Chapter II

Causes of Alienation
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CAUSES OF ALIENATION

This chapter intends to examine the causes and consequences of alienation. The major causes that have been identified are displacement, split personality and the breaking down of relationships. This leads to the characters’ experiencing frustration which, consequently, leads to a sense of alienation. The experience ranges from a sense of insecurity, disillusionment, incompatibility, split love between two persons, and a sense of mystery.

Alienated people have generally been considered as those who have “cut off” themselves from relationships; but, in fact it would also be possible to say that something has been cut off from them. Artists deprived of audience and cultural tradition feel alienated. Artists, who have suffered emotional and artistic death at the hands of an indifferent or hostile audience, seek an escape from the alienated condition in the form of leaving the society/country in which it seems impossible to sustain themselves as artists. Thus, though changing the place of one’s existence could be a means of escape, it may also have a different
effect. When a character is displaced from her/his place of existence and is placed amidst a strange environment, she or he may become a victim of alienation. Whether the displacement is voluntary or whether it is made to occur by external forces, the consequence for the characters could be the condition of alienation.

A character may travel through and to an “unknown” place for the purpose either of adventure or of psychological exploration. This happens when a character has lost the sense of belonging to a place or society, feeling herself/ himself to be an alien in the existing conditions. The character moves out into the unknown territory in an effort to gain knowledge of herself/himself and to acquire a sense of belonging. Thus, the issue of "belongingness" may be at the root of alienated existence. Thus, the character's journey may be viewed as a quest for identity, and for self-recognition. Audrey Thomas endows many of her alienated characters with consummate competence to observe and describe scenes, places, persons and the complicated psychological states of tension. She also presents them as intensely experiencing hurt feelings, choked emotions, moments of cold and ruthless insensitiveness and memories and fantasies haunting the lonely self. The journey from somewhere to somewhere is the expression of the frustration of the
imaginative, ideal dream world by a grim, real one. The journey’s end or the destination arrived at need not always result in a developmental growth or be a passage from one state of being to another. It may result in the revelation of an unresolved state of tension between the two worlds.

Travelling alone in foreign countries is the subject of most of the novels of Audrey Thomas. Audrey Thomas’ characters pass through many stages of the monomythic journey in their search and the journey might be periodical and arranged as in Songs My Mother Taught Me, a voluntary journey as in Graven Images, Coming Down From Wa, Blown Figures and Munchmeyer and Prospero on the Island, a necessary displacement as in Mrs. Blood or a forced displacement as in Munchmeyer, Latakia or Intertidal Life.

In Blown Figures, Intertidal Life, Coming Down from Wa, Graven Images, Prospero on the Island and even Latakia, the characters’ undertaking a journey is an attempt by the characters to penetrate into the true source of their power and their inability to connect with others. In this, they try to rediscover their power to act and do not make a conscious decision to escape from their alienated condition.

The characters move through exotic places of different cultural
milieu like Africa, Mexico, Greece and England. The strangeness of the environment may result in the surfacing of things previously unknown even to the characters themselves. Audrey Thomas herself has remarked in an interview by Wachtel's Cleanor (1981) thus:

You cast people in foreign countries and you just know they’ll reveal things about themselves. They’re up against a different culture, eating different foods, getting lost or sick[s] it’s too hot too cold or they’ve missed the train. All sorts of things surface that one kept very well hidden at home. I really love traveling partly because I have to redefine myself every time. I go it’s not simply just a matter of collection material. Something happens to me. It extends me in ways that I like although I can get very frightened. I find myself almost but not quite over my head

(Interface . 45)
The experience the characters have abroad may help them not only to (re)discover themselves, but to reorganize themselves so as to combat and overcome the psychic and socio-cultural damages they have suffered.

In *Songs My Mother Taught Me*, Isobel’s life becomes lonely, bitter and frustrated. Her only consolation was her periodical and arranged annual visit to her rich, domineering grandfather, who showed a love of tenderness and warmth, something she had never experienced at home. Yet, this love was not enough to free her from the intensity of her hurt feelings and dark frustration she had at home. She looked for other places and sought compensation for and insulation against emotional insecurity. When she took up a job in a hospital for psychic patients, she was apparently escaping from her own situation, though it might be possible to view the choice as a journey from innocence to experience. It would be true to say that the summer retreat in the mountain and a suburban madhouse are acceptable compensatory substitutes for the interior landscapes:

Of Isobel I knew a little more from as far back as I could remember I was aware and afraid of two
things, death and Passage of time. . . (SMTM, 37).

The frame of ‘innocence’ is the visits to the summer cottage,. which spans several summers and which expands time in concentric circles and which forms the earliest memories of childhood that endure beyond childhood. This frame is relevant to the later ‘experiences’ of the protagonist like the awakening of sexual curiosity and the desire for and the introduction to hell in the insane ward of the state hospital. At the end of the novel, Isobel starts over another map, preparing to launch herself on another journey, to Europe this time, on a scholarship.

