

# THE DIARIES OF THE CREASE FAMILY WOMEN

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## SO MANY LITTLE DIARIES

“THERE IS LOTS OF SMALL TALK but little small writing,” Robin Lakoff writes in her recent book on language and power, in which she explains that “one does not embark on the task of writing unless there is good reason to do so.”<sup>1</sup> The extent and nature of the diaries of the Crease family women of Victoria demonstrate some of the good reasons that nineteenth-century women had for writing about their daily lives. Sarah Crease, wife of Henry Pering Pellew Crease, Judge of the Supreme Court of British Columbia, was a pillar of Victoria society; her daughters Mary, Susan, Barbara, and Josephine were educated in reading, writing, drawing, and painting. Several of these women (perhaps all) kept many volumes of diaries.

Their many diaries were definitely small in size. Sarah, Susan, and Josephine each wrote during various years in Standard Life Assurance Company’s Colonial Almanacs, books measuring only 6.5 cm × 9.5 cm. These books listed the month’s dates and key events on the left-hand side, with the blank right-hand page labelled “memoranda.” These tiny books hardly gave them room for much expression beyond brief notes, but the women nevertheless tried to accommodate what they had to say to the small size of the page, writing in the margins and drawing balloons around long entries to squeeze their writing into the minimal space allotted.

Such little books precluded elaboration or lengthy reflection on the inner life. As a result, the diaries look at first glance to be just as “small” in content as in size. The women wrote about the weather, visits, rides, and teas; they recorded the ordinary domestic round of women of their class. However, these little diaries represented a

<sup>1</sup> Robin Tolmach Lakoff, *Talking Power: The Politics of Language in Our Lives* (New York: Basic Books, 1990): 52.

prodigious amount of writing activity. The extent of their diaries was impressive: with some omissions, Sarah Crease kept diaries for the years 1875-1913, daughter Susan for 1865-1943, and daughter Josephine for 1878-1942. All these women wrote because they were self-consciously collecting the events of their lives as written souvenirs in their diaries.<sup>2</sup> They also wrote to keep accounts of their activities, and to keep the past alive, recording memories before they were forgotten so that they could be re-read and the moment recalled.

Because a single recording voice seemed to be insufficient, these writing women sometimes wrote in a number of diaries during the same year. In effect, they "translated" their lives into a different generic forms; in their multiple diaries they created varied translations of their own autobiographical records.<sup>3</sup> In their different private texts they adopted different strategies of self-representation, and their diaries as a whole offer a polyphonic variety of voices for certain periods of their lives.

Sarah Crease, in particular, adopted different voices in different diaries. Her lists of menus and dinner guests, made out on almanac covers, were her diaries in pastiche form, and served as her expression as a gracious hostess. Sarah apparently read in her spiritual diary every day. When she added to a day's entry in that book, she translated the day's events into terms of prayer and reflection. These layers of reflections over the years have created palimpsestic texts in her spiritual diaries for the dates of certain key events in her life. Susan Crease, too, was not limited to one sort of diary. She, like her mother and her sister Josephine, often kept a list of key events of the year, indicating an attempt to keep the flow of life in a regularized order. She let her self fly freer, however, in her adaptations of ballads, with parodic characters acting out the roles she and her sister played in real life. In keeping multiple versions of their lives, the women clearly recognized different modes of personal discourse at their disposal, and translated their perceptions of a day accordingly, thereby casting doubt on any singular reading of their written selves.

<sup>2</sup> See Anne Martin-Fugier, "Bourgeois Rituals," *A History of Private Life*, vol. 4, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, ed. Michelle Perrot (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Belknap, 1990): 261-337 for a discussion of diary writing as part of a "thirst for memory."

<sup>3</sup> The concept of translation "enlarged to included imitation, adaptation, quotation, pastiche, parody" is one of the features of contemporary feminist discourse discussed by Barbara Godard in "Theorizing Feminist Discourse/Translation," *Tessera* 6 (Spring 1989): 42-53. Helen Buss in *Mapping Our Selves: Canadian Women's Autobiography* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993): 49 notes that these features also appear in texts of nineteenth-century women.



