrimination because of her "Quaker-like" dresses and her Norwegian accent, and since Americans knew that she came from a country where many of their domestic servants came from, she had to struggle hard to win respect and recognition.[270] Despite Dr. Wergeland's status as female and immigrant, she had after many years managed to climb the socio-economic ladder. Women's limited access to education maintained the differences between men and women in the work-life.

Since the three women in this study occupied widely different roles on the frontier, as farmwoman, pastor's wife, and professor, respectively, the character of their work differed. The work they did is to a certain extent, however uneven, described in their writings, but a few questions need to be asked. In *The Female Frontier*, Glenda Riley argues that, although

women over time were engaged in a variety of jobs, women's work continued to be characterized by domestic chores. Rearing children, cooking, sewing, washing, starching, and ironing clothes, as well as tending gardens and poultry were entirely female tasks which had to be done in addition to other work they might have been engaged in. Only Elisabeth Koren of the three women studied, reported having performed all of these chores, although she later delegated much of the work to servants. Elise Wærenskjold, in contrast, did not, in the consulted sources, write about her domestic chores except for a few comments about how to make the task of cooking more convenient and how to secure a good supply of raw materials. Undoubtedly, domestic chores on her Texas ranch mounted to considerable work, which she must either have performed herself, or in cooperation with domestic servants. Since she, in contrast to the two other women did not write about the interior of her home, except for a few pieces of practical information, it seems that she enjoyed the farm work much more and preferred to be among her animals and in her garden. Besides, it had an important economic aspect. Severe weather conditions could be disastrous to animals and crops. This is in accordance with Weatherford's observation that farm women tended to write more about animals, crops, and weather than about their homes.[271] Maybe Elise Wærenskjold also found on her Texas ranch the freedom she was searching. According to Riley, women found satisfaction in their employment as homesteaders. This is supported by a study of women homesteaders in Colorado, as the farm work gave them greater opportunities for responsibility and power within the family and the community, as well as enhanced equality between women and men.[272] Elise Wærenskjold's letters confirm this. She had great autonomy in the farm business, and in reality ran the farm while her husband was engaged in other enterprises, and after she became a widow.

Elisabeth Koren's work-life followed the conventions for women of her class and position. Living in an ethnic farm community, she described the work done by the farmwomen, who milked the cows, carried water, and worked alongside their men on the farm, while Mrs. Koren resorted to the domestic sphere and performed work that suited her middle-class status. Needlework was considered proper for women, and middle-class girls had often been taught the art. Elisabeth Koren reported spending much time sewing, both for herself and for others. Fashion became important as a means of transplanting civilization to the frontier. Like Elise Wærenskjold, Elisabeth Koren wrote about collecting seeds for her garden, and she also mentioned her poultry, so the two women shared these tasks at least. Also Agnes Mathilde Wergeland enjoyed her garden, but apart from her scholarly work, not much is written about her work-life. Since she did not have children and a large family to care

for, it must be assumed that her domestic workload was not as heavy as that of the two other women.

Regardless of the character of their work, all three women worked hard. When Elisabeth Koren lived in the homes of others, she clearly missed having her own house in which she could perform her chores as a housewife. As a result of the idleness she experienced, in combination with being a guest in the farm families' homes, she felt lonely. This changed when she moved into her own home and started to excel as "the matron of the parsonage," which implied challenging, but rewarding work for her. It is likely that hard work helped women adapt to the frontier. Not only did work keep them too busy to ponder over disagreeable matters, but the work these women did constituted a significant contribution, not only to their own future, but also to the communities in which they lived and worked.

4

The Community and Beyond

4.1 Women's Frontier Community Participation

During the 1830's a growing reform movement emerged in the United States, a movement in which women gradually became engaged. Taking care of home and family, women had a special mission as moral guardians, soon to be extended to their communities. This trend spread from eastern cities to the West, and from upper- and middle-class women to all women. Affairs of importance to women's daily lives were dominated by men, while women had to fight for their right to enter these arenas.

By reading newspapers, books, and journals, women learned about new ideas of their roles and responsibilities. Women formed reading clubs, in which they discussed literature. Through their reading activity, women were encouraged to improve their education, which again served as an entrance to participating in the reform movement. The temperance movement appealed to women, who saw it as their responsibility to save home and family from ruin because of drinking husbands and fathers. The early temperance movement reached its peak in the 1850's, soon to be replaced by abolitionism, war and reconstruction, but gained new impetus in the 1870's with the establishment of the pro-suffrage Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU).[273] Abolitionism attracted the attention of many women, who saw it as a female reform, both because they believed it was their moral responsibility to try to end slavery, and because they identified with black women, associating the conditions of slave women with the restrictions imposed on their own lives.

Women involved themselves in community projects through church or secular organizations. They served as Sunday school teachers, participated in charity associations, and the like. Black, and ethnic women formed their own organizations. Rural areas were no exceptions as virtually every church had its own Ladies Aid society, and reading clubs spread throughout the frontier region.[274] Reform-minded women in the West soon included environmental issues to their agenda, and toward the end of the nineteenth century, the vulnerable situation of the American Indian came to their attention. The previous attitude toward the wilderness as a place of hostility, in which wild beasts and savages roamed about, soon changed to contemplating the outdoors as a place for recreation, taking tramps, collecting species, and admiring the beauty of nature. Being witness to the injustice endured by the native peoples, and at the same time regarding them as uncivilized, women saw it as their mission to civilize them and called for a more humane treatment of the indigenous population.[275]

By participating in clubs and organizations, women of diverse backgrounds came together to discuss issues important to their gender, which ultimately led to their request for women's rights. In western regions, women's rights became a discussion topic by the mid 1850's, a movement that grew in intensity throughout the 1860's and 70's. The movement met resistance in some circles, among others in conservative immigrant groups, who felt the proper roles of men and women threatened, although many immigrants supported woman suffrage. Following the establishment of the National Woman Suffrage Association in 1869, Elisabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony traveled through the West, speaking in favor of woman suffrage. Wyoming Territory, where women, in 1869, as the first place in the nation, achieved the right to vote, especially attracted their attention. Suffrage was granted to women of Wyoming Territory partly because of the belief that women needed the vote in order to be effective reformers and to civilize the West. Woman suffrage would in turn attract women to Wyoming, where they were in great demand. The first woman to cast a vote in an election did so in Laramie, Wyoming, on September 6, 1870, exactly the place Agnes Mathilde Wergeland moved to a few decades later. Having acquired the right to vote, women started to serve in positions formerly closed to them and to hold political office. When the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified in 1920, granting universal suffrage, seventeen states – all western states except New York – had already given this right to women. Riley argues that reform-minded women resisted cultural values that restricted them to the domestic sphere.[276]

This chapter deals with how the three women, through active participation, influenced their communities, and how they perceived others. Their perceptions are revealed in their

background as ethnic, middle-class women. Although they shared a number of experiences on the frontier, the study shows that both region and time contributed to diverging experiences. Settling in frontier Texas at a time when cholera and other sicknesses hit the population hard made Elise Wærenskjold assume an active role in the physiological and psychological welfare of her fellow human beings. It was in the frontier cities of the West, with no adequate water supply, and primitive sanitation, that the disease was most severe. She also experienced slavery and the Civil War at close range, and gave her views on those matters. Both Elise Wærenskjold and Elisabeth Koren were engaged in the ethnic church. Of the three, only Agnes Mathilde Wergeland, who settled in the West much later than Koren and Wærenskjold, was able to enjoy full political rights for women.

4.2 Elise Wærenskjold

Elise Wærenskjold played an active role in community building in her Texas settlement, as she had done in Norway before emigration. She had a clear understanding of the world around her, and expressed her viewpoints and recommendations on a number of topics in her many letters and articles. Sickness was the first blow she and her fellow immigrants were exposed to, and in her writing she gave advice in this matter. Progressive causes, such as temperance, education, and abolition, were causes that occupied her mind. Although Elise Wærenskjold on her Texas ranch often felt cut off from the cultured life she had enjoyed in Norway, she found ways to cope with these shortcomings.

Sickness posed a real threat to the population as a whole, and especially to immigrants. Swampy areas in the South were frequently haunted by diseases such as yellow fever and typhus. New Orleans was especially vulnerable, and immigrants, weakened from the sea voyage, got sick and carried the diseases to the frontier, where both physicians and medicine were scarce. The climate was often believed to cause the fever. However, no one thought poor sanitary conditions could cause diseases. Better sanitation caused a decrease in infectious diseases, such as typhoid, typhus, and dysentery, which had been caused by sewage and contaminated water, both causes beyond women's control. When sickness struck, women were the ones to tend to the sick, whether skilled or not. Isolation on the frontier aggravated

not only diseases, but the threats posed by poisonous snakes, wild beasts, and accidents as well.[277]

Around 1850, some areas of the United States suffered outbreaks of cholera. Elise Wærenskjold wrote, in 1852, that the settlement has been severely hit by "fever." She stressed the importance of bringing proper medicine from New Orleans, as it was hard to acquire in Texas. Almost all the immigrants in the settlement got sick. Whether this was cholera or not, every tenth person died from the disease.[278] Since the settlement was still in its first fumbling stages, no sacred ground existed in which to bury the dead, nor did they have a priest of their own faith to perform the sacred rituals, which undoubtedly must have caused additional pain for those who survived.

The settlement was still very poor and it took time and money to establish institutions such as a school and a congregation and to hire a teacher and a priest, who would be center pillars in the immigrants' lives and ease their transplantation to their new homeland. Before a congregation was formed in the Four Mile Prairie settlement in 1853, and also after their first pastor left, lay members of the Norwegian community in Texas performed baptisms and funerals, and the dead were buried in the forest by their houses.[279] Confirmations had to be postponed. This clearly shows the need for establishing a congregation and transplanting the familiar institutions they missed, and which would secure some continuity in their lives and prevent their feeling of uprootedness.

Historian Oscar Handlin argued in 1951 that the immigrants felt rootless and alienated and unable to gain a foothold in America. The separation had been hard. They were cut off from homes and communities and when they reached their destinations in America, they felt exhausted after the long journey and faced the urgent need to find a livelihood. "Sadness was the tone of life, and death and disasters no strangers," he wrote.[280] It is not hard to imagine that the many deaths must have been hard to cope with, and especially in settlements at this stage, where congregations had not yet been established.

