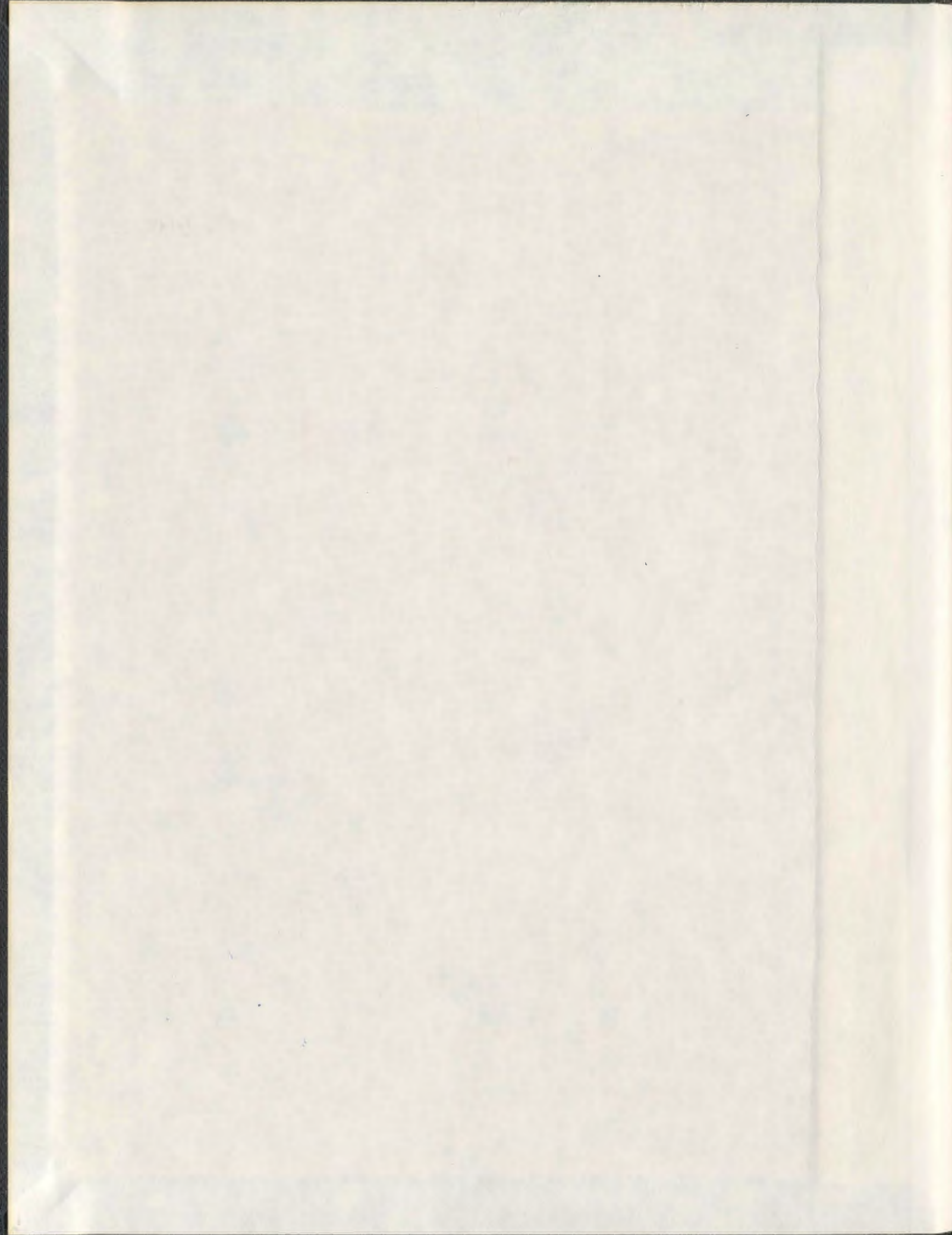


"KNOTTED THREADS" OF AMBIVALENCE:
GENDER, NARRATIVE, AND THE CULTURAL POETICS
OF MISSIONARY EXPERIENCE IN ENGLISH-CANADIAN
WOMEN'S WRITING, 1833-1914

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“Knotted Threads” of Ambivalence: Gender, Narrative, and the Cultural Poetics of
Missionary Experience in English-Canadian Women’s Writing, 1833-1914

by

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Abstract

Missionary women were ambivalent figures of social and moral change in early Canada. Their gendered experiences in the mission fields produced a variety of textual and cultural scripts that were ordered and contained, yet fractured and contradictory; their efforts at textual self-representation produced texts that were unstable bearers of cultural, literary, and personal knowledge. In this dissertation, I will explore the intersections of the shifting material, ideological, and cultural frameworks generated by missionary culture with the narrative forms and the discursive rhetorics utilized by missionary women. These intersections both permitted and constrained the articulation and emergence of female subjectivity within the textual archive generated by missionary writing culture. This dissertation will offer close readings of four key bodies of texts written by Canadian female missionaries who represent a range of geographies and religious denominations and consider their engagement with discourses of gender, class, race, religion, nationhood and their reliance on the cultural narratives offered by imperialism, domesticity, heroism, and the civilizing mission.

Chapter One examines the letters of the Irish religious congregation, the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and analyzes how they structured female community in pre-Confederation Newfoundland using discourses of sacrifice and kinship. Chapter Two explores gender roles in the mission field and the construction of domestic life in the Canadian North through a focussed examination of the writings of Anglican

missionary Charlotte Selina Bompas. Chapter Three considers the mission experiences of Dr. Susie Carson Rijnhart in China and Tibet through a close reading of her book, *With the Tibetans in Tent and Temple* (1901), investigating her text's relationship with heroic discourse, genres such as the imperial adventure, and discourses such as salvation history. Chapter Four examines the emergence of the missionary as an imaginative category in the writings of Janey Canuck, particularly *Seeds of Pine* (1914), and considers how the figure and the voice of the missionary intertwined with ideas of social reform, cultural progress, and nationhood. Most research on Canadian female missionaries evaluates their writings from an historical perspective without offering close readings of individual narratives. Yet is very often within the act of self-representation that the tensions and contradictions that animated complex cultural practices such as missionary work reside, collide, and emerge. Female subjectivity, in particular, demonstrated the instability of missionary culture, capturing its contradictions and ambivalence, and hence became an important critical tool for solidifying and questioning cultural boundaries that always seemed to be in a state of flux.

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The intersection among contexts is a phenomenon of *writing*. It is an operation of the *text* considered as a living work. Because the sequences have been written down together within the limits of one text... they constitute a network of intersignification, thanks to which the isolated texts signify something *else*, something *more*. (161, emphasis in original)

Paul Ricoeur
Figuring the Sacred (1995)

We move forward and our words stand
become responsible
for more than we intended

and this is verbal privilege

Adrienne Rich
"North American Time" (1993)

Introduction

In Canadian writer Sara Jeannette Duncan's delightfully incisive novel, *The Simple Adventures of a Memsahib* (1893), there is a passage that occurs early in the book that deserves brief examination. As Mrs. Peachey contemplates the impending departure of her newly married daughter, Helen, from Canbury, England to India, she indulges in an enticing colonial fantasy:

To Mrs. Peachey, one very consoling circumstance connected with Helen's going to India was the good she would probably be able to do to 'those surrounding her'.... Mrs. Peachey had private chastened visions, chiefly on Sunday afternoons, of Helen in her new field of labor. Mrs. Peachey was not destitute of imagination, and she usually pictured Helen seated under a bread-fruit tree in her Indian garden, dressed in white muslin, teaching a circle of little 'blacks' to read the Scriptures.... Over the form of these delicacies Mrs. Peachey usually went to sleep, to dream of larger schemes of heathen emancipation which Helen should inaugurate. Mr. Peachey, who knew how hard the human heart could be...was not so sanguine. He said he believed these Hindus were very subtle-minded, and Helen was not much at an argument. He understood they gave able theologians very hard nuts to crack. Their ideas were entirely different from ours, and Helen would be obliged to master their ideas before effecting any very radical change in them. He was afraid there would be difficulties.

Mrs. Plovtree settled the whole question. Helen was not going out as a missionary, except in so far as that every woman who married undertook the charge of *one* heathen, and she could not expect to jump into work of that sort all at once.... Mrs. Peachey thoughtfully acquiesced, though in fancy she still allowed herself to picture Helen leading in gentle triumph a train of Rajahs to the bosom of the Church—a train of nice Rajahs, clean and savoury. (12-14, emphasis in original)

This passage contains many of the cultural assumptions, assurances, tensions, and ironies that underlay the nineteenth-century Western missionary project, and, hence, becomes a

useful starting point for establishing some of the formative relationships between gender, narrative, and nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Canadian missionary writing. The diametric oppositions upon which missionary discourse was so often structured are, on surface, presented and reinforced: foreign land versus home land, heathen versus Christian, black versus white, savage versus civilized, knowledge versus ignorance, oral culture versus written culture. Yet Duncan establishes these dualities only emphatically to dissect them. Duncan's delicate irony establishes the tensions between the imagined surface cultural innocence of Helen's "labor" and a more penetrating view of Western missionary endeavour, one which saw such labours as invasive, questionable, and futile. As such, the passage presents at once the possibilities and limits of the task the foreign missionary has set out to perform, both capturing and questioning the power of—and resistance to—missionary practice as a viable social, cultural, and imaginative force in late nineteenth-century Canada, a force that was defined by differentiations of gender, couched in the rhetoric of moral and social improvement, and sustained by claims of racial and cultural difference. The missionary enterprise emerges as a discourse with the capacity to generate emotional fervour and sentiment, assailable idealism and unassailable conviction, demonstrable discomfort and resistance, confused dialogue and seductive "fancies" infused with absurdly clumsy gestures of colonial and cultural appropriation and displacement. It invokes a range of important cultural tensions, often manifested through text, that deserve critical interrogation.

The passage also establishes middle-class women's ambivalent relationship to

missionary culture, invoking their tentative entry point into its cultural landscape as both an emerging profession and an “heroic” and esoteric religious calling. This was often represented in the wholesome, responsible language and stirring rhetoric of the civilizing mission. The ease with which Helen is magically and imaginatively inserted into the foreign, colonial landscape as a missionary in a conventional and conservative posture of cultural dominance—that of dutiful and decorous religious teacher, contained within the cultivated and domesticated space of the garden—confirms and extends her feminine role as a conveyor of Western religious and domestic values; yet, she is as quickly expunged from India on the grounds of missionary work’s perceived “difficulties” and her inordinate and “radical” unsuitability to the task at hand. Helen’s participation in missionary culture is conceived at once as both conservative and radical. It is determined by a compliant, yet questing, femininity, but it is also limited by it, and hence models the “difficult” and ambivalent relationship that women shared with missionary culture, difficulties that their own writings not only reflect, but actively produce.

Finally, the fact that Mrs. Peachey relentlessly *imagines* these scenes of “heathen emancipation” registers the degree to which missionary culture was available as an imaginative and cultural category, both to nineteenth-century middle-class culture and to nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Canadian writers. Terrence L. Craig in *The Missionary Lives* has argued that “the missionary enterprise caught the Canadian imagination with a vivid appeal that in large part was literary” (13). According to Elizabeth Waterston, one of Canada’s earliest children’s books, *Bellegarde: The Adopted*

Indian Boy, A Canadian Tale, which was published anonymously in 1833, “used fiction to explain missionary efforts to Christianize native people” (79). In Catharine Parr Traill’s 1836 publication, *The Backwoods of Canada*, missionaries are an indispensable addition to the landscape of progress that Traill hopes to create¹ and that, later in her career, she would document through her textual work on botanical classification. Indeed, missionaries weave in and out of the fictional and non-fictional writings of Anna Jameson, Agnes Maule Machar, Agnes C. Laut, Sara Jeannette Duncan, Frances Brooke, William F. Butler, Lady Dufferin, Stephen Leacock, Nellie McClung, Ralph Connor, L. M. Montgomery, Lily Dougall, Letitia Hargrave, Susanna Moodie, Emily Murphy, Norman Duncan, Wilfred T. Grenfell, H. A. Cody, Marjorie Pickthall, Agnes Deans Cameron, Marian Keith, E. J. Pratt, E. Pauline Johnson, Edward William Thomson, and Duncan Campbell Scott. David B. Marshall maintains that “late [Canadian] Victorians idealized the missionaries in historical accounts, bibliographic sketches and religious novels” and that Canadian foreign missionaries, such as John Geddie and George Leslie Mackay, became public figures to an admiring readership which eagerly consumed accounts of their adventures (109).

¹ See, for instance this passage: “Within sight of Sully, the tavern from which the steam-boat starts that goes up the Otanabee, you see several well-cultivated settlements; and beyond the Indian village the missionaries have a school for the education and instruction of the Indian children. Many of them can both read and write fluently, and are greatly improved in their moral and religious conduct.... Certain it is that the introduction of the Christian religion is the first greatest step towards civilization and improvement” (59-60).

Equally influential within Canada were the writings of Francis Parkman. While he was American, not Canadian, Parkman wrote a series of books, such as *Pioneers of France in the New World* (1865) and *Jesuits in North America* (1867), based on the historical experiences of some of the earliest missionaries to Canada, the Jesuit Fathers and martyrs. These volumes were popular in Canada and the United States, with Canadian novelist and historian, Agnes Maule Machar, for instance, paying rhapsodic tribute to Parkman and his writings throughout her 1892 novel, *Marjorie's Canadian Winter*. Both Carl Berger and Carole Gerson have observed the impact of Parkman on Canadian historical and cultural production. Berger argues that Parkman's "influence upon Canadian historiography was greater than that of any other individual during the nineteenth century," as he functioned "as an outstanding example of what could be accomplished with the materials and themes of Canadian history" (*Sense* 94). Gerson similarly maintains that "Parkman almost singlehandedly determined the direction of Canadian historiography and historical fiction for the last three decades of the nineteenth century," with his influence apparent in such iconic nineteenth-century Canadian literary texts as William Kirby's *The Golden Dog* (1877) (*Purer* 113). Parkman's sense of historical drama allowed Canada's past to be restructured and read as an heroic romance.

Duncan's acerbic and fluid cultural critique of nineteenth-century colonial missions, waged through the imagined missionary career of Helen Brown, offers a tantalizing foretaste of the range of discursive and subject tensions and critical possibilities produced and contained within the writings of early Canadian women

missionaries themselves. Far from being static cultural figures, missionary women and their writings were defined and characterized by an almost bewildering degree of shifting subjectivities, contradictions, fractures, and ambivalences that were framed and structured by both the formal and the metaphoric properties of a variety of textual formats and literary genres. Missionary culture, which intersected with a range of “knotted” discourses situated around religion, gender, race, class, nationhood, and larger cultural narratives such as imperialism, individualism, and the civilizing mission, provided women with a distinctively complex, yet dynamically unstable, framework within which female subjectivity—narrations of the self—could emerge and unfold and against which this subjectivity could be produced and structured. Organized Christian missions were, in William Henry Foster III’s phrase, sites of “managed transculturation”(93), in which a range of voices, subjects, and experiences of varying registers were captured in a hybrid textuality which privileged certain rhetorics and types of experience, while distilling, negating, and silencing others. In this dissertation, I will explore the intersections of the shifting material, ideological, and cultural frameworks generated by missionary culture with the narrative forms and the discursive rhetorics utilized by missionary women. These intersections both permitted and constrained the articulation and emergence of female subjectivity within the textual archive generated by missionary writing culture.

I propose to do this through offering close readings of four groups of Canadian women’s missionary texts, most of them written in the nineteenth century, that frame missionary women’s individual struggles for self-representation, self-definition, and self-

expression, their bids to express and articulate their own claims of authority, belonging, and influence, and their imaginative projections regarding their “novel” experiences in “new” lands. “Authentic” and “spontaneous” textual descriptions of cultural encounters and representations of the self were also bound by the generic demands of private forms of writing—such as the letter, the journal, and diary—as well as those generated by published accounts that were read by a less predictable and more varied expectant audience. In writing themselves into the missionary project, women were giving narrative form and structure to a complex feminine subjectivity. Yet I explore these individual female voices to demonstrate how each woman’s individual subjectivity ultimately gestured toward larger cultural patterns, questions, stories and roles with which missionary culture came to be particularly identified and which often had resonance in the culture at large. In writing themselves into the missionary project, missionary women also demonstrated its instability, as they operated as both deliberate and unwitting textual witnesses to its contradictions, its fractures, its failures, as well as the opportunities it provided for self-invention and expansion of their own cultural roles. As a result, female subjectivity itself, which captured the contradictions and ambivalence of missionary work, became an important—if unintended—critical tool for destabilizing missionary work as a cultural practice, and for both solidifying and questioning cultural boundaries that always seemed to be in a state of flux.

The texts I will examine in this dissertation, some of which are private writings still housed in archives, others of which are published and in circulation, were written

either by foreign women missionaries who became settlers in Canada or by Canadian women who travelled to do missionary work in other lands and within Canada itself. I did not limit myself to consideration of the writings of women of one denomination, and I considered the missionary writings of women of different religious denominations and varying cultural backgrounds and over a range of time-frames: the four Irish women who established the Newfoundland foundation of the Roman Catholic religious congregation, the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who settled in pre-Confederation Newfoundland in 1833; the Anglican missionary, Charlotte Selina Bompas, who travelled from England to help her husband, Bishop William Carpenter Bompas, with mission work in the Diocese of Athabasca in 1874; the Canadian-born independent missionary, Dr. Susie Carson Rijnhart, who later became affiliated with the Disciples of Christ, and who conducted difficult missions to China and the great "Forbidden Land" of Tibet between 1894 and 1898 and between 1903 and 1906; and the passionate Canadian literary writer, Emily Murphy, who destabilized the terrain of the missionary wife, and used the structures, figures, vocabulary, and the emotion of missionary and religious culture imaginatively to construct a blueprint for Canadian identity during the early decades of the twentieth century.

Admittedly, this range of texts is diverse and to consider them together in one study is perhaps uncharacteristic of the studies that have so far been completed on Canadian women missionaries. Most of the important studies on Canadian women's

missionary experience are organized specifically around religious denomination.² Such critical projects have proven to be exceptionally insightful and valuable evaluations of women's particular historical experiences in key mission fields. While building on and acknowledging this important scholarship, I wish to take the topic of Canadian missionary women in a broader, more literary direction, one organized around the analysis of textual forms and the construction and dispersion of female subjectivities within texts, as well as the consideration of the specific historical conditions and social roles that became determining factors in their textual identities as missionaries. The nineteenth-century missionary movement, while it was defined and organized along boundaries of religious denomination, as well as divisions of nationality, class, race, and gender, also, at some level, transcended these divisions in its development as a cultural, global, and imaginative force. Yet, despite this transcendence, women's missionary experience, and their textual productions, were defined as much by difference, disparity,

² Jiwu Wong makes a similar observation in *"His Dominion" and the "Yellow Peril,"* albeit in reference to missionary histories in general in Canada, as opposed to women's missionary histories (5). See, for instance, Ruth Compton Brouwer, *New Women for God*, which focuses on Presbyterian women missionaries in India; Rosemary Gagan, *A Sensitive Independence*, which studies Canadian Methodist women missionaries in Canada and the Orient; Myra Rutherdale, *Women and the White Man's God*, which examines the cultural roles of Anglican women missionaries in the Canadian North; Marilyn Färdig Whiteley, *Canadian Methodist Women, 1746-1925*, which has a chapter dedicated to Methodist women missionaries. Adele Perry examines both male and female Protestant missionary culture in British Columbia in *On the Edge of Empire*; Barbara E. Kelcey examines the presence of female missionaries, both Anglican and Catholic, as well as other white female settlers in the Canadian North, in *Alone in Silence*.

and ongoing self-definition and negotiation, as they were by shared experiences and proscribed and protracted cultural and gendered roles. Their missionary writings and narratives hence became a particularly important site for producing and constituting the discursive formations that created, and continue to create, this difference,³ and for producing individual, as well as broader, cultural scripts. I wish to recognize the formulation of the material particularities and the disruptive ideological possibilities of each woman's individual experience as enunciated and energized within her writings, as well as to acknowledge and situate their experiences, as they often did themselves, amidst more continuous and enduring cultural patterns and social roles.

For instance, the Presentation Sisters did not view themselves as missionaries in the same manner as did Charlotte Bompas and Susie Carson Rijnhart. In the early correspondence that I examine, they, in fact, never use the word "mission" to describe their educational and religious work in Newfoundland. Yet they still draw heavily on the language of religious culture and rely on figures of masculine authority to describe their

³ In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Michel Foucault has argued that difference is essential to the formulation of archaeology. Foucault argues "that we are difference, that our reason is the difference of discourses, our history the difference of times, ourselves the difference of masks. That difference, far from being the forgotten and recovered origin, is this dispersion that we are and that we make" (131). Identifying the difference within women's missionary texts allows us to identify the "conditions of possibility" that allowed for the writing and the circulation of these texts, and that allow for their continuing interpretation by contemporary critics today (Carrette 11). This renders them archaeological, while still granting them coherence within a given discursive field. I am indebted to Jeremy R. Carrette's lucid and succinct discussion of archaeology and difference in *Foucault and Religion*, pp. 11-12, for helping me clarify and articulate this point.

distinctive contributions to settler life. Emily Murphy's relationship to missionary culture was more elusive and imaginative, her conception of it more intertwined with her ardent Canadian nationalism and her interest in Canada's spiritual present. The writings of Charlotte Bompas glimmer with a rhetoric of uncertainty, as Bompas negotiated what it was exactly she should be doing in the missionary field and to whom she should answer—to God or to husband? to missionary society or to self? In contrast, Susie Rijnhart boldly positions herself within mission culture in a tentatively heroic role, albeit one heavily structured by notions of feminine propriety. As my readings of these texts will demonstrate, women's relationship with missionary culture was often an uncoordinated one, and they deployed a mixture of rhetorics in their efforts at self-description and self-definition. They variously used vocabularies of sentiment, domesticity, professionalism, maternity, righteousness, passive suffering and active faith, yet they often did so unpredictably. This unpredictable, and, at times, incoherent, mingling of vocabularies within their texts provides us with a more coherent view of women's attempts to define textually their identities as missionaries than do more seamless narratives of continuity and progress.

This project is, in some respects, an 'archaeology' as the term is envisioned by Michel Foucault. In *Power/Knowledge*, Foucault sees an archaeology as "an appropriate methodology of th[e] analysis of local discursivities" (85). Structuring this project as an archaeology not only respects the difference of each woman's subjective experience as it was produced and articulated in their writings. It also creates space for the emergence of

alternative voices that may contradict the personal and cultural claims of the texts I have chosen to examine. An archaeology allows for the recovery, expansion, addition, and interpretation of the writings and the experiences of other women, whose textual voices—emanating from different geographies, religious denominations, and even different classes and cultures—could both alter and challenge, as well as reflect, expand, and endorse, the textual strategies and missionary experiences that are recounted and explored within this dissertation.

Female subjectivity, the variations and contradictions of narrative voice that occurred both within and between the texts that this thesis will consider, is perhaps better defined as a type of female ‘intersubjectivity.’ ‘Intersubjectivity’ is the term used by Tess Cosslett, Celia Lury, and Penny Summerfield in *Feminism and Autobiography* to describe women’s “embedded” relationships between themselves as writers and their audiences, between “personal narrative” and “public story,” between their need for authentic self-expression and their need to acknowledge more formal social, cultural, and moral roles (3-4). Cosslett, Lury and Summerfeld claim that “[i]ntersubjectivity...implies that the narration of a life or self can never be confined to a single, isolated subject.... Or, put more abstractly, the narration of the self cannot be understood in isolation from an other it acknowledges, implicitly or explicitly, and with which it is in a constitutive relationship” (4). Understanding the embedded nature of women’s (inter)subjectivity allows us to view their narratives as ones of “entanglement,” to utilize a phrase by Jane Samson (90). These texts are entangled at multiple levels—at the level of ideology and discourse, at the

level of material production and circulation, and at the level of the articulation of individual and local meaning. It is the merging and intersecting of these entangled layers of text, between the content of the text and the context of the text, that generate their discursive tensions around shifting definitions of home and heroism, civility and savagery, and, most pertinently, the instabilities generated by gender itself.