Josephine Crease  
(BCARS 24207, F-6875)



Susan Crease  
(BCARS 22937, F-7378)



## SPACES FOR WRITING

These multiple texts offer events recounted in many voices within each woman's diaries. Even more interesting, however, is a story that emerges when reading each woman's diaries against the others. This reading reveals an emotional story, one of bitter mother-daughter turmoil and dispute. Because these women were often too restrained to allow a disruptive record to stand, their diaries convey their passions in records that have been altered for subsequent readers through the elimination of pages and, probably, entire diaries. Such alteration of the record requires the reader to become aware of the writers' intentions, both conscious and unconscious. The censored record is an implicit code of the sort often used in messages when there is risk for the writer. The reputation of the Crease family was at stake, so the written record, even the private record, could only carry a disturbing message coded in the gaps between and omissions within the diaries.<sup>4</sup> The often idealized records that resulted leave hints of disruption, and when read together the diaries show the ways these women used the written word to encode the tension-filled spaces between family members. A story of conflicts over love emerged from the diaries, even though Sarah, Susan, and Josephine rarely dared write about it explicitly.

The Crease women managed their private written spaces within a roomy and accommodating series of public spaces.<sup>5</sup> Their family home Pentrelew, on the top of the hill on Fort Street, was large and impressive, with "two drawing rooms, a study, a morning room, a large dining room, two pantries, two kitchens, and eleven bedrooms,"<sup>6</sup> giving it room enough for numerous visitors, some of whom stayed for weeks. The house suited Henry Crease's position in colonial society. Sarah Crease, as wife of a man in his position, served as Pentrelew's gatekeeper. She was apparently an accomplished hostess and a kind minister to the sick who took refuge under her roof. Her house, however accommodating to outsiders, was less comfortable in many ways for those who lived within, especially her spirited daughter Susan, who as a young adult railed against her mother's restrictions.

<sup>4</sup> For a discussion of coding, see Joan N. Radner and Susan S. Lanser, "Strategies of Coding in Women's Cultures," *Feminist Messages: Coding in Women's Folk Culture*, ed. Joan N. Radner (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993): 2-9.

<sup>5</sup> See Linda K. Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female World, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," *The Journal of American History* 75 (1988): 9-39 for a discussion of women in their public and private spaces.

<sup>6</sup> Christina B. Johnson-Dean, *The Crease Family Archives* (British Columbia: Provincial Archives, 1981): 19.

The private spaces of the diaries contain the most volatile passions during the years between 1876 and 1886. In this decade, the young women of the Crease family were approaching marriageable age, and according to the diaries, matters of courtship were very much on the minds of the three oldest. Mary, at the age of twenty-two, appeared to be unwell; her mother and her sister reported that she suffered from frequent episodes of hysteria. Mary met and fell in love with many men during this period, but her parents found all of her and her sister Susan's young men to be unsuitable, and screened and rejected marriage proposals on behalf of their daughters. Mary, to her parents' despair and without their approval, finally married in 1886 at the age of thirty-two.<sup>7</sup> Barbara, despite her poor health (frequently mentioned in the diaries), managed to become engaged in June 1883 with parental blessing, left for San Francisco to consult doctors about her illness in September 1883, and died unmarried in November 1883. Although Mary and Barbara left only brief childhood diaries in the family papers, their stories are contained in the little diaries of their mother Sarah and their sisters Susan and Josephine.

#### KEEPING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

Sarah Crease was an organizer and a saver (of menus, guest lists, newspaper clippings, cards, and letters). She recorded the passage of time with various collections of sentimental objects treated as relics<sup>8</sup> and in written records. Like other women of her time, her "[m]emories, hoarded like capital, were recorded as in a passbook."<sup>9</sup> For the decade between 1876 and 1886, her diary-like records took several forms. Among them was the account of key daily events, based on a financial model. Her account-like diaries for the years 1876-1880 were in the tiny Colonial Almanacs from the Standard Life Assurance Company.<sup>10</sup> Sarah had no diaries in these little insurance books for the years 1881-1886, the years in which Barbara died and Mary wed against

<sup>7</sup> This was a late age of marriage in B.C. at the time. In 1881, the average age of marriage for B.C. women was 20; in 1891, it was 22.3. See Ellen M. Thomas Gee, "Marriage in Nineteenth-Century Canada," *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 19 (1982): 311-325. Mary's sisters were also unusual in their remaining single, since "the early-marrying western provinces [were] characterized by sex ratios highly favourable to the marriage opportunities of women" (Gee 320).

<sup>8</sup> Some of Sarah's collected objects now in the British Columbia Archives include her season's pass to the 1851 International Exhibition, the paper in which her wedding bouquet was wrapped, and cut-out paper silhouettes of her children's profiles.