Unlike Handlin, who argued that the immigrants would feel uprooted, John Bodnar instead adopted the concept of transplantation. This implies that the immigrants transplanted their familiar institutions to their new homeland. The church had been a central institution in their lives at home, and in forming new settlements in America, the church would again be central in their daily lives. The settlers wanted men of their own faith and who could speak their own language to serve them. The only way to meet that end was to call for a pastor from Norway. Congregations were organized and "letters of call' signed. The pastors who served these settlers were trained in Norway, they had been called to this duty and felt their mission

was to serve their transplanted countrymen. Elise and Wilhelm Wærenskjold were active in organizing a congregation and collecting money for a Norwegian Lutheran pastor, but the many deaths in the settlement impeded the process. They hoped more settlers would come in order to form a viable Norwegian society. On the third day of Christmas, 1852, Elise wrote to her friend Mrs. Thomine Dannevig:

> My husband had sent out an invitation to people to pledge an annual contribution for a Norwegian Lutheran pastor, and in half a day something over $70 was pledged by half of the settlers; it seemed likely that the matter would progress satisfactorily, but these many deaths have so depressed most of the people that the project has for the time being come to a complete standstill. We are now expecting Gjestvang and ten or eleven families from Hedmark. If they should settle down here, it is possible that something may yet come of it.[281]

Being without a Lutheran church and an ordained pastor, some joined other religions.[282] She writes about the so-called camp meetings, a special form of worship that takes place in the forest:

> There are all kinds of religions here, […] but most people are Methodists. They hold various kinds of services; of these, their camp meetings deserve mention. […] in the afternoon all the men go to one place and all the women to another for private prayer. […] During these long and vehement prayers, they kneel at first, each in his own place, but little by little, as they become more excited, soon one and then another will begin to scream and cry out, clap his hands, slap those standing nearest, throw himself down on the ground, and on the whole act like a madman or one possessed by the devil. […] Apparently they believe that they cannot get into Heaven unless they take it by storm. There was no edification for me in this. Several of the Norwegians have abandoned their Lutheran faith. […] I wish very much that we could soon get a good Lutheran pastor.[283]

Jacob F. Fridrichsen had succeeded Elise's father at West Moland, and in 1853, his wife had written to Elise in Texas that her son, the theology candidate Anders Emil Fridrichsen, wanted to come to Texas as their pastor. Norwegians in Brownsboro and Four Mile Prairie accepted the offer, and the following winter the first Norwegian Lutheran church in Texas was built at Four Mile Prairie.[284] Fridrichsen served these settlements, and Bosque, until 1857**.** According to Russell, Elise wrote that Fridrichsen, by considering himself better than others, offended some members. When he left, she wished they could get another pastor with a "Christian-minded" spirit who would not expect any profit, but instead of another pastor from Norway, Elling Eielsen came from Wisconsin to Four Mile Prairie for a visit in 1860.[285] Eielsen was a Haugean, a follower of the lay preacher Hans Nielsen Hauge. Elise had great respect for Eielsen, who worked untiringly among the Norwegians, where he, in addition to preaching, started a Sunday school, and helped organize a temperance society. Elise's oldest sons, Otto and Niels, went to this Sunday school, and Elise commented: "It was certainly needed here, for many children have grown up completely ignorant of the teachings of religion."[286] After Eielsen's short stay, the settlement did not have a Norwegian pastor until

1869, when Ole Olsen Estrem came from Illinois to live in faraway Bosque County, where there were more than sixty Norwegian families, compared to only seventeen in Four Mile Prairie. Elise had for a long time hoped to have Otto and Niels confirmed, and in a letter to her sister- in-law, Emilie Syvertsen, on May 1,1870, she wrote: "Last Sunday Otto and Niels were confirmed, and last Wednesday we were received at the Holy Communion table. Thus my wish was granted: to see my children confirmed before I die." Estrem served as pastor in Bosque County, Texas, from 1869 to 1877.[287]

Religion was important to Elise, but in contrast to rigid clerical doctrines, she believed in expressing faith through good deeds. She wanted to pass her religious faith on to her sons, for whom she wrote her "Confession of Faith." In this document, she dealt, among other issues, with what she regarded improper treatment of women. She reproached religions who allowed men to have several wives, such as the Muslims and the Mormons, who thereby "degraded half the human race, namely, the women." She maintained that children will suffer in such relationships, and women's position will be "little better than that of slaves." She admonished her sons to treat their future wives well, and provided the income was sufficient, to let them have money at their own disposal. Nor should wives need to ask permission to visit neighbors or go where they wanted. In her view, equality between spouses was an important prerequisite for a good marriage. She believed in a person's free will, and the power to choose.[288]

Elise Wærenskjold, who had been active in the temperance movement in Norway, continued her engagement for this cause in Texas. Since she hated liquor, she was pleased that Wilhelm did not drink it. However, they both drank beer and wine. After her husband had organized a temperance society in the settlement, "all of us Norwegians, about eighty persons counting young and old, can come together for a social gathering without having strong drink, but we do have coffee, ale, milk, and mead at our gatherings, and food in abundance," she wrote, but in Brownsboro "there is a disgusting amount of drinking, among both Norwegians and Americans," with quarreling, and fighting as a result.[289] A new temperance society was organized by Wærenskjold and Eielsen as the first one "died out almost immediately, partly because they completely misunderstood the rules and thought that one might drink hard liquor if only one did not become intoxicated, and partly because there was no one who took charge of promoting the cause."[290] She gave credit to Eielsen's practical approach to Christianity, in contrast to the Synod pastors, who regarded it a sin to join such an organization.[291] She wrote that it was her husband, in conjunction with Eielsen, who organized the temperance society.

Thus, *he* was the person behind these reform efforts because he had legal power, while it must be assumed that she contributed behind the scene.

As an educated, middle-class woman, Elise Wærenskjold was concerned about education for her sons. Parochial schools, organized by the ethnic church, taught the religion, language, and culture of the ethnic group. A Norwegian, who had acquired some education in Norway, served as teacher in Norwegian settlements. Elise reports that her boys and some neighbor children are taught by a Norwegian, who "gets his food and lodging for his work."[292]

After the middle of the nineteenth century, immigrant children, like native-born children, also attended public schools. In 1860, she writes that the boys "will start going to English school in Prairieville."[293] The school was in session only for a few months each year, classes were large and many of the teachers did not have much education themselves. In rural areas, formal education for children was supplemented by learning from their parents on the farm.[294] Elise praised Otto and Niels for being good at herding cattle, but she regretted that they had not inherited their parents' zest for scholarly pursuits. As a mother, Elise expressed her frustration over lack of investment in their children's future on the part of the men. Education was also impeded by The Civil War:

> The children learned little or nothing during these war years, as we had no school and there were so many other things to take care of. School has been held here since last spring; but it has now been interrupted for almost four months because a new school building is being erected. Though this building is ugly beyond description, it takes a very long time to complete it. God only knows how our husbands can be so indifferent toward a project that is of so great importance to our children. In a society where community spirit is lacking, nothing can thrive and prosper.[295]

In 1860, there were, according to Odd Lovoll, 321 Norwegian settlers in Texas, a relatively small number compared to in the Midwest.[296] Opposition to slavery might have been one reason why so few Norwegians settled in the South. Nevertheless, Texas was booming. The population nearly tripled between 1850 and 1860.[297] When the war broke out, the mail bound for abroad and the northern states, was immediately instilled, and after the defeat of the Confederation, they did not receive any newspapers or letters. Despite the lack of, or falsified, information, Elise still believed that Texas suffered less during the war than most other southern states, and she related afterwards:

> We were spared all the plundering, and seeing our houses and fences burned by the soldiers, calamities which befell numerous families in other states. It is with reason, therefore, that we count ourselves lucky for being in Texas – so long as we had to be in a slave state. Since the war broke out I have frequently regretted that we settled in slave territory.[298]

In a letter to Thomine Dannevig in 1865, Elise wrote that if they would be able to sell their property for what it was worth, they would move. Wilhelm wanted to move to Oregon, while Elise preferred the Midwest because of the concentration of Norwegians there and the close links to Norway.[299]

During the years before the Civil War, she had through numerous articles refuted any negative statement, and praised Texas as an ideal home for Norwegian immigrants. However, by displaying a deep concern for her countrymen, she tried to give prospective settlers objective advice. She recommended immigration for those who were dependent, as in Texas, "they can always get work with good pay and soon become independent." But she stresses that those who do not know how, or who do not want to work, will not succeed in America, and, she adds "for those back home who have been accustomed to servants, life here would perhaps be less pleasant, since help is difficult to obtain and very expensive."[300]

As a lady who had enjoyed many privileges in Norway, she admits that she misses many things in Texas. Still, she would not want her son to experience the class differences in Norway, but if she were alone, she would have preferred to live there, she writes in 1852, as she could not expect to acquire all the privileges, of either a spiritual, intellectual, or material nature, which she had enjoyed in Norway.[301] Although she can never forget her dear fatherland and her dear ones in Norway, whom she would like to visit, she would, after many years in Texas, however, not move back there to live. She praises the republican ideals and the absence of class differences in Texas, where, according to her letters, the worker and the landlord eat at the same table, of the same food, and are equally respected.[302] She does not mention blacks here, who clearly did not eat at the same table as whites, but in another letter she concludes that in Texas, there is freedom and equality for all *whites.*[303]

In a letter dated March 24, 1860, she writes that in Norway the poor people are scorned like the Negroes are by whites in America, and she expresses her abomination for both. She almost never come into contact with the slaves or their masters, she writes, but she would like Texas much better without slavery. She had a constant fear that her children would become slave owners.[304] "I had so often wished that my sons were older […] but what an inexpressible blessing it proved to be that they were young boys whom the conscription law could not touch! I would rather have left Texas a beggar than have my children fight to preserve slavery," she confesses.[305]

Believing that human beings were born with equal rights, she considered slavery an unjust institution "doomed to fall." Still, according to Russell, records show that Wilhelm and Elise owned a slave in 1861 and 1862, something that was never mentioned by her. Russell

questions her ignorance on the matter, and hints at some explanations. Wilhelm could have recorded an employee as a slave in order to demonstrate his pretended loyalty to the Confederacy during the Civil War. Or, the slave might just have been regarded an employee because the female slave, according to a law decree of 1858 that no free Negro could reside in Texas, and which allowed the slave to choose his or her master or leave the state, herself had chosen to become their slave.[306] Russell thinks the last explanation is the most credible because, although the Wærenskjolds were among the wealthiest people in the area before the Civil War, no records show slave ownership between 1851 and 1860. Neither do records show that they owned slaves in the later war years, when slavery still existed in Texas. Although illegal, they may have freed their slave following Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation of 1862.[307] Even if Elise did not mention their owning a slave, she wrote in a letter to her sister in law, November 18, 1865: "I did not lack help during the war, as many families did whose menfolk were fighting in the army. I had a very able German maid all the time and, in addition, a Negro woman a good deal of the time."[308] This Negro woman might have been the one registered as a slave.