Mrs. Blood introduces a woman at a point of crisis in her life, as she has to leave her home and get admitted in a hospital. This necessary displacement causes the protagonist to probe deeply, often painfully, into the past and the present of her existence. She is married, has two school-age children and her husband is a teacher who is also an artist. They have come to Africa from Canada in search of “adventure”, “romance”, and, as the narrator admits, to feel affirmed in their “superior” whiteness. The protagonist is the adult version of Isobel of Songs My Mother Taught Me, and she has experienced a painful miscarriage in a West African hospital. Mrs. Thing, a Smith College graduate with literary inclinations, married an English artist, lived in England and Canada and
is now in Ghana where her husband is teaching. Mrs. Thing’s problems are ordinary enough. She feels out of place among the bright, efficient faculty wives. The most efficient of them are infuriatingly as pregnant as herself. Love-making with Jason, her husband, lacks passion and joy. Now in hospital, isolated among native nurses and Indian doctors, she is terrified of pain and death. Memories of her working in an insane asylum return her to the world of ‘slon des ref uses’ and suggest a metaphoric connection between bodily and psychic health which elaborates upon the miscarriage story, which is set primarily in Ghana.

The displacement motif of *Songs My Mother Taught Me* continues here too. The superstitious Mrs. Thing believes in omens and signs, and blames herself for ignoring them on the journey to Africa.

*Munchmeyer* presents an aging English graduate student who becomes bored with his family and seeks to escape into an environment in which he can become a novelist. Munchmeyer builds himself a writing room in his basement to escape from his wife. Hiding from the “Brobdingnagian” upstairs, he decides to write a diary, or a novel disguised as a diary, and he hopes to become a novelist. He pretends to seek isolation and has to people it with companions to help him forget his youthful promises to himself. The irony of the situation is that
while isolating himself from familial and other relationships, he tries to populate his writing with people and relationships.

In *Prospero on the Island*, Miranda, the mother and writer, has a grant and spends the winter half of the year in a cottage on the Island, writing her novel about Munchmeyer and her diary about an academic painter. She and her two year old daughter live for a year in a renovated cabin on Magdelena Island where they are joined on weekends by the husband and their two older daughters ferry over from Vancouver city.

In *Blown figures* Isobel returns to West Africa to seek the child she has lost there by miscarriage some years ago and her voluntary movement from England to West Africa is an attempt to expiate what she feels to be her guilt, a feeling with which she is burdened, partly because of the earlier loss of Richard's child by a consciously undertaken step, namely abortion. She feels impelled to seek her dead child in the depths of the African rain forests in which it was symbolically rather than actually lost. The journey is both external and profoundly internal.

Isobel's journey is prompted by a visceral desire to regain the spark of life, which has been ground out of her and also by the need to
mitigate a spiritual agony that has left her overwhelmed by a sense of guilt. She believes that only Africa can revitalise her and give her peace.

In *Intertidal life* the protagonist is a writer of fiction, who seems to be writing mainly about herself. She lives alone on a nearly deserted little Island. Her husband Peter has fallen in love with her friend Ann and has moved back to the mainland. Unfortunately, Alice is still in love with her husband and she spends much of her time trying to understand her conflicting feelings of love and anger, jealousy and devotion.

In spite of the displacement, which she discovers later to be something forced on her, the essential problem remains the same—that is, the need to face up to one's emotional crack up. To begin with, there is the need for sharing her views, for voicing her interior desires, ambitions, and frustrations which Alice feels are very ambivalent.

All through these experiences, Alice has a persistent and nagging feeling that she is not successful in communicating what she experiences and what she expects from her husband and from her friends. Cynthia Flood(1985) remarks that:
This is a vision of human relationships which I can't accept. Indeed, I think it denigrates the species' ability to understand itself, to change, and to move to new and explored expanses of shore (IL, 17).

Even though she believes that her spatial displacement is the result of her own decision, she realizes later that it had already been planned by her husband for his convenience.

In Latakia there is a movement, "further and further East" into a geography and culture unknown. This journey is obviously a metaphor for the exploration of psychological unknown. But the journey goes nowhere. Rachel is as confused and hurt at the end of the novel as she was at the beginning: "There's Crete and this village and this street and all that seems much more interesting..." (LK, 30).

The novel actually takes place in Rachel's world after her tragic romance with Michael and her act of writing may be viewed as her attempt to put her life with Michael in a proper perspective, not necessarily the correct prospective, and probe into the tension and conflicts within. Rachel struggles to find a more immediate mimetic mode for representing her general surroundings, and her isolation. Rachel's spatial isolation from the rest of the society, as she composes
her "letter" alone on a rooftop terrace overlooking the Cretan community defines her as a writer who is simultaneously involved in and separate from the society around her: "The artist almost always lives in a Double Now. Therefore, it is not difficult for me to be up here on roof....."[LK, 50].

Rachel's alienation from the Cretan community is evident in the fact that she rarely sees the weavers and never takes part in their craft. Rachel remains separated from the other women of the community. The society around remains only a spectacle for observation whenever Rachel is obliged to observe.

Graven Images opens with Charlotte's journey that can be viewed both as voluntarily embarked on and as something forced by external factors. Lydia, who also has undertaken a journey to find her family, enjoys her travel by getting friends. Each has her own reasons for undertaking the journey. Charlotte, a travel-writer by occupation, has both practical and personal reasons. Charlotte is on the journey to write about ocean liner travel for The globe and Mail, Departure Magazine and the CBC.