Gender was particularly essential to the ideological, material, and practical formulations of missionary practice; it is, as Mary Taylor Huber and Nancy C. Lutkehaus have maintained, both a “capacious” and a “capricious” term (2). In her influential, two-tiered definition of ‘gender,’ Joan Wallach Scott maintains that “gender is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes” and that “gender is a primary field within which or by means of which power is articulated” (141-42). Scott’s definition is useful in grounding the dynamics of gender play within mission culture. In interpreting Scott’s definition of gender for her own study of Protestant missionary women, Eliza F. Kent asserts that gender is “socially constituted” through a variety of discourses, including “kinship” and “matters of religion, race and class” (*Converting* 10). As Misao Dean has argued, gender is also constituted within writing itself, particularly within the “discursive field of the literary text, which inscribes femininity in the textual decorum of genre, of content and of stylistic convention” (6). Women’s missionary texts, therefore, to some degree, produced and replicated the gendered characteristics and gendered spaces by which missionary women came to be identified, as these texts intersected with, solidified, and questioned broader views of

women's cultural roles. Feminist historian Denise Riley identifies such conflicting cultural positions as examples of the "myriad mobile formations" that are always playing out, both in women's individual lives, and within history itself (153). Riley maintains that there are always "differing temporalities of 'women'" with differing "densities" of meaning (153; 155). Perhaps because missionary work itself was so assertively and descriptively structured as a gendered cultural practice, women's missionary texts, more firmly than many cultural texts, effectively staged these fluctuating contestations and temporalities, the altercations that occurred and were produced between the cultural identities generated by "self description," "current understandings of women," and "the sedimented forms of previous characterizations" of woman as a gendered category (Riley 153). Missionary women were structured as gendered subjects within religious and missionary culture, subjects with determined social roles and powers, but they also structured themselves as gendered subjects within their own writings, and within other cultural mediums such as photography and their own drawings, with incessant references to and inscriptions of their own femininity, in order to better align themselves with, or to avail themselves of, certain cultural and discursive powers. The women writers who will be examined in this thesis, to varying degrees, organized their narrative identities around assumptions of gender that were both self-determined and culturally and socially imposed, and these gendered identities were always being negotiated in their texts. To some extent, therefore, their texts both produced and resisted woman's gendered difference as missionaries, as women began to inscribe their own cultural identities. One

of the important critics of Canadian missionary literature, Terrence L. Craig, whose work will be discussed later in this introduction, has enigmatically observed that, for missionaries, “[b]ecoming a missionary in the first place was a cloaking in the form of a storyteller, an acquisition of the script before the play” (93). Craig is partly right.

Women were encouraged to conform to certain scripts, but some of them, while adhering to those scripts, also resisted them to produce their own variations. Women’s missionary literature, therefore, became the site of this unpredictable intermingling of cultural and textual scripts, some already written, some self-composed, that were in incessant play.

As Eliza F. Kent has observed, gender also “serves as a set of metaphors that can be applied to relationships of power” (*Converting* 10). Male and female missionaries, like adventurers, explorers, geographers, and male and female travellers, participated in the colonial project, usefully defined by Nicholas Thomas as “a socially transformative endeavour that is localized, politicized, and partial, yet also engendered by larger historical developments and ways of narrating them” (105). Indeed, Anna Johnston sees missionary writing as “crucial to understanding cross-cultural encounters under the aegis of empire because they illuminate the formation of a mode of *mutual imbrication* between white imperial subjects, white colonial subjects, and non-white colonial subjects” (*Missionary* 3, emphasis in original). These relationships of power are described, reconstructed, and produced in women’s missionary writings. As Mary Louise Pratt, Gillian Beer, and W. H. New have argued, descriptions of people and landscape in writing are never neutral and are always invested with cultural meanings and exchanges

of power that need deconstruction.⁴ Missionary women assumed fluctuating positions and “densities”⁵ of assertion, equality, dominance, and subordination in relationship to the spaces of the mission field reconstructed in their writings, such as the wilderness, the foreign land, the home land, the mission station, the domestic interior, and the sacred space of the church. These dynamics of power were also established with the people they encountered, and with whom they lived, in the mission field, such as conjugal partners and family relatives, domestic servants, rival missionaries, and the native populations they were seeking to Christianize, as well as with the intended and extended cultural readerships of their texts. In women’s missionary writings, these relationships of power were expressed directly through a privileging of certain Western forms of womanly experience, such as domestic management, organized benevolence, and maternal and other familial roles. They were also expressed in more encoded terms through language, in the deployment of religious and spatial expressions of proximity and distance, of barrenness and fertility, of purity and disorder, which, to some degree, aestheticized the exchanges of cultural, social, and religious power in which missionary women were

⁴ See Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, pp. 38-78; Gillian Beer, “Problems of Description in the Language of Discovery” in *Open Fields: Science in Cultural Encounter*; W. H. New, Introduction, *Land Sliding: Imagining Space, Presence and Power in Canadian Writing*.

⁵ Denise Riley is not the only critic to use the concept of density to describe relations of gender and power. Both Ann Laura Stoler and Anna Johnston use the term “cultural density” to describe the gradations of power in imperial writing. See Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*, p. 97 and Johnston, *Missionary Writing and Empire*, p. 10.

always engaged. These exchanges were also encoded within the ordering privileges of narrative itself, in gendered constructions of narrative identity, even if this power was somewhat mitigated by nineteenth-century women's less assured relationship with publication and authorship.

As Fiona Bowie, Myra Rutherdale, Anna Johnston, and Jean and John Comaroff have noted, the nineteenth-century missionary project was dominated by masculine figures and the cultural narratives generated by martyrdom, heroism, and muscular Christianity that privileged male versions of missionary experience.⁶ This emphasis on male achievement occurred even though, by the end of the nineteenth century, women actually outnumbered men in many mission fields and memberships in Canadian women's missionary organizations such as the Woman's Auxiliary and the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society were collectively estimated at over 200,000 by 1916 (Brouwer *New* 5). Despite their growing presence in the mission field and the unqualified success of their efforts at formal organization in the Canadian homeland, women's contributions were, in some respects, textually marginalized through a lack of formal acknowledgment by missionary societies. Nineteenth-century supporters of the missionary movement mourned this seemingly inexplicable lack of acknowledgment of

⁶ For instance, see Fiona Bowie, "Introduction: Reclaiming Women's Presence" in *Women and Missions: Past and Present: Anthropological and Historical Perspectives*, pp. 1-2; Myra Rutherdale, *Women and the White Man's God*, p. 10; Anna Johnston, *Missionary Writing and Empire*, p. 43; Jean and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, Vol. 1, pp. 172-73.

its female pioneers. In *Canadian Savage Folk*, published in 1896, John Maclean offers this heartfelt tribute to female missionaries, to whom he quaintly refers as “the saintly heroines in the lodges”:

There have been no more devoted workers among the native tribes than the women of culture, who have consecrated their talents to the work of elevating the red men and their families in the camp. They have labored assiduously amid great privations, enduring hardships without a murmur, and though their influence has been abiding and strong, seldom have we heard their names mentioned, or read them on the printed page. We have not seen a biography of one of these saintly heroines of the lodges, though many of them have been worthy of lasting record, and this want is still more striking through the existence of numerous biographies of [male] missionaries to the Indian tribes. (344)

Within mission discourse, it seemed, convergent disclaimers of silence, voicelessness, and textual invisibility, both incidental and self-conscious, emerged as ironic cultural narratives for defining and reproducing women’s missionary experience. Despite Maclean’s assertion that women endured “hardships without a murmur,” women did, in fact, produce their own textual “murmurs” that need to be situated within a broader field of cultural and literary study.

This constructed narrative of marginalization, generated from within missionary discourse itself, which maintained that missionary women had no voice and were haplessly marginalized, collides forcefully, therefore, with the material evidence of their own narratives and the articulations of their own points of view in letters, missionary periodicals, religious and secular magazines and newspapers, and in a range of publications. Missionary women’s vexed relationship to marginality is contextualized by

Mary Jean Corbett in "Feminine Authorship and Spiritual Authority in Victorian Women Writers' Autobiographies." Corbett argues that, in the act of producing their own autobiographical writings from within the domestic sphere, women, in fact, constituted the terms of their own claims to female authorship, religious authority, and cultural influence (55). Corbett maintains:

Acting in conjunction with the economic logic that assigns women to the private realm, Christian discourse gives the autobiographer authority over that domestic space, which is redefined as the new locus for cultural and even literary authority. Far from being marginal, then, the woman who writes herself in relation to God and the home is at the center of the private sphere, newly invested with the power of producing and reproducing the ideologies that structure Victorian culture. (56)

In the kind of structured, layered marginalization imposed upon them by missionary culture, missionary women were still able to claim and cultivate certain rhetorical powers from a decentralized position that inculcated creative negotiations of their cultural roles and their textual presence, even as it enforced a measure of tractable constraint.⁷

The gendered cultural and social parameters imposed upon missionary women by missionary culture are captured deftly in a description in G. M. Grant's *Our Five Foreign*

⁷ In *The Empire Writes Back*, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin see marginality as ambivalent, as both a site of "unprecedented creative energy," as well as the outcome of a "thrusting" process of imperial expansion and alienation (12). While the women's missionary texts I examine are not postcolonial, women's marginality within missionary culture, a marginality generated by gender, sometimes positioned them similarly to colonial converts in relationship to the centralizing powers of missionary societies. Jean and John Comaroff in *Of Revelation and Revolution* see missionary texts as "highly self-conscious texts that position European and native on the moral and colonial margins" (1: 173).

Missions, which exaltedly offers an “ideal sketch of the lady missionary”:

To the village-women the appearance of a female evangelist must be, as it were, the vision of an angel from heaven; to their untutored eyes she appears taller in stature, fairer in face, fairer in speech, than anything mortal they had ever dreamt of before; bold and fearless, without immodesty; pure in word and action, and yet with features unveiled; wise, yet condescending to the ignorant and little children; prudent and self-constrained yet still a woman loving and tender.... Short as is her say, she has, as it were with a magic wand, let loose a new fountain of hopes, of fears and desires; she has told them perhaps in faltering accents of righteousness and judgment of sin.... This day salvation has come to this Indian village. (21)

Nineteenth-century missionary culture, as can be seen, had firm ideas about the kinds of characteristics women ideally brought to the mission field, as it framed their capacity to deliver elevating and liberating influences to native populations in sentimental terms. Influence, purity, modesty, and “self-constrained” wisdom, proffered in “faltering accents,” modeled important feminine virtues to native women, who were conversely perceived as coarse, unrefined, and unrestrained. Underlying such idealized portraits was the important belief that women were more “natural” religious teachers than men. As was argued by J. R. Jacques, women offered special insight into “the brilliant gems of Christian experience garnered by the praying mother” (155). Restrictions upon women’s public role in mission work were depicted as vestiges of an “*oriental barbarism*” by those who supported women’s presence in the mission field (Jacques 151, emphasis in original). As I. B. Aylesworth concluded: “Who dare venture to set limitations to the sphere of woman’s work or usefulness?” (197). Underlying such idealized portraits was also what Eliza F. Kent has called “the discourse of respectability” (*Converting* 9). Kent

defines the discourse of respectability as “a system of intentions, desires, practices, and beliefs that organize gender and status differences in such a way that behaviors are valued positively to the extent that they exemplify restraint, containment, and orderliness, whereas behaviors are valued negatively that exemplify lack of self-control, spontaneity, and chaos” (*Converting* 9). Missionary organizations used the attributes of the discourse of respectability both to manage and inspire its female missionaries into modelling a version of Christian domesticity predicated upon a disciplined femininity. Under the influence of such a discourse, “womanhood,” as Mary Jean Corbett has observed, “emerged as a vocation unto itself” within mission discourse (*Representing* 83).

Yet such optimistic considerations of women’s elevating effect in the mission field conflicted with the isolation, frustration, and lack of “visible results” mission work typically produced. Indeed, while arguing the “truly divine” nature of the work of women missionaries, Grant also observes that “in its details, [female missionary work] is and must always be hard, toilsome, heart-breaking at times, always repulsive to flesh and blood” (21). As Gail Elizabeth Edwards has asserted, observations about the “toilsome” and mundane aspects of missionary work became part of its writing culture, as the private writings and diaries in which observations of discouragement and failure were recorded also offered missionaries important tools for reflection and self-examination (“Creating” 154). These confessional observations were markedly different in textual temperament from the elevated rhetorics of martyrdom, sacrifice, and progress which often characterized public representations of mission work in missionary periodicals and

official reports, and they strained women's attempts to represent their own subjective experiences in the measured discourses invited by respectability and propriety. This created what Sean Gill has identified as "ambiguities and closures" within certain forms of missionary writing that, at times, revealed some of the "ideological contradictions" inherent in missionary women's lives (174). These contradictions, for instance, pitted woman's presumed elevating cultural powers against her ostensible persistent need for supervision and paternal guidance, her decorous observance of obedience against unseemly displays of self-reliance and independent thought. Women, therefore, had a dialogic relationship with their own emergence as an elevated imaginative category within missionary culture to which their writings often bear uneasy testimony, as they emerged as both radical and conservative, progressive and backward, operating in marginal frontier space, while still representing and aligning themselves with metropolitan values.

As a literary scholar interested in analyzing non-canonical—and some might say, "non-literary"—texts, I am also interested in pursuing questions that more specifically consider the relationship of these texts to the larger cultures of reading and writing of which they were part, as well as to consider their particular imaginative relationship to Canadian literary culture. How did these women use texts and "verbal privilege" to structure and negotiate their relationships within specific mission and colonial cultures and with their cultural readerships situated within those cultures, as well as beyond them? How did missionary women use the formal properties of the different writing genres they

deployed to negotiate, construct, and represent their subjective and cultural experiences? How did their writings produce and resist the emergence of the missionary as a gendered imaginative category within missionary culture and within Canadian culture? Finally, where do we situate—and where have we situated—such missionary women as *writers*, as producers of texts, within the current spectrum of Canadian literary and cultural criticism? These are questions to ponder as I now consider the imbrication of the missionary and religious culture in Canada's past, examine the relationship of textuality to missionary work and experience, and explore the level of critical engagement that missionary writing as a genre has received by Canadian literary and cultural scholars.

Navigating the Spiritual Wilderness: The Nineteenth-Century Missionary Experience in Canada

In his essay in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, "Believing and Making People Believe," Michel de Certeau maintains that historical beliefs about belief saw it as a force that could be "captured" and diverted for other ends, like "water harnessed for a hydro-electric plant," a force that was both "inexhaustible" and "transportable" (178). De Certeau's observations about belief can be extended to the nineteenth-century missionary movement, where these convictions, in some measure, helped organize missionary work as a cultural practice. The haplessly optimistic belief in the transportability and the endless expansiveness both of Christianity—and of Western civilization itself—was fuelled by spirited denominational rivalries and it coalesced with the religious imperative

of the Great Commission cited in Matthew 28. This movement became situated within discourses of imperialism, pioneering and conquest, individualism, humanism, and benevolence, which, in part, helped to create the ideological, cultural, and professional frameworks for the emergence of the nineteenth-century missionary movement.

Perhaps, somewhat uncomfortably, for those sensitive to its troubled and unsettling legacies, Christian missions to Canada have been intertwined with some of the earliest introductions of European culture to mainland Canada and contact with its Native populations.⁸ Jacques Cartier, one of the earliest European explorers to mainland Canada, reportedly, in an iconic gesture of spiritual imperialism, mounted a French flag atop a great cross set at the beach at Gaspé before he returned to the New World in 1534 (Marquis 14). In *Moon of Wintertime*, John Webster Grant identifies this moment “as the first recorded presentation of Christian teaching to Indians” and one of the “first important moments of colonial cultural encounter between natives and Europeans within Canada” (3). As Terrence L. Craig has observed, the arrival of the Jesuit Fathers from France a century later, particularly “the torture and murder of Fr. Jean de Brébeuf in 1649 by Iroquois Indians,” became “an archetype of North American missionary martyrdom” (7). This mythic narrative of the intertwining of Christian influence and Canada’s

⁸ It is not my intention in this chapter to provide a history of Christian missions in Canada. See John Webster Grant, *Moon of Wintertime*, for the best specific historical overview of this monumental topic. The essays in Terrence Murphy, ed., *A Concise History of Christianity in Canada* also offer a valuable overview of the emergence of the missionary in Canadian society in the midst of such religious historical developments as the rise of Methodism and the emergence of Tractarianism.

foundational identity was extended well into the twentieth century. Agnes C. Laut, an esteemed historian, who wrote many books analyzing the cultural, economic, and historical tenets of Canadian society, claimed in her 1915 publication, *The Canadian Commonwealth*: "I sometimes think that the church does for Canada what music does for continental nations, what dollar-chasing and amusement do for the American nation—open that great emotional outlet for the play of spiritual powers and idealization, which we must all have if we would rise above the gin-horse haltered to the wheel of toil" (254). She argued that "the Church visualizes Canada's idea in a vision" (255). Laut's claims about the impact of the Christian church upon Canadian cultural identity were echoed not quite fifty years later by Northrop Frye in *The Bush Garden*, who observed: "Religion has been a major—perhaps the major—cultural force in Canada down to the last generation or two. The churches not only influenced the cultural climate but took an active part in the production of poetry and fiction" (229). William Kilbourn, too, has similarly claimed—no doubt to the consternation of postcolonial critics everywhere—that "the history of Canada, as European peoples have made and known it during the past five centuries, is inextricably bound up with the expansion and expression—in politics and society and culture—of the Christian churches" (7).

Frye's linking of religion, particularly Christianity, and nineteenth-century Canadian cultural production and identity, can also be extended to the development and the impact of the home and foreign missionary movement in Canada. Historians and critics such as Carl Berger in *The Sense of Power*, Terrence L. Craig in *The Missionary*

Lives, Alvyn Austin and Jamie S. Scott in *Canadian Missionaries, Indigenous Peoples: Representing Religion at Home and Abroad*, and Kristin Burnett have argued that the missionary movement influenced the development of Canada as a nation and the evolution of “Euro-Canadian identity.”⁹ Indeed, Craig has declared, although many might argue the dramatic scope of his assertion, that “missionaries *are* Canada, for many third world people who seldom see a tourist or a diplomat” (133, emphasis in original). Alvyn Austin has claimed that the churches of Canada sponsored more missionaries at home and abroad than any other nation in Christendom (*Saving* 85). Jean Usher has asserted that “the missionary was probably the most important agent of acculturation” in the nineteenth century within Canada (15). David B. Marshall observes that the “missionary impulse was one of the major features of late-Victorian society” in Canada (99). Marshall and historians such as Ruth Compton Brouwer maintain that “[r]eports from the mission fields, especially foreign missions, captured the imagination of Canadians” in the nineteenth century, in which “the resources and the workforce dedicated to Christian missions represented an outpouring of the confident and optimistic spirit of the age” (Marshall 99; Brouwer *New* 3).

However, as Alvyn Austin and Jamie S. Scott observe, Canada in the nineteenth century was dually positioned in that it was both a receiver and a sender of missions (4).

⁹See Berger, *The Sense of Power*, p. 218; Craig, *The Missionary Lives*, p. x; Austin and Scott, Introduction, *Canadian Missionaries, Indigenous Peoples*, p. 4; Burnett, “Aboriginal and White Women in the Publications of John Maclean, Egerton Ryerson Young and John McDougall” in *Contact Zones*, p. 102.

Hence, Canada was subject to imported influences and cultural attitudes and perceptions about its uncivility and "heathen wildness," even while it was operating as an agent of civilization and dispatching religious and medical missionaries to "uplift" and enlighten the indigenous populations of Burma, India, China, Japan, the Hebrides, Palestine, Africa, and Tibet, as well as its own northern territories and coastal communities. Some of these tensions are revealed in an article published in *The Church Missionary Gleaner* in 1879, entitled "Two Mountain Barriers." Dominating the article are drawings of two highly similar mountain chains: "The Rocky Mountains From the Great Plain of the Saskatchewan"; and "The Hindu Kush Mountains, to the North of Afghanistan." The pictures visually reinforce the ideological equivalence established between Canada and "heathen" countries like India, as reconstructed from the perspective of missionary organizations such as the British-based Church Missionary Society. The article observes: "Our two pictures on this page show us two mighty mountain chains at present confronting our advancing missionaries. The Hindu Kush divides the northwest frontier of British India from Central Asia. Across that mighty barrier the Gospel has not yet been carried.... The Rocky Mountains face the missionary on the Saskatchewan Plain as he presses on westward in his search for the yet heathen remnant of the Red Indian tribes" (139-40). The mountain ranges, plucked from their specific spatial and temporal geographies, are, on surface, presented as imposing symbols in the drama of missionary progress, creating indistinguishable impediments in the advancement of Christianity. Yet, the article also observed that, beyond the Rocky Mountains, and the reader's range of

vision, was “[n]ot an untouched pagan population,” but the newly-minted Diocese of Caledonia and the flourishing mission settlement of Metlakatla (140). Canada was, therefore, unpredictably, established as both exotically “heathen” and promisingly Christian, wild, yet tentatively contained within diocesan boundaries and mission community. Canada, at once, demonstrated the necessity, the progress, and the promise of foreign missions.

Moreover, foreign missionaries, particularly those situated in the West and the burgeoning communities in the North, espied within Canada’s resource-based farm economy potent material metaphors—of sowing, cultivating, and harvesting the land—around which their own settlement efforts and evangelical projects could be organized and circulated. Eva Hasell, in her prairies missionary narrative, *Canyons, Cans and Caravans* (1930), recognized the parallels and the disparities between the bountiful literal harvests she espied on her travels and her conclusions regarding Canada’s bleak “spiritual harvest” in which “the hungry sheep look up and are not fed” (11). Missionaries aspired in the aesthetics of the Canadian landscape—its unvarying desert-like plains and dense wildernesses—what Jane Samson has called “mutually sustaining moral geographies of conversion and heathenism” that allowed them to situate their life work in greater cultural dramas of salvation history and traditions of apostolic wandering and suffering (99). Scholars such as Jamie S. Scott and Doug Owram have observed the degree to which the earliest missionaries in the Canadian North West, such as John West, situated their missions “in the language of landscape and cultivation,” which allowed for an elusive

play between spiritual and cultural meanings of 'wilderness' and 'cultivation' (Scott 23; Owram 24). Owram observes that the term 'wilderness' took on metaphorical, as well as physical, aspects engendered "by the absence of Christianity," as Canada appeared as a "heathen and moral desert" under the missionary gaze (24). Scott maintains that "the discourse of cultivation lubricate[d] the slippage between the salvific and civilizing agendas of Christian colonialism" (22).

Complementing this "slippage" was the cultural trope of the "unspoiled West," a landscape that was not worked, but empty, a landscape of vast spaces devoid of cultural meaning, and hence open to projects of moral regeneration and social development. Perhaps in allusive tribute to Thomas Carlyle's *Past and Present* (1843),¹⁰ Agnes Deans Cameron in *The New North* (1909) encapsulates this idea of cultural blankness and expansiveness in the Canadian West by using the temporal metaphor of the book. Cameron reads, in the prairie's "blank pages," the unwritten history of Canadian advancement: "Looking at the red ploughs, we see in each a new chapter to be written in Canada's history. The page of the book is the prairie, as yet inviolate, and running out into flowers to the skyline. The tools to do the writing are these ploughs and mowers and threshers, the stout arms of men and of faith-possessed women. It is all new and splendid and hopeful and formative!" (11). Canada emerges as a vital site of ideological

¹⁰ Carlyle declared in Book 3, Chapter 5 of *Past and Present*, "The English are a dumb people. They can do great acts, but not describe them. Like the old Romans, and some few others, *their* Epic Poem is written in the Earth's surface: England her Mark!"

opportunity. David B. Marshall maintains that the “newness” of an “unspoilt” and “virgin” land provided an irresistible stage and “an opportunity to recreate the heroic age of evangelization in Canadian history” (109). This idea found a form of cultural apotheosis in the rhetoric and social agency of the social gospel, defined by Mariana Valverde as an “attempt to humanize and/or Christianize the political economy of urban-industrial capitalism” (*Age* 18). In this rhetoric, popularly espoused by Methodist missionary J. S. Woodsworth and Saskatchewan historian Edmund Oliver, Canada was potentially envisioned as the kingdom of God on earth, the earthly New Jerusalem, where a harmonious society, based upon principles of justice, cooperation, and integration, could be built.¹¹ Such social visions, of course, depended upon suitably compliant or conveniently absent immigrant populations and were hence sustained by an objectionable racism.