Upon the emancipation of the slaves, she, however much she had wished for their freedom, seems to waver in her opinion: "What of the thousands of people who have nothing with which to make a start in life – many even lacking the clothes they need to cover their bodies? For great numbers of them, life will be harsher now than when they were slaves."[309] There is no reason to doubt her sincere concern for blacks, and maybe she has a good point in saying that "it would have been better, for them too, if their emancipation had been brought about a little more gradually."[310] She is pleased that the slave-owners get the penalty they deserve by losing their slaves, but she regrets that the Yankees do too little to protect them.[311]

On some occasions they hired Negroes to work on the farm, or rented out the farm to them. During the war "we usually rented out the farm or else hired a Negro to work it for us," she wrote.[312] Families who did not have slaves, nor means to hire Negroes from their owners, suffered great hardships because women and children, whose husbands and fathers were in the Army, had to do all the work. "Practically all the Norwegians have hired Negroes," she writes, "and among us they are well treated."[313] In a letter to her Norwegian friend, Mrs. Kaja Poppe, dated September 29, 1868, Elise, at this time a widow, writes that she rents out the farm to Negroes and in return receives the half of what is produced. She would have preferred to rent out to a Norwegian, but after the war they are not to be had, and when Norwegians immigrate, they settle in Bosque County, by then the largest Norwegian settlement in Texas. The Negroes behave better than white Americans, she contends.[314] However, in a letter to her

sister in law, June 9, 1869, her attitude toward blacks is not as positive. "It is mainly the freed Negro slaves who rent land," she writes, and "many of them are lazy, cruel to the animals, or so careless with the tools that they cause a lot of trouble," she concludes.[315] Farm work was one of few options open to blacks, who had few skills except for in agriculture. The system of tenancy drove blacks into debt and was almost like a new kind of slavery.[316]

To what extent did she embrace the lack of class differences that she apparently praised so highly? Many of her letters reveal that she clearly missed contact with cultured people, and did not seek new friendships. Even after a number of years in Texas, her old friends in Norway seemed to be closer to her than those she had met in Texas. In her husband's absence, she assumed the role of a businesswoman, whose contact with others mostly was limited to business affairs. In a letter to Mrs. Thomine Dannevig in 1865, she writes:

> Next to my children, the most valuable pleasure I have is to receive letters from my dear ones in Norway and Denmark. I cannot forget old friends and make no effort to establish new friendships. I do not seek company, but go only where I have errands or business to take care of, which I do have quite often when Wærenskjold is away, otherwise very seldom. Many people come to our house, however very few whose company interests me.[317]

She reported staying at home on some occasions when Wilhelm and the boys visited the neighbors, and when celebrating the Fourth of July in the settlement, she did not show any enthusiasm:

> They gathered in the morning and continued celebrating a good twenty-four hours. They ate and drank lustily. A few danced a little. Wærenskjold made a speech. As for me, I would rather have had nothing to do with the entire party, but such things are just to Wilhelm's liking, especially when he can be at the head of the whole affair. Of what we usually call amusements, I have few or none.[318]

Why did she not enjoy herself? Could it be that the people were not refined enough for her to enjoy their company? Was it the drinking at this party that she loathed? Or was it simply that she did not easily make new friendships, like she indicated herself when talking about her husband's extroverted character? From what she wrote, it must be deduced that she was a deeply reflective woman, who had strong opinions about social issues and appreciated cultured contacts with like-minded people. But why were educated people so hard to find in Texas? In 1865, she relates about a "pleasant exception" to the acquaintances she has when two Germans visit. One of them, a Prussian Officer, she speaks of as "the most pleasant acquaintance I have made here." And she continues: "You may be sure I often miss the possibility of associating with cultured people, which I was well accustomed to in Norway and which I always appreciated so much." The other German, a baker, "was no more cultured

than people here, however much more polite."[319] Thus, this last statement, combined with other statements, supports the conclusion that education and class were important to her. The majority of the Norwegian settlers were not of the cultured class, but still she rejoiced when immigrants from Norway came.[320] No matter how much she longed for cultured company, she did not want to persuade anyone into immigrating who would not benefit from it, but ethnicity seems to some extent to have replaced some of the shortcomings.

The longing for cultured contacts she coped with in several ways. Fond of reading, and with a strong commitment to social reform, she started a reading club with sixteen Scandinavian families. This initiative satisfied her literary pursuits as well as her ethnic orientation. A number of Norwegian settlements, like the American society in general, established reading clubs, especially in rural areas where books were not to be had, or too expensive to buy. These clubs met the women's and immigrants' cultural needs, as well as serving as a link to their homeland. Elise Wærenskjold appealed to publishers, friends and relatives in Norway for book donations.[321] *Fædrelandet og emigranten* and *Norden* she got free from the publishers. She read everything about Norway, but skipped American politics and controversies in the Lutheran Church in America.[322] She was fond of reading Norwegian authors, but Ibsen did not appeal to her. "I like Lie, Janson, and Kielland much better, and find Gløersen's *Laura* especially interesting," she writes. Ole Kristian Gløersen, 1833-1916, was widely read in the latter part of the nineteenth century. He, like Elise, had feminist sympathies, and in *Laura*, he attacked the double standard of morality.[323] Elise Wærenskjold was able to read many languages, and she kept newspapers in the Norwegian, German, and English language. She also knew French, but this was not available to her except for the books she brought from Norway.[324]

She always sustained her contact with Norway and her friends there, and in 1865 she writes: "My interest in my ever-beloved native land and all my precious friends and relatives is as strong as when I left Norway, and I often long to see you all again." She regretted that Wilhelm did not share her desire to visit Norway.[325] Elise kept up a lively correspondence with old acquaintances in Norway, and getting letters from Norway "is one of my greatest pleasures," she writes, but she laments that "almost no one writes except when immigrants come; then we usually get a lot of newspapers, too, and a few books, which we read over and over until the next year, when immigrants come again."[326] The high postage may have been a reason why she received so few letters, but it can also be assumed that Elise's ardor for news from Norway was stronger than the reverse. Many of her letters go to her friend Thomine Dannevig, and to Thomine's son Thorvald, whom she had known as a little boy before she

emigrated and after whom she had named her own son. In one of these letters she asked whether it was possible to get pictures of landscapes, as she would like to have a view of Lillesand and her birthplace, the Dybvaag parsonage, where she spent the first eight years of her life.[327] In a letter to Professor Rasmus B. Anderson several years later, she laments that "many of our people here cannot read Norwegian and, unfortunately, not a few, in their ignorance, are almost ashamed of being Norwegian." She admired Anderson's "continuing efforts to make Norway better known and to gain for her the recognition she deserves among the Americans, who are so prone to look down upon foreigners." A book with the history of Norway, would, in her opinion, contribute to "awaken the interests of their countrymen in the old land of their forefathers." [328] Why many of her countrymen lacked interest for Norway might be reflected in class differences. Most of the immigrants had only known poverty in Norway, while Elise had enjoyed more privileges there than she ever obtained in Texas.

4.3 Elisabeth Koren

The Korens' reason to immigrate was different from most of the inhabitants in the congregations they served, who were farmers and had come to America to seek a better outcome for themselves and their children than they could expect in Norway. The Korens saw it as their mission in life to serve these people and give them the stability and security they needed in their daily lives. The Pastors Claus L. Clausen and Nils O. Brandt had visited the Iowa settlements in 1851. The following year, Brandt founded three congregations, among other Washington Prairie. A "letter of call" was sent to Norway, and the theological candidate Ulrik Vilhelm Koren, responded.[329] By accepting the invitation from the congregations in Winneshiek, Fayette, Clayton, and Allemakee counties in Iowa, Pastor Koren became one of the first pastors of the Norwegian Lutheran church in the Trans-Mississippi West. He also served as secretary, vice-president and ultimately president of the Synod.[330] Elisabeth Koren, as pastor Koren's wife, had high status, and the couple had a central position in community building.

While formal church business was left to committee meetings, where men drafted the congregations' rules, pastors' wives followed nineteenth century norms for women, and as cultural conservators they transferred their social and religious values to new generations. As

more immigrants continued to settle in the area, the need to divide the parishes into smaller units became more prevalent. In addition, the freedom of religion created discord and a subsequent need to divide parishes and to build more churches.[331] The first church in the Washington Prairie settlement, built of logs, was erected on the parsonage land in 1855.[332] Although kept outside formal business matters, Mrs. Koren shows great interest in the decisions for at least two reasons. First, she hopes the parish will be divided because Vilhelm will not have to travel so far and will spend more time at home. Second, after having met all the other frontier pastors and their families on a trip to Wisconsin, she, in a letter to her father, reveals her wish of having another pastor's wife in the vicinity with whom she can socialize: "Our nearest neighbor […] will be the Minnesota pastor. He will be only a day distant, and if you can find us an agreeable man to go there next summer, Father, I shall be very thankful to you. But he must be married; that is one of my conditions."[333] Her writing reveals that there was close contact between the clerical families in the Norwegian Synod both for business and pleasure, as Lagerquist contends.[334] However, in the beginning, frequent contact was difficult, but when the railroad within a couple of years would reach Prairie du Chien, they would no longer be so isolated from other clerical families.[335]

Although many immigrants found comfort in adhering to their familiar religion, the freedom of religion in America caused tension between religious groups. According to Gjerde, divisions within congregations and between laity and clergy occurred frequently in the early years of settlement. As the pastor's wife, Mrs. Koren followed strictly the conventions of the Norwegian Lutheran Church, which did not accept dissidents. When a Franckean lay preacher argued with Vilhelm, she marveled at her husband's patience: "I expected several times that they would come to blows, she wrote."[336] Coming home from a service, she encountered "two rather unpleasant-looking women" at the door. "The one was a Franckean, the other a Methodist."[337] The derogatory comment clearly reveals her opinion about other denominations. Learning about a Methodist conducting an English Sunday school in the settlement, she concludes that the teaching "can scarcely be correct."[338]

On one of the first services she attends in America, Mrs. Koren admires the fervor displayed by the parishioners: "It is so wonderful to see our people in this foreign land streaming together from every direction, and to feel the devotion and attention with which they sing their hymns and listen to the pastor. It all has quite a different aspect from what I have been accustomed to."[339] Despite the freedom of religion in America, she found that the parishioners were even more devoted to their religion than people in Norway. Having been without a pastor of their own faith for a while had made them realize how much it meant to

them to be able to worship in their own familiar way. Before a church was built, services were held in the schoolhouse or in the homes. In a letter to her father, she writes:

> Would you believe that the services in the small houses here make a stronger and more satisfying impression on me than those at home? I do not know why it should be. I think it is the ardent singing of the hymns and the crowded room, whereby the pastor and the congregation come into a much closer and more intimate relation to each other.[340]

Even if she finds the devotion of the congregation pleasing, she misses the solemnity of the holy days in Norway: "They are now ringing in the holy days at home. How I miss the church bells! I should so much like to hear them on Sunday mornings […]."[341] In America, the holy days seemed long to her when she was alone, but when Vilhelm was home, they tried to make these as festive as they could. Lingering with places and memories of her Norwegian home, she confessed:

> I did not long to return; I did not for a moment wish that we had not come here - but these dear memories have made me melancholy. [...] I would not, if I could, make a visit home now - it would be too soon to make so long a journey again. But to stay here forever - I cannot think of such a thing, nor can Vilhelm either. [...] Never to gaze again on what I have left behind - that would be too heavy a burden; I cannot see it in any other light, unless - God forbid - there should be too many changes. Yes, God knows what may happen. He guides all things, and we will confidently submit to His will.[342]

Nelson writes that the Korens with their seven children made a trip to Norway in 1870, from May to shortly before Christmas.[343]

Arriving in the settlement just before Christmas, the Korens celebrated Christmas Eve in a frugal way in the Egge home upon which Mrs. Koren gave these reflections: "This was a strange Christmas Eve, indeed; so different from any I have ever known before. Here we sat, Vilhelm and I, separated for the first time from relatives and friends, in a little log cabin far inland in America. For supper we had spareribs and coffee. [...] What a contrast between this evening and a year ago!"[344] But however great the contrast between her cultured life in Norway and her life on the frontier, she does not regret having emigrated, as she finds comfort in the fact that she and her husband will serve their congregation:

> Last year I began the new year clad in bobbinet, dancing away with roses in my hair. This year I am sitting here with Vilhelm in this bare room, where tomorrow he is to conduct divine services for all these people who so long have lacked a pastor. Still, this is best.[345]

Through her accounts from living with these farmers for a year, we learn a great deal about how the young Mrs. Koren perceived these immigrants, who had a very different background and belonged to a different class than she did. In her diary Saturday January 7, 1854, she writes:

> They are really nature's children these farmers. There is nothing wrong with that; but it can irk one considerably, as, for example, a moment ago while we were eating. Erik, who had had

> supper at Suckow's did not eat with us, but drew off his shoes and socks, put both his feet on a stool, and began quite unabashed to rub them with turpentine; my appetite was not particularly sharpened by either his manners or the awful smell. On the whole we have to shut our eyes and ears as much as possible to preserve our appetite and good humor when our finer sensibilities are offended by these rustic manners; fortunately, they usually have the opposite effect, however; one glance at each other, and we have a hard time to keep from bursting into laughter.[346]