<sup>9</sup> Martin-Fugier, 263.

<sup>10</sup> Sarah Crease, Diaries. British Columbia Archives and Record Service (BCARS), AE/C86/C861.

her parents' wishes. These gaps indicate, in my reconstruction of their story, the impossibility of keeping proper accounts of affairs touching her heart.

Sarah also wrote in one of her mother's old books, indicating the continuity of a women's writing tradition in her family. Her prayer book, *Daily Bible Readings for the Lord's Household*, was inscribed inside the front cover "Left to me by my dear Mother"<sup>11</sup>; it was a book of daily prayers and spiritual reflections that Sarah used as a diary over several years by writing important memories in the white space around a day's prayer. *Daily Strength for Daily Needs*<sup>12</sup> was a similar prayer book that she received as a gift in 1898, in which she recorded earlier occurrences, such as Barbara's death, that she wanted to remember on their anniversaries. These prayer books were diaries of memories and records of the past.

The rest of Sarah's papers can be read as the life writings of a determined record-keeper. She kept, for example, a collection of individual sheets of menus, seating plans, and lists of guests for parties between 1878 and 1892.<sup>13</sup> For several of these years, she also kept a record of the year's key events on almanac covers, some of which had attached to them various loose diary sheets. Diaries for other years consisted of odd sheets of paper with dated entries folded together into a bundle.<sup>14</sup> A blank book labelled "Weddings"<sup>15</sup> contains clippings of newspaper accounts of family weddings. Sarah, however, saved no clippings or mementoes of her daughter Mary's wedding in 1886.

In all of these texts of compulsive ordering, Sarah's writing style was elliptical and impersonal. Her constant and continuous records were seldom accounts of her feelings and desires as one might expect in a private diary, but rather lists of deeds and events. She wrote most often in phrases, eliminating both the subject *and* the verb in a sentence, leaving the *who* and the *what* out of her entry altogether, and focusing on the result of the action after the fact: "Musical Party at the Robertsons" (1 Feb 1877). She also listed names, as in "Ride. Mary, Susie, J. C. R. Mr. Chislet & Mr. & Mrs. Blunden went out riding together" (14 Oct 1876). If Sarah put herself in these lists, it was as *self*, as in "Henry, self, Barbara, Zeffie, Arthur & Emily went in Winter's carriage . . ." (10 Nov 1876). She wished, in her own diaries, to draw as little attention to herself as possible.

<sup>11</sup> Sarah Crease, miscellaneous papers, BCARS AE/C86/C861.6.

<sup>12</sup> Sarah Crease, miscellaneous papers, BCARS AE/C86/C861.2.

<sup>13</sup> Sarah Crease, miscellaneous papers, BCARS AE/C86/C861.6.

<sup>14</sup> Sarah Crease, miscellaneous papers, BCARS AE/C86/C861.5.

<sup>15</sup> Sarah Crease, miscellaneous papers, BCARS AE/C86/C861.4.

Sarah's writing in all of its various little spaces also avoided an account of the tension in her family home. Any reference to things not being as they should be was coded in the language of disease. Her children's sufferings were recorded in her diaries solely in terms of their battles with illness, labelled (diphtheria, scarletina, measles) or unlabelled ("feeling poorly"). After nine-year old Lindley's departure for many years of school in England, Sarah recorded that Henry suffered from eczema; his heartbreak was treated with the following regime: "No tea coffee wine spirits or beer Warm baths ordered with Carbolic soap" (22 May 1878). Sarah accounted for Mary's mental anguish and hysterical fits without recognizing any cause in love or family troubles, writing that Mary was "very nervous and poorly" (16 April 1878). Later she acknowledged "Mary in hysterics [*sic*] — on the verge of a serious illness" (19 Jan 1880). None of the fights that Susan recorded between mother and daughters or between sisters who were rivals in love made an appearance in Sarah's diary. In her world of words, people were not happy or unhappy, but ill or healthy. Even her own menstrual periods were coded euphemistically in her diary as illness: she wrote a tiny *uw* by the dates of her afflicted days. Sarah wrote to keep accounts, and these accounts precluded emotional content, which was then deflected into representations of disease. But while Sarah was carefully recording a phrase or two to pin down the important events of a day, her daughters were flying apart in frustration and longing.