However, the composition of Canadian life, with its unpredictable mixtures of

¹¹ For more on the social gospel movement in Canada, see Richard Allen, *The Social Passion*; Richard Allen, ed., *The Social Gospel of Canada*; Ramsay Cook, *The Regenerators: Social Criticism in Victorian Canada*; Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925*; Benjamin G. Smillie, ed., *Visions of the New Jerusalem*; Nancy Christie and Michael Gauvreau, *A Full-Orbed Christianity: The Protestant Churches and Social Welfare in Canada, 1900-1940*; R. Douglas Francis and Chris Kitzan, eds., *The Prairie West as Promised Land*; David B. Marshall, *Secularizing the Faith: Canadian Protestant Clergy and the Crisis of Belief, 1850-1940*. One of the most influential early twentieth-century articulation of the tenets of the social gospel movement is found in James S. Woodsworth’s *Strangers Within our Gates*. As I shall argue in Chapter Four, Emily Murphy transforms the rhetoric of the social gospel into a literary discourse in “A Song of This Land,” which ends her 1914 publication *Seeds of Pine*.

imperial structures and citizenry, technological backwardness and uncertain, heady advancement, expansive destiny and social conservatism, interspersed with sporadic Native populations who occupied a vast geography brimming with undeveloped resources, also provided an important ideological space into which Christian travellers could question, as well as contemplate and develop, the values of “civilized” society. Raymond Williams observes in *Keywords* that, in the nineteenth century, the term ‘civilization’ embodied a “sense of historical process” and “an achieved condition of refinement and order” (58). The term ‘civilization’ particularly operated as an ordering device and evaluative category for nineteenth-century missionaries and travellers, who sought to create cultural coherence and points of reference for their encounters with the unknown. These travellers often envisaged ‘civilization’ in spatial, somewhat static, terms; ‘civilization’ was what they left behind in the homeland and re-entered again when they returned there. Yet, even as missionaries and travellers in their writings repeatedly upheld a spatial conception of civilization, they also renegotiated and expanded its meaning into something more flexible and indeterminate, fuelled by the energy and perceptions of cultural encounter. The British traveller, Anna Jameson, who, in 1838, published one of the most important travel accounts of Canada, *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada*, travelled throughout northern Ontario, escorted, at certain junctures of her journey, by the Anglican missionary George MacMurray and his wife. Her encounters with Chippewa natives in Sault St. Marie caused her momentarily to question aspects of her own culture and the designations of ‘civilized’ and ‘savage.’ At

one point in her narrative, Jameson muses: "With regard to the belief in omens and incantations, I should like to see it ascertained how far we civilised Christians, with all our schools, our pastors, and our masters, are in advance of these (so-called) savages?" (428). Later she ironically observes: "A war-party of Indians, perhaps two or three hundred, (and that is a very large number,) dance their war-dance, go out and burn a village, and bring back twenty or thirty scalps. *They* are savages and heathens. We Europeans fight a battle, leave fifty thousand dead or dying by inches on the field, and a hundred thousand to mourn them, desolate; but *we* are civilised and Christians" (459, emphasis in original). Just over seventy years later, another female traveller, a Canadian, similarly used her cultural encounters with the Inuit in the Arctic Circle to challenge definitions of 'heathenism,' 'barbarousness,' and 'civilization' (251-52). In *The New North*, Agnes Deans Cameron spiritedly interrogates and defends Aboriginal cultural practices such as polygamy,¹² surmising: "Not all the real things of life are taught to the Cree by the Christian. Courage is better than culture, playing the game of more importance than the surface niceties of civilisation, to be a man now of more moment than to hope to be an angel hereafter" (199). Mary Louise Pratt, in her groundbreaking

¹² The license Cameron was taking in defending polygamy was all the more remarkable when considered in the context of the active campaigns to contain aboriginal women's "immoral" lifestyle in northwest Canada. See Sarah A. Carter, "Creating 'Semi-Widows' and 'Supernumerary Wives': Prohibiting Polygamy in Prairie Canada's Aboriginal Communities to 1900" and Robin Jarvis Brownlie, "Intimate Surveillance: Indian Affairs, Colonization, and the Regulation of Aboriginal Women's Sexuality" in *Contact Zones*, for a sense of this cultural context. Emily Murphy would later use secular romance and sentiment to critique the practice of native polygamy in *Seeds of Pine*.

critical study of European travel literature, *Imperial Eyes*, calls such moments of rhetorical dislocation “the mystique of reciprocity,” when Western travellers appeared to be engaging in “calling forth contradictions of Euroexpansionist ideology” by redirecting, parodying, and tentatively questioning—without ever really overturning—the normal exchange of European values (78; 84). Both Jameson and Cameron use their positions as gendered travellers to identify the lapses of cultural coherence produced by placing “Christian” values in opposition to so-called “heathen” cultures. These moments questioned and challenged, if only fleetingly, Christianity’s moral authority and European culture’s claims of cultural supremacy. Canada, therefore, was an arresting space of cultural encounter, which allowed outsiders to examine, as well as champion, the cultural and social frameworks that organized their society. Within the modality of such encounters, Canada’s own claims to civility, its fractured construction as an emerging “civilized” nation, waxed and waned unpredictably.

Indeed, the range of meanings assumed by missions and cultural encounters with Native populations in the context of Canadian culture meant that missionary culture itself became imbricated into it in unpredictable, as well as predictable, ways. James Clifford in *The Predicament of Culture* uses the figure of Squanto as a metaphor to capture the momentum of unexpected dislocation, the surprising multiplicity, and the wayward mobility of indeterminate and competing cultural narratives and practices within ethnography. Clifford observes: “Strange anticipation: the English Pilgrims arrive at Plymouth Rock in The New World only to find Squanto, a Patuxet, just back from

Europe" (17). Canadian missionary history offers similar compelling images, its own version of the Squanto effect: of foreign missionaries arriving in Canada throughout the nineteenth century to "save" the "native heathen" only to bypass Canadian missionaries just setting out to "save the heathen" in foreign lands. Canada, therefore, functioned as its own "contact zone,"¹³ a complex and compelling site of cultural transposition and instability within which the global missionary project could be staged and revitalized, as well as challenged and reformulated.

Missions did not assume importance in Canadian society for altruistic reasons only. Underpinning the rhetoric of benevolence and philanthropy that framed the quest for the salvation of heathen souls was a myopic anxiety about the present and future of the Canadian church and the Christian religion in Canada. An anonymous writer in the *Presbyterian College Journal* declared in December 1896 that "[t]he foreign missionary is the great apologist of our faith" (160). Missionary work was regarded as a tangible and visible manifestation of the vitality seen as necessary for the "self-propagation" of the Christian church within Canada. In the *Presbyterian College Journal* in January 1889, Arthur Tappan Pierson would argue: "The church that is no longer evangelistic will soon cease to be evangelical'.... Missions are both the dynamics and the apologetics of the church; the vindication and justification of our faith, the sure means of strength and

¹³ "Contact zone" is the term coined by Mary Louise Pratt in *Imperial Eyes* to describe "the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict" (6).

growth" (195). Missionary work was promoted not simply to rescue heathen cultures "languishing in the dark," but to revitalize a languishing church at home. Indeed, David B. Marshall confirms that the "missionary enterprises of Canadian churches were regarded as a measurement of their vigour and wealth, and the growing number of missionaries and especially converts was regarded as evidence of the truth and efficacy of Christianity" (99). Pamphlets such as *Foreign Missions Essential to the Prosperity of the Church at Home*, published in 1876 in Toronto by Rev. C. R. Matthew, argued that the Church was "internally quickened and prospered by the reflex influence of Foreign Missions," because it awakened compassion, charity, "respectful affection," and tolerance in religious congregations (13; 12).

In this cultural context, the missionary emerged as a discursive, usually male, figure of cultural resonance and occasional influence, a figure increasingly bound by the social forces that had professionalized and bureaucratized missionary work by the late nineteenth century, yet one still isolated on the margins of "civilized" society—both in Canada and in foreign lands. This isolation lent him a distant and romantic allure and mystique, but it also burdened him with a measure of cultural incongruity, as he could be viewed as an anachronistic figure incapable of comprehending urgent social realities or dissecting secular temptations. In Lily Dougall's 1899 novel, *The Madonna of a Day*, Mary Howard accuses the male missionary she meets on a train, who has just returned from "a remote mission station," of being too removed from society to understand the modern phenomenon of the "New Woman" (12-13). Yet, while charged with

marginality, the male missionary still laid claim to a heroism that gave robust cultural embodiment to the ideology of virility seen as necessary for the regeneration of the formal and material aspects of Christian influence, organization, and worship.

Women occupied a special position within this burgeoning professionalization and organization within Canada.¹⁴ Attitudes and anxieties about the necessity of limiting women's public role in evangelical and cultural work in the nineteenth century meant that female missionaries had, at times, a more constrained and uncertain relationship with organized missionary practice and its traditions and textual forms than did male missionaries. However, this anxiety was accompanied by the concomitant cultural belief that women were the "natural" guardians of morality and religious faith in nineteenth-century society and, hence, should assume some cultural responsibility for its moral upkeep, even if this responsibility was ideally exercised from the domestic sphere. Missionary societies tended to organize themselves along both gender and denominational lines, which very gradually formalized women's participation in mission activity in the major Christian denominations in Canada.¹⁵ In Canada, Baptists from the

¹⁴ For accounts of female religious organization within Canada in the nineteenth century, see Donna Sinclair, *Crossing Worlds*; Mrs. Willoughby Cummings, *Our Story*; Sharon Anne Cook, "*Through Sunshine and Shadow*"; Christopher Headon, "Women and Organized Religion in Mid and Late Nineteenth Century Canada"; Paula Bourne, ed., *Women's Paid and Unpaid Work*; Wendy Mitchinson, "Canadian Women and Church Missionary Societies."

¹⁵ Anything but a cursory summary of the beginnings of the women's foreign missionary movement in Canada is beyond the scope of this Introduction. For detailed statistical information on home and foreign missions in Canada to 1900, see *Women of*

Maritime region were the first formally to organize thirty-three foreign missionary societies in 1870, due in large part to the efforts and vision of Hannah Maria Norris. A Nova Scotia native, Norris also became the first Canadian woman sent out by a denominational mission society to serve as a foreign missionary, first in Burma, and later in India. By 1876, the Presbyterian Church had established two divisions of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society, an Eastern Division, which served Trinidad, the Hebrides, and Korea, and the Western Division, which served Formosa, China, and India. The Methodist Church of Canada formed the Woman's Missionary Society in 1881, which established mission stations in Japan, and later in China. Four years later, the Church of England organized the Woman's Auxiliary to the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, which engaged in numerous charitable activities and educational training for home missions in the Canadian North. The Church of England established foreign

Canada: Their Life and Work, National Council of Women of Canada, 1900, pp. 272-316. For the story of the Hannah Norris and the early Baptist foreign missionaries, see Harry A. Renfree, *Heritage and Horizon: The Baptist Story in Canada*. For the story of the Presbyterian Church's women's foreign missions, particularly to India, see Ruth Compton Brouwer, *New Women for God*; for information on women foreign missionaries in the Methodist Church of Canada, see Rosemary Gagan, *A Sensitive Independence*, and Marilyn Färdig Whiteley, *Canadian Methodist Women, 1766-1925*, Chapter 5. For more on the involvement of women missionaries in the home missions of the Anglican Church of Canada, see Myra Rutherdale, *Women and the White Man's God*. For more on women's organization in the Disciples of Christ Church in Canada, see Reuben Butchart, *The Disciples of Christ in Canada Since 1830*. Many of the essays in Elizabeth Gillan Muir and Marilyn Färdig Whiteley, eds., *Changing Roles of Women Within the Christian Church in Canada*, John S. Moir and C. T. McIntire, eds., *Canadian Protestant and Catholic Missions, 1820s-1960s*, and Myra Rutherdale and Katie Pickles, eds., *Contact Zones* examine the contributions of female missionaries, as does Barbara E. Kelcey's *Alone in Silence*.

mission stations in Japan and China that attracted female missionaries, accounts from whom were regularly published in the *Letter Leaflet*. The Disciples of Christ had also formally organized women's missionary societies by the mid 1880s in Ontario.

Ruth Compton Brouwer maintains that the "feminization of the foreign missionary enterprise constituted the most remarkable element in the nineteenth-century break with a Reformation tradition that had given Protestant women little share in the life and work of the church" (*New* 13). Concurrently, as Brouwer observes, the feminization of mission work resulted in women being surprisingly effective agents of "cultural imperialism" while, at the same time, "undermining Pauline injunctions on women's role in the Church" (*New* 14). This was particularly the case in settler societies, where, as Anna Johnston and Alan Lawson maintain, "the boundaries of cultures were especially porous" (370). Johnston and Lawson see settler cultures as "place[s] of negotiation" in which "settlers" acted as "mediator[s]" rather than as "simple transmitter[s] of Imperialism's uncomfortable mirroring of itself" (370). As argued by Adele Perry, Kristin Burnett, Myra Rutherdale, Sarah Carter, and Barbara E. Kelcey, missionary women affected the formation and development of nineteenth-century settler societies, operating as "signifiers of Western civilization" that privileged "whiteness" in opposition to Native womanhood (Perry *Edge* 19; Burnett 104-06; Carter *Capturing* 147-48; Kelcey 34-35). Anne McClintock has observed that "the mission station became a threshold institution for transforming domesticity rooted in European gender and class roles into domesticity as controlling a colonized people" (35). Navigating in environments that

strained and challenged cultural definitions of civilization and progress, missionary women influenced the forces of development on the margins of Canadian society because of their engagement with the formation of domestic space and with the organized structures of moral and social reform.

“The Word in the wilds”: Missionary Discourse, Textuality, and Canadian Literary Criticism

Nineteenth-century missionary experience had a complicated relationship to the book as a material and symbolic object that played on literal and metaphorical meanings of the Word. As Jamie S. Scott and Gareth Griffiths observe, missionary writings were “powerful tools of control” that both endorsed and created “the reality of dominant ‘sacral texts’ in societies and cultures that had no such tradition of a monolithic and unified code of moral and religious authority” (x). Numerous critical studies have observed the important role that missionary culture played in fostering the production and circulation of books within Canada.¹⁶ Textual pioneers such as James Evans and William Carpenter Bompas translated Biblical scripture into numerous Native dialects, which were then circulated in Native communities as hymn and prayer books, creating indigenous Canadian books within Canadian borders. Agnes Deans Cameron in *The New North* calls

¹⁶ See Brendan Edwards, *Paper Talk*; Patricia Fleming, et al., eds., *A History of the Book in Canada*; C. L. Higham, *Noble, Wretched and Redeemable*; William Barker and Sandra Hannaford, “Towards a History of the Book in Newfoundland”; Terrence L. Craig, *The Missionary Lives*.

William Bompas a Canadian “Caxton,” as she whimsically observes: “There is something in the picture of this devoted man writing Gospels in Slavi, primers in Dog-Rib, and a prayer book in Syllabic Chipewyan, which brings to mind the figure of Caxton bending his silvered head over the blocks of the first printing-press in the old Almonry so many years before” (186). These projects of literal translation and textual production obliquely mirrored the ideological acts of interpretation and translation in which missionaries were engaged as they attempted to transform and convert Native cultures (Higham *Noble* 61-70; Randall 19-30).

The book also occupied a more symbolic and ideological role within mission culture. At the beginning of his influential essay, “Signs Taken for Wonders,” Homi K. Bhabha recounts the scene of an Indian missionary, Anund Messeh, introducing a book—the Word of God—to a captive and questioning crowd outside of Delhi in 1817. The scene, Bhabha insists, through its incessant repetition “in the cultural writings of English colonialism,” “*inaugurates* a literature of empire” as it reveals the “process of displacement that paradoxically makes the presence of the book wondrous to the extent to which it is repeated, translated, misread, displaced” (102, emphasis in original). Bhabha maintains that “[t]he institution of the Word in the wilds is also an *Entstellung*, a process of displacement, distortion, repetition—the dazzling light of literature sheds only darkness” (105). As has been argued by Eliza F. Kent, the book was a potent symbol of the civilizing mission itself, a metonymic emblem of cultural and political power and of “modern, enlightened forms of knowledge” (“Books” 72). These forms of knowledge

were often privileged by missionaries, as will be seen in my discussion of Susie Carson Rijnhart in Chapter Three. The book's uneasy position in the wilderness became a metaphor for the mobility and dislocation represented by missionaries themselves, representing the intersection of narratives of coherence and structure with those of displacement and dislocation that the missionary's tenuous position in settler and colonial society often generated. The book's material embodiment of knowledge, language, and story collided with the oral traditions of Native cultures and also operated as a visual metaphor for the missionary's own sense of dislocated settlement.

In this respect, missionaries and missionary work had a complicated relationship to narrative, the process of writing itself. As critics such as Maina Chawla Singh, Anna Johnston, Laura M. Stevens, Jean and John Comaroff, Gareth Griffiths, Jamie S. Scott, Adele Perry, Gail Elizabeth Edwards, Eliza F. Kent, and Terrence L. Craig have variously argued, missionary work as a cultural practice depended heavily upon formal and informal writing to reinforce, communicate, and circulate its objectives and projects, to attract workers to the mission fields, and to raise much needed funds for ongoing missionary work.¹⁷ Underlying this reliance on writing and textuality is, as Anna

¹⁷ Maina Chawla Singh, *Gender, Religion and "Heathen Lands"*; Anna Johnston, *Missionary Writing and Empire*; Laura M. Stevens, *The Poor Indians*; Jean and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, Vol. 1; Gareth Griffiths, "'Trained to tell the Truth': Missionaries, Converts and Narration"; Jamie S. Scott and Gareth Griffiths, eds., *Mixed Messages: Materiality, Textuality, Missions*; Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*; Gail Elizabeth Edwards, "Creating Textual Communities: Anglican and Methodist Missionaries and Print Culture in British Columbia, 1858-1914," (Diss. U of British Columbia); Eliza F. Kent, *Converting Women* and "Books and Bodices: Material Culture

Johnston has argued, a “belief in the potential of representation to effect real cultural change” (*Missionary* 84). Missionaries, through their writings, wished to generate tangible and material results and their writings were open to the influences of secular literature and the public marketplace (Comaroff and Comaroff 1: 172; Griffiths “Popular” 53-55). Missionary writings were, as Terrence L. Craig has observed, “texts of persuasion,” documenting the missionary’s “always unfinished work,” with “the reader always being handed an invitation to complete it” (101). As Catharine Randall has argued in her work on the *Jesuit Relations*, missionary writings can be viewed as “relational texts” that forged connections between imaginative communities, such as the Old World and the New World, and competing systems of theological thought, as well as creating connections between individuals and intended readers and audiences (22).

Anna Johnston has observed that missionary writings are also “profoundly hybrid,” and, within those writings, missionaries assumed many cultural roles, both deliberate and inadvertent (*Missionary* 32). The insistence by many nineteenth-century Christians on conceptualizing Christianity, not only as God’s chosen religion, but as an economic, cultural, and political liberator, meant that imperialism, economics, education, medicine and science, philanthropy, nationalisms, and the impulse for improvement, progress, and reform, all became intertwined with Christian faith, creating a complex web of overlapping interests and indistinguishable achievements that was reflected in

and Protestant Missions in Colonial South Africa”; Terrence L. Craig, *The Missionary Lives*.

missionary writings. Missionary stories, as will be discussed in detail in Chapter Three, particularly became implicated in the secular literature of travel and imperial adventure. As Eliza F. Kent has observed, they also merged with the literature of “social uplift” that proliferated in the nineteenth century (*Converting* 53). Missionaries, as well, assumed a host of less defined, more indeterminate cultural roles within their writings: anthropologist, ethnographer, traveller, tourist, literary writer. According to anthropologists such as James Clifford and Renato Rosaldo, and critics such as Anna Johnston, missionary writings influenced the production of data in the fields of scientific procurement, anthropology, and colonial ethnography, as the missionary’s observations about native customs and manners became accepted, and then circulated, as knowledge (Clifford *Predicament* 26; Johnston “Tahiti” 80). Indeed, Kristen Burnett has maintained that “[m]uch of the knowledge about Indigenous cultures that the average middle-class, Protestant Euro-Canadian received during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was provided through the publications of missionaries” (Burnett 103; Francis 16-60; Higham *Noble* 31-60). Both Gail Elizabeth Edwards and Jane Samson have also observed the imbrication between the missionary and the travel writer and tourist. Missionaries often responded to new landscapes using the language of the picturesque, or tropes of emptiness, desolation, and wilderness to organize their visual perceptions of the New World within a redemptive framework of cultural meaning (Edwards “Creating” 169; Pratt 61; Samson 89-109).

Gail Edwards has explored the difficulty that missionaries, such as William

Ridley, who served in British Columbia, had in “translating [their missionary] experience into narratives that would engage the attention of the metropolitan reader” (“Creating” 165). Ridley claimed in his *Snapshots from the North Pacific: Letters Written by the Right Rev. Bishop Ridley (Late of Caledonia)*:

How little does even the true Church, much less the crowd of self-centred Christians and the world, know of the travail and joy of the missionary?... It makes him self-contained, and this tends to make him reticent and to restrain his pen when a full record of the common incidents of his work would be as fuel to kindle sacrifice of praise in many a pure and devout heart at home....

The real romance of Missions is not yet written, and never will be, because God’s greatest works are like the diamond and dew—perfected in the secret places of the Most High, and await the great day to reveal them. (qtd. in Edwards “Creating” 165)

Charlotte Bompas, whose writings will be examined in Chapter Two, had a remarkably similar reflection, albeit one defined more by cautious pragmatism than aesthetic despair. In her Annual Address to the Woman’s Auxiliary, in August 1906, which she delivered once she had left the northern mission field that she had served for thirty-two years, Bompas observed:

May we some of us be spared to witness its [the W.A.’s] steady growth and large increase, but let us not be wholly occupied with the sending out of bales or the reckoning of accounts. There is much that is outward and material to fill our view, but may there not be danger even in our Church and Mission work of our forgetting the underlying inner object of it all, and our own inward and spiritual growth. In all the rush of life, and even of Church and Mission activity, our danger is “lest we forget” the true inwardness of it all.... Still less, let us not become so absorbed in the materialism and indifference, which reigns around us as to forget the only

force by which they can met, the force of Spiritual life. (10)¹⁸

This overarching contradiction, then, of how missionary experience, in some respects, *resisted* the power of narrative to contain it creates a compelling source of tension within missionary writing, as what was silent, inexpressible, intangible, and immaterial about the components of the missionary's "inward" calling, conviction, and faith, the "force of Spiritual life," collided directly with the materiality of missionary work and the expressive and generic demands of narrative itself.

Less formal writings, such as diaries, journals, and letters, which women often produced, also demonstrated some of this cultural resistance. They were also bearers of less formal knowledges, what Michel Foucault would call "local" or "disqualified knowledges" that render these texts genealogical (*Power* 83).¹⁹ As Sara Mills has observed in her critical work on women's travel writing, such writing, intertwined with the constraints that nineteenth-century middle class culture—and that women themselves—placed upon the feminine gaze, allowed for a recounting of such "innocent" occupations as flower and specimen gathering and the "trials" of domestic management, occupations that Mills sees as a vital extension of imperial work ("Knowledge" 40-41).

¹⁸ "Annual Address of Mrs. Bompas, President, Delivered at Dawson. Y.T., August 13th, 1906," 6-10. *Second Annual Report of the Selkirk Diocesan Branch W. A. Anglican Church Series 111.5 a, Cor. 98, File 1 of 11, Diocesan W.A. Annual Reports, 1906-1923, Yukon Territory Archives.*

¹⁹ Foucault defines genealogy as "the union of erudite knowledge and local memories which allows us to establish a historical knowledge of struggles and to make use of this knowledge tactically today" (*Power* 83).

Very often, in this type of missionary writing, the long-term transformative project of missionary work—that of religious and cultural displacement—was very often lost or minimized, only fleetingly glimpsed and contemplated, amidst the verbal minutiae of the “innocent” details of household management and settlement, physical survival and illness, punctuated, of course, by colourful anecdotes and “encounters,” sentimental reflections, and episodes of adventure that granted these writers the status of “pioneers,” “heroes,” and “heroines.” However, simultaneously, missionary writings became positioned against larger cultural narratives, such as imperialism, individualism, Providence, and salvation history, that both enhanced and mystified their projects of cultural mediation and religious displacement. Missionary texts, hence, are bearers of cultural, historical, and literary knowledge, structured by what Paul Ricoeur calls “the intersection among contexts,” or by what Michel Foucault has similarly called “the effects of intersection” (Ricoeur 161; Foucault *Power* 75). Displayed, produced, and encoded in these written intersections are many ideological tensions and assumptions about class, race, nationality, religious affiliation, and gender, all of which were both reinforced and destabilized by the missionary’s encounters with “native heathens” in the contact zones of foreign lands.