One day she made a visit to the Suckows, one of the neighbors, and commented on the contrast of the primitiveness of their home with the beauty outside:

> I sat there for a while, but was really afraid to look about me in that wretched room. Ugh, it was a trial to go in there after the bright, cheerful sunshine outside. It was stuffy and untidy, though that was not surprising in such a little room with so many children, and then that poor crippled girl who hops about on the dirty floor. Sigrid invited me to have dinner, but I could not do it. I was eager to get outside, and it was not until I had walked some distance that the fresh winter morning began to blot out the pitiful picture I had just seen.[347]

Mrs. Koren frequently commented on the scrubbing of floors, which she disliked because of the strong smell of the lye, but the necessity of this is revealed in the following passage:

> It was really a good thing Helene did not scrub her floor. Just now two men; Thorgrim and another, came stamping in with their dirty wet boots. […] Thorgrim is smoking some abominable tobacco and spitting on the floor with abandon. I cannot understand why there is not a spittoon, and a mat for wiping the feet. Apparently that is not done here.[348]

Spitting on the floor was a gendered and most certainly also a class habit. It must have been extremely disgusting to a refined lady. Later on, with increased awareness of the risk of spreading diseases, as for example tuberculosis, posters admonished people to stop spitting.[349]

The primitive manners of the farm families in the settlement, and their frugal living conditions were recurrent themes in her writing, but there were also exceptions, as for instance the description of a visit to the Sørlands: "We had a very pleasant time there; I was busy with my work and Eli set out a plentiful supply of good food. She is a very tidy housekeeper; it is less primitive, too – both saltcellars and pepperboxes."[350] After a visit to two of Eli's brothers and their families, she commented: "We had dinner before we went on to the other brother, who lives nearby. It was pleasant there, too; both wives had worked for Americans, and where this is true one can be sure to find things tidy and clean.[351] Being domestic servants in American middle-class homes was the main occupation for young, unmarried Norwegian American girls. Through this work, they were introduced to American customs at the same time as it served as a step toward middle-class status for themselves.

Bodnar asserts two separate immigrant Americas, that of the working class and that of the middle class. Mrs. Koren's diary clearly reveals that she belonged to a more elevated class than the farm people she mingled with in the Washington Prairie settlement. While waiting

for the parsonage to be completed, she joined her husband on a trip to Wisconsin and enjoyed being with pastor Preus and his wife Linka as expressed in a letter to her father September 18-20, 1854: "You may be sure it was very strange to mingle with educated people again after having seen, Vilhelm excepted, only farm folk for more than seven months."[352]

The middle class had power to influence public affairs and public institutions in contrast to the working class, whose main concern was to manage their lives on a day-to-day basis. Although religion was extremely important to the farm people, they were highly concerned about their daily work on the farm. When a young boy died, Mrs. Koren was shocked at the family's reaction to it. It seemed the worst thing about it was that the father would not have his son to help with the work, she observed. She turned down the invitation to attend the funeral, and wrote in her diary: "They seem to go to a funeral as to a feast."[353] "To see a lively party on such an occasion would not have been pleasant," Mrs. Koren concluded.[354]

Life in immigrant communities was dominated by practical measures with little room for mourning.[355] The patriarchal system, prevalent among European American immigrants, implied that the whole family worked on the family farm. Americans criticized what they saw as a lack of affection between husband and wife in such relationships, and the exploitation of labor on the part of the wife and children, often at the expense of the children's education. Gjerde writes that in the United States, married European immigrant women had more children than married American women. Reasons for this can be found in the European American typology: more children meant more help on the farm, but in addition to the financial asset, children also had an emotional value. From a European American perspective, limiting the number of children signified "moral decline" and not intelligence. In American households, on the other hand, parents did not expect as much deference from their children, who were encouraged to get an education and follow their own pursuits. Moreover, American women, who enjoyed more matrimonial influence than their European American counterparts, were more likely able to control fertility. They preferred to devote more of their time and energy to each child. Although nineteenth-century women seldom wrote about sexuality and pregnancy, enough data exists to confirm these theories about children's utility, Gjerde concludes.[356] Again, the class difference might explain Mrs. Koren's reaction to the farm families' rituals.

Letters from family and friends in Norway were extremely important to the immigrants, like immigrant letters were for those left in Norway. Since letters were the only source of information between those who immigrated and those ho stayed behind, they served

as an invaluable link, but in the early days of immigration, the mail system was slow and unreliable. The cost of sending letters also impeded this early correspondence. The immigrants waited for weeks, and even months for news from home. However, when letters arrived, there was great joy when the news was good. Elisabeth Koren treasured highly letters from her family in Norway, but the waiting brought much disappointment. The farmers in the settlement brought grain to the mill in Decorah, and letters and newspapers back. It happened that the mill was filled up, or had broken down, and the farmers would have to wait there, sometimes for days: "Erik is in Decorah. I am sitting, as I have done many times, waiting for him to return, with a faint hope that he will bring letters. God grant we may not be disappointed this time, too![357] But, upon Erik's return, she exclaims:

> No letters this time either, not even an *Emigranten*! The mail from Wisconsin had not come; very likely it cannot get across the river on account of the ice; possibly that is also the reason we have heard nothing of our baggage. But now it is all of five months since we heard from home. Not a line from anyone since we arrived here. I only hope those at home do not have to wait so long for our letters![358]

She clearly expressed her anger with the post office in Decorah when she became aware that stacks of letters had been laying there for a long time, but she was the more rejoiced when she received the long awaited news: "God be praised for letters and good news from home, even though they are old! How good it was, nevertheless, to hear something at last from all our dear ones at home![359] Like letters, new issues of *Emigranten*, the most important pioneer newspaper, were most welcome. *Emigranten* kept her informed about world news. She worries about the effects the Crimean War might have on her loved ones in Norway:

> *Emigranten* urges its readers to consider that Europe in all likelihood will need much wheat from America this year. God knows what the end will be! If one could only get recent news from Norway! "Well, it is a good thing we are away from there when it looks like that," say many here, although under such circumstances most people would be much more reluctant to be so far distant from those they hold dear.[360]

Norwegian immigrants often spent a year, or at least a winter, in the older settlements in Illinois or Wisconsin before heading west and claiming land in the new areas opened for settlement.[361] Some who had previously lived in Wisconsin, sold their farms and moved to Minnesota, where they could acquire large tracts of land at lower prices. In a letter to her father, May 22, 1854, she writes: "I think the whole population of Wisconsin must be moving west. A young man who came here yesterday with greetings from Pastor Preus had passed more than three hundred wagonloads of Norwegians, the greater part bound for Minnesota […] There is no land for them here."[362] However, family members of those who were already there, continued to come and lodged with their relatives, at least for a while.[363] She makes her

reflections of the constant motion of people: "I wonder what state will be next, or whether there will finally be an end to this continual bird-of-passage life. It is unpleasant - this constant restlessness among people here."[364]

The knowledge immigrants had about America before they arrived could be misleading. America-letters and immigration agents portrayed America in positive terms, while the reality often turned out to be worse than expected. Many immigrants suffered a great deal during the first years, both from want, sickness, and sheer ignorance. Sickness hit many immigrant communities hard. Elisabeth Koren mentioned that immigrants from Norway had died of cholera in Chicago on their way, and the surviving ones regretted bitterly having immigrated.[365] After a trip to Wisconsin she wrote that cholera was bad there, especially in Rock Prairie, but "here in the settlement health conditions were good, thanks be to God!"[366] She is puzzled at the ignorance displayed by some immigrants about America, as, for example, when she is asked by one of her neighbors:

> Had it ever occurred to you it would be cold in America?" he asked. I have heard that question often. I wonder what sort of ideas these newcomers have of the country. I believe that even after they hear of something disagreeable, they must first see it with their own eyes before they can believe that all is not roses in their dear America.[367]

She, an educated middle-class woman, knew better than most immigrants that frontier America had its shortcomings. For her, the situation was in a way reversed. She knew that things she took for granted in Europe, were considered luxuries here, which caused her to appreciate those even more when they were available to her:

> Vilhelm, who had brought home a lemon, made some excellent lemonade. I had gone out after the first mignonettes, and now we sat there and felt we were quite European and civilized with our lemonade and the fragrance of the mignonettes. But I wonder if a glass of lemonade would have tasted as good to us over there?[368]

At times she could dream herself back in Norway, as, for instance, when she in a letter to her father writes: "For afternoon coffee we now sit outside regularly and enjoy the cool shade and beautiful woods – and at times make believe that the blue prairie is the distant sea. Ah, how beautiful it is at home now! The beautiful water!"[369] Being so far away, she assures her father that she and the baby often look at his daguerreotype, "and then I tell her of her grandfather. Think of when she can understand me!"[370] A culture conservator, Mrs. Koren carried her culture to the frontier and passed it on to the next generation.

4.4 Agnes Mathilde Wergeland

When moving to Wyoming, Agnes Mathilde Wergeland was introduced to the western landscape, which she came to enjoy immensely. Her friend, Dr. Hebard, was active in many kinds of sports, including golf, fencing, and rifle shooting, and she awakened in Dr. Wergeland these interests, especially golf. A game of chess was a favorite pastime on winter nights. These activities brought new dimensions to her life. Both were fond of taking long tramps, and they had a passion for the beauty of nature, and for trees, flowers, and birds. The mountains were especially alluring to her. By train and wagon they reached the Norwegian settlement in the Snowy Range region, consisting of log cabins built by the Norwegian missionary Nils G. Sundby. Here, surrounded by fir trees, pines, aspen, and mountains, Dr. Wergeland had her own little refuge, 'Enebo,' where she and Dr. Hebard used to spend their summers.[371]

With her commitment to the environment, and to history, she found the culture of the first inhabitants fascinating. After a trip to the Grand Canyon, Dr. Wergeland demonstrated to some of her friends an Indian dance she had watched: "I recall how she even imitated for us the curious steps of the Indians whom she had seen dance at the Grand Canyon of the Colorado. With her instinct for the historic, she had deeply enjoyed this glimpse of primitive times and of a primitive people," June E. Downey wrote.[372] Her home was decorated with Navajo rugs, Indian relics, and pioneer souvenirs, a contrast to the pieces of European art and culture, but Agnes Mathilde Wergeland embraced both cultures.[373] More and more she came to feel at home in the West. In her biographical note, Merrill wrote:

> Perhaps the self-complacent East too lightly let slip away from it what she had to give. At any rate, to the young open-minded West, where possibly the need was greater, she took the wealth of her culture and there made practical for hundreds of students a large measure of the riches of her experience and her unusual intellectual equipment. She found in Wyoming a mental atmosphere that suited her. Always a pioneer and a radical in thought (however gentle in manner), always a keen observer of the progress of women in recent history, it was not for nothing that she taught in a university maintained by the first state in the union to grant women suffrage; not for nothing that she met and made friendships there with women who were lawyers, reformers, members of state committees, and voters on all public questions.