The more immediate reason for the journey to England is to complete her mother's family tree by tracking down the history of Robert
Corbett, an obscure ancestor who emigrated from England to America in the mid 17th Century, and to complete a secret project - to write a novel about her mother. She spends considerable time wandering around England, searching, sorting, sifting, ostensibly for nothing, since the enigma of Robert Corbett remains unsolved. Much of the novel is taken up with Charlotte’s research, its peripheral events and incidental details:

I am in England for three reasons; One......, to write up an account of the last transatlantic sailing of the Polish ocean line the Stefan Batory. . . Two, to try and find the missing link between the Robert Carbett. . . Three is my secret project, a novel. (GM, 20-21).

In coming down from Wa William is really searching into his parents’ past. His well -considered and chosen journey to Africa is a quest. His quest is just to find out what happened to his parents in his childhood days and to find out the reasons for his Parents’ indifferent behavior towards each other. He is also in an unhappy family surrounding. Both his parents take care of him. The alienation that has
raised an impenetrable curtain between them makes him feel alienated and it is to overcome this sense of alienation that he journeys to Africa in an effort to reach the point in the past at which his parents got alienated from each other and to identify what alienated his parents from each other.

Many of Audrey's women are battling with a sense of inadequacy and of lack and this sense of failure is usually related to the thought that she is not in a settled home with a permanent partner. This sense of inadequacy makes the character feel rejected at home and by the society. In order to escape from this unsettling sense, the protagonist undertakes a voyage, short or long. Thus the journey is a spatial displacement and it becomes both a symbol and a means for the protagonists' struggle against or escape from the sense of alienation. Thus, though the journey is an immediate phenomenon, it is best understood when mediated through the conscious or unconscious motivational drive of the character.

Audrey Thomas presents women as self-alienated and self-divided, in dialogue with themselves. This split personality is another cause of alienation. Audrey Thomas writes about self-divided
protagonists who, on the one hand, have the urge towards independence and, on the other, the desire for attachment.

Victimization and male tyranny could also be considered causes of alienation. Such victimized protagonists find that their very existence is distorted. They find themselves so situated that they stand aloof from their domestic and social environments. They feel alienated, powerless and detached in their depersonalized environments.

In *Songs My Mother Taught Me* Isobel has more than a name, she has a new kind of relatedness to everything. She desires the season of 'innocence' and the season of 'experience'. Her home-life begins to look more and more unreal, like, "some of the old, faded, slightly out-of-focus snapshots in one of (her) mothers' innumerable candy boxes. The 'me' she says is who takes the bus to the hospital and back had nothing to do with the 'me' who had a life on 88" (120). Her summer job in the mental asylum increases her self-division. There is no ( and there cannot be any ) integrative centre at the asylum. The chaos and the raving purposellessness of the asylum are not basically different from the conditions that prevail at Isobel's home. The asylum world is a mirror to her mother's world.
In *Songs My Mother Taught Me* what may appear at first to be a conventional first person narrative, is actually the "I" split into the "songs of Innocence" of childhood and the "Songs of Experience" of adolescence chronologically. Sometimes the narrator prefers to refer to herself in third person. The split personality, the first person and the third person, is the manifestation of the split-self within. That is, the narrator is self-alienated. The agonizing tensions between her fear of life and desire for her grandfather’s house, a symbol of peace and harmony, has been eating into whatever substance there is in her life.

In *Mrs. Blood* almost every page has bold letter titles which indicates that the woman reverts from one self-image to another. The narrator has no permanent name. Rather, she has two. Some days her name is Mrs. Blood some days it is Mrs. Thing . She alternates between the two throughout, though she tries to shape up an identity that she does not attain. She is a troubled and suffering woman. Her earlier years, leaving traces of disappointment and bitterness, leads her into isolation. Right through her life, from her childhood through sexual awakenings, the insane ward at the state hospital and unsatisfactory affairs, to her unsatisfying married life in West Africa, she has been moving from one point of alienation to another. Recently uprooted from
Canada to Africa, her problematic pregnancy split her personality and also her space of existence, from home to hospital three times. The Mrs. Thing/Mrs. Blood split suggests the fragmented nature of the protagonist. She is divided from herself by language, tradition, and law in order to be some one for somebody else and herself to be somebody else. Mrs. Thing is acted upon as a passive thing. Her identity blurred, she is transformed into an object or a function. Mrs. Blood, by contrast, is in touch with the universal force, is overwhelmed by her reproductive capacity, and is frightened that this capacity might go to naught because of her past violation against life that could have been born, had she not terminated it under Richard’s peremptory order.

Mrs. Blood and Mrs. Thing are in conflict with each other in her many roles as patient, mother, wife, lover, owner, neighbour, creator and destroyer. And, the single protagonist with two names is also pitched into conflict with Jason, with her own memory of her past and with Richard. This confusion between opposite desires results in Isobel’s schizophrenic condition and her inability to pronounce and keep her identity. She feels blotted out by what is around and what is within. "It is impossible for me to see other people as separate from myself" (191).
The opening sentence of the novel "Somedays my name is Mrs. Blood, some days its Mrs. Thing" (1) makes one become aware of the schizophrenic state of mind of the central character. Mrs. Blood gradually dominates. An overwhelming sense of victimization induces the psychological and aesthetic states resembling schizophrenia in almost each protagonist of Audrey Thomas, none of whom succeeds in resolving her crisis entirely. Mrs. Blood is Isobel’s adult married self, with two children and expecting a third. The setting is Africa. Isobel is confined to a hospital for the most part, awaiting an inevitable miscarriage. The first section of the novel describes Isobel’s arrival and stay in the hospital and ends with her return home. The second section shows an uneasy Isobel fluctuating between hope and fear, but returning once again to the hospital, as the miscarriage begins. The short concluding section depicts Isobel losing the child thus losing the one hope that might have begun process of her reintegrating herself with the world around and within.