Yet missionary writing, as Terrence L. Craig has argued, has proven to have an uneasy relationship with Canadian literary history (1-2). Missionary texts by both men and women lend themselves to obvious discussion within the parameters of numerous topics that currently enjoy critical favour, such as generic hybridity, cultural geography,

narrative and cultural constructions of gender, textual subjectivity, as well as considerations of the relational effects of cultural power and the range of provocative and difficult questions generated by postcolonialism and its efforts to recuperate textual evidence of native agency and dialogic cultural encounter within colonial writings. These are vital areas of inquiry within contemporary literary and cultural criticism. Despite this, as Terrence Craig and Iona Bulgin have both observed, while missionary texts have attracted the attention of historians, sociologists, and religious scholars, they have generated surprisingly little attention from Canadian literary scholars (Craig 132; Bulgin 24-26).

There have been, of course, noteworthy exceptions of literary critics who have recognized the textual complexity of missionary literature. One of the most eminent is the important work of Ronald Rompkey on the career and writings of the medical missionary to Newfoundland, Wilfred T. Grenfell. In scholarly articles, as well as his masterfully meticulous biography, *Grenfell: A Life*, Rompkey identifies the “problems of composition” that “may be faced by a man of great reputation” when taking on the cultural task of reinterpreting his life within autobiographical form (“Elements” 12). Rompkey situates Grenfell’s autobiographical writings, particularly *A Labrador Doctor* (1919), within broader literary and autobiographical traditions, such as spiritual autobiography and heroic biography. In so doing, he acknowledges the complexity of narrative production within mission culture and the role that Grenfell’s textual construction of his own narrative persona and masculinity, and the process of

reinterpreting the events of his own life “in spiritual terms,” played in energizing his mission and in establishing his cultural legacy (“Elements” 12). Grenfell was a prolific writer with dozens of publications, and Rompkey deftly captures the cultural and the discursive effects produced by Grenfell’s experimentation with a range of autobiographical forms.

Another powerful exception is Terrence L. Craig’s 1997 publication, *The Missionary Lives: A Study of Canadian Missionary Biography and Autobiography*. Craig’s book examines both literary and biographical accounts of Canadian missionaries and is a pioneering attempt to assemble a vast compendium of disparate resources about Canadian missionary literature. Moreover, his book wages a passionate argument about the necessity of subjecting missionary texts to serious critical attention. The book is ambitious in its intentions and filled with insight about the characteristics of missionary literature and its tense relationship with contemporary critical discourse. Craig contends that “Canadian missionary lives” are “archetypally alien to contemporary literary and cultural theory” (107). Indeed, in his despairing Prologue, Craig mourns what he calls the “inaccessibility” of missionary literature, exasperatedly asserting: “Writing this book has been an exercise in self-conscious objectivity, an unachievable goal that Post Modernism teaches us is not worth pursuing” (n. pag.). Yet Craig’s conclusions regarding the “accessibility” of missionary literature and the relationship between missionary literature and the literary project of postmodernism are, I think, unnecessarily pessimistic. As Linda Hutcheon and Robert Kroetsch confirm as two of Canada’s most important critics

of this field,²⁰ postmodernism, with its privileging of fragments, disunity, ambivalence, contradiction, gaps, silence, and “unofficial” histories, has generated a revitalized critical awareness of how such narrative features can function textually to assume both political and cultural significance. Some of the critical dilemmas posed by postmodernism seem particularly relevant in being redeployed to the analysis of women’s missionary literature, where fragments, disunity, gaps, silence, and contradiction are recurring textual and material characteristics. Women’s informal texts and private writings often operated flexibly in relation to the ecclesiastic and official histories, hagiographic biographies, and missionary periodicals, sometimes mirroring them, sometimes incorporated into them, sometimes in contradiction with them, sometimes silenced by them, sometimes situated well outside them.

How women’s writings were positioned in relationship to “official” histories and discourses of the Grenfell mission is explored by Iona Bulgin in her research on the life writing of nurses who were employed by the Grenfell mission in the twentieth century in Newfoundland and Labrador. In her dissertation, “Mapping the Self in the ‘Utmost Purple Rim’: Published Labrador Memoirs of Four Grenfell Nurses,” Bulgin argues for the consideration and integration of the published writings of four Grenfell nurses into the

²⁰ See Linda Hutcheon, *The Canadian Postmodern* and Robert Kroetsch, *Labyrinths of Voice* and *The Lovely Treachery of Words* for critical considerations of Canadian postmodernism. For an intriguing exploration of Canadian postmodernism that considers the work of both Hutcheon and Kroetsch, see Frank Davey’s essay, “Contesting ‘Post(-)modernism,’” in *Canadian Literary Power*.

broader literary and cultural histories of Canada and Newfoundland, as she seeks to “broaden canonical boundaries” (22). Their writings, Bulgin argues, have been shrouded in “cartographies of silence” that were, in part, generated by the material and cultural politics of the Grenfell mission and women’s positioning within it (40-41). Bulgin, relying on numerous theorists of life writing, particularly foregrounds the gender issues that both characterized and constrained the production and the circulation of their textual voices. In its close and dedicated readings of the Grenfell nurses’ individual memoirs, her study demonstrates the cultural value of analyzing women’s non-canonical texts from a literary perspective.

In contrast to the work of Rompkey, Craig, and Bulgin, early literary assessments of Canadian literature, such as Lionel Stevenson’s *Appraisals of Canadian Literature* (1926), saw the literature of Canada as beginning in the nineteenth century with the publication of indigenous novels and poetry. Within his “appraisal,” non-fiction travel and settler literature were relegated to a distant secondary status. Carl F. Klinck’s landmark *Literary History of Canada* (1965) was one of the first Canadian literary histories to give consideration to missionary and religious writing. References to missionary writings appear in Victor G. Hopwood’s entry, “Explorers by Land,” and James S. Thomson’s article, “Religious and Theological Writings” (Hopwood 20-22; Thomson 573-75). The writings of many of the important seventeenth and eighteenth-century missionaries to Canada—the Jesuit Fathers, Samuel de Champlain, Marie de l’Incarnation, Marguerite Bourgeoys, and Laurence Coughlan—have since been claimed

as part of Canada's foundational literatures by W. H. New, W. J. Keith, Patrick O'Flaherty, Douglas Daymond and Leslie Monkman, and Faye Hammill.²¹ Yet these foundational texts have received scant critical examination, as has a consideration of where missionary literature should be situated within Canadian literary culture as a more conventional, "high culture," indigenous literature, in the form of poetry, novels, sketches, etc., began to flourish in Canada in the nineteenth century. This lack of critical attention is heightened by the fact that the genres with which missionary literature most obviously intersect—travel and settler writing, autobiography, life writing—are themselves characterized by generic instability and have been, up until recently, variously marginalized within literary studies.

This critical gap may have been occasioned, until recently, by the lack of an appropriate critical vocabulary. Helen Buss has identified this problem in her article, "A Feminist Revision of New Historicism To Give Fuller Readings of Women's Private Writing." Buss observes that the "terminology" of New Criticism that dominated Canadian criticism until the 1980s and "the location of such consciously used and overdetermined markers as metaphor, symbol, and allegory" left the critic "bereft of an adequate critical practice" when confronted with certain forms of autobiographical writing (86). In contrast, the critical approaches and frameworks invited by New

²¹ See W. H. New, *A History of Canadian Literature*; W. J. Keith, *Canadian Literature in English*; Patrick O'Flaherty, *The Rock Observed*; Douglas Daymond and Leslie Monkman, *Literature in Canada*, Vol. 1; Faye Hammill, *Canadian Literature*.

Historicism allow for the situation of women's personal and private writings in relationship to "the marketplace of public culture" (87). They also invite discussion of "the symbolic and more personal moments of a private economy," exchanges involving "talent, power, skills, nurturing, and labor" that give "an awareness of the critical importance to the reader of women's private writings" (87). Missionary writings similarly straddle the spheres of private and public, the mission station and the marketplace, and are particularly invested in exchanges of cultural labour. The writings of female missionaries, therefore, lend themselves to the type of autobiographical analyses practised by Buss and numerous other critics of female autobiographical writing. In her groundbreaking study, *Mapping Our Selves*, as well as in numerous scholarly articles, Buss has argued for the "breaking of the traditional limitations set by the idea of a 'literary' canon" and the inclusion of women's private writings and archival resources into the Canadian literary project (*Working* 1).

Missionary women were both pioneers and settlers, yet they have received little consideration in literary treatments of these cultural categories.²² However, as Carole Gerson has observed, the writings of early Canadian women writers, including those of missionaries, deserve consideration precisely because "an examination of the range and genres of [women's] published writing establishes some of the social and cultural

²² See, for instance, Janet Floyd, *Writing the Pioneer Woman*; Elizabeth Thompson, *The Pioneer Woman*; Marian Fowler, *The Embroidered Tent*; Barbara Korte, "Gentle-Women in the Wilderness: Self-Images of British Canadian Pioneer Women."

boundaries of women's textual activity in relation to a pioneer society" (*Canada's* 3). Gwendolyn Davies has similarly observed the importance of investigating "literary women who transcended the educational, economic, and geographical limitations of colonial society to achieve the publication of their work" (*Studies* 71). Investigating these writings "elucidates some of the social patterns governing female authorship in colonial Canada" (Gerson *Canada's* 3). Women's missionary texts also overlap with women's travel texts and the kinds of cultural analyses done by Wendy Roy, Sherrill Grace, Roberta Buchanan and Bryan Greene, Lisa LaFramboise, Denise Heaps, Eva-Marie Kröller, Elizabeth Waterston, and Germaine Warkentin on Canadian women's travel and exploration writing.²³

The close textual analysis of missionary writings also has an obvious place in the "new" critical landscape of nineteenth-century Canadian literary and cultural studies delineated by editors Jennifer Blair, Daniel Coleman, Kate Higginson, and Lorraine York in their landmark publication, *ReCalling Early Canada: Reading the Political in Literary and Cultural Production*, published in 2005. The editors begin the collection with a

²³ See Wendy Roy, *Maps of Difference*; Sherrill Grace, "'A Woman's Way': Canadian Narratives of Northern Discovery," and "A Woman's Way: From Expedition to Autobiography"; Eva Marie Kröller, *Canadian Travellers in Europe, 1851-1900*; Elizabeth Waterston, "Travel Books, 1880-1920," in *Literary History of Canada*; Denise Heaps, "Gendered Discourse and Subjectivity in Travel Writing by Canadian Women," (Diss. U of Toronto); Lisa LaFramboise, "Travellers in Skirts: Women and English-Language Travel Writing in Canada, 1820-1926," (Diss. U of Alberta); Roberta Buchanan and Bryan Green, Introduction, *The Woman Who Mapped Labrador*; Germaine Warkentin, Introduction, *Canadian Exploration Literature*.

provocative question: "What is 'Early Canadian' literature and culture, and how do we look for, uncover, speak and teach it?" The cultural materials that receive thoughtful and vigorous analysis include a range of both canonical and non-canonical texts. The careful work of Kathleen Velmena, for instance, on the letters of Letitia Mactavish Hargrave and the examination of nineteenth-century women's captivity narratives by Kate Higginson intersect with the concerns of missionary literature, given the importance of epistolarity, textual structuring of domestic relations, and subjective constructions of both white and native womanhood to missionary writing. The textual analysis of missionary writings can become an important supplement to, and extension of, these kinds of critical investigations.

Indeed, Catharine Randall, in an important article published in the *International Journal of Canadian Studies* in Spring 2001, in a special issue entitled "Spirituality, Faith and Belief," issued a clarion call to the academic community of Canada about the importance of subjecting the *Jesuit Relations* to "a literary interpretation, one coupled with a theological sensitivity," a treatment that it "has not yet received" (19). Randall argues that the *Jesuit Relations* are part of the "foundational texts of North American religion, history and literature" that demand "scholarly synthesis," and an "overall interpretative perspective" and that, ideally, "[s]uch an endeavour would necessitate the work of a team of academics" (20; 31). Randall's point is a good one. Rather than perfunctorily situating works such as the *Jesuit Relations* at the beginning of Canadian literary histories, there needs to be a concomitant level of energetic rhetorical, narrative,

and cultural consideration of these texts by literary and cultural critics so that these foundational narratives, and later missionary writings, can be more visibly situated in the context of early literary, cultural, and textual enterprise within Canada.

One of the reasons missionary work was able to achieve both cultural and literary vitality in the nineteenth century was that missionary culture was able to take the ideological imperatives of evangelical and civilizing work and organize them into stories. But whose story was being told? Whose story should have been told? And whose story was not told? These are the difficult, and sometimes emotional, questions that underskirt the critical reception of historical missionary literature today, as critics respond to the paternalistic and ethical dilemmas and the racist assumptions posed by missionary work and missionary writing. As Adele Perry has argued, the missionary archive “is self-serving, self-promoting and profoundly self-referential” (“Metropolitan” 119). The missionary archive’s seeming insularity to the cultural resistance that surrounded it presents unique interpretative dilemmas and challenges to critics in terms of evaluating the cultural reliability of its representation of events in the mission field, as well as its representations of the social structures of the homeland against which life in the mission field was inevitably pitted. Postcolonialism’s concern with both the “decolonization of representation” and the establishment of “a politics of accountability” provides reading strategies for missionary texts in identifying and reframing the tensions of colonial encounter (Brydon 51). Missionary texts advertised the “subaltern” status of native peoples through a variety of cultural frameworks and rhetorics. Natives, most often

identified under the undifferentiated rhetoric of "Indian," appear as children, animals, noble savages, variously silent objects of a vacillating compassion and contempt that was most often predicated on racial difference. Often, they do not appear at all, obliterated in the missionary's drama of the self.

Missionary writings present a highly asymmetrical and biased outlook of Native populations that often suppressed, negated, appropriated, and distilled the voices, the stories, and the cultural perspectives of the Other. Missionaries, such as William Carpenter Bompas, who insisted that "souls have no borders," effectively dismissed Native populations as political subjects with legitimate grievances and governmental structures. Nineteenth-century missionaries were seldom troubled by the moral implications of these cultural appropriations and their interventions in Native societies. While this can generate discomfort and anger today, a more valuable critical response might be to consider what these limitations of voice have come to mean? What cultural effects were generated by these appropriations and how can they now be positioned within the broader cultural questions encouraged by postcolonialism, New Historicism, and post-structuralism? In her important research on the cultural exchanges between Protestant missionaries and Tsimshian culture in nineteenth-century British Columbia, Susan Neylan maintains that studies of missionaries and natives should consider the "dialogic nature" of the cultural exchanges that occurred between the two, which often resulted in "a constant negotiation and change of the meaning elements in discourse" ("Contested" 168). Neylan maintains that "First Nations actively took part in missions

and shaped and defined the processes of their own Christianization, but they could not entirely direct or control them,” and these ongoing interactions embodied the “process of colonial hegemony at work” (“Contested” 168). Such vexed and difficult cultural dilemmas, questions, and conclusions engender “the politics of research” that define our attempts critically to consider the cultural texts of early Canada and to create a critical space in which this important conversation and debate can occur (Blair et al. xiv).

Missionary writings offer one entry point into a larger cultural project—the discursive role of religious discourse in early Canada’s cultural and textual production—that Canadian literary studies appears poised to begin fully interrogating. Publications by Gail Edwards, Jamie S. Scott, and Paul Perron offer welcome insight into the narrative and rhetorical structures of autobiographical missionary writing.²⁴ Recent books such as Joanna Dean’s *Religious Experience and the New Woman*, Daniel Coleman’s *White Civility*, and Janice Fiamengo’s *The Woman’s Page* are attentive to the role played by religious discourse and rhetoric in structuring nineteenth- and early twentieth-century literary and journalistic writing and in constructing Euro-Canadian identities and social roles. This criticism has been enriched by the plethora of gender, postcolonial, postmodern, and interdisciplinary studies in history, sociology, geography, and anthropology, which draw attention to the shifting subjectivities and contradictions of

²⁴ See Gail Edwards, “‘The Picturesqueness of his Accent and Speech’: Methodist Missionary Narratives and William Henry Pierce’s Autobiography”; Jamie S. Scott, “Cultivating Christians in Colonial Canadian Missions”; Paul Perron, *Narratology and Text: Subjectivity and Identity in New France and Québécois Literature*.

these early texts and the cultural instabilities they reflect and produce. Undeniably, Christianity and other religions were powerful and potent forces to early Canadian writers, to such a degree that they may generate discomfiture within twentieth-first century academics perhaps uncomfortable with such structured, institutionalized, and unabashed spiritual faith. Such contemporary political judgements should not suppress or overwhelm investigations of early missionary texts. As Janice Fiamengo has wisely observed in a recent article assessing the journalistic legacy of Sara Jeannette Duncan, "I believe our work is more useful when political judgement is not our guiding principal and when we pay more attention to the writer's context than to our own" ("Baptized" 278).

My readings of these texts, and the questions I have posed surrounding them, have been particularly influenced by the work of a number of cultural theorists: Mary Louise Pratt, Sara Mills, Jean and John Comaroff, Michel Foucault, James Clifford, and, as always, the work of Raymond Williams. Specific studies of Canadian missionary history have also been influential, particularly the work of Ruth Compton Brouwer, Rosemary R. Gagan, Myra Rutherdale, Alvyn Austin, Jamie S. Scott, and Susan Neylan. Even though the focus of this project is narrative, I wish in no way to disregard the exciting research that is being done on alternative cultural and visual texts in terms of their relationship to religious discourse. In the last ten years, critics have increasingly been exploring how both religious culture and missionary culture were reconstituted and influenced by secularization and by visual mediums such as photography, painting, architecture, and

museum displays.²⁵ Narrative often worked both in tandem and in contradiction with these other cultural forms of display and with missionary experience itself. Indeed, David B. Marshall in *Secularizing the Faith* claims that narrative itself adopted “visual elements” to compete with increasing secularization, both within and beyond Anglo-Protestant religious culture (139). Because the field of missionary study converges upon a number of academic disciplines—anthropology, history, religious studies, cultural and literary studies, women’s studies, geography, folklore—this project is necessarily interdisciplinary in its influences and in its execution. Yet I have also been influenced by the important work of Anna Johnston and Gareth Griffiths, two literary scholars, whose close readings of colonial and postcolonial missionary writings provide important critical models on how we can incorporate such readings into the bigger project of not only “recalling early Canada,” but in defining the types of critical work delineated by the emergence of “new missionary studies,” saluted by Jamie S. Scott and Gareth Griffiths in their important volume, *Mixed Messages: Materiality, Textuality, Missions* (ix). Scott and Griffiths, in an “adventurous claim,” testify to the importance of locating the study of Christian missions “within the broader realm of religious and cultural study” (ix). They maintain that Christianity needs to be defined as a force that is both cultural and

²⁵ See Kim Greenwell, “Picturing ‘Civilization’: Missionary Narratives and the Margins of Mimicry”; Jennifer Blair, “Surface Interiorities: Representing the Quebec Convent”; and Frances Lord, “The Silent Eloquence of Things: The Missionary Collections and Exhibitions of the Society of Jesus in Quebec, 1843-1946” for a sampling of these critical examinations of other missionary cultural “texts,” which respectively examine photographs, convent architecture, and museum displays.

uncontained beyond its “own system of categories and values” (ix). The merging of these two fields of cultural endeavour, one emerging, the other established but redefining itself, creates vital opportunities for important Canadian scholarship.

Ravelling and Unravelling “Knotted Threads”

The phrase “knotted threads” that appears in the title of this dissertation is one used by Emily Murphy to describe her own literary work, as well as the “threads” of Canadian history, and social and literary commentary, she is engaged in intertwining. As she stands in the Athabasca Valley and observes the construction of the Western railroad, she declares: “Right glad am I to go through it this day with a construction party, and for my own satisfaction to mentally tie together the threads of the Past and Present. And who knows but in a century from now some curious boy in one of these towns may find this record in an attic rubbish heap, and may rejoice with me over the knotted threads” (32). “Knotted threads,” hence, becomes her chosen metaphor for female textual self-representation. As a form of cultural labour, Murphy suggests that its value—indeed, her value—is in abeyance, deferred and undetermined, unapparent, but with the potential to be realized by more discerning citizens of the future, a critical position that is both shrewdly resigned and prophetically bold. As such, she locates the cultural dilemma of the female writer in a category of what Daniel Coleman has identified as “belatedness” (16). In *White Civility*, Coleman speaks of the importance of situating Canadian writing temporally as well as spatially (16), and Murphy verifies the relevance of the temporal in

creating a cultural trajectory and narrative for the eventual acceptance of her own writing.

Murphy, as well, was not alone in identifying the usefulness of the metaphor of the thread. At the very end of *The Imperialist*, published in 1904, Sara Jeannette Duncan's poised and self-aware narrator uses similar imagery, not simply to conclude her intricate narrative, but to create a potent metaphor for the emergence of Canadian destiny itself: "Here, for Lorne and for his country, we lose the thread of destiny. The shuttles fly, weaving the will of the nations, with a skein for ever dipped again; and he goes forth to his share in the task among those by whose hand and direction the pattern and the colours will be made" (266). Textile imagery has been similarly appropriated by many female historians and critics to describe the evolution of specific gendered histories as subjects for scholarly interrogation.²⁶ Helen Buss has also identified Françoise Lionnet's metaphor of braiding as an apt one for describing and reading women's autobiographical writings. Buss maintains that "not only does the writer braid an identity but as reader I 'allow my self to be interwoven with the discursive strands of the text, to engage in a form of intercourse wherein I take my interpretative clues from the patterns that emerge as a result of this encounter'" (*Mapping* 25). Identifying the "discursive strands" of women's missionary texts allows for the rise of what James Clifford in *Writing Culture* has called a "cultural poetics that is an interplay of voices, of positioned utterances"

²⁶ See, for instance, Kathrine Bellamy, *Weavers of the Tapestry*, a history of the Congregation of the Mercy Sisters in Newfoundland and Willeen Keough, "The Slender Thread," a history of Irish women in Newfoundland and Labrador.

("Introduction" 12).²⁷

Referring to missionary women's writing as "knotted threads" also gestures towards women's tangled relationship to writing, authorship, and public literary culture. Missionary women, to some extent, represented in microcosm women's broader, problematic relationship to the issues surrounding public self-representation that were playing out in literary culture at large in Britain, America, and Canada. Maina Chawla Singh rightly observes that "the production of missionary literature was not a gendered domain" (139), yet she fails to acknowledge the extent to which gender influenced both the narrative forms missionary women relied on to record their subjective experiences and the extent to which gender both constrained and influenced the development of their narrative voices and writing personas. Missionary culture, in particular, encouraged women to narrate their experiences from a perspective of Christian domesticity in forms such as the letter, diary, and journal, which constituted private forms of writing that could still be utilized publicly when warranted. Yet, as Mary Jean Corbett has observed, some women writers, such as writers of spiritual autobiographies, were able to elide the boundaries between the public and private spheres, between domestic and cultural labour, because they were able to "configure their authorship as congruent with the norms of domestic femininity" (*Representing* 57). To some extent, missionary women were able to

²⁷ Later in his "Introduction: Partial Truths," Clifford defines cultural poetics as "the constant reconstitution of selves and others through specific exclusions, conventions, and discursive practices" (24).

establish a measure of this congruence, as well, as their roles as religious teachers, missionary workers, and domestic paragons merged with the cultural possibilities generated by their writing duties. However, the “domestic femininity” in which much of their cultural authority resided was more elusive and harder to situate in light of the exotic locales, the heathen encounters, the mobility and isolation of missionary work, and the tenuous nature of domestic life itself in the mission field. Readings of women’s missionary texts, to some degree, need to consider the *forms* their writings assumed, as well as the rhetorics they produced, in formulating their versions of gendered subjectivity and experience.