Enthusiastic as she was with women's rights in Wyoming, Wergeland continued to advance the cause for women's liberation, both in Norway and in the United States. She knew personally the leaders of the women's movement in Norway. By writing *Amtmandens Døtre* (The Governor's Daughters), the first book to attack conventional marriage patterns, her relative, Camilla Collett, was a pioneer in this movement. Aasta Hansteen fought ardently for

women's liberation and suffrage in Norway before she went to America in 1880, where she lived for nine years, struggling as a newcomer and devoting her time to the women's cause. Hansteen became acquainted with America's great reformers, and in letters to Agnes Mathilde Wergeland, who was still in Norway, she writes: "These great reform movements are the glory of the United States!" She contrasts these glorious movements in America with the women "at home," who are "frightened like the mouse in her hole, silent and afraid that anyone may discover that they exist."[374] Aasta Hansteen's letters to Dr. Wergeland must have been a source of inspiration, and in one of her last letters she writes: "Indeed, bright, prophetic visions and thoughts now encircle the globe!" Through Aasta Hansteen, Dr. Wergeland later kept herself informed about the suffrage movement in Norway, which she continued to support.

Settling in Wyoming, where woman suffrage had been granted as early as 1869, she felt she should become a citizen and be able to take advantage of that privilege. In July 1902, before leaving Chicago, she gave up her Norwegian citizenship. Disappointed that she was not able to serve her own country, she wrote: "Today I swore my allegiance to the United States. In two years I shall reappear before a judge, wherever I may be in the United States, and repeat my declaration. Well, my own country did not give me a chance and I must take my chance here."[375] Although it was hard for her to renounce her allegiance to her native country, she had made up her decision that in being a representative of a state university, she ought to be a citizen of the United States, and her diary entry on August 1, 1904, stated: "Today I was naturalized. Hard for me to take the oath, but the best thing after all. They have forgotten me in Norway. Only old Frøken Hansteen has asked about me at home."[376] In November of that year, she voted for the first time in any election, and she wrote in her diary: "Red letter day in my life for I voted and I hope right. I feel very much pleased that I have accomplished so much."[377] About her own efforts in the woman's cause, she declared:

> I have never cared to lead the ranks on the firing line. I have preferred to be one of the soldiers who have worked, laying in the right place the mines which later should blow up the ramparts, but when one is in the trenches one has hard work: I have been obliged to earn my bread besides, and only dry bread at that, so I have had the real hard rock to blast and perhaps do not yet see the goal. But I can, however, say that I have endeavored to break a path by my own quiet efforts.[378]

She attacks what she terms "shortsightedness," and emphasizes the necessity of educating women, who "must learn to subjugate man, not by passion but by wisdom." She writes that she, although most people consider her conservative, is quite radical, and she demands that the women "*must* work upon themselves first, last, and all the time; that alone will give the

understanding and conception of what really must be done."[379] Dr. Wergeland never thought women should receive any favor *because* they were women, but they should – with the same qualification as men – be able to do the same work for equal pay. She believed in equal opportunities, and she thought woman suffrage would be beneficial for home and family. She was head of the department of history and received the same salary as her male colleagues. This she attributed to the fact of woman suffrage in Wyoming. At the first legislature, in 1869, before Wyoming even became a state, a law granted equal pay and position to men and women, provided they had equal qualifications.[380] Dr. Wergeland had a strong commitment to helping those women who still did not enjoy equal privileges. Through active membership in a fraternity organization, along with a philanthropic spirit, did she continue her engagement for women and for the disadvantaged.

Agnes Mathilde Wergeland was a Norwegian patriot, and throughout her life she thought of how she could support her native land:

> I am a patriot no matter how long I live in another land and however much I may owe it. What Henrik Wergeland lived, fought, and died for: a free and worthy society, a Norway strong because it is righteous, open to every honest effort, united, not by force, but by conviction, tolerant, because it is enlightened – that I, too, have wished to labor for. Circumstances have not considerably favored my efforts, I am here instead of there, but I have learned an endless lot that can benefit my land if I might find a place to work for its welfare.[381]

She was deeply engaged in Norwegian politics, and the country's relations to neighboring countries, especially the relationship between Norway and Sweden, and in her new year's prayer, she conveyed: "I am so deeply thankful that this year of 1905 my native country has not seen the horrors of war and that the new king, however unimportant his position seems, is desirous of making his mark in love for the new home."[382] By writing articles, she hoped to contribute to Norway's growth.

Despite her patriotism, she did not have much contact with Norwegian Americans in America. According to Semmingsen, an article she wrote to Symra in 1911, on European politics, was her first contact with Norwegian Americans. There is no information about her associating with Norwegians while she lived in Chicago. Semmingsen suggests that maybe she was too proud to reveal her precarious situation. Still, she was interested in causes for emigration, and the situation of Norwegians in America. She accused her fellow countrymen in America of having turned their thoughts "toward the soil, and exchanged for wealth our people's traditions."[383] To her home in Wyoming she transplanted the traditions she cherished in Norway. In the spring she would say: "I seek the anemones that I used to pick in childhood even though I do not find them here." [384] She also brought the Norwegian Christmas traditions

to the West. Even with an enthusiasm for the American holidays, Dr. Wergeland introduced a whole week of Christmas celebrations, and the Christmas preparations included Norwegian style cleaning and scrubbing, as well as bringing out the best of all kinds. The house was nicely decorated, and in the garden a sheaf of grain was put up for the birds. On the first Christmas at the Doctor's Inn, she introduced the Norwegian custom of putting up a Christmas three, a custom that would bring back memories of her childhood years in Norway.[385] In 1909, after a nervous breakdown, she made a recovery trip to Norway, but longed for her home in Wyoming.[386]

4.5 Ethnic Women in Frontier Communities

With few exceptions, immigrants, regardless of sex or background, did not separate household from neighbourhood, or family from community. Middle-class Americans, on the other hand, maintained firm lines between the home, women and children on one side, and the public life on the other. This reflects the differences in European American versus American family patterns, described by Gjerde. Immigrants adhered to corporatism, whereas Americans by the mid-nineteenth century had embraced contractual relationships between individuals.[387] Americans regarded the blending of public and private in immigrant communities with dismay, while immigrants saw Americans as indifferent to the needs of the community.[388]

Ethnic neighborhoods functioned as social arenas for married immigrant women. While men traveled to town of nearby settlements, women usually stayed behind and rarely came into contact with native-born Americans, what Milton Gordon has termed "structural assimilation."[389] Gabaccia suggests that immigrant women regarded their ethnic communities – although shared with men – a private sphere, and the English speaking, multiethnic world outside their communities the public sphere. Married immigrant women rarely crossed that boundary, but single immigrants could not avoid doing so.[390] Entire settlements found comfort in their shared cultural background, where the immigrants continued to speak Norwegian, and where they transplanted not only familiar institutions of education and faith, but literally also crops of various kinds which they knew from Norway. Frequently, people from the same area in Norway made up the bulk of a settlement, where they continued to enjoy their local traditions. The shared background alleviated their feeling of uprootedness.

Social contact helped them cope with isolation, homesickness, and every-day problems, and eased their adaptation to an American way of life. In ethnic settlements, women assumed responsibility for maintaining kinship networks, spanning gender and generations. It was common that large kin groups gathered at baptisms, marriages, and funerals. Like many Americans, Elisabeth Koren found the immigrant funerals distasteful, but for immigrants of the working classes, such gatherings formed a natural part of their lives.[391] It can also be argued that of the women in this study, especially Elisabeth Koren reacted to the blending of public and private. She preferred more privacy than what she found in the farm families' frontier homes.

Like their American counterparts, middle-class immigrant women in frontier communities played significant roles in community building in nineteenth century America. Despite male opposition and heavy domestic duties, they participated in the great reform movements, such as temperance, abolitionism, and feminism, which swept across the United States in the decades preceding the Civil War. These reform movements gained new impetus in The Progressive Era around the turn of the century when the United States assumed industrial world power.

Women focused on the welfare of their ethnic communities. Sickness and death was always a concern, and especially Elise Wærenskjold wrote about health conditions in the settlement when she gave advice to prospective settlers to bring medicine against the epidemics that haunted the frontier. Burying the dead in unsacred ground was an extra burden. Elisabeth Koren did not write much about sickness except for an outbreak of cholera in Wisconsin. Thus it must be assumed that health conditions in the Washington Prairie settlement were good. She was trusted in having medical skills and was consulted by the parishioners about minor illnesses. Weatherford contends that health practices were more dependent of class than of nationality, as educated European Americans, in contrast to the uneducated, carried out good health practices.[392]

The ethnic church, in which women formed women's groups, provided spiritual strength, solace, social contacts, as well as a link to the homeland. Ethnic schools taught homeland language and culture to immigrant children.[393] Both institutions were financed by contributions from the congregation. Women were most concerned about childrens education and churchly rituals associated with life and death; baptisms, confirmations, weddings, and funerals.[394] Elise Wærenskjold expressed her deep frustration over lack of community spirit in building a school, and her ardent wish to have her boys confirmed.

Religious and cultural leaders of Norwegian American settlements resented the infusion of Yankee ideas into their communities, ideas they thought would weaken parents' and community control. Lagerquist argues that, despite Scandinavians' allegedly unproblematic assimilation, ethnic retention prevailed, with dense clusters of immigrants, keeping their native language, and marrying within the ethnic group. Possible reasons for Norwegian Americans' tenacious hold on their ethnic heritage could be that immigration coincided in time with Norwegian nationalism. The State Lutheran Church in Norway was transplanted to the United States, where it was transformed into an association of Norwegian American ethnicity with Lutheranism, influencing religious and educational institutions. The Lutheran church played a significant role in the adaptation process by providing a place where Norwegians "engaged in familiar activities in a familiar language," Lagerquist concludes.[395]

The influence of the ethnic church varied with region. In southern states Catholisism and Lutheranism were often abandoned and replaced by religions popular among Americans, whereas in the Midwest, Old World religions grew more conservative than in the homeland.[396] The importance of the church also varied between ethnic groups, and between urban and rural immigrants. For Scandinavians in the rural Midwest, religion was an extremely important part of their lives.[397] This is confirmed by both Elise Wærenskjold and Elisabeth Koren. Even if Mrs. Koren encountered sectarians in her settlement, the parishioners' devotion to their ethnic church made a deep impression on her. Elise Wærenskjold wrote that many immigrants had converted to American religions, and, although not at all filled with enthusiasm for the Methodists' camp meetings, she had at least attended one. Since the ethnic church was financed by the parishioners, the relatively few Norwegian immigrants in Texas compared to in the Midwest makes it obvious that it was harder to maintain the familiar institution there. Still, Elise Wærenskjold and her husband played important roles in doing so.

Elise, in later year, lamented that Norwegians in Texas were almost ashamed of their ethnicity and that they had forgotten their Norwegian language. When her son got engaged, she could not fully reconcile herself with the fact that the girl was American.[398] Throughout her life in Texas, she frequently revealed her disparaging view of Americans, whereas Elisabeth Koren seemed to be enthusiastic about her contact with Americans. When she on a few occasions was traveling with her husband, she seized the opportunity of practicing the English language and learning about American customs.[399]

Other ethnic institutions that served women were, among others, the ethnic press, and cultural and literary societies.[400] In addition to their own writing, all three women in this study

benefited from such institutions, which, in the case of Elise Wærenskjold and Elisabeth Koren, compensated for the lack of cultured company in the settlements, and at the same time served as a link to Norway. Women later created a public sphere by entering into fraternal organizations. The women's rights movement in the United States, well known to Norwegian feminists, peaked during the early twentieth century, at the time Agnes Mathilde Wergeland migrated to Wyoming. Unlike Elise Wærenskjold and Elisabeth Koren, Wergeland lived and worked in the midst of the cultural elite, and, not least, the half-century that had passed between their frontier experiences had changed the American society in the favor of women.