In Blown figures, the reality of Isobel’s journey to Africa, a dark continent, is a dream, a hallucination. It is a sequel to Mrs. Blood. The protagonist, now called Isobel, makes both a literal and an imaginative return journey to Ghana to find the child which she miscarried in
Mrs. Blood and which has haunted the narrator with an irreparable sense of guilt and loss, until she has gone mad. She attempts to relieve her tension through a physical journey to Africa whose myriad details might divert her from her own self. But she gradually turns her mind into a destructive, doomed and psychologically split thing. Isobel is now indeed schizophrenic. She misidentifies herself as Miss Miller in some places:

Before us, Miss Miller, we have four objects.

A painted woman reading a real newspaper.

A real woman reading a painted newspaper.

A painted woman reading a painted newspaper.

A real woman reading — ah, you guessed it!

The point is not which is which but does it really matter? (BF, 221).

Thomas has deliberately undermined mimetic representation in questioning the desire to believe in the journey undertaken by Isobel. She wants to be the one splitting the self away, leaving and waving good bye. She remembers Jason seeing her off at Van Couver airport. The split desire to turn away from home, mother, child, Jason, followed
by an equally strong desire to be resued, pulled back, plagues her again. Haunted by past traumas, Isobel desires life, love, security and connection, yet expels and excludes these seeming threats.

**Songs My Mother Taught Me, Mrs. Blood and Blown figures** are all about the self-discovery of a single female character, Isobel. The novels are held together by the repetition and expansion of the same moods and the split personality of the protagonist. In **Songs My Mother Taught Me**, Isobel had made Clara the maternal object. In **Mrs. Blood**, Richard makes her an object, and in **Blown Figures** the narrator makes her an object, though all along she has been nourishing the hope of surviving and reversing the pattern of herself being reduced to an object. Isobel’s journey, which can be viewed as a journey of exorcism, seeks to conceal the split, insane self.

**Latakia** is about Rachel and her love affair with Michael. Michael has now left her. **Latakia** is Rachel’s letter, a monologue written out of anger, resentment and longing. It is also a celebration of freedom and independence. The narrator is herself a novelist. It is a story that draws attention to the ways a woman can write about herself and her feelings. Fragmentation and self-referentiality reflect Rachel’s own inner division. She is propelled by the determination and desire to create something
from out of the chaos of daily living. What she discovers is that the old pattern of female narratives, like her own children, are ingrained in her body and in her psyche.

Just as she did not cease to be a mother when she became a novelist, she could not cease to be mother and a writer when she got divorced or when she became Michael’s lover. And, she identifies Michael’s own split, his seeing her as an attractive woman sometimes and as mother and writer at other times:

You said it was my ‘life experience’ that made me so attractive to you. But it was precisely the result of that life experience that you hated so much my children, my books, the fact of their publication (LK, 51).

Latakia is a letter written by Rachel. It focuses on Rachel’s inner division, torn as she is between her desire to create an ordered world through the art of writing and her desire for the common daily living. What she discovers is she could not be a mother or wife when she becomes a novelist. She gets divorced to overcome the condition. But she could not cease to be a mother and a writer when she got divorced or when she became Michael’s lover. Rachel herself, as the
remembering feeling subject, allows herself to take an insistently double view by being both inside and outside. Rachel disguises herself as a mal(e) identified woman and lover and in this, she parallels the voluntary disguise that is often taken by a character in a comedy or romance. The unreality of Rachel's disguise is conveyed when she says:

\[
\begin{align*}
I & \text{ hate You} \\
I & \text{ Love You}
\end{align*}
\]

Everything above this line is true.

It's all so bloody complicated isn't it? (LK, 29)

In a self-defined, unified and contented manner, Rachel assumes her life as a writer and as a dutiful mother. The unity of her life is heightened when she meets Michael. But, as he begins to impose his definitions and expectations upon her, Rachel's world begins to dissolve. Michael is revolted by and mocks at a physically crippled woman in Greece, but he continually ignores both his crippled nature as he is unable to reach out of himself and his mentally crippling effect on Rachel. Michael finally enacts the ultimate sense of dissolution, when he leaves Rachel for Africa and Rachel apprehends the whole lie of her past with Michael. But, at the same time, she feels this is also something against this lie: "Michael I love you". It was a lie when I said it and yet
as soon as I said it, it was true” (134). She is caught in an indeterminate stretch of existence. The indeterminacy is revealed in the form of contradictory statements. Along with her repeated statements about lying to Michael, her indeterminacy this effectively renders life meaningless. She has written love letters to him in Africa from the top of her house in Crete which he has left, but she never posted them. The latest novel she writes is the “longest love letter in the world” (21) at two hundred pages. But, paradoxically, it is a hate letter too. Proof of her split personality is its final sentence “the best revenge is writing well” (172).