Om P. Juneja and Chandra Mohan have identified Canadian literary culture as an important “site” of ambivalence (xvi). Juneja and Chandra identify ambivalence as “a state of mind entertaining antithetical values and feelings” (xvi). Ambivalence has been similarly identified as a distinguishing feature of colonial and missionary literature, particularly by Homi K. Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* (85-92; 102-22). Fittingly, however, there is more than one way in which textual ambivalence can be produced and read. Ambivalence can be a deliberate rhetorical strategy, as described by Juneja and Mohan, but it can also be an unintentional effect of writing, an emergent outcome by women missionary writers, many of whom actually privileged the ideals of narrative coherence and unity, linear cultural progress, and female submission and propriety, but who were still troubled by contradictions about their positioning within broader cultural institutional frameworks and practices and the delineation of their contributions and

social and religious roles. They faced an uncertainty about how to unite these broader tensions and contradictions that very often remained unreconciled in their writings. This form of ambivalence functions as instances of the local or disqualified knowledge that Foucault sees as integral to the formation of cultural practices. This unintentional textual ambivalence as an outcome of cultural practices that were themselves culturally predicated and reconstituted by ambivalence—ambivalence as an outcome of a struggle for meaning and for an articulation of voice as opposed to an intentional rhetorical effect—provides a rich area of inquiry that deserves closer examination.

Chapter One, entitled “An Island of ‘Living Stones’: Epistolarity, Sacrifice, and Female Community in the Nineteenth-Century Writings of the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Newfoundland,” will examine the letters written by the founding Sisters of the Presentation Congregation that are archived at the Presentation Motherhouse in St. John’s, Newfoundland. Founded in 1833, the Presentation Order in Newfoundland was the first English-speaking order of nuns established in Canada and also the first order of Presentation Sisters established outside of Ireland, where they originated. The chapter will first consider many of the literary, cultural, and romantic stereotypes and prejudices regarding the Catholic nun in the nineteenth century. It will also examine the importance of epistolarity as a means of textual expression for religious congregations and consider how the Presentation Sisters’ lives of religious privilege, enclosure, and structure affected their integration into Newfoundland society and their textual representation of life in the New World. The nature of life in a religious

congregation created constraints on their social behaviour, but there were also opportunities for cultivating creative self-identity and playful self-expression.

Chapter Two, entitled "The Hidden Leaven: Gender Relations, Domestic 'Borderlands,' and the Quest for Influence in the Missionary Writings and Experience of Charlotte Selina Bompas," examines the writings of Charlotte Selina Bompas, wife of Anglican Bishop William Carpenter Bompas, who performed missionary work in the Canadian North for thirty-two years (1874-1906). This chapter will first consider, in general terms, the cultural restraints placed upon the missionary wife within mission culture. It will then document some of the discourses that defined the nature of mission work in the Canadian North for both men and women before examining the discursive nature of Bompas's public and private writings. Revealed and encoded in Bompas's writings are complex and contradictory attitudes about domesticity, civilization, aboriginal culture, and her own emerging identity as a missionary.

Chapter Three, entitled "In Heroism's Shadow: Textual Tensions, Cultural Dilemmas, and Narrative Redemption in Dr. Susie Carson Rijnhart's *With the Tibetans in Tent and Temple*," offers a close reading of Rijnhart's 1901 book to examine the textual tensions engendered by her act of self-representation and her hesitant alignment with the missionary heroic tradition. Susie Rijnhart was a medical doctor who travelled as an independent missionary to China and Tibet between 1894 and 1898 to perform missionary work with her husband, the controversial Dutch missionary, Petrus Rijnhart. In the course of their journey, her infant son, who was born during the journey, died and

her husband mysteriously disappeared, leaving Rijnhart alone in a quest for safety in “the Forbidden Land.” This chapter will situate Rijnhart’s work within the missionary heroic tradition and the Orientalist discourse that surrounded Tibet and other Eastern countries in the nineteenth century, and consider the unique role of the medical missionary in nineteenth-century mission work. It will then explore the implications of Rijnhart’s defence of the Pauline apostolic model, her use of “imaginative geography” to argue for Canada’s cultural agency, her textual constructions of Tibetan cultural knowledge, and her use of “salvation history” to create cultural meaning for the deaths of her husband and child and for her own sacrifices.

Chapter Four, entitled “Bearing Witness to the Nation: Canadian Nationalism, Cultural Parables, and the Missionary as Saviour in Janey Canuck’s *Seeds of Pine*,” will consider the missionary as an imaginative category in the writings of Emily Murphy, first female magistrate of the British Empire, with particular focus on her 1914 publication, *Seeds of Pine*. Murphy was the wife of the Reverend Arthur Murphy, an itinerant Anglican minister, who also spent time performing mission work for the Anglican Church in Ontario. Yet, my interest in Murphy lies equally in her cultivation of the figurative and symbolic power of missionary figures, such as William Bompas and Émile Grouard, whose lives of heroism, as defined by Murphy, created the foundation for an emerging Canadian nationalism. Murphy’s use of Christian allusion, parabolic narratives, and prophetic discourse, and her accounts of the historical and contemporary achievements of the “hero” Christian missionaries within Canada, are interlaced with her

consideration of the value of immigrant religious experience and native and pagan mythologies in order to document and authenticate her anxiety about Canada's present and future at a crossroads in its nascent history. In addition, I will situate *Seeds of Pine* amidst practical social developments such as the home missions movement (whereby white missionaries delivered moral rescue to other white Christian settlers), the emergence of the social gospel movement, and Murphy's desire to cultivate a more mythic, spiritual, and literary definition of nationhood.

While this thesis is, to some extent, organized along the trajectory of private to public, of communal and epistolary to increasingly individualistic and literary forms of written expression, it will also, to some degree, interrogate those boundaries. Much private correspondence in the nineteenth century was, in fact, written in the expectation that it would be publicly circulated, and private letters, diaries, and journals fulfilled a host of public functions. As well, trends in cultural and literary studies, particularly in the past twenty years, have challenged considerations of what "literary" has come to mean. For instance, some cultural and literary critics, such as Raymond Williams and Stephen Greenblatt, have deconstructed and demystified the aesthetics of many canonical literary texts to reveal their unexpected material and political formations;²⁸ in contrast, literary writers, such as Robert Kroetsch and Margaret Atwood, have unearthed in non-literary writings—such as seed catalogues and pioneer journals—aesthetic patterns and symbolic

²⁸ See Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City*, and Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions* for examples of such readings.

values.²⁹ Most of the research on Canadian female missionaries evaluates their writings from a historical perspective without offering sustained close readings of individual narratives or considering how the generic forms of these writings influenced how they can be read as texts, both for their intended and extended cultural readerships. Yet it is very often within the formal dynamic of narrative production and reception that the tensions and contradictions that animated complex cultural practices such as mission work reside, collide, and emerge, increasing our understanding of how missionary writing achieved cultural vitality within nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Canadian culture.

In his series of parables on historical materialism, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," Walter Benjamin describes a game of chess played by a puppet with an elaborate "system of mirrors" that creates the illusion of transparency, despite the fact that the game is being controlled by master chess player (253). This master chess player is likened to "theology" in that he is "wizened and has to keep out of sight" (253). Missionary writing, too, has been categorized by, and attributed with, a cultural and critical transparency, burdened with critical narratives that belie its complex discursive formations, its interpenetration with literary and secular history, and its constructed narrative features, both repetitive and incidental. And, if this is the case, how has this presumed transparency, the critical narratives that we have constructed about missionaries and their writings, limited our readings and reception of these Canadian cultural texts?

²⁹ See Robert Kroetsch, *Seed Catalogue*; Margaret Atwood, *The Journals of Susanna Moodie*.

Canadian critic Robert Kroetsch has declared in *The Lovely Treachery of Words* that “criticism as an extension of the text liberates the text into its full potential” (64).

Missionary writing, too, can produce a range of critical possibilities that needs to be liberated into “full potential.”

Missionary literature has undeniable colonizing aspects, but conversely, it has also been subject to the processes of marginalization and misinterpretation that it has been charged with producing and implementing. Daniel Coleman’s *The Scent of Eucalyptus: A Missionary Childhood in Ethiopia* (2003) cogently demonstrates this point. Coleman uses memoir and autobiography not simply to recount his memories of his missionary childhood, but to interrogate the categories through which missionary practice has historically defined and reproduced itself, and how it continues to be defined and identified within academic cultural criticism. Somewhat archly, while still in earnest, Coleman asks, “what exactly *is* the missionary position?” (246, emphasis in original). Coleman uses the language of literary criticism, his position as a literary and cultural critic—indeed, the form of the critical essay itself—to speculate on the cultural meaning of missionary work and to create overt questions regarding missionary practice and its relevance in contemporary cultural criticism. Coleman, in his important last chapter, “The Babies in the Colonial Washtub,” interrogates the determining factors upon the reception, as well as the production, of missionary experience, as he explores the politics of misinterpretation and misreading which missionary work as a cultural practice and as an historical legacy has tended to generate. Coleman performs this culture work through

his reading of a photograph which was displayed at a controversial Royal Ontario Museum exhibition in 1990, the subject of which his parents had a personal connection. He maintains that "in order to understand the complex relations of the real world, we need to hear as many stories as possible, even when they are broken and confusing, and we need to tell the fragments to which we have access" in order to create a "better composite" (249-50). This study begins at an earlier point, when missionary work had different cultural emphases, when missionaries used different narrative forms and textual practices to represent their relationship to missionary work and to formulate their narrative identities. The doubts, questions, and dilemmas of female missionaries, as well as their efforts at textual self-assertion, self-definition, and self-representation, were directed into more encoded language and into generic forms—letters, journals, published sketches, children's books, adventure and travel narratives—that reinforced, challenged, and allowed them to negotiate the grounds upon which they could participate in, and create their cultural roles within, private and public expressions of missionary work.

Chapter One

An Island of "Living Stones": Epistolarity, Sacrifice, and Female Community in the Nineteenth-Century Writings of the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin

Mary in Newfoundland

To whom coming, *as unto* a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, *and* precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 2: 4-5

There is another proposition which I think you will adopt as readily: it is, that in every rank the best sort of women for colonists are those to whom religion is a rule, a guide, a stay, and a comfort. You might persuade religious men to emigrate, and yet in time have a colony of which the morals and manners would be detestable; but if you persuade religious women to emigrate, the whole colony will be comparatively virtuous and polite. (156)

Edward Gibbon Wakefield
*A View of the Art of
Colonization* (1849)

The woman writing a letter is the figure with the power to turn allegory into myth.... Here is the originary place of much modern literary, cultural and feminist theory, as the woman in the frame moves her pen across the page and inscribes a particular relationship between sexuality and textuality, and a new role for the woman who writes, in modern histories of self and subjectivity. (123)

Carolyn Steedman
"A Woman Writing a Letter"
(1999)

The arrival of the ship *Ariel* outside the St. John's Narrows on September 21, 1833 was an important moment for women's missionary history in Canada and in pre-Confederation Newfoundland and Labrador. Indeed, in an odd but apt coincidence, the name of the ship was emblematic of the pilgrimage, both material and symbolic, which had just occurred and which the vessel had helped enable.¹ The *Ariel* had just completed a turbulent twenty-five day passage from the Old World to the New that originated in Waterford, Ireland on August 28, 1833. The journey was marred by numerous storms that caused one of the ship's occupants, Sister Mary Magdalene, to "invoke" every saint on the calendar.² The *Ariel* carried four Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary: Sister Mary Magdalen O'Shaughnessy, age 36; Sister Mary Xavier Lynch, age 21; Sister Mary Bernard Kirwan, age 36; and Sister Mary Xavier Molony, age 51. The four nuns³ left the Presentation Convent in Galway, Ireland on August 12, 1833 to

¹Ariel was the name of Prospero's magical helper in William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, and he navigates between the two primary "worlds" of the play, the world of powerful magic, and the world of malleable mortals, as a key transitional figure.

² Letter from Magdalene to My ever dearest Revd. Mother, September 22, 1833. The Four Foundresses/First Letters to Ireland, Presentation Congregation Archives, St. John's, Newfoundland.

³ In ecclesiastical terminology, a 'nun' is the term for a member of a female religious order who professes solemn vows, while a 'sister' is a member of a religious congregation who professes simple vows. Because they professed simple vows that were renewed annually, members of the Presentation Congregation were 'sisters.' However, because of popular usage of the term 'nun,' and because the Presentation Sisters refer to themselves as 'nuns' in their own writings, I will be using the terms 'nun' and 'sister' interchangeably in this chapter. A similar distinction exists between a religious order and a religious congregation. A religious order was fully cloistered whose members professed

embark on a mission to Newfoundland. Their mission was to establish a new school in St. John's in order to teach poor Catholic girls reading, writing, basic arithmetic, weaving, cooking, needlework, and religion.⁴ Accompanying the sisters on the *Ariel* was the man who had arranged their passage and orchestrated their arrival into the New World, Bishop Michael Fleming, the newly appointed Bishop of Carpasia and Vicar-Apostolic of Newfoundland, an instrumental figure in the advancement of Roman Catholicism in Newfoundland and Labrador.⁵ Fleming had encountered difficulties in

solemn vows, while a religious congregation professed simple vows with relative enclosure. Ecclesiastically, the Presentation Sisters are considered a religious congregation. However, in their own writings they often refer to themselves as the Presentation Order. Hence, I use the terms 'congregation' and 'order' interchangeably in this chapter.

⁴ For more on the development of the curriculum and pedagogy used by the Presentation Sisters in nineteenth-century Newfoundland, see Sister Mary Paula Penney, "A Study of the Contributions of Three Religious Congregations to the Growth of Education in the Province of Newfoundland," (Diss. Boston College); Sister Mary James Dinn, *Foundation of the Presentation Congregation in Newfoundland*; Melanie Martin, "Sisters, Students, Teachers: A History of the Contributions of the Presentation Congregation in Newfoundland" in *Weather's Edge*. For more general information on the nineteenth-century school system, see Phillip McCann, *Schooling in a Fishing Society*; V. P. Burke, "Education in Newfoundland" in *Book of Newfoundland* Vol. 1, pp. 287-95; Fred Rowe, *The Development of Education in Newfoundland*.

⁵ For accounts of the life of Bishop Michael Fleming and his contributions to Newfoundland's religious life, see Paul O'Neill, *Upon This Rock*; John Edward Fitzpatrick, "Conflict and Culture in Irish-Newfoundland Roman Catholicism, 1829-1850," (Diss. U of Ottawa); Patrick Browne, "Catholic Footsteps in the Ancient Colony," (Diss. Memorial U of Newfoundland); J. B. Darcy, *Fire Upon the Rock*; M. F. Howley, *Ecclesiastical History of Newfoundland*; Raymond J. Lahey, "Fleming, Michael Anthony," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*. Fleming also published his correspondence during his life time. See, in particular, his *Letters on the State of Religion in Newfoundland*, published in 1844.

securing the *Ariel*; he was initially unable to find a captain who was willing to offer private passage to “lady missionaries”⁶ en route to the New World. Captain William Staunton, a Newfoundlander, finally agreed to accommodate the mission to Newfoundland. The Presentation Sisters were not the first female missionaries to settle in Newfoundland and Labrador,⁷ nor were they the first religious order to establish themselves on the island of Newfoundland. However, they are still important missionary pioneers. They were the first foreign foundation of the Presentation Order to be established outside of Ireland. They were also the first English-speaking order of women

⁶ The fact that the sisters were considered missionaries by the general population is interesting. According to Jo Ann Kay McNamara, only “ordained priests” were permitted the formal designation of “missionary” in Catholic missions, confirming what she calls the “subaltern” status of women’s orders against the “clerical elite”(609). Women’s religious orders, while receiving varying degrees of formal religious recognition in numerous Papal bulls and clarifications over the centuries, have never achieved clerical status.

⁷ Apart from the wives of Anglican and Methodist missionaries, who often aided their husbands, women such as Fanny Wix, the first female missionaries permanently to settle in Newfoundland and Labrador were affiliated with the Moravian Missions in Labrador. These women included Sr. Anna Elizabeth Kohlmeister, who served as a missionary for thirty years in Labrador beginning in 1793, and Sr. Maria Magdalen Hasting, who arrived in Okak on August 25th, 1800, and later lived in Nain and Hopedale. See Hans Rollmann’s etext, “Retrospect of the History of the Mission of the Brethren’s Church in Labrador for the Past Hundred Years (1771-1871)” available at <http://www.mun.ca/rels/morav/texts/> for more information. The role of female missionaries in Newfoundland’s cultural history requires further examination. Iona Bulgin explores the narratives of four women, all nurses, employed by the Grenfell missions in the twentieth century in “Mapping the Self in the ‘Utmost Purple Rim’: Published Labrador Memoirs of Four Grenfell Nurses,” (Diss. Memorial U of Newfoundland). These women were nurses, but were also, in varying degrees, as Bulgin argues, influenced by religious missionary organizations, narrative forms such as spiritual autobiography, and formal missionary discourse.

religious to organize a mission, settle, and teach school in what we now consider Canada, predating the establishment of the Sisters of Mercy in Newfoundland in 1842 and the establishment of the Red River colony of Grey Nuns in St. Boniface in the summer of 1844.

There are many studies describing the cultural contributions of the Presentation Order in Newfoundland.⁸ A relatively unexamined portion of this cultural legacy, however, includes the letters written by the four founding sisters to members of the religious congregation at the Presentation Convent in Galway, Ireland, which are currently archived at the Presentation Motherhouse in St. John's, Newfoundland.⁹ These letters, while they have been valued for the cultural testimony they have provided on the

⁸ In addition to being educational pioneers, the sisters offered one of the first training facilities for teachers in nineteenth-century Newfoundland. Their school was also one of the first to teach music in Newfoundland. See studies by Penney, Rowe, Woodford, Galgay, Martin, Whitaker, and Dinn.

⁹ There are seven letters from the four foundresses archived at the Presentation Motherhouse in St. John's, as well as correspondence between Sister Mary John Power and Bishop Fleming negotiating the terms of the foundation of the Presentation Sisters in Newfoundland. In addition, there is also Mother Magdalene's verbal account of the journey replicated in Howley's *Ecclesiastical History* and in his article published in 1884 in the *Irish Monthly*, "The Presentation Sisters in Newfoundland." William Hutch's biography, *Nano Nagle: Her Life, Her Labours and Their Fruits*, also contains letter excerpts written by sisters residing at the Presentation Convent in Newfoundland to convents in Ireland and provides additional correspondence not available in St. John's. There is also one undated letter to Rev'd Mother from Sister Mary Patrick Maher, circa 1850s, archived in St. John's. This correspondence, along with material from the Early Annals of the Presentation Congregation in Newfoundland, archived in the Presentation Motherhouse in Newfoundland, collectively form the basis for the material used in this chapter.

history of Catholicism in Newfoundland, for the insights they have provided into the characters of historical figures such as Bishop Michael Fleming and Bishop John Mullock, and for the cultural perspective they have provided on historic events in St. John's such as the Great Fire of 1846, have been under-examined for their complex textual construction of Christian womanhood in a New World setting. This early correspondence, as well as the Presentation Order's Early Annals, are instrumental in helping contemporary readers understand how nineteenth-century women religious structured community, how they documented their settlement and integration into Newfoundland settler society, how they conceptualized their imaginative relationship to the New World, how they represented their religious and cultural authority, and how they framed their sacrifices and their uncertainties regarding their Newfoundland mission. Unlike New World pioneers to Canada in the nineteenth century, such as Anne Langton, Catharine Parr Traill, and Susanna Moodie, the Presentation Sisters textually represented their relationship to the New World in a manner that was, in great part, determined by their relationship to religious authority and the highly structured nature of convent life. These cultural restrictions, in some sense, diluted what Misao Dean has identified as the "liberal rhetoric of freedom characteristic of the New World" that helped to define the nature of "[f]emininity in a colonial society" (12). Yet these constraints were counterpointed by fleeting opportunities for practical and rhetorical self-determination and self-invention. Jo Ann Kay McNamara, in her important history of Catholic nuns, *Sisters in Arms* (1996), has observed: "The feminine apostolate was holistic. As active

orders run by and for women, the sisters had to invent themselves as they went along. Though some practiced a specific charity...they rarely defined themselves within professional boundaries" (622-23). The sisters' letters, therefore, reflected these tensions between creative opportunities and structured restraint, as their own efforts at textual self-definition were waged within very firm and highly structured material conditions, as well as more shifting ideological and imaginative restrictions and constructions. In this chapter, I will identify these boundaries and restrictions and explore the play between restraint, sacrifice, and the opportunities for self-definition that were provided by what Mary Jean Corbett has called a "religious femininity," which the sisters textually reconstructed in their private letters and in the Annals of the Presentation Order's history in Newfoundland ("Feminine" 55).

The sisters' letters also make apparent what Catharine Randall has called the "interplay of voices" that very often tend to energize collective bodies of textual material written by religious orders, material which Randall claims has an unappreciated "literary value" (18). This "interplay of voices" has often come to be downplayed in conventional historical analyses of collective material, which often isolate the content of such letters from their narrative form and from the particularities of individual authorship and audience. Such analyses tend to disregard any consideration of women religious as individuals who, through their writings, were claiming and cultivating a form of rhetorical, as well as individual power, even as they were shaping, submitting to, and articulating the cultural, social, religious, and communal restraints that affected and

inhibited their textual productions. Rebecca Sullivan, in an article examining the role of the habit in religious culture, has observed that, very often, “feminist social history ironically tends to reduce the role of the gendered body in culture, eschewing individuals and personalities in favour of roles and positions” (“Breaking” 111). In these interpretative configurations, Sullivan argues, the female as individual often becomes “absent from the processes of [cultural] determination” (“Breaking” 111). Sullivan maintains that one of the projects of feminist literary history is the reconstruction of female agency and the recognition of the existence of individual female voices in historical writings that have traditionally been examined collectively (“Breaking” 111). If this is indeed the case, then the moments of rhetorical playfulness and constrained questioning that emerge in these letters, moments which a close textual analysis of the writings reveals, have as much cultural value as the articulations of the sisters’ social role and their cultural perspectives on conventional historical figures and events in Newfoundland history.

1.1 Labouring in “the vineyard of the poor”: The History of the Presentation Order

The Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary (SPBVM) was the name of the religious order founded by Honora, or Nano, Nagle in Ireland in 1775.¹⁰

¹⁰ There are numerous biographies of Nano Nagle. For full accounts of Nano Nagle’s life and the foundation of the Presentation Order, in addition to Howley’s *Ecclesiastical History*, see William Hutch, *Nano Nagle: Her Life, Her Labours and Their Fruits*; Maurice Leahy, *The Flower of Their Kindred*; Sister Rosario O’Callaghan, *Flame*

Nano Nagle was born in Ballygriffin, Ireland, in 1718. Her ancestors included Edmund Spenser, author of *The Faery Queen*. She was also the cousin of Edmund Burke, the eminent author of such writings as *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* and *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. Nagle, along with other influential Irish pioneers, such as Edmund Rice, was one of a number of figures who helped revitalize Catholicism in Ireland in the eighteenth century. She has been called a “female St. Patrick,” a modern “Deborah,” for her courage and her vision and for her subsequent impact upon Irish society (Wyse 42); in a popular iconic image, she is depicted wrapped in a plain cloak holding a lantern,¹¹ a literal and metaphoric light shining into the darkness.

This period saw the establishment of numerous orders of women religious in Ireland, many of which are still active today in foundations throughout the world, including the Sisters of the Presentation, the Sisters of Mercy, the Irish Sisters of Charity, the Sisters of the Holy Faith, and the Sisters of St. Louis. The creation of religious orders attracted both wealthy and middle-class Irish women who sought to perform good works with the benefit of ecclesiastical authority and unencumbered by the demands of marriage

of Love; Sister Raphael Consedine, *One Page Beyond: The Life of Nano Nagle*; Thomas J. Walsh, *Nano Nagle and the Presentation Sisters*; Sister Corona Wyse, *Not Words But Deeds*; Sister Mary Pious Farrell, *Nano Nagle: Woman of the Gospel*.

¹¹ Interestingly, the public meeting premises and spiritual education centre owned and operated by the Presentation Congregation in St. John's today is known as “The Lantern.”

and traditional family life.¹² Mary Peckham Magray and Corona Wyse speculate that the surge of female religious orders in Ireland was the outcome of a complex intersection of religious, economic, social, cultural, and gender issues, including priestly misconduct, the tensions of Protestant advancement, repressive legislation against Catholicism, the economic and social impact of numerous famines, the relaxation of Papal strictures on enclosure regarding women's religious congregations, and a general increase of middle-class women's involvement with philanthropic and benevolent works (Magray 3-13; Wyse 9-13).¹³

In the 1750s, Nano Nagle initiated many charitable ventures, including establishing institutions for the care of poor aged women and teaching poor and lower-class male and female children, despite the fact that, under Irish law, it was illegal for any Catholic to do so (Wyse 23; Walsh 9). The uncertain status of Catholicism in Ireland at this time prevented Nagle from formalizing her initiatives into a recognized religious congregation until later in the century. Underlying these initiatives was the key idea of an active female religious order devoted exclusively to educating and providing charitable and religious service to the poor. As Corona Wyse maintains, Nano Nagle saw her

¹² Relative to the population of Ireland, estimated at eight million in 1840, the number of nuns in active religious orders was quite small, at about 1600. Yet Maureen Fitzgerald reveals that 81 percent of these orders were involved in actively administering programs for the poor and, by 1864, 84 percent of them had established schools (19).