Together with women's rights, a new perception of the environment and of the American Indian had emerged. Although Elise Wærenskjold defended blacks, she wieved the Native Americans in a much more condescending way. After an attack by Indians in the Bosque settlement, she showed no sympathy with their cause and described them as „wild heathens."[401] Without the belief that the immigrants were entitled to the land upon which they settled, their dream of a better life in America would fall apart. For them it was important to subdue the wild and civilize the frontier.[402] In 1867, when Elise Wærenskjold wrote this letter, the reigning view was that the wild had to be tamed. Unlike Elise Wærenskjold, Elisabeth Koren did not express any clear point of view regarding Native Americans. When traveling through Wisconsin on her way west, she related in colorful terms of meeting two wagons of Indians. Later, she briefly mentioned the fear expressed by the neighbors, when they had heard that the Indians had "stolen" a girl near Lansing. She reassures her father that it is peaceful enough in the easternmost part of Iowa where the Korens live, but in Minnesota, she writes, "the Norwegians are living right next to the Indians."[403] Agnes Mathilde Wergeland, who imitated the Indian dances, and who decorated her home with pieces of Navaho items, must have been fascinated about their culture. The divergent perceptions of native populations reflected their views of the environment. Region and era made the three women's experiences differ in significant ways, but they all found their proper place in the West and gave invaluable contributions to their communities' progress.

5

Conclusion

This study has aimed at finding similarities and differences between three Norwegian women who settled on the frontier of the Trans-Mississippi West between 1847 and 1910. Sharing a similar gender, ethnic, and class background, I found that these were important dimensions in explaining how these women adapted to the frontier. Despite many similarities in their background, these women's frontier experiences diverged in significant ways, due to time and place of migration, occupation, marital status, and family situation.

Their experiences have to be seen in relation to conditions in the Norwegian society at the time of migration. Coming from the Norwegian cultural elite, all three had acquired some education. Elise Wærenskjold and Elisabeth Koren had been taught by private tutors before the girls' schools were established shortly after 1850. Education for girls aimed at preparing middle-class girls for a "proper" marriage, and Elisabeth Koren followed the prescribed norms for girls of her class and day by marrying the theological candidate Vilhelm Koren. Agnes Mathilde Wergeland, who was much younger than the two other women, had completed the Governess School at Nissen Pikeskole before she went abroad to pursue further studies. Education gave all of them certain advantages in different ways.

While Elisabeth Koren followed the prescribed norm, it can be argued that Elise Wærenskjold and Agnes Mathilde Wergeland acted against the gendered expectations of their day. When Elise Wærenskjold founded her first school in the 1830's, she was well in advance of her time, as female teachers did not become common until the 1860's. When she joined a temperance society as the first female member, and started her writing career as early as 1843, more than forty years before women started to write under their own name, it can truly be said that she was a pioneer, in Norway, as she later was in America. Since we know that divorces

were uncommon in Norway until about 1890, the fact that she at the time of migration was separated from her husband might even have influenced her decision for emigrating. Finally, a woman engaged in so many independent enterprises uncommon to women at the time must have felt constrained in Norway, and been attracted to the individual freedom in America.

With her zest for scholarly work, Norway did not offer Agnes Mathilde Wergeland much. She went to Munich to study in 1883 or 1884, when Norway was in the verge of many changes for women. 1884 was, according to Blom et al., the year women were admitted to university education in Norway. As the first Norwegian woman with a doctorate, she had to look to America to be able to pursue her career. Still, at a time when female professors were rare, she had to struggle even harder just because she was an immigrant. Besides, she never married, and thus had to rely on her own efforts for survival. Wergeland's acquaintance with the leaders of the feminist movement in Norway, particularly Aasta Hansteen, who had participated in and praised the women's rights movement in America, might also have spurred her decision to emigrate.

By marrying Vilhelm Koren, who accepted the letter of call from the Washington Prairie congregation, Elisabeth Koren also accepted her future role as a pastor's wife in a pioneer settlement. She was the only one of the three who emigrated as a married woman, and her and Vilhelm's Atlantic crossing as first class passengers on board the *Rhein* stood in stark contrast to Elise Wærenskjold's dismal conditions on board *New England* a few years earlier. As pastor and pastor's wife, the Korens earned great respect. Agnes Mathilde Wergeland's journey to America is not mentioned in the consulted sources, but by 1890, when she emigrated, the ocean crossing had become much faster and safer, and was no longer the risky adventure it had been forty years earlier.

As to all women who migrated to the West, the westward movement and their first time on the frontier represented many challenges. Elise Wærenskjold and Elisabeth Koren write about impassable roads, primitive housing, poor food, and dearth of supplies. Both women lament the lack of variety in the diet, and securing provisions for, and preparing tasty meals like the ones they were used to in Norway, seem to have been important in their adaptation process. Because it was hard to get provisions on the frontier, they appreciated even more what they could get, and rejoiced at the prospect of having familiar crops from Norway transplanted to their frontier gardens. Regrettably, I have not, in the consulted sources, found any information about Agnes Mathilde Wergeland's diet, or cooking on the Wyoming frontier.

Giving birth and rearing children on the frontier were associated with danger, and Elise Wærenskold and Elisabeth Koren, who both gave birth on the frontier, express their anxieties. Children gave consolation to lonely mothers. As caretakers of home and family, women had a special role in rearing children, and when sickness struck, they tended the sick. Death among children happened frequently, both as a result of accidents and sicknesses. Women were tormented by the death of a child, as expressed by Elise Wærenskjold when her youngest son died. Poor sanitation, lack of medicine, and few doctors put the frontiers people at risk, but these women had a special stake in the wellbeing of their entire communities by giving advice in health matters.

The sources reveal that Elisabeth Koren and Agnes Mathilde Wergeland suffered spells of loneliness. Elisabeth Koren's loneliness is to a great extent explained by the lack of cultured company while sharing living quarters with the farm families. She keeps up her spirit by thinking of her future home, and how to make that comfortable and cozy for herself and her family. Elise Wærenskjold does not, like the others, express being lonely, but she clearly missed contact with educated people, like she was used to in Norway. I found that class was important both to Koren and Wærenskjold, although the latter praised the lack of class differences in America. Agnes Mathilde Wergeland, who worked and lived with American university professors, did not lack cultured company.

The natural environment brought pleasures as well as disasters. Elise Wærenskjold writes about frost and grasshoppers destroying her crops and killing her animals, but it is remarkable that she never writes about the beauty of nature. Elisabeth Koren felt threatened by prairie fires, thunderstorms, and snakes entering her house, but in contrast to Elise Wærenskjold, she also found immense pleasure in the natural environment. Watching a beautiful sunset, or listening to the singing of a bird, could cheer her up when she felt depressed and lonely. Agnes Mathilde Wergeland cared for the birds in her garden and loved trees and the beautiful view from her balcony. In the West, she also learned to appreciate outdoor activities, and she spent the summers at her mountain cabin, "Enebo." A possible explanation for Elise Wærenskjold's one-sided view of nature might be that her livelihood depended on the natural environment.

The three women engaged in different kind of work on the frontier. As a farmwoman, Elise Wærenskjold followed the ethnic tradition by taking part in the heavier farm work, such as milking cows and herding animals. She also had leadership roles. When her husband was absent, she had many "business errands," she writes. She stepped out of the norm for middle-class American women, who were supposed to be purely domestic, even if it was harder for

farmwomen to follow this norm. It is likely that her life and work on the farm gave her the freedom she probably missed in Norway. Elisabeth Koren, on the other hand, was banished to the loft during formal church meetings. The Lutheran church was conservative and women's work in the church was limited to charity work. As the pastor's wife, it seems that she was more in accordance with American nineteenth century ideology of True Womanhood than the two other women, although Agnes Mathilde Wergeland's entry on the frontier came later.

I do agree with Riley that – regardless of place and era – there was a female frontier. Women shared many aspects different from men's experiences. However, Riley admits that there were exceptions to this, as the market economy altered women's lives. They sought education and entered the public arena. Agnes Mathilde Wergeland is a prime example of this exception. Also Elise Wærenskjold, who wrote frankly about opinions on public issues, transgressed the boundary into the public sphere. Since education was a prerequisite for entering into the public arena, I do believe that, generally, time more than region gave women this increased freedom. However, region was important during the women's rights movement as equal rights for women were first granted in the West, and first of all in Wyoming, where Agnes Mathilde Wergeland found her place. As also suggested by Russell, I believe that had Elise Wærenskjold been born later, she would most likely have taken the full step into the public arena as well. Elisabeth Koren, as pastor's wife, found her proper place as "the matron" of the parsonage.

As long as western women's history has been a scholarly field, historians have debated whether the frontier was liberating for women or if they brought their former culture and values with them to the West. As argued by Dee Brown, Julie Roy Jeffrey, and Glenda Riley, there was more continuity than change in women's frontier lives. The three women's described actions on the frontier support this statement. They played significant roles in transplanting the material as well as the spiritual culture they had known in Norway, although they had to make do without any luxuries in the beginning. Through the ethnic church, which was a center pillar of their lives, Elisabeth Koren and Elise Wærenskjold imparted their cultural values. Since Agnes Mathilde Wergeland lived among Americans and had little or no contact with Norwegians, it is unlikely that she had the possibility to join an ethnic church. I give credit to Bodnar's idea that transplantation of ethnic institutions helped the immigrants adapt.

The connection to Norway was of great importance to all three women. Books, letters, pictures of dear faces and places were highly valued. All three cherished their memories of the Norwegian Christmas traditions, traditions they carried with them to their frontier homes.

Elise Wærenskjold expressed a number of times her strong desire to visit her native country. Both she and Elisabeth Koren indicate in their writing that other immigrants do not value their Norwegian heritage as much as *they* do. They had left Norway behind and wanted to become Americans. Could this attitude be attributed to class? My guess would be that class matters. Since most immigrants were working class people who had emigrated in order to get a better future in America, they had never been accustomed to the luxuries these women missed on the frontier. A suggestion for future research would be to compare the frontier experiences of Norwegian middle-class women with those of working-class women, with special focus on their relation to Norway. However, such an approach has some problems, as working-class people, in the degree they wrote, tended to write more about their daily work than about their feelings. They also were inclined to write more favorably about their situation than what was true.

Sources have also been a problem in this study, as the primary sources consulted give a somewhat uneven picture of the three women. The diary of Elisabeth Koren gives a fairly comprehensive picture of her experiences the first year on the frontier, and Elise Wærenskjold's letters relate much about her undertakings, her family, and the community, although as has been pointed out, she does not give any description about either her home or her feelings in her letters. Regrettably, not as much of Agnes Mathilde Wergeland's own writing has been preserved, and I have therefore not been able to do her justice in the comparison of the three women. Enough data exists though to confirm that all three women belonged in both worlds. They brought the best of their Norwegian culture to the frontier and, after some initial hardships, adapted successfully to the American society.