#### THE INNER LIFE OF EMOTION

Susan Crease began writing a diary as a child; her first diary volumes were gifts to her from her mother and her mother's sister, Aunt Barbara. Susan and her sister Mary wrote in their diaries together as children, using identical phrases in their accounts of weather and visitors. She was not a diligent child diarist, however, and her diary for 1865 (at age nine) turned into her diary for 1871 (at age fifteen). Susan's diaries preserved in BCARS were regular after the family's move to Pentrelew in 1875, the year in which Susan turned twenty. After this point, diary books were hardly able to contain Susan's passion for writing. Her intense focus on her self and her emotions is a common trait among adolescent diarists. Indeed, many women have kept diaries during adolescence, but stopped writing once they had a sense of themselves and their place in the adult world. Susan Crease wrote a diary of adolescent intensity throughout her twenties. She did have an



artistic flair for writing, but her conflicts with her mother were a stronger impetus for her continuing emotional record. Her writing was one way in which she could establish herself as an individual with some integrity outside the realm of strict parental control.

Like her mother, Susan kept records in several different places at once, and compulsively kept notes on key events over the years. Susan was apparently a diary re-reader and, to a certain extent, a reviser. She marked important events in the margins of her diaries with a line, and among her papers was a monthly listing of key events that occurred over the years that she must have compiled from other records, since all the listings were organized according to the month, not the year, of their occurrence.

Susan often kept more than one diary book during any given year. For many years, she kept as one of her diaries a Standard Life Assurance Company's Colonial Almanac,<sup>16</sup> the same kind of little book in which her mother and her sister wrote. Her other diary books were varied, and included both commercial books and her own diary books made of large sheets of paper cut down to manageable size, then sewn, tied with yarn, or pinned together with straight pins. Other diary entries were on odd sheets of paper ripped out of old school books and on the backs of form letters reminding parishoners of upcoming Christ Church Cathedral Fund committee meetings. Most of these homemade diaries were labelled on the covers, grounding their composer in her time, place, and identity, as in: "Diary 1878 s.r.c. Pentrelew Victoria."

Diary spaces, especially those in commercial volumes, often proved inadequate for what Susan wanted to write. She sometimes glued in papers that would extend the space for a day's entry beyond the given page. When her friend, Ernest Boyle, departed for England, Susan included a newspaper account of the boat's sailing, and also made the tiny space in her diary a bit larger by a piece of paper that folded in on the day's entry. In her rebellion, her accommodation to the shape of the page seemed emblematic of Susan's writing: she realized what the restrictions on her were, tried to fit in, but in the end always spilled over onto something that did not quite fit the conventional pattern.

In her diaries she also kept copies of letters she had written; one of these letters suggested just how far she was willing to go in her quest for a self-determined life outside the constricting spaces of Pentrelew. In February of 1882, Susan reported that she "Overheard Mama tell Papa 'I was no use etc, etc' Had a good cry in consequence & made up

<sup>16</sup> Susan Crease, *Diaries*, BCARS AE/C86/C864.

my mind to write to Sister Superior of St Mary's Home in Clifton." The letter she wrote asked about the possibility of joining the religious order for "a stranger who is anxious to join her or some similar community" of sisters in England. Susan's flight to the convent was not successful; she may not have even sent the letter. Including a copy of it in her diary, however, showed that like many other women writers of the nineteenth century, Susan struggled to escape the strictures of her father's house<sup>17</sup> as well as the margins of the page.

Susan's emotion also spilled over into poems that she wrote and inserted into her diaries; she tried to put her frustrations into a larger, literary context. When she and her sister Mary were fighting over the affections of young William Boyle (age nineteen to their twenty-five and twenty-six), Susan cast their conflict in the form of a ballad in this poem that reflected her anger over the battles with Mary:

...

But alas! and alas! these maidens two  
 Wonder all day what each other will do  
 And though so proud and though so fair  
 Would willingly pull each other's hair  
 Like cubs just come from a lion's lair. (26 Jan 1879)

...

This poem, like her diaries and the other documents she inserted in them was signed and labelled for place: "src Pentrelew," indicating that Susan considered herself an author, not just a diarist keeping records for her own sake. Perhaps she hoped that someone would discover the poem and see her as a writer, not just an angry daughter. In casting herself as an author, too, she was distancing herself from the dangerous emotions. Her parodic translation of the conflict helped to protect her from the consequences of strife with her sister as they suffered under their parents' restrictions.