¹³ For more information on this emergence, see Magray, *The Transforming Power of the Nuns*; Catriona Clear, *Nuns in Ireland in the Nineteenth-Century*; Maria Luddy, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century Ireland*.

apostolate as existing in “the vineyard of the poor” (41). Nagle initially affiliated herself with the Ursuline order, which she herself had helped establish in Cork in the 1750s, but the Ursulines had strict constitutional laws, and they refused to modify their rules regarding their requirement for full enclosure. Nagle envisioned a more active female apostolate, comprising what the foundress of the Congrégation of Notre-Dame in Montreal, Marguerite Bourgeoys, had called “secular” nuns;¹⁴ and, as a result of this conviction, she began the lengthy process of starting her own religious order. Nagle died at the age of sixty-six in April 1784, but left behind three dedicated members of the order¹⁵ to carry on her work and acquire for it formal religious recognition. Initially, the order was called the Sisters of the Sacred Heart, but it became formally known as the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in 1791. Maurice Leahy explains that the “Presentation” of Mary alludes to her Presentation in the temple by her parents, Joachim and Anna—a feast that the Catholic Church celebrates on November 21 (212). The figure of the Virgin Mary assumed increasing ecclesiastical and cultural significance in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century religious life. As Jo Ann Kay McNamara observes, Pope Benedict XIV, with the 1749 bull, *Quamvis Justo*, “encouraged women taking

¹⁴ According to Hélène Bernier, Marguerite Bourgeoys defined the nuns of her order as “secular,” claiming: “The Holy Virgin was not cloistered, but she everywhere preserved an internal solitude, and she never refused to be where charity or necessity required help.” See Bernier’s entry on Marguerite Bourgeoys in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online* for a full account.

¹⁵ These women were Elizabeth Burke, Mary Fouhy, and Ann Collins (Wyse 19).

simple vows under episcopal and parochial supervision to regard the Virgin Mary as a model for the active life" (601). Amplifying this ecclesiastical endorsement was the fact that, as Xavier Donald Macleod argues, the Virgin Mary was the focus of a general renewed cultural and devotional religious interest in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century North American and English society, celebrated as a feminine extension of God's favour, grace, and paradoxical proximity to humankind, a figure who was often established in opposition to—perhaps in order to mitigate—more overtly colonial acts of appropriation and possession that defined early modern discourses of exploration and civilization.¹⁶

The Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary received approval as a formal religious order by Pope Pius VII in 1805. A special episcopal dispensation was granted to the order so that its members could perform specified charitable works, such as teaching the poor and visiting the sick, without the restrictions imposed by full religious enclosure.¹⁷ The Apostolic Brief of Pope Pius VII states:

¹⁶ In the *History of the Devotion of the Blessed Virgin Mary in North America*, Xavier Donald Macleod declares: "There are peculiarities in her conquest and in her sacred warfare without parallel in the victories of the sword. The weapons of her hosts are gentleness and mercy and weariless affection, self-sacrifice and a refusal of reward on earth.... With the succession of Columbus came the...sword but also the Cross and the Rosary. There came lust of dominion of lands, of gold, cruelty, bloodshed and the vices of civilization. But among them were self-sacrifice, devotion, zeal for souls..." (4).

¹⁷ For an examination of the complexities of the Presentation Order's relationship to enclosure, see Walsh, pp. 168-81. As Robin Whitaker has noted, enclosure was desirable in that it granted the Presentation Congregation the designation of "real religious," which offered both "status and security" (Whitaker "Staying" 73-74; Walsh 168-69).

We consent and grant to the now-existing aforementioned Virgins and to all future ones, that they may, and can, on the expiration of the time of Probation, having observed all that is otherwise to be observed, freely be admitted to the Solemn Profession of Religious Vows, with the addition of a fourth, namely, that of educating and instructing young girls, especially the poor, in the precepts and rudiments of the Catholic Faith: in such wise, nevertheless, as that they be obliged in future to live under the aforesaid Rules and Constitutions...to observe the laws of enclosure, and therefore never by any means to pass the limits of the Monastery, unless for the most weighty reasons, expressed in the Constitutions, and sanctioned by the Canon Law. (Walsh 397-98)

However, as Robin Whitaker has noted, the dispensation had certain restrictions which ultimately limited their public and social role ("Nobody's" 178-79). The Presentation Congregation could not, for instance, accept fees or payment for their educational services, which became a determining factor in Bishop Michael Fleming's decision to later bring the Mercy Order¹⁸ to Newfoundland. The mission of the Mercy Sisters was to teach school to privileged Catholic girls whose wealthier parents could financially contribute to their schooling.¹⁹

¹⁸ The Mercy Order was founded in Ireland in 1731 by Catherine McAuley. Like the Presentation Sisters, the Mercy Sisters have a rich and dynamic history in Newfoundland. For accounts of this history, see Kathrine Bellamy, *Weavers of the Tapestry*; Sister Williamina Hogan, *Pathways of Mercy*; Robin Whitaker, "Staying Faithful: Challenges to Newfoundland Convents"; Sister Mary Penney, "A Study of the Contributions of Three Religious Congregations to the Growth of Education in the Province of Newfoundland."

¹⁹ These schools, known as pension schools, taught "respectable Catholic ladies," who were "aping after gentility," "elegant and fashionable accomplishments" suitable to their "comfortable" station, as well as educational and religious instruction (Fleming *State*, pp. 22-23). See Penney for an account of the fees, etc. In contrast, the Presentation schools were funded directly by Fleming himself as Vicar-Apostolic and Bishop of Carpasia. Philip Tocque's *Newfoundland: As It Was and As It Is in 1877* enthuses: "How

The establishment of the first foreign Presentation foundation in St. John's, Newfoundland occurred almost fifty years after Nagle's death in 1784, yet expansion was always part of her vision for the order. She had declared during her life: "If I could be of any service in saving souls in any part of the globe, I would willingly do all in my power" (Wyse 120). Nagle privileged action over contemplation, the performance of good deeds over praying for them, and she envisioned an order of active female apostles who would alleviate and transform the suffering of the poor. Bishop Michael Fleming, who was himself Irish, visited the Presentation Convent in Galway in August 1833 and discussed the nature of the Newfoundland mission with the Reverend Mother, Mary John Power, which resulted in four sisters volunteering to help establish a new foundation for the order in St. John's.²⁰ Thomas J. Walsh and Sisters M. Concepta Evans and Eileen Collins in their histories of the Presentation Order use the image of the "Perfect Pilgrimage" from

shall we be expected to delineate the single-minded prelate, attracting to our rude shores, and entirely at his own expense, those pious and gifted ladies of the *Presentation Order*, and again of the *Order of Mercy*, to diffuse a sound, a virtuous, a religious, and withal, an elegant education amongst the female portion of the community?" (409). Later, when the Education Act was passed in 1836, the Presentation School was the recipient of an annual 100 pound grant from the Newfoundland legislature. For more information, see Rowe, *The Development of Education in Newfoundland*, and Penney.

²⁰ For a full account of the story, see Howley's *Ecclesiastical History* and "The Presentation Order in Newfoundland" in the *Irish Monthly*, 1884; William Hutch, *Nano Nagle*; J. B. Darcy, *Fire Upon the Rock*; Sister Mary James Dinn, *The Foundation of the Presentation Order in Newfoundland*; Sister M. Concepta Evans and Sister Eileen Collins, "The Pioneer Presentation Sisters"; Sister Angela Curtis, "Irish Presentation Sisters Answer the Call: Education in the 1830s"; Peter Neary, "Kirwan [Sister Mary Bernard]," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*.

sixth-century Irish mission history, associated with the lives of Columcille, Brendan, and Columbanus, to describe the mission of the Presentation Sisters to Newfoundland. According to Walsh, the Perfect Pilgrimage meant “irrevocable separation from family and friends” and from one’s Motherland “wholly in body and soul” to follow “the way of the Apostle” (Walsh 253). Bishop Fleming framed the sisters’ pilgrimage with a quotation from the Gospel of Matthew: “Behold we have left all things to follow you” (qtd. in Hutch 299). William Hutch similarly claims that the sisters went forth “with the spirit of the Apostles to distant countries beyond the seas, where a wide field and an uncongenial soil awaited cultivation at their hands” (286). Such assessments place the sisters’ journey within an evolving and revitalized historical apostolic tradition, progressing into the present and future. Yet these historical verdicts were imposed retrospectively upon this mission. While none of the four foundresses ever returned to Ireland, the early letters of the foundresses express the hope and possibility that they would eventually do so. Indeed, Superioress Mary John Power of the Presentation Galway convent had negotiated a contractual arrangement with Bishop Fleming, giving her the authority to recall the sisters “at any time after six years” (Howley *Ecclesiastical* 1: 282). Power shrewdly stated:

Should the convent at Newfoundland be then sufficiently established, or should the present flattering prospect of promoting the great end of our holy Institute, by coöperating in the instruction of the poor female children in St. John’s, *not succeed* to their satisfaction, or should they wish to return for any other particular cause which they may *deem necessary*, that, in that case, your Lordship would have them safely conducted back to their convent in Galway. (Howley *Ecclesiastical* 1: 282, emphasis in original)

The fact that the sisters narrated their hope that they would eventually return to Ireland frames their mission in more uncertain cultural terms than categories such as the "Perfect Pilgrimage," with its invocation of permanent exile, suggest. This conflict isolates the tensions between their self-representation of their mission and the broader cultural narratives against which their achievements would be evaluated.

1.2 "Maria Monks," Female Apostles, or "Brides of Christ"?: Cultural Perceptions of Nineteenth-Century Women Religious

Before the features of the mission and writings of the earliest Presentation Sisters in Newfoundland can be considered, however, it is important that their emergence into New World society and their material efforts at self-depiction be situated amongst the broader cultural and literary formations that influenced the dominant perceptions of women religious in nineteenth-century North America. This is a matter of some complexity. The figure of the Catholic nun in early Canadian culture was one of often irreconcilable contradiction. She was a literate figure, simultaneously defined by educational privilege, material sacrifice, and religious and sexual difference, whose influence extended into and affected the formation of both French and English cultures in Canada, and whose historical writings constitute a portion of Canada's earliest foundational literatures.²¹ Orders of women religious, such as the Ursuline Sisters, the

²¹ The earliest congregations of women religious in what we now call Canada were French in origin. Several were founded in New France in the seventeenth and

Presentation Sisters, the Sisters of Mercy, the Grey Nuns, and the Sisters of Loretto, played a vital role in the cultural transformation of many communities in nineteenth-century Canada and in pre-Confederation Newfoundland and Labrador, advancing the causes of education, medicine, and philanthropy, as well as the development of formalized religious Christian practice and the emergence of an institutionalized Catholic faith. They also became important documenters of nineteenth-century history, as their letters and convent Annals recorded and contextualized local historical events from an enclosed female perspective (Smyth "Writing" 101-02). Yet, despite their alliance with the forces of change, progress, cultural advancement, and civilizing mission that influenced the development of nineteenth-century Canada, nuns and sisters became invested with other imaginative meanings that limited, and even contradicted, cultural perceptions of their transformative role. In these imaginative expressions, the differences between female religious orders often came to be disregarded, enveloping sisters with a cultural homogeneity that did not respect the differing origins of their foundations, the

eighteenth centuries, including the Ursulines by Marie Guyart (Marie de l'Incarnation), the Congrégation of Notre-Dame by Marguerite Bourgeoys, and the Sisters of Charity, commonly known as the Grey Nuns, by Marguerite D'Youville. The Sisters of Providence was founded in Montreal by Emilie Gamelin in 1843. There are many specific biographies on the foundresses. For information on the emergence of many French-speaking orders in Quebec in the nineteenth century, see Marta Danylewycz, *Taking the Veil*. Several English-speaking congregations also emerged in the United States in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, although the very first order in the United States was the French-speaking Ursulines, who established a convent in St. Orleans in 1727 (Ewens 22). See Emily Clark, *Masterless Mistresses* for an account of their development. Howley provides a brief synopsis of the history of conventual orders in North America in the *Ecclesiastical History*, pp. 403-04.

specific nature of their devotional practices, and the primary emphases of their philanthropic purposes.

Perhaps the most influential of these expressions was the proliferation of anti-Catholic and anti-convent literature that flourished in nineteenth-century Canada and the United States.²² From the 1830s to the 1860s and beyond, there emerged a deluge of sensationalized “true narrative” accounts, written ostensibly by “escaped” nuns, who innocently enter convent life, only to be confronted by unorthodox and dissolute behaviour from professed sisters and Catholic clergy. In these narratives, convents, particularly those in Montreal, were prominently featured as sites of corruption, illicit sexual activity, imprisonment, and murder. The most famous of these accounts was Maria Monk’s *Awful Disclosures, by Maria Monk, of the Hotel Dieu Nunnery of Montreal*, published in 1836, a best-seller which detailed a series of outlandish imprisonments, implied seductions, and bloodcurdling murders at the Hôtel Dieu, home of the Black Nuns, in Montreal. According to Maureen Fitzgerald, *Awful Disclosures*

²² For critical examinations of this literature, see Jenny Franchot, *Roads to Rome*; Susan M. Griffin, *Anti-Catholicism and Nineteenth-Century Fiction*; Jennifer Blair, “Surface Interiorities: Representing the Quebec Convent” and “The Knowledge of ‘Sex’ and the Lattice of the Confessional: The Nun’s Tales and Early North American Popular Discourse”; Mary Ewens, *The Role of the Nun in Nineteenth Century America*; Manuela Mourão, *Altered Habits: Reconsidering the Nun in Fiction*; Rebecca Sullivan, “A Wayward from the Wilderness: Maria Monk’s *Awful Disclosures* and the Feminization of Lower Canada in the Nineteenth Century.” For a broader cultural examination of anti-Catholicism in nineteenth-century Canada, see J. R. Miller, “Anti-Catholicism in Canada: From the British Conquest to the Great War,” and Terrence Murphy, ed., *A Concise History of Christianity in Canada*.

was outsold only by Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in antebellum America, selling 300,000 copies by the 1860s (25). Ostensibly, the account was written by a "fallen" nun who naïvely entered the convent and witnessed the events she discloses, but the narratives were, in fact, invented fictions that were presented as real events, the work of a number of writers, the primary of which was George Bourne, a virulent anti-Catholic activist, who, in 1835, penned a similar "first-person" account of corrupt convent life, *Lorette: The History of Louise, Daughter of a Canadian Nun*. Anti-convent literature shared similarities with novels of Gothic fiction from European culture, such as Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and *The Italian* and Matthew Lewis's *The Monk*, in which nuns, as well as male religious, appear as figures of intrigue, mystery, thwarted romance, and questionable piety. These conventions were repeated and amplified in the ostensibly "true narratives" of *Lorette*, *Maria Monk*, *Rowena Reed*, and others, which made liberal use of hidden chambers, "mad" sisters, mysterious disappearances, potions and other illicit substances, and suggestive sexual indiscretions between nuns and priests. In anti-convent literature such as *Awful Disclosures*, nuns are presented as either being generally passive and easily acted upon, showing little agency or vitality, or else they are actively and energetically degenerate. At times, the character of the nun, especially the nun who narrates the story, merged with another powerful cultural and religious archetype—that of the fallen woman, the modern Eve—whose revelatory narrative functions as a kind of cultural atonement for her naïveté and easy susceptibility to physical and moral temptation and seduction.

As Jenny Franchot persuasively argues in *Roads to Rome*, underlying the impulse to produce such literature was a manifest Protestant anxiety about the cultural implications of enclosure and active religious orders for the well-being of middle-class society (143-44). Anti-convent literature brashly and sensationally illustrated that female piety within Catholic religious orders was a force that was easily corruptible and misdirected when re-situated from the middle-class domestic sphere and Protestant family life, where it was best nurtured and maintained. In *The Rise of the Gothic Novel*, Maggie Kilgour argues that, in Gothic fiction such as *The Monk*, cloistering became “a metaphor for the repressions of the flesh, body, nature,...and the illusory idealization of spirit, mind and art. The structure of the cloister is an image of that repression whose tools are superstition and deception” (143). Nuns were to be pitied because of the restrictive regimes in which they voluntarily lived and because of their denial of their maternal role. These sentiments were generated from a cultural viewpoint in which, as Jo Ann Kay McNamara argues, unambiguous religious celibacy emerged “as an occasion of sin and virginity itself a crime against nature” (419). Convent life was featured as a form of imprisonment from which enlightened women would thankfully make an escape.²³ Yet

²³ In an interesting cultural replication, the idea of the convent as a prison paralleled the proliferation of female “captivity narratives” that also arrested the nineteenth-century Canadian and American imaginations. In captivity narratives, such as ones popularized by Mary Rowlandson, “innocent” white women were “captured” by Native populations, only to escape and tell their sensational tales of sexual and physical peril and intriguing cultural difference. Jenny Franchot makes this connection explicit in *Roads to Rome*, Part II, pp. 87-193. A well-known nineteenth-century Canadian captivity narrative is Theresa Gowanlock and Theresa Delaney’s dual account, *Two Months in the*

Jenny Franchot provides an alternate, equally powerful, perspective on enclosed life. She argues that suspicion about convent life reflected male Protestant anxiety about the cultivation of female power, autonomy, and self-determination encouraged by enclosure (143-44). As Franchot provocatively summarizes: "The rule of enclosure symbolized an imprisonment that ambiguously contained female escape" (144). Convent life, therefore, was seen in anti-Catholic literature as presenting a range of anomalous cultural possibilities and "alternative femininities" for women, which could be interpreted as being both repressive and liberating, and which were represented as alarming deviations from woman's "natural" calling to be a wife, mother, and household manager (Franchot 120; Sullivan "Wayward" 213).

Literature such as *Awful Disclosures* did more than to establish the questionable nature of enclosure and convent life. In such accounts, nuns, priests, and convents also served a political purpose as they became potent symbols of the static, degenerative, mystified, and "feminine" nature of Roman Catholic culture in Quebec, seen, as Rebecca Sullivan argues, as a violation to the "natural" unfolding, development, and advancement of Canadian New World culture founded on a vital and transparent masculine Protestantism ("Wayward" 213-14; 218-19). The opposite held true in Newfoundland, where the establishment of the religious foundations of the Presentation Sisters and the

Camp of Big Bear, published in 1885. For more on Canadian female captivity narratives, see Sarah Carter, *Capturing Women*; Jennifer Henderson, *Settler Feminism and Race Making in Canada*; Kate Higginson, "Feminine Vulnerability, (Neo)Colonial Captivities and Rape Scares" in *ReCalling Early Canada*.

Sisters of Mercy between 1833 and 1842 represented the vitality of Catholic progress. Legislative advances that permitted the segregation of religious practices fostered the emergence of separate Catholic schools for different classes of Catholic children, and the erection of landmarks of Catholic advancement such as the Basilica Cathedral. This progress would cause William Hutch to conclude in 1879: "There does not exist, probably, at this moment a single British colony in which the Catholic Church has made more steady progress than in Newfoundland" (292). The formal establishment of monuments to Catholic progress—what detractors called "Papal Aggression" (McCann "Bishop" 81)—was witnessed with consternation by Anglican missionaries and clergy, including Edward Wix, Bishop Aubrey Spencer, and Robert Traill Spence Lowell. Other detractors included two Newfoundland governors, Sir Thomas Cochrane and Captain Henry Prescott, both of whom felt that the removal of the apparently inexhaustible Michael Fleming was "essential to the harmony of the colony" (McCann "Bishop" 81). In Newfoundland, the emergence of anti-Catholic antipathy was seen as a means of countering Catholic vitality and ambition.

Indeed, J. R. Miller and Terrence Murphy argue that the anti-Catholic sentiments present in nineteenth-century Canada were fed by a variety of factors. The emergence of ultramontanist and increased papal authority within Catholicism and the tensions generated by the emergence of Tractarianism within Anglicanism in the nineteenth

century coalesced with the perceived danger of Irish immigrants.²⁴ As Miller, Murphy, and scholars such as Willeen Keough observe, there was an underlying animosity to Irish immigrants in nineteenth-century Canada and Newfoundland that energized anti-Catholic sentiments.²⁵ Miller observes that Irish immigrants were associated with abject poverty and dangerous disease, particularly those who arrived in Canada after the famine in the 1840s (37). He claims that mid-nineteenth-century Irish immigrants were viewed as a "social menace" in which the "problems caused by poverty and disease were quickly and mistakenly attributed ultimately to a deficient religious foundation" (37). Keough specifically examines the immigration of Irish women to Newfoundland in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, observing that many Irish women who entered Newfoundland were often detained as vagrants, prostitutes, and carriers of disease ("Slender" 100-05). Yet, conversely, the stabilizing effect of Irish women upon permanent settlement was seen as a threat to the colonial government's formal attempts to retain Newfoundland as a migratory fishing station, one whose resources could be redirected for the exclusive benefit of the British Motherland, instead of being used to sustain its local population

²⁴ See J. R. Miller, "Anti-Catholicism in Canada" in *Creed and Culture*, and Terrence Murphy, ed., *A Concise History of Christianity in Canada*, for a fuller discussion.

²⁵ This dilemma has also been situated in a broader literary context by Carole Gerson and Ron Marken. See Gerson, "Nobler Savages: Representations of Native Women in the Writings of Catharine Parr Traill and Susanna Moodie"; and Marken, "'There is Nothing But White Between the Lines': Parallel Colonial Experiences of Irish and Aboriginal Canadians."

(Keough "Slender" 101).

Some of these cultural attitudes emerge in the literature of early Canada. Carole Gerson observes in *A Purer Taste* that "Quebec's Catholicism provided North American writers with indigenous equivalents to the dark convents and monasteries of Italy and Spain" (112). As a result, nuns and convents made frequent appearances in early Canadian fiction, influenced by imported European literary conventions that governed the creation of New World romances and intrigue. In Frances Brooke's *The History of Emily Montague* (1749), generally claimed by literary historians as the first "Canadian" novel, Protestant Ed Rivers devotes a lengthy portion of one of his early letters home to describing the three different convents in Montreal and some of their objectionable religious practices: "Yet I cannot help being fir'd with a degree of zeal against an institution [the convent] which cruelly devotes beauty and innocence to slavery, regret, and wretchedness; to a more irksome imprisonment than the severest laws inflict on the worst of criminals" (19). Rivers reflects Protestant discomfiture about religious enclosure, depicting it as a form of "imprisonment" that invites his radical sympathy (19). Rivers's representation of Catholicism's corruption and excess is consistent with the book's theme that the "Romish religion is like an over-dressed tawdry, rich citizen's wife," as opposed to the "noble, graceful simplicity" of the worship practices of the Church of England, which are comparable to an "elegant well-dressed woman of quality" (82-83). Ann M. Little sees such "corporeal" representations of convents as a metaphor, not only for the dual penetration and closure of space that convent living seemed to

invite, but as a metaphor for Canada itself as “a body to be penetrated” (187-88). This corroborates Rebecca Sullivan’s claim that the nun’s “gendered body stood for the gendering of nationalism in the early nineteenth century” (“Wayward” 213). In addition, River’s concern with Catholicism’s ostensibly excessive conspicuousness and lavish religious spectacle was a common preoccupation with Protestant observers in nineteenth-century North American culture, as Jenny Franchot has argued.²⁶ Interestingly, as will be discussed later in this chapter, the Presentation Sisters in Newfoundland reinforced Catholicism’s privileging of spectacle through their repeated rhetorical emphasis on ceremonial celebrations and processions in their writings on the specific occasions that permitted their entry into the public sphere.