Notes

[1] Orm Øverland, *Immigrant Minds, American Identities: Making the United States Home, 1870-1930*. (Urbana. Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 25.
[2] L. DeAne Lagerquist, *In America the Men Milk the Cows: Factors of Gender, Ethnicity, and Religion in the Americanization of Norwegian-American Women*. (Brooklyn, New York: Carlson Publication Co., 1991), 13, hereafter referred to as Lagerquist and page number.
[3] Lagerquist 14, 19.
[4] Ida Blom og Sølvi Sogner, red., *Med Kjønnsperspektiv på Norsk Historie: Fra Vikingtid til 2000-årsskiftet* (Oslo: Cappelen Akademisk Forlag, 2005), 164-166, hereafter referred to as Blom et al, and page number.
[5] Blom et al., 169, Semmingsen, *Veien mot Vest* I, 92.
[6] Blom et al., 170.
[7] Maxime Seller Schwartz, ed., *Immigrant Women*, 2nd ed. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 15-16, hereafter referred to as Schwartz and page number.
[8] Blom et al., 182-188.
[9] Blom et al., 193-204.
[10] Donna Gabaccia, *From the Other Side: Women, Gender & Immigrant Life in the U.S. 1820-1990.* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), 22, hereafter referred to as Gabaccia and page number.
[11] Blom et al., 173.
[12] Blom et al., 216-217.
[13] Blom et al. 225.
[14] Blom et al., 223-225.
[15] Blom et al., 213-214.
[16] Blom et al., 231-234.
[17] Blom et al., 236-237.
[18] Blom et al., 239-240.
[19] Blom et al., 235. "Slike følelser kunne likevel tillates dersom det også fantes en sterk 'Nærve af Religiøsitet i hendes Væsen.'"
[20] Blom et al., 220-222.
[21] Blom et al., 242-244.
[22] Blom et al., 247-250.
[23] Blom et al. 246.
[24] Blom et al., 245-247.
[25] C.A. Clausen, ed., *The Lady With the Pen: Elise Wærenskjold in Texas*. (Northfield, Minnesota: Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1961), Introduction, 5, hereafter referred to as Clausen and page number.
[26] Charles H. Russell, *Undaunted: A Norwegian Woman in Frontier Texas* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2006), 4, hereafter referred to as Clausen and page number.
[27] Theodore C. Blegen, ed., *Land of their Choice: The immigrants Write Home* (The University of Minnesota Press, 1955), 321.
[28] Clausen, Introduction, vi.
[29] Russell, 8.
[30] Clausen, 170.
[31] Russell, 11.
[32] Russell, 189. Letter to Gjestvang, October 4, 1846.
[33] Russell, 12.
[34] Russell, 14-15.
[35] Russell, 15-16.
[36] Russell, 27.
[37] Russell, 16-17.
[38] Nelson, Introduction, x-xii.
[39] Nelson, 8.
[40] Nelson, 11-12.
[41] Nelson, 21-22.
[42] Nelson, 18-19.
[43] Nelson, 21.
[44] Nelson, 59.

[45] Maren Michelet, *Glimpses from Agnes Mathilde Wergeland's Life* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Folkebladet Publishing Company Press, 1916), 16, hereafter referred to as Michelet, and page number.
[46] Michelet, 16-20.
[47] Michelet, 26.
[48] Michelet, 40.
[49] Michelet, 47, writes 1883, while other sources, for example Semmingsen, 113, write 1884.
[50] Michelet, 56.
[51] Ingrid Semmingsen, "A Pioneer: Agnes Mathilde Wergeland's Life." (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Folkebladet Publishing Company Press, 1916), 115, hereafter referred to as Semmingsen and page number.
[52] Semmingsen, 117.
[53] Semmingsen, 114.
[54] Agnes Mathilde Wergeland, *Leaders in Norway and other Essays*, ed. Katharine Merrill. (Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, (1916) 1968), 68-69, hereafter referred to as Wergeland and page number.
[55] Semmingsen, 117.
[56] Gabaccia, 46.
[57] Semmingsen, 117.
[58] Michelet, 65.
[59] Wergeland, 178.
[60] Armitage and Jameson, ed., *The Women's West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 93-94, 143, hereafter referred to as Armitage and Jameson, and page number.
[61] Julie Roy Jeffrey, *Frontier Women: "Civilizing" the West? 1840-1880* (New York: Hill and Wang, (1979) 1998), 6, hereafter referred to as Jeffrey, and page number.
[62] Glenda Riley, *The Female Frontier: A Comparative View of Women on the Prairie and the Plains* (University Press of Kansas, 1988), 2, hereafter referred to as Riley, *The Female Frontier*, and page number.
[63] Glenda Riley, *A Place to Grow: Women in the American West* (Arlington Heights, Illinois: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1992), 5, hereafter referred to as Riley, *A Place to Grow*, and page number.
[64] Armitage and Jameson, 143-144, Jeffrey, 6.
[65] Riley, *A Place to Grow*, 6-12.
[66] Riley, *The Female Frontier*, 1-13.
[67] Gabaccia, 26.
[68] Gabaccia, 101-103.
[69] Gabaccia, xii-xiii.
[70] Schwartz, 3.
[71] Gabaccia, xiii.
[72] Oscar Handlin, "Immigration Portrayed as an Experience of Uprootedness" in Major Problems in American Immigration and Ethnic History, ed. Jon Gjerde (Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998), 3-8.
[73] John Bodnar, "Immigration Portrayed as an Experience of Transplantation" in Major Problems in American Immigration and Ethnic History, ed. Jon Gjerde (Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998), 8-16.
[74] Lagerquist, 5.
[75] Jon Gjerde, *The Minds of the West: Ethnocultural Evolution in the Rural Middle West, 1830-1917* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 3, hereafter referred to as Gjerde, and page number.
[76] Gjerde, 1-22.
[77] According to Gjerde, typology is "a set of institutional and ideological structures that powerfully, if imperfectly, informed individual and interpersonal behavior," 163.
[78] Gjerde, 159-161.
[79] Gjerde, 135-221.
[80] Armitage and Jameson, 147.
[81] Sandra L. Myres, *Westering Women and the Frontier Experience, 1800-1915*. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982) xviii, hereafter referred to as Myres and page number.
[82] Orm Øverland og Steinar Kjærheim, eds., Fra Amerika til Norge I: Norske Utvandrerbrev 1838-1857. (Oslo: Solum Forlag, 1993), 23-40, hereafter referred to as Øverland & Kjærheim, Volume number and page number. Arnold H. Barton. "As They Tell It Themselves: The Testimony of Immigrant Letters," in *Nordics in America: The Future of Their past.* Ed. Odd S. Lovoll. (Northfield, Minnesota: The Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1993), 138-145.
[83] Christianson, 92.
[84] Christianson, 102.
[85] Doris Weatherford, *Foreign & Female: Immigrant Women in America, 1840-1930* (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 1995), x, hereafter referred to as Weatherford, and page number.
[86] Glenda Riley, *A Place to Grow*, 74.

[87] Riley, *A Place to Grow*, 76
[88] Schwartz, 46-47.
[89] Glenda Riley, *The Female* Frontier, 23.
[90] Russell, 28, 32.
[91] Russell, 28-33.
[92] Russell, 35-36.
[93] Russell, 36.
[94] Russell, 37.
[95] Russell, 37, 42.
[96] Russell, 39-40, 56.
[97] Russell, 50.
[98] Øverland & Kjærheim, I, 118.
[99] Øverland & Kjærheim I, 131.
[100] Russell, 63-70.
[101] Weatherford, 100.
[102] Russell, 71.
[103] Russell, 73
[104] Clausen, 92. Letter to Emilie Syvertsen, spring 1870.
[105] Russell, 38.
[106] Øverland & Kjærheim I, 110: "for den bestandige Nydelse at Et og det Samme til hvert Maal bliver man gruelig kjed af, […]" (This author's translation)
[107] Øverland & Kjærheim I, 110: "gode Æble-, Pære-, Kirsebær- og Blommetræer, ligeledes Rips, Stikkelbær, Solbær, Bringebær og Jordbær." (This author's translation)
[108] Øverland & Kjærheim I, 110.
[109] Clausen, 41.
[110] Clausen, 135. Letter to Madame Basberg, December 20, 1887.
[111] Clausen, 97.
[112] Øverland & Kjærheim I, 111, 181.
[113] Clausen, 41.
[114] Clausen, 44.
[115] Clausen, 48. Letter to Thomine Dannevig, October 16, 1858.
[116] Clausen, 48. Letter to Thomine Dannevig, October 16, 1858.
[117] Lagerquist, 77-78.
[118] Weatherford, 24-30.
[119] Weatherford, 17.
[120] Weatherford, 7-16. (Also treated by Jon Gjerde in *The Minds of the West*.)
[121] Armitage and Jameson, 152.
[122] Clausen, 61.
[123] Russell, 120-121.
[124] Weatherford, 52.
[125] Clausen, 64. Letter to sister-in-law, February 2, 1866.
[126] Clausen, 65.
[127] Russell, 127.
[128] Clausen, 67-68. Letter to Thorvald Dannevig, April 15, 1867.
[129] Øverland & Kjærheim II, 400-401.
[130] Nelson, 72-73.
[131] Nelson, 74.
[132] Nelson, 74.
[133] Nelson, 74.
[134] Nelson, 75.
[135] Nelson, 80-81.
[136] Nelson, 83-84.
[137] Nelson, 86-87.
[138] Nelson, 88-89.
[139] Riley, *A Place to Grow*, 74.
[140] Nelson, Introduction, vii.
[141] Odd S. Lovoll, *Det løfterike landet: En norskamerikansk historie*. (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1997) 97, hereafter referred to as Lovoll and page number..
[142] Lovoll, 97.

[143] Nelson, Introduction, ix.
[144] Nelson, 101.
[145] Nelson, 222.
[146] Nelson, 186.
[147] Glenda Riley, *The Female Frontier*, 88.
[148] Nelson, 187-188.
[149] Nelson, 282-283.
[150] Nelson, 283.
[151] Nelson, 178.
[152] Nelson, 196.
[153] Nelson, 362.
[154] Nelson, 258.
[155] Weatherford, 61.
[156] Nelson, 210.
[157] Weatherford, 99.
[158] Nelson, 264.
[159] Nelson, 277.
[160] Nelson, 236.
[161] Nelson, 117.
[162] Nelson, 159.
[163] Nelson, 171.
[164] Nelson, 156.
[165] Nelson, 109.
[166] Nelson, 189.
[167] Nelson, 224-225.
[168] Nelson, 225.
[169] Nelson, 227.
[170] Nelson, 239.
[171] Nelson, 250-251.
[172] Nelson, 239.
[173] Nelson, 228.
[174] Nelson, 259.
[175] Glenda Riley, *A Place to Grow*, 204.
[176] Nelson, 209.
[177] Nelson, 212.
[178] Glenda Riley, *The Female Frontier*, 88.
[179] Nelson, 314.
[180] Nelson, 314.
[181] Nelson, 320.
[182] Nelson, 330.
[183] Nelson, 324.
[184] Glenda Riley, *The Female Frontier*, 47-49.
[185] Nelson, 349.
[186] Nelson, 354-356.
[187] Wexler, 77.
[188] Schwartz, 134, Gabaccia, 107.
[189] Riley, *The Female Frontier*, 19.
[190] Linda Gordon, U.S. Women's History (Washington DC: American Historical Association, 1997), 8-11.
[191] Lise B. Løken, *Dr. Agnes Mathilde Wergeland: Historian, Poet, and American University Professor* (University of Oslo, 1995), 130-131.
[192] Michelet, 81.
[193] Michelet, 78.
[194] Michelet, 78-80.
[195] Michelet, 88.
[196] Michelet, 89.
[197] Michelet, 90.
[198] Michelet, 114-115.
[199] Semmingsen, 119.
[200] Michelet, 156.