Rachel’s behavior is also an evidence of her schizophrenic love-hate contradiction. While her rational self is continually breaking away from Michael asserting its independence, her body remains in subjection to him.

Rachel’s split between the physical and the psychological, and the rational and the emotional are reflected in her writing. At present, Rachel writes from her solitary roof top in Crete, where she captured her endeavours through her fine senses. Fully secure in herself as artist, Rachel does not split her self schizophrenically as Isobel did. The choice sometimes threatens to tear her apart, but that is a different matter from
being in a state of disintegration. She is strong enough to withstand the threat as a means to and as a process of creative response to the experience which otherwise would have completely destabilized her life. The artist lives imaginatively in two places at once or simultaneously at two different times:

The artist almost always lives in a Double Now.

Therefore, it is not difficult for me to be up here on the roof, thinking of you, and still very much aware of the sound of Helen's loom two doors down, that last spiral before the village proper, and the moon slowly surfacing behind the hill (LK, 58).

A somewhat similar kind of split occurs in the volume containing the two loosely related short novels Munchmeyer and Prospero on the Island. One is a novel about a man writing a novel about a man writing a novel. Prospero On The Island is the diary of woman who is writing the novel. Munchmeyer about a male writer who keeps a diary.

In the doubling of Munchmeyer's very first diary entry, dated "April 1". The first role of Munchmeyer is that of a "cold-blooded... doomed man"... with "Cigarette dangling..." and "a girl to screw"
(3). The second also depicts the "doomed man" Munchmeyer, this time "doomed to a marriage" made in "hell" (3). Miranda’s Munchmeyer is represents himself as the alienated artist in a "hole" (4), feeling "so incredibly lonely, lonely as hell" (5), unable to allow his artistic imagination to soar above domestic life.

In *Prospero on the Island*, Miranda describes her being out with her child. "I walk through the crisp leaves with Toad" and she suddenly thinks of new, crisp bank notes. Then she laughs at the simile: "My mistress’ eyes are nothing like the Sun, why must I always search for similarities?" (5). The something in Munchmeyer "leaves crisp as bank notes crackled under them feet...." These links are the evidence for Miranda’s using the same words in both novels and, unconsciously, she is expressing her split personality in her own being and in her writing.

*Latakia* and *Prospero on the Island* portray writers with split personality. They reflect the crisis faced by women who want both their family and their writing. They cannot give up their writing for their family or their family for their writing. Till the end they are divided.

Munchmeyer, on the other hand, is neurotic and guilt-ridden. He desires to be a writer but knows his lack of control over characters and sequence in his writing. "I confessed to myself, in shame that I would
never be a poet - Fame had been my mistress not truth . . ." (5). Afraid of the ridicule his writing might expose him to, he knows that he is responsible for his own failure as artist. But he blames his wife and children and deserts them. He creates in himself pity and a sense of guilt and seeks refuge in his fantasy. As the novel progresses, it becomes difficult to distinguish reality from fantasy.

Miranda's capabilities of maintaining her family and her writing in a monomanic personality hides her slightly split personality. In this, she contrasts with Munchmeyer's schizophrenic, failed personality.

Alice in Intertidal life does not effectively resolve the split in her personality - between love and hate for her husband. She merely includes "I forgive but I don't forget-can't get over it. Gotta go through it" (279). Alice's goal is to reconstruct an identify for herself which, while ameliorating the pain of the past, will be strong enough to make her face a threatening future. Alice tries to hold her former identity as Mrs. Peter. Alice had treated Peter as her elder son and with this motherly touch in her love for Peter, she is not able to face and accept the loss of her husband's love. Though now she is the head of the house and mother to her children and though her writing takes up most of her energies, she longs for her husband's return. But, at the same time, she
questions his return. Her schizophrenic position shows her longing for her husband's return and at the same time, her perception of the end of the relationship: "I could hear the 'end' in friend..." (30). Judith Fitzgerald remarks that "The characters who populate Intertidal Life meticulously portray the dualistic nature of individuals." For all the complexity of their nature and their diverse social and personal problems, Anne-Marie, Raven, Selene, and Trudle, serve, each as a foil, for Alice's self-discovery. (Canadian writers, 211). In Graven Images Charlotte's monomanic aim is just to find the last remaining link of the family tree which, when and if discovered would be at the top of the American line. In coming Down From Wa William Kwame's journey is just to find out the past mystery of his family.

In Graven Images Charlotte allowed her mother to die as nothing else is left for the 90 year old woman to live for. Her family moved to America from England and they do not feel at home. Moreover, they are not able to find their roots in their parent country. Hence she does not feel at home in her place. Charlotte has to struggle to put together the missing pieces, whether in the archival records in England, or in the recesses of her mother's memory. The family skeleton locked away for forty years is finally unlocked at the very end of the
novel by Frances, who emerges from the shadows to tell how she had been awakened one night by strange noises. Coming out on to the landing, she had stood tooking down, “and my father looking up, from the bottom of the stairs . . . and his hands were covered in blood . . . and he saw me” (317). In the end, the “graven images” of the god-like Lawrence is broken, releasing Frances and Charlotte to come together in a new relationship of closeness and affiliation. This sad plight urges her search for her family roots. Another seeker of a root-cause, William, in *Coming Down From Wa*, sets out to explore into his parents past which met with some mysterious catastrophe that resulted in the loss of innocence and unspoken wrath. William knows he is different and is scared by a secret. He sees evidence of the secret’s phantom self in the awkward silences between his parents in their lives, their separate vocations and their failure to share a bed room. Their alienation alienates him from them.