Not surprisingly, the convent emerges as an influential setting in Julia Catherine Beckwith Hart’s juvenile novel, *St. Ursula’s Convent: or the Nun of Canada*. Published in 1824, Hart’s story is the first known published Canadian novel written by a native Canadian. Hart’s portrait of the convent, as an early reviewer astutely observed, offers little insight into the nature of enclosed or religious life (Lochhead xxvii).²⁷ As well, the

²⁶ See Franchot’s *Road to Rome*, pp. 182-93, for a superb discussion of the cultural impact of Catholic religious “spectacle” on intrigued but suspicious Protestant observers.

²⁷ The anonymous review which appeared in the *Canadian Magazine and Literary Repository* of May 1824 states that the “convent has little more to do with the story here given than the seat on which the reviewer rests has anything to do with his narrative.” The reviewer maintained that the reader does not learn “anything of the life which the ‘Nun of Canada’ leads” (qtd. in Lochhead xxvii).

convent setting is decidedly less political than in *The History of Emily Montague*. Rather, the convent, inhabited by a bevy of mostly indistinguishable nuns, who offer frequent choruses of 'Mon Dieu' upon hearing shocking secular revelations, provides the romantic New World setting against which the budding Old World romances, cases of mistaken identity, and misdirected Old World fortune can be resolved. Hart also makes use of a predictable stereotype, that of the cunning Jesuit, whose duplicity almost confounds the reunion of the De la Valiere family with their fortune. Yet there is considerably less Catholic prejudice in *St. Ursula's Convent* than is present in *The History of Emily Montague*. And, unlike the misguided and duplicitous nuns in *Lorette* and *Awful Disclosures*, Mother Catherine's life of patient and resigned suffering establishes her, as Douglas Lochhead has noted, as a positive role model, which is reinforced by her prominent position in the novel's embedded narrative structure (xxxiii-xxxiv). She is the novel's central story teller, and she is represented as sharing those lessons to impressionable young women seeking social—as opposed to spiritual—models and guidance. Despite this, Hart's portrait is limited by the fact that her female characters enter the convent as an option of last resort, having been deserted by family and opportunity, as opposed to being motivated by any meaningful religious conviction or desire to engage in philanthropic and charitable works. Indeed, at the end of the book, Mother Catherine abandons her order to resume her true calling as she reunites with, and resumes mothering, her lost family.

The tensions discussed above are framed most pertinently in a novel that shares

the same cultural setting as the foundation of the first foreign Presentation Order: Robert Traill Spence Lowell's *New Priest in Conception Bay*, published anonymously in 1858.²⁸ The vitality demonstrated by the Presentation Order in Newfoundland by the 1850s may have played a role in formulating Lowell's anti-Catholic sentiments. Lowell was an American Anglican missionary who came to Newfoundland in 1843 to do missionary work for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Conception Bay at the behest of the Aubrey Spencer, the Anglican Bishop of Newfoundland and Bermuda. He was educated at Harvard University and came from a distinguished family—his younger brother was James Russell Lowell, a well-known poet²⁹ and respected editor of such esteemed publications as the *Atlantic*. Robert Lowell left Newfoundland in 1847, not long after Tractarian Bishop Edward Feild assumed the bishopric of Newfoundland and Bermuda, but he continued to be occupied about Newfoundland affairs, launching a

²⁸ There is little critical work done on *New Priest of Conception Bay*. Philip Hiscock has focussed on the novel's linguistic construction of Newfoundland dialect and language in *Languages of Newfoundland and Labrador*. Hans Rollmann gives consideration to the novel in *Religious Studies 3901 by Distance Education: Religion in Newfoundland and Labrador: The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: Course Manual*. Patrick O'Flaherty, in addition to writing the Introduction to the New Canadian Library (NCL) edition, considers the novel in *The Rock Observed*. O'Flaherty, while admiring the book's portrayal of landscape, dialect, and the social manners and mores of the Newfoundland fishermen, is dismissive of the religious tensions in the novel, arguing that "Lowell's gifts of observation and description were such that, if he had been less obsessed with his religious theme, he might have written a classic novel" (93). The novel has since been ignominiously dropped from the NCL catalogue.

²⁹ As a point of interest, Susie Rijnhart quotes from J. R. Lowell's poem "Columbus" at the end of *With the Tibetans in Tent and Temple*. Rijnhart's text will be examined in Chapter Three of this dissertation.

successful appeal for famine relief in Newfoundland in the American newspaper, *The Daily Advertiser* in New Jersey in February 1848, and even writing a poem to his former parishioners which appeared in *Collected Poems* in 1863 (Rollmann *Religious* 6.5-6.8).

As Patrick O'Flaherty observes in his introduction to the New Canadian Library edition of *New Priest in Conception Bay*, issued in 1974, the plot of Lowell's novel, in some respects, echoes that of *Awful Disclosures* (4). Lucy Barbary, daughter of a local fisherman, Skipper George, and a beautiful, free-spirited, Protestant girl from the rural community of Peterport—modelled upon the Conception Bay North town of Bay Roberts—mysteriously disappears, and the quest to discern her fate loosely structures the novel. After a series of interviews with colourful characters, a trial then takes place in which Lucy is presumed murdered. Lucy is, however, happily resurrected, mysteriously found on the *Spring-Bird*, a boat bound for Madeira, after some initial confusion that she is the boat's ghost. In the novel's denouement, the reader learns that she had been abducted and drugged by the nuns at the new convent in Bay Harbour with the help of the local Catholic clergy, although Lucy has no exact memory of the event and there is no explanation offered as to why the kidnapping occurred. Lucy then returns to Peterport, still fortunately marriageable, and little altered by this dramatic course of events.

The novel is infused with anti-Catholic prejudice as it animates the sectarian rivalries and bouts of violence between Catholic and Protestant settlers that defined nineteenth-century life in St. John's and in the outlying communities of Conception Bay. Like its settlement history, Newfoundland's relationship to organized religion was a

tempestuous one. Throughout the 1700s, following the implementation of the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, formal Catholic observances were outlawed on the grounds that they would encourage permanent settlement. It was illegal for mass to be heard publicly; indeed, premises that hosted public masses were often burned down. Joseph Hatton and Moses Harvey, John Fitzgerald, and others particularly identify the period following 1833 as one of volatile sectarian rivalry as the impact of dissenters legislation, which permitted the advancement of the institutional and formalization of separate Catholic religious and educational services in Newfoundland, began to flourish. This development came about partly as a result of the passing of the Catholic Emancipation Act in the British Parliament by Daniel O'Connell in 1829, but was also a matter vigorously pursued by Fleming himself. Fleming, for instance, on a visit to England in 1830, secured from Her Majesty's Court a written assurance that Newfoundland, too, was to be a beneficiary of the lifting of Ireland's penal laws.

One of *New Priest's* most pointed commentaries on Catholic religious orders occurs in the chapter, "A Call at a Nunnery." Mr. Elnathan Bangs, the American merchant, articulates the suspicion with which the enclosed life of nuns was regarded and deconstructs the nature and mysteries of convent life. Lowell uses Bangs's artless chatter, solecisms, and colloquial language to satirize convent culture. Bangs himself invokes the sentiments of books like *Awful Disclosures* and *Rebecca Reed* when he observes: "Wh' ye know th' Protestants 'r' pleggy hard upon convents;—clappin' gals up, an keepin' 'em n' prison, 'n' dungeon, 'n' what not. When the's so much 'f it, ye want t' hear t'other

side" (166). It is this framework that motivates his visit, so it can be established that the convent "is a Christian institootion, all open and above board" (166). By stressing that the convent is an institution, Bangs establishes it as a divergence from the traditional domestic structures that dominate outport Newfoundland. Bangs highlights the convent's anomalous nature by observing that it does not even contain a kitchen—something of a staple in Newfoundland outport female domestic identity—concluding, "Wall, I didn't s'pose 'twas a fact, but they used to say, you know, that nuns lived p'tty much like Injuns, on parched corn, and so on," mocking the ascetic lifestyle which some female religious orders adopted (169). In an adroit use of malapropism, Bangs calls "nunneries" "mummeries" (166). Convents are also compared to "hairims" and are likened to a "Lunatic 'Sylum" (166). With colloquial flourish, Bangs represents convents as both stultifying and permissive, as he enjoys a guided tour through the nunnery under the watchful eye of the unctuous Father Nicholas. His penetration into the indeterminate public/private space of the convent is a reminder of Jenny Franchot's claim that convents "evaded the distinction between public and private central to liberal democracy and middle-class heterosexuality" (117). The arrangement of private and public space within the convent, therefore, the endless twists and turns of the architectural structure, that Franchot and Jennifer Blair see as part of the imaginative challenge convents provided to urban identity and urban space (Franchot 112; Blair "Surface" 73-88), also defied traditional arrangements of Newfoundland's rural domestic organization, and become another "mystery" to be penetrated, which is emphasized by Bangs's confusion as to the

functions of the various rooms. Bangs also uses the “newness” of the convent to emphasize its sterile coldness—no doubt slyly to reinforce the “unnatural” coldness and “sterility” of the nuns who lived in it. The sparseness of the building’s interior and exterior is a departure from much anti-Catholic literature, which vilified the architectural excess of Catholic buildings, but, nevertheless, creates narrative tension between the convent’s seemingly innocuous and innocent appearance and its corrupt function and inhabitants as revealed at the novel’s end.

Interestingly, Lowell’s fictional nunnery may have been somewhat inspired by the establishment of the Presentation Convent in Harbour Grace in 1851, which was the first foundation of both the Presentation Order and of any female religious order to be established outside of St. John’s. This was followed by the establishment of a foundation in neighbouring Carbonear the following year.³⁰ Howley confirms that an existing building situated by the Church was donated and then renovated exactly for that purpose in 1851, with the sisters permanently settling there in 1852 (*Ecclesiastical* 2: 172). Geographically, Harbour Grace is relatively close to Bay Roberts, and may be the model

³⁰ It is worth noting that it was with the establishment of these foundations that the growth of the Presentation Congregation in Newfoundland accelerated. Up until the time of the Great Fire in St. John’s in 1846, there were only eight members of the order, with another forthcoming, all from Ireland. The first native Newfoundlander who became a Presentation Sister was Miss Catherine Mullalley of Bonavista who professed her vows on May 27th, 1851 (Howley *Ecclesiastical* 2: 51). By 1853, Bishop Mullock approvingly notes: “[I]n St. John’s, Harbour Grace and Carbineer [sic], ten Nuns have been received and professed during the last ten days” (Howley *Ecclesiastical* 2: 65). By 1882, there were thirteen foundations and 113 members of the Presentation Congregation in Newfoundland (Howley *Ecclesiastical* 2: 78).

for the fictional community of Bay Harbour, the location of the fictional convent.³¹ The new Presentation foundation and Catholic school in Harbour Grace was established four years after Lowell left Newfoundland in 1847 to return to America, but six years before *New Priest in Conception Bay* was published, and it has been established that Lowell remained connected to Newfoundland well after he left it (Rollmann *Religious* 6.5-6.8). While it is a matter of speculation whether Lowell was specifically alluding to the emergence of the Presentation foundation, his novel still performs important cultural work in that it articulates some of the specific and general prejudices with which the order might have had to contend within outport Newfoundland and against which their own efforts at self-representation need to be situated, despite, as will be discussed later in this chapter, the sisters' consistent narrative silence on cultural resistance to their mission and to their work.

Anti-Catholic prejudice was only one element affecting perceptions of women religious. Isobel Grundy argues that cultural and historical representations of nuns were often limited by being depicted from "an ahistorical viewpoint, which conflates or confuses the contemporary with the often distant past" (127). Grundy was speaking of nuns in the early modern period, but her perceptions are equally relevant for nuns in the nineteenth century. Nuns, hence, were often not seen or represented as subject to the

³¹ In an interview conducted in 1847, Lowell references Harbour Grace with respect to Bay Roberts: "Harbor Grace, w[hic]h may be called a market town is about 9 miles distant [from Bay Roberts]" (Rollmann *Religious* 6.9).

social and cultural forces and changes that determined the lives of other groups of settler women, as they were sometimes depicted as static curiosities that represented the past as opposed to a progressive present and future. This “ahistorical” perspective was compounded by the excessive sentimentalization with which nuns were sometimes viewed, as their vows, their habits, their sacrifices, and their life of enclosure cloaked them in a mysterious exoticism that both transcended and veiled their material and practical contributions to the communities they served and that fed Protestant anxiety about their cultural role. Writing in 1891, Katherine Tynan, in *A Nun Her Friends and Her Order*, declared: “Much of the poetry of the world seems to me to conserve itself in the convents. There is high ascetic poetry in the resigned wills, the cheerful abnegation, the patient service, the hardship to delicate bodies, which is a rule in all religious orders. For the eye and heart there is material poetry in the nun herself and her garb, and those beautiful dwelling-houses where: ‘The Brides of Christ/ Lie hid, emparadised’” (3-4). Tynan’s quotation from Coventry Patmore’s “*Deliciæ Sapientiæ de Amore*” in *The Unknown Eros* (1877) summarizes a broader cultural view that luxuriated in the paradoxes and the “poetry” that convent life seemed to invite. Patmore, a Catholic convert, is best known for *The Angel in the House*, his poetic tribute to the beauty of female domestic virtue, duty, and passivity, which imposed such definitive and sentimentalized strictures on Victorian middle-class women that it has since emerged as an influential critical trope around which much contemporary feminist criticism of the period is currently organized. Patmore’s sentimental reflections on Victorian

womanhood did not end with his contemplation of wives and mothers, however, and extended to considerations of women religious, perhaps in response to a renewed interest in Marian devotion in nineteenth-century England,³² as well as his own increased interest in the mystical power of religious women. His description of cloistered women as “Brides of Christ” is one with a rich cultural history. Since the Middle Ages, many nuns, in the course of professing their vows, were seen, and even declared themselves as entering into a symbolic, sacred, and mystical union in the form of a “spiritual marriage” with Christ the Bridegroom. Maureen Fitzgerald sees an interesting ambiguity in the conception of women religious as “Brides of Christ,” particularly with how its usage related to the development of the identities of nuns in nineteenth-century America. On the one hand, Fitzgerald sees the deployment of the term as a “strategy for power” which “rhetorically legitimate[d] nuns’ shift in fidelity from worldly men to the male Christ and male Father” (30; 29). Yet, on the other, Fitzgerald also sees the term as embodying a “capitulation to male dominance” that encouraged women’s subordination to male authority figures (30).³³ In addition to how the term positioned nuns within nineteenth-

³² See Carol Marie Engelhardt, “The Paradigmatic Angel in the House: The Virgin Mary and Victorian Anglicans” for a consideration of the topic of Marian devotion in nineteenth-century England.

³³ Magray notes that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Ireland, all women’s religious orders and congregations were subject to male governance, often a diocesan bishop (109-10). Obviously, given the many references to Fleming as their “superior” and “protector,” this was also the case in Newfoundland, despite the fact the order had pontifical, as opposed to diocesan, status (Whitaker “Nobody’s” 179; 194).

century gender relations and religious hierarchies, it also wielded a dazzling degree of symbolic and mystical power.³⁴ One of the interpretations of the Biblical book, Song of Solomon, is that it is an allegorical celebration of the symbolic union—predicated on multiple paradoxes—between Christ the Bridegroom and his Bride, the Church. Patmore celebrates this mystical paradox in “*Deliciæ Sapientiæ de Amore*” as he exclaims, “Hail Virgin in Virginitie a Spouse!” (l. 674). Such rhetoric obfuscated the hierarchical nature of convent life, the long periods of apprenticeship preceding the full profession of vows, and the difficult relationship that many women’s orders had with clerical and ecclesiastical authority and canon law.³⁵ As well, in such rhetoric, the utilitarian value of nuns’ cultural contributions became subsumed in a sentimentalized discourse, where the nuns’ mystical possibilities outweighed their social value, where their annunciated and visual distance from the secular world outweighed their practical influence within it.

Catholic nuns such as the Presentation Sisters also became central figures in the formation of what Jo Ann Kay McNamara has called the “feminine apostolate”: the increased participation of women religious in global missions of charity, education,

³⁴ Rebecca Sullivan in “Breaking the Habit” reveals that this image can be traced back to medieval times to mystics such as Teresa of Avila, who referred to herself as a Bride of Christ. When professing their vows, many women often wore white dresses representing their “spiritual marriage” (113-14). In *Spirited Women*, Deborah Rink’s history of women’s religious orders in British Columbia, there is a remarkable picture of thirty-five sisters, all dressed in white veils and similar white wedding gowns, parading through the primeval British Columbian forest in front of a statue of the Virgin Mary.

³⁵ See Magray and McNamara for a full discussion of these topics.

medical aid, and other benevolent works, which also allowed for the cultivation and introduction of formal Christian practices. As Mary Peckham Magray, Marie Luddy, F. K. Prochaska, and other historians argue, this was influenced by broader secular and cultural movements that saw the proliferation of women's organized efforts at benevolence and philanthropy in the nineteenth century.³⁶ Nuns, therefore, became distinct figures in nineteenth-century missionary activity throughout Canada and in other parts of the world. Constrained by simple vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and by a modified observance of the rules of religious enclosure, nuns who lived within the formal structure of a religious congregation whilst performing mission work challenged many of the informal defining principles of traditional mission experience. These principles included the heroic mobility of the missionary, the unrestricted access of potential converts to the missionary's "lived" civilizing example, the degree to, and conditions by which, the missionary became integrated into native communities, and the missionary's reliance on the spirit of individualism in order to perform and circulate his work. As will be discussed later in this chapter, these restrictions also affected their textual productions. Nuns, therefore, had a different relationship with mission history than other religious missionaries, which often has caused them to be minimized as

³⁶ See F. K. Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England*; Dorice Williams Elliott, *The Angel Out of the House*; Simon Morgan, *A Victorian Woman's Place*; Mary Peckham Magray, *The Transforming Power of the Nuns*; Maria Luddy, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century Ireland*; Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap and Water*; Linda Kealey, ed., *A Not Unreasonable Claim*, for some of the most influential considerations of this vast topic.

missionary figures in broader missionary histories, a critical observation that has been made most recently by Patricia Grimshaw and Peter Shylock (189).³⁷ Their identities as women religious gave a distinct structure to the manner in which their missions could unfold and in the language and narrative forms they could use to describe and structure their works and their relationships. Their religious and communal identities as professed members of a religious order often overcame their identities as missionaries and settlers.

Amongst this complex intersection of competing cultural roles and emphases, therefore, Catholic female identity created a powerful imaginative category. Catholic nuns and female religious orders emerged at once as saintly and sordid, ascetic and covetous, progressive and archaic, devious and transparent, powerful and passive, within

³⁷ Grimshaw and Shylock claim that one of the “less understood areas of research in missionary history is the work undertaken by Catholic female religious around the world” in that the “nuns did not conform to established structures of domestic life” and that they had to “overcome restrictions on movement outside their communities” (189). In the classic history of missionary encounters in Canada, John Webster Grant’s *Moon of Wintertime*, there are only two references to the Ursulines of Montreal, and Marie de l’Incarnation. There are also only two references to the advancement of the Grey Nun’s missions in northern Canada, even though the Grey Nuns established several foundations in St. Albert, Providence, and St. Boniface. All had important cultural encounters with Aboriginal populations. Elizabeth Smyth has been an important critical advocate for greater consideration of the contributions of English-Canadian women religious in Canadian history. See her articles, “Writing Teaches Us Our Mysteries” and “Preserving Habits.” A book of notable exception, one that vigorously considers nuns as missionaries, is Jo Ann Kay McNamara’s *Sisters in Arms*, which situates the emergence of women’s orders amongst European and American global, social, ecclesiastical, and imperialistic politics, particularly, pp. 565-630. Canada is only incidental to her discussion, however. The landmark works, *Women and Missions: Past and Present* and *Gendered Missions*, also consider the role of Catholic nuns in the broader context of mission work.

the Canadian, American, and British literary and historical imaginations. Agnes Deans Cameron inimitably captures some of these tensions in *The New North* as she visits a convent of Grey Nuns in Chipewyan during her 1908 northern journey to the Arctic and records her impressions of the lives of “immaculate” economy, conformity, and industry practiced by “these good step-mothers of savages” (102). Cameron frames her visit in oxymoronic terms as she first introduces the Grey Nuns to the reader as an example of Chipewyan’s “living”—as opposed to its “buried”—“history” (100). She observes: “We linger in the convent, looking at the rows of tiny beds, each with its little blue counterpane” (102). It was highly unusual in the context of early twentieth-century Canadian travel literature for a white woman traveller to describe the sleeping arrangements of other white Anglo-settlers, but this observation establishes the degree to which Cameron, with her “lingering” Protestant gaze, regards the Grey Nuns as “curiosities” to be described, deconstructed, and diminished.³⁸ She concludes her visit by pontificating: “Many a time are we to throw a glance backward through the years to these devoted souls upon Athabaskan shores, trying to graft a new civilisation on an old stock, and in the process economising their candles like Alfred of old” (102). Cameron’s description captures the progressive and devotional spirit of the sisters’ work, but does so by disembodiment and situating them “backward,” aligning them with the material

³⁸ The fascination with deconstructing convent life was also found in articles such as Rose E. Clark’s “A Peep at Convent Life,” published in *Rose-Belford’s Canadian Monthly* in April 1882, which offers a more positive glimpse of convent life than the perspectives offered by the anti-Catholic literature of the day.

figures and trappings of Old World historic culture. It is against such cultural representations that the writings and correspondence of the Presentation Sisters who settled in Newfoundland need to be situated.

1.3 "Uncongenial Soil": Newfoundland as an Historical Mission Site

In his *Letters on the State of Religion in Newfoundland*, Michael Fleming claims that Newfoundland "presents many difficulties, in a missionary point of view, to the perfect establishment of religion" (6). Fleming cites Newfoundland's lack of infrastructure and formal religious edifices, its scattered population, and its extreme seasonal weather (6-7). He also identifies both the material and moral poverty of Newfoundlanders themselves as offering particular challenges to the missionary. Fleming often mourned the nature of religious life in nineteenth-century Newfoundland society, in which the "conjugal bond had lost its sanctity" and the "seeds of licence had grown with impunity," as Catholics often attended Protestant and Methodist churches, leading to an alarming "relaxation of discipline" ("Mission" 2).

Since Newfoundland became the subject and object of European curiosity and investigation in the late fifteenth century with Cabot's "discovery"³⁹ of Newfoundland, it

³⁹ I am using the term discovery with irony, of course. Newfoundland had an indigenous Native population, the Beothuk, living in it at the time of John Cabot's "discovery" and Sir Humphrey Gilbert's landfall. There were also indigenous Native populations in Labrador. It had also been previously "discovered" by another group of white European explorers, the Vikings, some five hundred years previous.

had been historically seen as particularly ripe, if difficult, ground for missionary activity.⁴⁰ According to M. F. Howley, Sir Richard Whitbourne, who witnessed Sir Humphrey Gilbert's imperial possession of Newfoundland in 1583 in the name of Queen Elizabeth I, and who was later given a commission from the High Court of Admiralty, wrote to King James in 1619, "urging the sending out of missionaries to convert the savages" (35). Whitbourne speaks of converting the Beothuk populations in his *A Discourse and Discovery of New-Found-Land*. Howley links Whitbourne with other missionary explorers to North America, particularly Christopher Columbus, Jacques Cartier, and Samuel de Champlain, situating mission work in Newfoundland within a dynamic global continuum in which "[t]he missionary went hand in hand with the discoverer" (53). Although there is no concrete evidence that missionaries were present during Cabot's voyage, Howley still offers speculative evidence that Newfoundland's sixteenth-century history was one that was motivated by adjunctive missionary impulses. He, for instance, speculates that the name "Beuena Vista" (Bonavista), where Cabot is supposed to have had his landfall, emerged from a "religious" cry of joy and that John Cabot was "actuated by the same religious spirit as Columbus" (55). Howley also describes, and even pictures, an historical artifact said to be present on Cabot's voyage in which he claims "there can hardly be a doubt that it forms part of the equipment of some early missionary," and he speculates that it "was not improbable that he had" missionaries with

⁴⁰ It is beyond the parameters of this thesis to offer anything but the briefest summary of Newfoundland's mission history.

him (*Ecclesiastical* 1: 56; 55).⁴¹ Whether or not Howley is correct, his efforts to rewrite fifteenth-century Newfoundland's discovery narrative and invest it with missionary significance is noteworthy. Howley is enacting a nineteenth-century outlook that sees the history of Newfoundland as advancing only with the introduction of Christian influence and organization.