These labelled diaries and insertions imply that Susan expected an eventual reader for her diaries. Another strong indication of some sort of audience in her mind is her use of developed narratives. In a few striking passages, she wrote long diary entries with literary effects. These narratives were about romantic or sexual events in her life, and

<sup>17</sup> See Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984): 83-92 for a discussion of images of imprisonment and escape.

cast her as a protagonist in a plot of love and marriage. In October 1878, she wrote:

I went to Mrs Jones and to town — coming back a very heavy shower began to fall so I took refuge at Dr Ash's — He opened the door and almost before I was aware had taken me to the drawing room and kept me there while he said such things to me and at last took me in his arms, turned up my face and kissed me passionately on the lips twice!! I don't know what to make of him . . . I told Mary all about it & she thought it very queer.

She did not report telling her mother about this incident. Her diary appears to have been a place where she could live outside her mother's restrictions against men as lovers or as suitors.

#### MAINTAINING DOMESTIC ORDER

Josephine's diaries give a sense of household routine and the domestic order against which Susan played out her emotional scenes. Josephine diligently recorded the constancy of housework, which often went without comment in the diaries of her mother and her sister. She, like her mother and her sister, was given diaries by Henry Crease. One little Standard Life Assurance Company book was inscribed on the cover: "Zeffie Crease 1878 from HPPC."<sup>18</sup> Like Susan, she kept a number of books during a given year, recording events in brief form in a little book and expanding on matters in larger notebooks or handmade books. Her diaries were tidy lists of relatively mundane matters, such as weather reports and tennis matches. Since the early diaries were written in school scribblers, she may have begun her diary-writing as the result of a school assignment. The later books continued in the rhetorical format of required writing. Josephine did what was expected of her, in both writing and housekeeping.

It seemed that Josephine could not be bothered to write too much, and cut corners in her writing when she could. She used many abbreviations: eveg., ch., bk. (book), fr. (from), hd (had), wh (which), A2 (Arthur Allen), "Mama most frightfully X" (30 March 1883). In her use of lists she condensed the rhetorical features of her text rather than using more discursive patterns. The ends of several volumes included lists: lists of principal events, lists of things she wanted, lists

<sup>18</sup> Josephine Crease, *Diaries*, BCARS AE/C86/C865.

of things she had received, lists of friends, lists of letters sent, lists of dinner party guests and so on.

Josephine rarely wrote about feelings, but focused her diary entries on external events. She usually began each entry with a summarizing comment about what was most notable about the day: "A Fancy Dress Ball at Pentrelew" (13 Jan 1886) and "Electric pole front of Pentrelew erected at last" (11 Aug 1886). She wrote about each day the following day, concluding many of her girlhood entries with a mention of her bedtime. Her goal was apparently to get the facts down with as little as possible metaphoric colour or commentary added.

Josephine recorded these facts about each day with an eye to an untroubled subsequent reading. She had no qualms about discussing censorship of the record: she mentioned how both she and Susan burned selected valentines after Valentine's Day in 1881, and one of the tasks she hoped to accomplish in 1888 was to "destroy letters." If she burned her valentines and destroyed her letters, she must have realized the importance of the written record as a record of the self, and was shaping that idealized record for possible readers.

Josephine's rare emotional outbursts took the form of exclamation marks. The longest train of exclamation marks followed comments on Barbara's surprising engagement to Harry Ridley, the only engagement of the girls approved by their parents. Josephine wrote about the engagement in two different diaries. In one diary, she used an unprecedented string of four, then five exclamation marks after the horrified statements "Get a letter from Barbara saying she engaged to Mr Ridley & very much stronger!!!! Oh! dear What is the world coming to!!!!!" (1 June 1883). In the other diary, she commented more directly on her feelings about Mr. Ridley: "Mary get a letter from Barbara saying she engaged to Mr H Ridley of Yale! That awful man!!!!" (1 June 1883). No other family members appear to have had these violent feelings about Harry Ridley. Sarah, in her tradition of appearing to ignore any love or romance in her children's lives, mentioned nothing of the engagement. Susan, surprisingly dispassionate, recorded, "Heard of B's engagement to Mr Ridley — Seems very joyful about it" (1 June 1883). Josephine, despite her exclamation marks, never wrote why she found Mr. Ridley so awful; she censored her writing so that the appearance of household order was preserved.