William is convinced that the answer lies in the past his parents shared in West Africa. Until his mother joins him in Wa, William is unable to discover the family secret. Through Sandy’s final explanations, William’s questions are answered and the mist cleared.
William is unable to uncover the family secret by his own efforts. When his mother Pat joins him in Wa, telling her story, despite her interruptions:

..."You are not responsible for your Parents' youth. Nothing you can do can 'make up' for what we did - ...you may have felt you grew up in a loveless house, we both loved you. Never doubt that for a minute."

"I have never doubted your love", ... But we weren't family and I longed for a family. You were both so... closed" (CDW, 268-269).

Alienation is also a common, social phenomenon. In modern civilization, alienation is caused by certain socio-political situations. It is also generated by changes of values, frustrations and shocks. Alienation has the potential to terminate the hold of many of the celebrated traditional values like parent-child relationships, values of marriage, values of love, values of sister – brother relationships, and also the value of honesty. The third and the main cause of alienation is breaking down of relationships. All the conflicts that the characters in Audrey Thomas'
novels experience are essentially personal and they arise from the disharmony between the characters' need for union with other people and their equal and complementary need to preserve their individual identity.

Breaking down of relationships such as the breaking down of marriage, the breaking down of love and the breaking down of familial relationships, is one of the major causes of alienation.

Alienation may occur when a person's emotional ties are threatened by insecurity, instability, disillusionment, incompatibility and by a sense of mystery. The characters' uncertainty of their own identity, their own sense of insufficiency, their sense of lack of the required competence in their chosen profession, economic insufficiency, and disintegration of social and familial relationships are also the other major causes of alienation.

In *Songs My Mother Taught Me*, Isobel's sense of insecurity, arising from her perception of the economic insufficiency of her parents and her perception of home as a battlefield between her parents, makes her feel alienated from home and from herself. She has the feeling that as a child she has lost her childhood. In *Mrs. Blood*, uncertainty of identity and split love make Isobel live an alienated life. Munchmeyer in
Munchmeyer and Prospero On the Island becomes a victim of alienation by his sense of insufficiency as a writer. Frustrating personal relationships that constantly moves towards disintegration makes Alice in Intertidal Life and Rachel in Latakia succumb to alienation. Inability to hold herself as a member of the family anymore makes Isobel in Blown Figures plunge into the unknown. The sense of mystery that shrouds the relationship between his parents throws William Kwame in Coming Down from Wa into the depths of alienation. Central to all these is the breaking down of relationship.

The primary cause for the breaking down of relationship is, perhaps, the absence of attachment, affiliation and affection in love. Since women and children have been culturally and emotionally dependent on man, any disruption of attachment is seen not simply as a loss of relationship but as a total loss of self. Such a loss makes one feel as if one were suddenly thrown into a totally dark world where one gropes painfully not knowing what one is groping for.

The weakness and sense of insecurity of Audrey Thomas’s protagonists are probably the result of their childhood experience. In Songs My Mother Taught Me the cause of Isobel’s alienation is rooted in the relationship between her parents in which neither love nor sympathy
ever had a place. Audrey Thomas, as Margaret Atwood says, is concerned about "the terrible gap between men and women". At the same time, Audrey Thomas crosses the boundaries of the binary oppositions:

\[ \text{Ever} \begin{align*} &\text{Then is} \\ &2127 \end{align*} \]

Thomas's characters often exist in a state of prolonged culture shock. Men against women, reality against arcadia, Europe against America; and even more starkly, the white west against some country further South, Africa or Mexico – these are the collisions whose psychic contusions she traces. (Atwood 269).

Audrey Thomas's *Latakia* is about "a tragedy about a man who loved two women" (65). Rachel argues for the differences in priorities between a man and a woman. "A man's first love is never his woman, but his work... A 'wife' was not supposed to be like that" (85). When the relationship between Michael and her got in her way, Rachel feels forlorn. All she has left is words and her own determined optimism. In *Latakia*, the protagonist feels guilty that her children feel neglected by her because of her love for Michael. "The children felt I neglect them
for you (her lover Michael)" (24). They were made to feel relegated in Rachel's love-priority and uncared for in their life. Children become victims of family obligations and expectations. What the children need is trust, affection and a sense of importance. If it is rudely and suddenly withheld from them, they feel alienated. Rachel argues for the differences in priorities between a man and a woman. In the list of Rachels' priorities, her work and her children come first. Her writing generates in her a double sense, that of needing Michael but, at the same time, not needing Michael's relationship. This split in the major priority in her life sends her into the abyss of indeterminacy and her simultaneous-love and hatred for Michael.