[201] Michelet, 212.
[202] Michelet, 208.
[203] Michelet, 100.
[204] Weatherford, 130-131, 137.
[205] Riley, *The Female Frontier*, 71.
[206] Riley, *The Female Frontier*, 102.
[207] Riley, *The Female Frontier*, 104.
[208] Riley, *The Female Frontier*, 105-108.
[209] Riley, *The Female Frontier*, 109.
[210] Riley, *The Female Frontier*, 102.
[211] Clausen, 44. Letter to Mrs. Thomine Dannevig, Third Day of Christmas, 1852.
[212] Russell, 101.
[213] Clausen, 138. Letter to the Editor, September 3, 1888. (Appeared in Posten, a Norwegian newspaper for "progress, freedom and peace," October 12, 1888)
[214] Gjerde, 142.
[215] Clausen, 45. Letter to Mrs. Thomine Dannevig, January 6, 1857.
[216] Russell, 105.
[217] Russell, 72-73.
[218] Clausen, 41. Letter to Mrs. Thomine Dannevig, Third Day of Christmas, 1852.
[219] Riley, *The Female Frontier*, 118.
[220] Øverland & Kjærheim II, 358.
[221] Clausen, 94.
[222] Riley, *The Female Frontier*, 117.
[223] Øverland & Kjærheim II, 62-63. Letter to Thomine Dannevig, October 16, 1858.
[224] Clausen, 50-51, hereafter referred to as Clausen and page number. Letter to "My dear friends," March 24, 1860.
[225] Clausen, 71-72. Letter to Kaja Poppe, September 29, 1868.
[226] Øverland & Kjærheim, II, 337.
[227] Øverland & Kjærheim II, 330, Letter to Mrs. Thomine Dannevig, probably spring or summer 1865: "deels fordi Vinteren ikke var saa kold i Aar; deels fordi jeg gav Kørene mer Korn (Mais). Jeg kjøbte Korn for Tøi […]. Wærenskjold var borte og saa gjorde jeg som jeg vilde." (This author's translation)
[228] Clausen, 58. Letter to a friend in Christiansand, late summer or early fall, 1865.
[229] Clausen, 62. Letter to sister-in-law, November 18, 1865.
[230] Clausen, 74. Letter to Sister-in-law [Emilie Syvertsen], June 9, 1869.
[231] Clausen, 72. Letter to Kaja Poppe, September 29, 1868.
[232] Clausen, 132.
[233] Clausen, 133. Letter to Marie, May 16, 1887.
[234] Clausen, 136. Letter to Thomine Dannevig, December 21, 1887.
[235] Nelson, 197-199.
[236] Weatherford, 181-187.
[237] Nelson, 123.
[238] Nelson, 127-129.
[239] Nelson, 143.
[240] Nelson, 126.
[241] Lagerquist, 85.
[242] Nelson, 212.
[243] Nelson, 211.
[244] Nelson, 227.
[245] Nelson, 228.
[246] Nelson, 185.
[247] Nelson, 295.
[248] Nelson, 253.
[249] Nelson, 328.
[250] Nelson, 328-329.
[251] Nelson, 344-345.
[252] Nelson, 320.
[253] Nelson, 365. Letter to her father, September 9, 1855.

[254] Nelson, 341.
[255] Nelson, 309. Letter to her father, September 18-20, 1854.
[256] Nelson, 363. Letter to her father, June 10, 1855.
[257] Nelson, 359. Letter to her father, May 4, 1855.
[258] Michelet, 88-89.
[259] Michelet, 92-93.
[260] Semmingsen, 119.
[261] Michelet, 93.
[262] Michelet, 101.
[263] Michelet, 104.
[264] Schwartz, 87.
[265] Gjerde, 151-158.
[266] Gjerde, 160. Chevalier: Society, Manners, and Politics in the United States: Being a Series of Letters on North America (Boston: Weeks, Jordan, 1839), 342-43.
[267] Gjerde, 183-184.
[268] Lagerquist, 94.
[269] Schwartz, 87.
[270] Michelet, 91.
[271] Weatherford, 275.
[272] Riley, *The Female Frontier*, 138.
[273] Riley, *The Female Frontier*, 156-158.
[274] Riley, *The Female Frontier*, 163-165.
[275] Riley, *The Female Frontier*, 181-185.
[276] Riley, *The Female Frontier*, 187-193.
[277] Weatherford, 48, 51, 153.
[278] Øverland & Kjærheim I, 248-49, 254-55.
[279] Øverland & Kjærheim I 109, Lovoll, 95, Clausen, 167, Letter to R.B. Anderson December 26, 1894.
[280] Oscar Handlin, "Immigration Portrayed as an Experience of Uprootedness" in *Major Problems in American Immigration and Ethnic History*, ed. Jon Gjerde (Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998) 7-8.
[281] Clausen, 42-43.
[282] Russell, 88.
[283] Clausen, 43-44.
[284] Clausen, 167. Letter to Professor R.B. Anderson, December 26, 1894.
[285] Clausen, 47. This letter appeared in Morgenbladet, February 26, 1858. Russell, 92.
[286] Clausen, 53. Letter to mother-in-law and sister-in-law, March 25, 1860.
[287] Clausen, 75 note, 97. Letters to Sister-in-law [Emilie Syvertsen], June 9, 1869, and May 1, 1870.
[288] Russell, 97-101.
[289] Clausen, 45. Letter to Thomine Dannevig, January 6, 1857.
[290] Clausen, 50, Letter to "My Dear Friends, March 24, 1860.
[291] Clausen, 168. Letter to Rasmus B. Anderson, December 26, 1894.
[292] Clausen, 49. Letter to Thomine Dannevig, October 16, 1858.
[293] Clausen, 49. Letter to "My dear friends," March 24, 1860.
[294] Schwartz, 217.
[295] Clausen, 62. Letter to sisters-in-law, November 18, 1865.
[296] Lovoll, 93.
[297] Russell, 104.
[298] Clausen, 59. Letter to a friend in Christiansand, late summer or early fall, 1865.
[299] Øverland & Kjærheim II, 330. Letter to Thomine Dannevig, spring or summer 1865.
[300] Clausen, 38-39, 47. Letter to T.A. Gjestvang, July 25, 1852, letter to the editor of Morgenbladet, fall 1857.
[301] Øverland & Kjærheim I, 257.
[302] Øverland & Kjærheim I, 112.
[303] Øverland & Kjærheim I, 169.
[304] Øverland & Kjærheim II, 127.
[305] Clausen, 57. Letter to a friend in Christiansand, late summer or early fall, 1865.
[306] Russell, 107-110.
[307] Russell, 105, 110-111.
[308] Clausen, 62. Letter to sisters-in-law, November 18, 1865.
[309] Clausen, 59. Letter to a friend in Christiansand, late summer or early fall, 1865.
[310] Clausen, 63. Letter to sisters-in-law, November 18, 1865.

[311] Øverland & Kjærheim II, 338.
[312] Clausen, 62. Letter to sisters-in-law, November 18, 1865.
[313] Clausen, 59. Letter to a friend in Christiansand, late summer or early fall, 1865.
[314] Øverland & Kjærheim II, 468.
[315] Clausen, 74. Letter to sister-in-law [Emilie Syvertsen], June 9, 1869.
[316] Sara M. Evans, *Born for Liberty: A History of Women in America.* (New York: Simon & Schuster Inc., 1997), 121.
[317] Øverland & Kjærheim, II 329. "Næst Besiddelsen af mine Børn, er det den største Nydelse jeg har, at faae Breve fra mine kjære i Norge og Danmark. Jeg kan ikke glemme gamle Venner og indlader mig ikke stort paa at stivte nye Venskabsforbindelser. Selskab søger jeg ikke; jeg gaaer kun hvor jeg har Ærende eller Forretninger og det har [jeg] riktignok meget ofte, naar Wærenskjold er borte; men ellers meget sjelden. Her kommer Mange i vort Huus; men meget Faa, hvis Selskab interesserer mig." (This author's translation)
[318] Clausen, 44. Letter to Thomine Dannevig, Third Day of Christmas, 1852.
[319] Øverland & Kjærheim II, 338: "det behageligste Bekjendtskab, jeg har gjort her. De kan tro, jeg savner ofte Omgang med dannede Mennesker, som jeg var saa vel vant til i Norge og som jeg altid satte saa høi Pris paa." 329: "var ikke mere dannet end Folk her; men meget mere høflig." (This author's translation)
[320] Clausen, 47.
[321] Russell, 103.
[322] Clausen, 118.
[323] Clausen, 124.
[324] Øverland & Kjærheim II, 400.
[325] Clausen, 62. letter to sisters-in-law, November 18, 1865.
[326] Clausen, 44. Letter to Thomine Dannevig, Third Day of Christmas, 1852.
[327] Clausen, 68. Letter to Thorvald Dannevig, April 15, 1867.
[328] Clausen, 154. Letter to Professor Rasmus B. Anderson. May 10, 1894.
[329] Nelson, Introduction, viii.
[330] Nelson, Introduction, vii-xv.
[331] Nelson, 365. Letter to her father, September 9, 1855.
[332] Nelson, note, 362.
[333] Nelson, 303-304. Letter to her father, September 18-20, 1854.
[334] Lagerquist, 87.
[335] Nelson, 366. Letter to her father, September 9, 1855.
[336] Nelson, 118.
[337] Nelson, 119.
[338] Nelson, 151.
[339] Nelson, 115.
[340] Nelson, 360-361. Letter to her father, May 4, 1855.
[341] Nelson, 217.
[342] Nelson, 244.
[343] Nelson, note, 244.
[344] Nelson, 101-102.
[345] Nelson, 114.
[346] Nelson, 121-122.
[347] Nelson, 136-137.
[348] Nelson, 129-130.
[349] Weatherford, 52.
[350] Nelson, 136.
[351] Nelson, 201.
[352] Nelson, 303.
[353] Nelson, 162.
[354] Nelson, 165.
[355] Weatherford, 65.
[356] Jon Gjerde, *The Minds of the West: Ethnocultural Evolution in the Rural Middle West, 1830-1917* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 192-194.
[357] Nelson, 178.
[358] Nelson, 180.
[359] Nelson, 188.
[360] Nelson, 192.
[361] Nelson, 360, note.

[362] Nelson, 232.
[363] Nelson, 263.
[364] Nelson, 359.
[365] Nelson, 265.
[366] Nelson, 309. Letter to her father, September 18-20, 1854.
[367] Nelson, 157.
[368] Nelson, 294.
[369] Nelson, 361. Letter to her father, May 4, 1855.
[370] Nelson, 357-358. Letter to her father, January 28, 1855.
[371] Michelet, 178-181.
[372] Michelet, 105.
[373] Michelet, 163-164.
[374] Michelet, 137-138.
[375] Michelet, 143.
[376] Michelet, 144.
[377] Michelet, 144.
[378] Michelet, 146.
[379] Michelet, 147-148.
[380] Michelet, 150-152.
[381] Michelet, 124.
[382] Michelet, 145.
[383] Semmingsen, 123-124.
[384] Michelet, 220.
[385] Michelet, 170-173.
[386] Semmingsen, 128.
[387] Gjerde, 159-171.
[388] Gabaccia, 79.
[389] Gabaccia, 77.
[390] Gabaccia, 85.
[391] Gabaccia, 63-64.
[392] Weatherford, 47.
[393] Gabaccia, 77-81.
[394] Weatherford, 72.
[395] Lagerquist, 5, 9.
[396] Weatherford, 71.
[397] Weatherford, 80.
[398] Øverland & Kjærheim III, 156. Letter to Thorvald and Thomine Dannevig, May 19, 1870.
[399] Nelson, 302. Letter to her father, September 18-20, 1854.
[400] Schwartz, 176.
[401] Clausen, 68-69. Letter to Thorvald Dannevig, April 15, 1867.
[402] Weatherford, 268-269.
[403] Nelson, 363, letter to her father, June 10-28, 1855, 256.

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Appendix