Josephine maintained order in her writing, even when the writing process failed her mother and her sister Susan. She was the only writer to record Mary's wedding on 19 Jan 1886. Sarah had no diary at all for 1886; her only mentions of Mary's wedding were a note "Mary

Crease's Farewell" on a dance card for a fancy dress ball at Pentrelew on 13 January, and a note written several years later in her *Book of Daily Bible Readings* saying, "Our dear Mary Maberley married to Frederick Geo. Walker 1886" (19 Jan). Susan also left no diary for 1886, so Josephine, alone, reported coolly: "At Christ Ch. Cath. Mary Maberley Crease to Frederick Geo. Walker. S & I only bridesmaids cream canvas cash. trimmed with tea green satin. Plush bonnets with Holly berries to match 11:45" (19 Jan 1886). Her fancy clothes made the story for Josephine, who, lost in her role as bridesmaid, did not even say what the bride wore.

### THE STORY BETWEEN THE SPACES

Writing and literacy obviously performed an important function in the lives of these women, especially since they bothered to keep such careful daily records for so many years. The Crease women writers were all self-conscious historians of the family. One of their primary motives for writing was to preserve, as many other women writers have done, the family's textual traditions in "handwritten memoirs, diaries, personal letters [and] scrapbooks."<sup>19</sup> But within these carefully preserved texts intended for the public eye was another story of family trouble, carried through the coded messages in the linguistic patterns of the writing and in the very shapes of the texts themselves. Each woman's diary demonstrated a different "pragmatics of self-representation,"<sup>20</sup> because for each writer, each diary or autobiographical statement served a different social and emotional purpose.

Sarah piously eliminated her egoistic self from her writing, and wrote sentences with empty spaces at the beginning in place of the unwritten I and the verb ascribing purposive action to that I. But her diaries have clearly been edited and censored, by herself or by another. Diaries, for what were the most stressful years for her and her daughters, are missing, and the entries she so carefully kept were in the form of restrained lists, with much of the focus on events outside the intimate family circle. Sarah was keeping a family record that emphasized tradition and continuity. Her emotion was carried through the ritual of prayer.

<sup>19</sup> Margaret Conrad, "Sundays always make me think of home': Time & Place in Canadian Women's History," *Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women's History*, eds. Veronica Strong-Boag and Anita Clair Fellman (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1986): 70.

<sup>20</sup> Regenia Gagnier, *Subjectivities: A History of Self-Representation in Britain, 1832-1920* (Oxford University Press, 1991): 4.

Josephine was her linguistic inheritor. Like her mother, she accounted for the weather over the years, but rarely accounted for anger or tears. Her focus on events was close and concrete. Her endless lists suggest that material objects, desired and named, shaped her world. She, of all the Crease women diarists, was most content to stay within the bounds of the page. Her deviations from the little spaces for each day in a commercial diary were all in the lists that fill the back pages of her books. Housework, not prayer, was the guiding ritual with which she patterned her diaries. She wrote diligently of her constant efforts to keep the vast spaces of the family home in literal cleanliness and order.

Susan, especially as a young adult, railed against the domestic order as she saw it carried in the rule of her mother. She struggled for autonomy in writing; in many of her diary entries throughout her twenties, she discussed her conflict with Sarah's maternal authority. Sarah appeared not to hear Susan, and in the spaces between their two diaries was Sarah's subversion of Susan's power to disrupt the family order.<sup>21</sup> Susan considered herself a writer, and included in her diary literary attempts in both narrative and poetry. These poems and stories were often of love. Her attempts at youthful romance were frustrated and contained at every turn by her parents, but in her diaries she found a less limited space for expression. She determinedly altered the texts of her parents by adding extra sheets to the little diaries they gave her and by making her own big, messy diaries with the domestic tools at hand: sewing pins, needles, and thread. She boldly labelled these books as her own, signing them with the place and date on the cover.

What may at first look like small talk of household affairs in the diaries of the Crease family women is, on further examination, a powerful linguistic and material expression of the value of writing. They each saw different opportunities and restrictions within Pen-trelew, and created very different private spaces in all their little diaries; each writer encoded her story differently. Reading these diaries against one another in fact creates a sense of several spaces: the physical space of the family home; the material spaces on which the women wrote; the narrative spaces left by the incidents recorded in one diary and not in the other; and finally the emotional spaces between the family members.

<sup>21</sup> Joan N. Radner & Susan S. Lanser, "Women in the Patriarchal Household" in Radner 31-35 explain: "To pay attention to women's subversive feelings is, in a sense, to validate them — and potentially to lose power or self-esteem; acting as if one is not receiving their messages, on the other hand, is a way of silencing women, of screening out their power to disrupt" (32).