Lack of love and communication result in the protagonists' being alienated. In Coming Down from Wa, Kwame, brought up in the unacceptable silence between his parents, yearns for the united love and affection of his parents which he does not receive:

... a puzzle he thought he would, never solve: the puzzle of his parents' taking separate vacations every year, his mother usually to visit one of the children in her Child World program, his father to hike the West
Coast Trail or go kayaking by himself (later, with William) ... the puzzle of his Parents' polite but distant attitude to one another; the puzzle of their lack of involvement in any cause where they would have to belong to a group; the lies. The lies had started early ... (CDW, 1-2)

Man's existential conflict produces certain needs that are common to all men and women. They are forced to overcome the causes of separation, powerlessness and loss and they have to find new forms of relating themselves to the world to enable them to feel at peace with themselves. In *Songs My Mothers Taught Me* Isobel is happy in her work at the insane Hospital rather than at her home. "In my many ways it was easier for me to cope with the crowd madness of ward 88 than the glossed over violence of my home" (145). If the thread of attachment is broken, the very meaning of life is lost for them. Children are eager to be close and attached to their home. If home is devoid of love or is a place of internecine conflicts, children at home become perpetually anxious, feel alienated from every thing and seek refuge outside home.

The third and important cause of the breaking down of relationships is failure in married life. While in love with each other, there
is no signal of any disillusionment or misunderstanding between the lovers. When they get married, they slowly awaken to their commitments and responsibilities and become aware of the lack of potential necessary to face the responsibilities squarely and finally they realize that they are not able to live together. Later realization reveals the husbands' motives and the wives' expectations and when these clash, a sense of incompatibility descends on them. This might become a perpetual source of anxiety and hence of alienation.

In marriage or in a long love affair, when a third person takes away the affection of the husband or the wife as in Latakia, in Munchmeyer, in Intertidal Life in Mrs. Blood and Blown Figures, the other partner experiences anguish and grief. The sense of having been deserted leads the person to an alienated condition in their life.

Isobel (Songs My Mother Taught Me, Mrs. Blood, Blown Figures), Alice (Intertidal Life), Rachel (Latakia), Sandy (Coming Down From Wa), Charlotte (Graven Images) and Martha (Munchmeyer) are victims of uncaring and loveless husbands. The love within them is killed by the lack of love of their husbands to the extent that they are unable to love their children without their husbands and are unable to continue their writings.
In *Intertidal Life*, Alice even thinks of divorce "I am so torn. If I went to a lawyer now, I could sue for divorce" (87). In *Latakia* Rachel says "I wondered why I couldn't just tell you to leave" (75). But the question which finally perturbs them is "how long?". They realize that they have been doing something but have never lived together despite being housed together. This shows that they have been engaged in a tug of war. They cannot finally say who wins and who loses. This is the main cause of the breaking down of their married life. In *Coming Down From Wa*, William's and Sandy's refusal to surrender their individual selves and their refusal to focus on the present engagement are the causes of their failure in life. The result is that they are caught in the vice like grip of alienation. "... they were like people who were on the run from something, who had changed their identity maybe and were afraid of being recognized..." (3)

Isobel, Rachel, Alice, Sandy and Martha are in the cage of suffocating married life, where neither freedom of speech nor of action is theirs. In *Mrs. Blood* Jason says "drink a lot and the marriage does not seem to be a happy one" (167). They still cling to each other because of their children. They find it difficult to break away despite each others'
affairs and they find it difficult to come to terms with loveless living conditions.

The alienated character's emotions, sentiments and economic freedom remain uncured. The wives are expected to be faithful, obedient and worshipful towards their husbands. And if the wives continue their expectation and their own interest, adverse consequences follow and their normal emotional life is disturbed. Women's protest against separation fails and, consequently, turns into frustration. They continue to struggle against the strong currents, even if it results in failure. They are constantly grappling with their situation and one can admire their spirit of resilience, even though one might be aware that the contest is unequal.

In *Intertidal Life* Alice, who has so far followed her husband's wishes, lets herself be drained of her energy. Any further submissive adherence to the expectations, whims and designs of Peter would certainly make her collapse. But, she has none means at her disposal to rebuff Peter. Peter dislikes marriage and blames his wife “Their relationship wasn’t intense. There was neither intense love nor intense hate. It was probably very old fashioned” (36).
It means Peter would be independent irrespective of what happens to Alice emotionally and economically. Peter wanted to settle down like a bachelor. Transforming himself as a careless young bachelor, Peter separates himself from his children and his wife. But, Alice still considers it possible to reunite with Peter and reharmonize the relationship between them. She does not know why they should separate though she understands that Peter seeks only separation. From Alice’s point of view, nothing is incompatible. But, from Peter’s point of view, everything is incompatible.

In Latakia the total domination of Michael over Rachel shows his desire and capability in ordering her around. It is this overpowering authority which almost scares Rachel. She has no wish to be trapped in a slavish life where both her identity and individuality would be killed mercilessly. She needs fresh air, the freedom of growth and character. Michael is a man covered with various layers of personality, one of them being the urge or the motive to negate Rachel’s individuality. He does not want to allow any time to Rachel. Rachel thinks that his aggressive and deliberately intrusive behaviour does not allow her the time to write. Further Michael does not want to relinquish his marital relationship
and wants his affair with Rachel to continue. This life of adjustment for convenience with the lady love is also a cause for their alienation:

You wept; we made love; I told you that we were both under a terrible strain, had been and would be until we got on that freighter and had sometime alone together. You said you loved both of us, you'd just begun to realize it. I said that you would have to solve that one yourself . . . nothing is settled (LK, 120).

In *Munchmeyer and Prospero on the Island* Martha's relationship with her husband Munchmeyer becomes tense once she becomes secretive about her thoughts, though she requires communication and reciprocation. Her dream of love for and her involvement with her husband is broken. She has to accept Munchmeyer's proposal of separation. But in *Prospero on the Island* Miranda admires her husband Fred's imagination, ability and his sensitivity to beauty. But admiration is no substitute for love. She also feels alienated from her husband. "But physically he does not excite me " *(105). Once she said to Prospero "I get lonely in my head and in my body" *(145). In a way she also
experiences separation from her husband even while living with him and inspite of admiring him.

In Mrs. Blood, Isobel, left alone in the hospital, is not allowed to speak or even to open her mouth to reveal her agony of isolation and alienation. All this leaves Isobel disturbed. With no love coming out of her husband Jason with a healing touch, she finds her mind reverting back to her ex-lover Richard’s love. She is not able to remove the thought of Richard from her mind even after having two children by her husband. Though this regressive desire for Richard appears natural, she is burdened with a sense of guilt. She finds herself in a very curious situation. While Richard is now out of her life, she is unable to return Jason’s love. These are the reasons for the breaking down of the marital relationship between Mrs. Blood and Jason.

The pattern continues in Blown figures. This novel, in fact, opens with Isobel still mourning the abortion of her baby. The sudden and shocking abortion of her baby shakes her out of her roots. Obviously the only mode of punishment that she could think of is that of leaving her family for the unknown and the unobtainable. Her decision to leave home and children pains her, but her delicate, vulnerable ways force
her to take the decision. She dedicates the rest of her life to her search for her aborted child in Africa.

The most important factor in the breaking down of relationship in *Mrs. Blood* is Isobel’s desire not to feel rejected by Jason. But Alice in *Intertidal Life*, and Martha in *Munchmeyer and Prospero on the Island* are rejected by their husbands Peter, and Munchmeyer and Rachel in *Latakia* is rejected by her lover who is somebody else's husband.

Some try to come out of their broken relationships by reverting to their old hobby of diary writing and novel writing. Audrey’s protagonists try to retain their being through their writing. When Alice in *Intertidal Life* is described as a housewife in the divorce petition, she borrows Hannah’s pen, crosses that out, and writes in its place. "writer" (157). In *Latakia*, Rachel’s writing is a revenge: "The Book I am working on now is about you and me" (30). In *Songs My Mother Taught Me*, Isobel has a romantic dream of being "a writer", wanting "to be known". In *Munchmeyer and Prospero on the Island* Munchmeyer never finishes his writing. "He once tells Maria that he is a “compulsive beginner” and has five novels unfinished, in his drawer" (131). But Miranda begins to keep a diary in Magdalena that becomes a novel in a realistic way. She remarks: "I write this on the fury... which suggests “Island” (156). In
Coming Down From Wa. Kwame is also writing his life in a diary. Thus, writing, in any form, is both the task of unburdening oneself and of probing into the real within.

Thus, the foregoing discussion has shown how there is a perceptible pattern in the causal factors of alienation. The chapter has examined how the various types of spatial displacement of characters is a major cause of alienation, while it has taken care to show that some incidents of displacement can be viewed as issuing from alienation. The psychological dimensions like split personality, sense of insecurity and disillusionment, as causes of alienation, have also been discussed. The chapter has also examined the social and familial situations as sources for the characters' sense and experience of alienation. A sense of mystery and the character's motivation to resolve it have also been studied as factors leading to alienation.

Further, the chapter has discussed the consequences of alienation. A major consequence is the perpetually nagging sense of rootlessness, of being located at a given space at a given time but not really being there. Quest-journey is another major consequence and the apparent dynamism of movement could actually be caused by the inability of the characters to reach or be in a settled state of mind, as
exemplified by Kwame in *Coming Down From Wa* or by Isobel in the Isobel series. One of the most debilitating consequences of alienation is that of the character being reduced to the status of an object or a function. When the character is reduced from a human to a thing, the character is plunged almost irredeemably into the despair of alienation.

Mrs. Thing in *Mrs. Blood*, Alice in *Intertidal Life* and Rachel in *Latakia* have been examined from this perspective. Another major consequence of alienation, which occurs repeatedly in the novels, is that of the characters’ channelising their frustrated energy into creative writing. Thus, Alice in *Intertidal Life* and Rachel in *Latakia* turn to creative fiction not only as an escape from the haunting anxiety caused by alienated existence but as a means of therapeutic exercise. The chapter has also examined how the endeavour to write itself could become the source of alienation. The inability to have a vision, to perceive and to organize results in a state of alienated existence for which there is no remedial measure. This state has been exemplified by Munchmeyer in *Munchmeyer and Prospero on the Island*. Separation is yet another major consequence of alienation and Rachel in *Latakia* and Alice in *Intertidal Life* are concrete illustrations. Sometimes, remediless
anguish could be the result of alienation as exemplified by Isobel, Mrs. Thing and the parents of Kwame.