Despite Howley's narrative efforts to do so, it is difficult to establish a reliable history of Newfoundland missions before the seventeenth century. Terrence Murphy observes in *A Concise History of Christianity in Canada* that the "earliest examples of English-speaking missions can be traced to the colonies established by private adventurers in Newfoundland and Nova Scotia in the early seventeenth century" (108). Murphy speculates that the first English-speaking missionary to reside "in what is now Canada" was William Leat, an Anglican clergymen who arrived at John Guy's settlement in Cupids sometime before 1621 (109). The colonies at Cupids and Avalon were home to seven missionaries in the 1620s: two Anglican missionaries and five Roman Catholic missionaries (109). Murphy claims that the earliest female missionaries to Newfoundland also arrived in the 1600s, when two female Quaker missionaries, Hester Biddle and Mary Fisher, preached aboard ships in St. John's harbour in 1656 and 1659 (110). According to Howley, the first order of organized religious missionaries established on the island of

⁴¹ In contrast, for instance, Joseph Hatton and Moses Harvey's book, *Newfoundland: Its History, Its Present Condition, and Its Prospects in the Future*, published five years before Howley's *Ecclesiastical History*, makes no mention of this missionary "evidence."

Newfoundland was the Récollet Fathers, who settled at Placentia in 1692 (147). The order left Newfoundland in 1713, when the French acceded defeat to the British with the implementation of the Treaty of Utrecht. The period following the signing of the Treaty of Utrecht, when Newfoundland was governed by British rule, was a difficult one for Irish Catholics. They experienced the brunt of complete “religious intolerance” for much of the century; there were few priests and it was illegal for mass to be practiced and heard (Dinn 13). Father James O’Donel, a Franciscan Friar, became the first Roman Catholic Vicar-Apostolic of Newfoundland in 1794. He was succeeded by Bishop Patrick Lambert and then by Bishop Thomas Scallan, whose attempts to advance Catholicism in Newfoundland with more institutional infrastructure and vitality were aggressively championed by Michael Fleming once he became Vicar-Apostolic of Newfoundland and Bishop of Carpsasia in 1829, the same year that the passing of the Catholic Emancipation Act in the British Parliament allowed for the establishment of Catholic religious orders, such as the Presentation Congregation, in Newfoundland.

Bishop Michael Fleming, like many nineteenth-century thinkers, saw a significant degree of religious influence residing with women, particularly women within the domestic sphere. In her classic essay, “The Cult of True Womanhood,” Barbara Welter outlines the qualities of “True Womanhood” that defined its “cult-like” emergence in nineteenth-century America: “piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity” (21). Frances Brooke, in her fictional depiction of Canada in *The History of Emily Montague*, would declare that “[w]omen are religious as they are virtuous, less from principles found

on reasoning and argument, than from elegance of mind, delicacy of moral taste, and a certain quick perception of the beautiful and becoming in every thing" (108). Women's "particular susceptibility" to religion made them a natural asset to those seeking a society predicated on religious vitality and domestic virtue (Welter 22). Claims of the purifying power of women's "natural" redemptive role became intertwined and reproduced in nineteenth-century religious, colonial, and missionary politics. The cult of true womanhood became particularly associated with Protestant women and family, represented in sentimental raptures that elevated women's maternal role and solidified women's powers within the domestic sphere. As Jenny Franchot has argued, Catholicism and Catholic religious orders, with their "alternative family structures," best represented in their institutionalized celibacy, were seen as "sentimental competitor[s]" to Protestant families, ones that threatened their integrity (117).

The cult of womanhood was envisioned not only as purifying and stabilizing, however; it was also envisioned as portable, capable of reproducing itself in wilder arenas where "civilization" was both emerging and tenuous. A. James Hammerton observes that the process of nineteenth-century colonization in burgeoning areas of settlement like Canada and Australia became intertwined with ideas regarding the importation of "respectable" and "suitable" female immigrants and settlers (*Emigrant* 53-54). Colonies seeking a firm religious and cultural foundation were advised to bring "good women" to accelerate the process, as articulated by Edward Gibbon Wakefield, who claimed in 1849 that "the best sort of women for colonists are those to whom religion is a rule, a guide, a

stay and a comfort,” echoing sentiments articulated earlier in the *Jesuit Relations* (156).

It is the rhetoric of these cultural frameworks that Fleming enlists and expands in justifying his decision to introduce the Presentation Sisters to Newfoundland. Melanie Martin observes that Newfoundland became a valuable site “for the Roman Catholic Church to ensure the propagation of the Catholic faith” (27). The Presentation Sisters were vital to Fleming’s vision of “ensuring the growth of virtuous and moral citizens” through the education of its young women (Martin 24).⁴² Fleming states that

...the *practical* fruits of religion must be looked for outside the church door, permeating the ordinary actions, and visible in the every-day life of those who make profession of the pure and holy Evangel of Christ. In securing this immediate and constant action of religion in the domestic circle, a good woman is the most powerful ally of the missionary; for it is she who, by her counsel and example, shapes the course of her husband’s life, and moulds and fashions the hearts of the rising generation, whether it be for good or evil” (qtd. in Hutch 296-97, emphasis in original).

Similarly, in his *Letters on the State of Religion in Newfoundland*, Fleming observes at length:

I felt the necessity of withdrawing female children from under the tutelage of men, from the dangerous associations which ordinary school intercourse with the other sex naturally exhibited; for whatever care could be applied to the culture of female children in mixed schools, they must lose much of that delicacy of feeling and refinement of sentiment which form the ornament and grace of their sex. Besides, viewing the great influence that females exercise over the moral character of society—the great and useful and necessary influence that the example and conversation of the mother has in the formation of the character of her children, as well male as

⁴² For a broader cultural overview of the development of female education in nineteenth-century Canada, see Elizabeth Jane Errington, “Ladies’ Academies and ‘Seminars of Respectability’: Training ‘Good’ Women of Upper Canada.”

female—I judged it of essential importance to fix the character of the female portion of our community in virtue and innocence, by training *them* in particular in the ways of integrity and morality, by affording them the very best opportunities of having their religious principles well fixed...; for I felt that which all must feel—namely, that when once the future mothers are impressed with the truths of religion—once they are solidly instructed in the Divine precepts of the Gospel—once their young minds are enlarged, and enlightened, and strengthened by educational knowledge, the domestic fireside is immediately made the most powerful auxiliary to the school, and instruction and true education, the basis of which is virtue and religion, are instilled into the little ones at their mother’s knee.... (18, emphasis in original)

Fleming, therefore, expanded the cult of domesticity—seen to be the ideological terrain of the middle-class Protestant family—to include lower-class Catholic mothers, whose children the nuns were charged with training and educating. Elevation of the family—an elevation that erased its socioeconomic realities and urgent material wants—became the sentimental construct around which Catholic advancement and ambition was organized. Of equal interest is where the Presentation Sisters themselves are positioned by Fleming within his description of their social role: “I have said upwards of four thousand children have already passed under their hands, and I must here add that there is scarcely a district in the island at the present day where may not be found virtuous and religious females, diffusing by their example the greatest edification, and who promise, as mothers, to train up their future offspring in the fear and love of God” (*Letters* 20). The sisters’ role is promoted in a manner in which they share ideological power with the children’s Catholic mothers, giving them a powerful sentimental equivalence. Fleming effortlessly conflates the ideals of the power of fruitful domesticity and disciplined female virtue to present a

mission and a Catholicism capable of cultural regeneration. Yet, the Presentation Sisters' own self-identity as missionaries resided less in their "motherly" relationships with their students than it did in the discourse of kinship that they cultivated with each other textually in their own letters, as I will now discuss.

1.4 The "Resurrected" Letters of the Presentation Order: Representing the Death and Rebirth of Female Religious Community

Donna Landry has claimed that "the letter writer is always in some sense a traveller" (51). Landry's claim positions the letter writer in a complex nexus of spatial and geographic relations, structured on unexpected formulations of mobility and stasis, for both readers and writers of letters. In her poem "The Way I read a Letter's—this," the nineteenth-century American poet, Emily Dickinson, summarized these tensions, counterpointing the sequestered immobility of the reader with the letter's power to create a form of emotional and cultural "transport."⁴³ Nineteenth-century letters were very often material symbols of the dislocation of family and community wrought by the difficulties of immigration, the demands of migratory labour, and the complexities of leisured travel. Letter writing emerged as an important compensatory practice that allowed for the reframing of community over geographic distance. Within Christian religious tradition,

⁴³ See the first verse of Dickinson's poem: "The Way I read a Letter's— this—/ 'Tis first—I lock the Door— /And push it with my fingers—next— /For transport it be sure— " (ll. 1-4).

the earliest articulations of historical Christian missions appeared through letters. The New Testament contains thirteen of the apostolic letters of St. Paul, as well as two of St. Peter, all of which were influential in providing the foundation for an apostolic tradition that could inspire and guide the missions of later Christian missionaries.⁴⁴ Letters were also a particularly vital means of individual expression and communication for women religious, allowing them to maintain important links between their enclosed religious community and the secular world in which their charitable projects and their biological families were located. Laura M. Stevens sees epistolarity as a “unique form of theatricality,” in which “both self and other are forged in an act of imaginative projection and inscription” (63). The vitality of the feminine apostolate in the nineteenth century meant that many religious congregations and communities became disrupted and displaced, and then rebuilt, as foundations spread to different parts of the world.⁴⁵ Letters, therefore, became an indispensable means of nurturing and sustaining the “imaginative” connections between established religious communities. They became important in maintaining spiritual and emotional, as well as practical, connections and

⁴⁴ In my third chapter, I will be discussing the impact of St. Paul on the mission and writings of Dr. Susie Carson Rijnhart.

⁴⁵ In addition to the first foundation in Newfoundland, the Presentation Sisters established many foundations internationally throughout the nineteenth century. A foundation was established in Manchester, England in 1836. The first foundation in the United States was established in San Francisco in 1854 and in Dakota Territory in the United States in 1888. There were also foundations established in Los Angeles, Montana, and New York. The first Australian foundation was established in Tasmania in 1866 with later foundations in Melbourne.

relationships that geographic distance and the spatial separation created by travel, pilgrimage, and settlement created. In the process was recorded, as Isobel Grundy observes, "a quest for a specifically female community" (127).

As well as maintaining secular and religious connections, Claire Walker argues that nuns' letters were also an important means by which women could articulate their "ideas and expression" (159). As Elizabeth Smyth has observed, this was particularly relevant for women in religious orders. Smyth maintains that "women religious who engaged in the study, writing and teaching" of their own history and experience did so "within narrow parameters" ("Writing" 111). The historical writings, annals, and necrologies maintained by convents were written primarily to edify and inspire congregations, not to disclose and question them (Smyth "Writing" 103-08). More public forms of written literary expression and self-disclosure were most often not available to sisters, as these forms of self-representation could be construed as a violation of their vow of obedience (Smyth "Writing" 111; 123). Missionary letters, however, as Laura M. Stevens argues, gesture toward a "tendency to shape relationships by articulating them through reference to both public and private realms" (63). Yet, conversely, despite the letter's ability to traverse the public and private spheres, William Merrill Decker sees "isolation as the basic discursive condition of the letter" in the nineteenth century (160). Decker maintains that "the materiality of the letter exchange"—its uncertainty and precariousness—"is an abiding component in the poetics and narrative of epistolary relations" (38). Decker's arguments have pointed resonance for women religious such as

the Presentation Sisters, given the rhetoric of exile and isolation, often presented in emotional language, with which their missions were self-characterized. Indeed, Laura M. Stevens observes that “the letter form helped construct the community of feeling evoked by mission writings” (62). This “community of feeling,” too, was often predicated on separation and exile. These “communities of feeling” within mission culture have also been recently explored by Jane Haggis and Margaret Allen, who see missionary texts as “discursively constructing ‘emotional communities’ of religion” that “work to imbricate...women into imperial structures of feeling that are raced, classed and gendered” (692). The ambiguities and possibilities of play within the language of emotion which characterizes separation, and which was, in part, generated by the discursive structure of letters themselves, gave the Presentation Sisters a means of gendered self-expression and subjectivity, in which they could use the “intimate language of sisterhood” in a culturally acceptable form (Haggis and Allen 693).

That the letters represented more than simply exchanges of news and information was revealed by the emotional regard with which the absence of expected letters, and the arrival of new letters, was often described. In an arresting cultural expression, as Pierre Duchaussois reveals in his history of the Grey Nuns, the sisters who settled in Red River used the phrase “fasting from letters” to describe the periods of privation that occurred between the appearance of the mails (*Grey* 222). In an excerpt from correspondence written during the summer of 1867, an unidentified sister writes: “No letter from the Mother House, nor from anyone in Montreal! Our dear Sister Superior (Sister Lavoie) is

only an apprentice in fasting from letters. She finds it a very heavy penance. It is indeed the great hardship of the North, to which no length of time can make us grow indifferent” (qtd. in Duchaussois *Grey* 222).⁴⁶ Another missionary writer who wrote many letters from the New World, the Anglican missionary, Charlotte Selina Bompas, whose writings will be examined in the next chapter, also describes lack of letters as a personal privation. In her journal of 27 December 1874 at the mission station at Fort Simpson, Bompas wrote:

That Packet! O, how I long for it! It will bring me, I trust, my dear home letters. Eight months have passed since I left them all, and as yet no line has reached me, except those few from Selina [sister of William C. Bompas], written a few days after we started. It has been a long, weary waiting. I know not how I could have borne the thought of it had I foreseen the possibility of such a long, long time of silence—such a blank in one’s life.... God’s love and mercy are great in sustaining me through this trial. As the time draws near I begin almost to dread my letters. What changes will not six months have brought? (Archer 29-30)

Bompas establishes the power of the elusive written letters to restore temporal dislocation and lost experience, expressing this idea forcefully through the idea of the “blank,” the anxiety created by the emptiness of that which has been written, and is forthcoming, but is unavailable to be read. This reliance on letters from the Old World, in some respects, challenged congratulatory New World mythologies of cultural self-reliance, effortless

⁴⁶ For an informative analysis of the mission of the Grey Nuns in northern Canada, see Barbara E. Kelcey, *Alone in Silence*, pp. 123-37. For an examination of the writings of the Grey Nuns, see Lisa LaFramboise, “Travellers in Skirts” pp. 62-68. LaFramboise observes that the Grey Nuns also rhetorically located their mission and mission journey within a discourse of suffering.

conquest, and self-contained community. Such emotional longings give credence to William Merrill Decker's claim that letters in nineteenth-century culture had a metonymic function in which they attempted to situate the reader and the writer of letters in "a condition of contiguity" (15). This is forcefully brought to bear by Bompas's emotional description of the letters' arrival. She represents herself ecstatically weeping over and kissing the letters, which she calls "my treasures," when her husband unexpectedly appears and delivers them to her (Archer 38).

The Presentation Sisters in Newfoundland also expressed an inordinate interest in the arrival of letters. Sister Xaverius Lynch describes both the joy and the tensions that the delivery of a letter could generate:

He [Bishop Fleming] is the greatest stickler for rule and discipline and is most observant. I will give you an instance of it. He brought me a letter from sweet Ireland and you may guess my delight when I saw dear Ursula's direction. I took it out of his hand with the greatest joy and kept looking at it and fiddling with the seal not knowing well what I was doing I was in such joy. He immediately turned round and asked me if I was going to open it though Rev. Mother was present. As for himself, he appears not to care for anything in this world. His only breathing seems to be for the good of Religion and the salvation of souls.⁴⁷

She captures the joy and transport the arrival of the letter creates, "not knowing well what I was doing," before she has even opened it. Here the letter emerges as a seductive material temptation from which sisters needed vigilant protection. This was compounded

⁴⁷ Letter from M. X. Lynch to My dearest Ann, January 6, 1834. The Four Foundresses/First Letters to Ireland, Presentation Congregation Archives, St. John's, Newfoundland.

by the fact that reading the letter in front of her Superioress would be a violation of Xaverius Lynch's vows. As revealed through their own letters, therefore, letters came to occupy a perilous place in the culture of obedience that governed nuns' lives. Letters were depicted as a form of indulgence, one whose gratifying anticipations and pleasures⁴⁸ were set in opposition to the self-governance and discipline needed for a meaningful religious life; yet the absence of letters also helped to define the nature of an exiled religious life in that it allowed for a testing and strengthening of devotional purpose. The letter's absence was, in many respects, a present absence, therefore, the deliverance and appearance of which, while bringing elated joy, would confound efforts to present the religious life as one of structured suffering. Women missionaries who established new religious communities in Canada can be seen to be using the material conditions of their exile, their separation from known communities, to create new metaphors, actively framed within religious discourse, which fed, and also reflected, their sense of religious and cultural expatriation, while defining and establishing their spiritual trials.

The earliest letters written by the foundresses of the Presentation Order in Newfoundland have a fascinating material history that reveals the precariousness of mail delivery in nineteenth-century society. Letters were written and sent via the mails by all four sisters to the Reverend Mother Mary John Power of the Presentation Convent at

⁴⁸ The written text as a source of pleasure for the reader is, of course, the argument behind Roland Barthes's *The Pleasure of the Text*, where Barthes uses the terms *plaisir* and *jouissance* to describe the range of emotional pleasures invited by readable (closed) and unreadable (open) texts.

Galway; two of these letters were actually written the day after their arrival in Newfoundland, on September 22, 1833. Unaccountably, the letters were lost somewhere in Liverpool and were missing for four months (Howley *Ecclesiastical* 1: 289). After weeks, and then months, passed with no letters forthcoming from Newfoundland, the four sisters were assumed dead. Funerals were held for them in Galway; their Professed Vows were burnt and the Presentation Convent in Galway went into general mourning (Howley *Ecclesiastical* 1: 289). This historical anecdote gives credence to the arguments of modern critics of epistolary writing who establish the cultural importance of letter writing and the metaphoric and metonymic significance of the letter in nineteenth-century society in maintaining and in recreating community. David Fitzpatrick has observed that letters between nineteenth-century emigrants and their families maintained "material and emotional links between separated brethen" (97). Fitzpatrick claims: "The arrival of a letter was in itself a token of solidarity, while the absence of an expected letter was an endemic source of anxiety, even a harbinger of death" (97). More metaphorically, William Merrill Decker argues that the "contiguities offered by language generally and the epistolary text in particular are always threatened by the possibility that the letter will not arrive, will become a dead letter.... The death that is the space between correspondents...haunts letter writers" (15). Indeed, the early "resurrected" letters from the foundresses in Newfoundland to their Superioress and sisters in Galway are, in some respects, letters of mourning. They mourn the disruption to community created by the Newfoundland mission, even as they document the emergence of a new community in the

New World.

This simultaneous destruction and renewal of community allowed the sisters to frame their mission in terms of sacrifice. Barbara Welter discusses the feminization of religion in nineteenth-century American society as being formulated, in part, on a "special identification with suffering and innocence" "shared by both women and the crucified Christ" (88). Welter's observations, while specific to religion in American culture, can be extended to Canadian and British society where the conception of women's "natural" propensity for suffering became intertwined with ideas of female attachment and religious community. This attachment was represented in familial terms in the written correspondence of religious women who were separated from their known religious communities. Maureen Fitzgerald claims that "the social foundation of a sisterhood" and female religious orders was "women's ability, desire and willingness to make a lifelong commitment to live and work with other women" (32). Women could use these painful separations to create and narrate the terms of their new religious life, one suitably founded on sacrifice.

There is no doubt that the Presentation Sisters represented themselves and constructed their relationship as one determined by community and connection. They describe their relationships with one another in a language that reflected the hierarchies of convent structure, but also demonstrated familial concern. In a letter dated 22 September 1833 to "My ever dearest Rev. Mother," Mary Xavier Molony says:

I hope to hear dear R. M. that you are quite well since the departure of

your dear children and that you will be rewarded in Heaven for the sacrifice you have made—we will I trust in God satisfy your expectations by doing all in our power for God's glory.... I have not expressed my feelings towards my ever dear R. M. J. and my beloved Community but every day I call on the Lord to pour down on you and them every blessing heaven can give and Jesus can bestow with a million loves to you and every one of my darling sisters—believe me to be your fond and affectionate child.

Mary Xavier Molony⁴⁹

The language expresses both the hierarchical and the emotional nature of the relationship between the sisters and their Mother Superior. Mary Peckham Magray confirms that life in nineteenth-century Irish convents was “governed by a well-defined hierarchy of ‘spiritual mothers’ who led and ‘spiritual daughters’ who followed and obeyed” (49). Magray argues that “[r]elationships between spiritual mothers and spiritual daughters, then, were firmly grounded in the complementary concepts of motherly authority and filial obligation” in which “the source of female authority within the convent was rooted in this parenting role” (49; 50). Complementing this parental paradigm was the cultivation of “sisterly affection” between women religious in order to maintain harmony and keep at bay destructive behaviours, such as jealousy and intense dislike, which could disrupt religious and contemplative works (Magray 60). The family, then, became a powerful metaphor for representing and ordering female religious life and for framing affectionate female relationships. This is represented in the above passage as Molony

⁴⁹ Letter from M. X. Molony to My ever dearest Rev. Mother, September 22, 1833. The Four Foundresses/First Letters to Ireland, Presentation Congregation Archives, St. John's, Newfoundland.

defines her relationship with her Mother Superior in maternal terms in which she twice depicts herself as a "child." In an unchildlike gesture, however, she frames the sacrifice as extending in both directions, as she focusses on the sacrifice of Mother Mary John in releasing her to participate in the Newfoundland mission, in complement to her own personal distress at being separated from her known community. Sister Xaverius Lynch echoes Magdalene's sentiments when she claims: "Tell my dear Rev. Mother I often think of her and hope I will never disappoint her or my dear Community in any respect. Tell her I would be delighted to get a letter from her and that I look upon myself as her own child."⁵⁰ Sister Bernard Kirwan, in an undated letter, asks to be remembered "to all my darling Sisters whom I love daily more and more" and describes herself as the Reverend Mother's "attached child."⁵¹ The sisters, therefore, redefined the idea of family to accommodate their personal distinctive emotional relationships with the other women in the order.⁵²

⁵⁰ Letter from M. X. Lynch to My dearest Ann, January 6, 1833. The Four Foundresses/First Letters to Ireland, Presentation Congregation Archives, St. John's, Newfoundland.

⁵¹ Letter from Bernard to My ever dearest Rev. Mother, no date (c. September 1833). The Four Foundresses/First Letters to Ireland, Presentation Congregation Archives, St. John's, Newfoundland.

⁵² See Joan F. Burke, "These Catholic Sisters are all Mamas! Celibacy and the Metaphor of Maternity," and Nancy C. Lutkehaus, "Missionary Maternalism: Gendered Images of the Holy Spirit Sisters in Colonial New Guinea," for discussions on how women religious appropriated discourses of maternity and kinship to describe their relationships with one another, as well as with their converts.

In order to demonstrate the impact of the disruption to community, the letters had, in some degree, to reconstruct textually emotional suffering and sacrifices. This anguish is reflected in Sister Magdalene's letter to "My ever dearest Sister M. Augustine," dated November 21, 1833:

My heart is so sad today. I can scarcely restrain my tears—are you not ashamed of me? But recollect for a moment, it is Presentation Day—we, in a distant land separated from our dear Rev. Mother and Sisters, perhaps forever. Every moment brings to my recollection some circumstance or act of kindness of my dear Sisters and of you in particular...[that] can never be effaced from the heart. O, never, it is not in the power of time nor can the cold blasts of North America chill or damp the ardour of my affection for my dear sisters.⁵³

Magdalene counterpoints her internal "ardour" with the external and hostile "cold" of the New World landscape, emphasizing the geographic distance between evolving communities as she positions herself in an uncertain exile, implying that the process of building community in Newfoundland has not yet been achieved. Yet, in so doing, she locates the foundation of the Newfoundland mission not only upon emotional suffering, struggle, isolation, and self-sacrifice and but also upon emotional discipline and self-governance. She aligns herself with other missionary apostles and figures, such as St. Paul, who endured exile for their religious convictions. In an extension of this, she instructs Sister Augustine in the same letter: "Tell Mother Gertrude we celebrated her

⁵³ Letter from Magdalene to My ever dearest Sister M. Augustine, November 24, 1833. The Four Foundresses/First Letters to Ireland, Presentation Congregation Archives, St. John's, Newfoundland.

feast and begged of her to pray for the poor exiles.”⁵⁴ Magdalene’s claims of constancy of affection to her “dear Sisters”—which are given narrative force and aesthetic emphasis by her use of the stylized phrase, “O, never”—are echoed by Sister Xaverius Lynch who, in an undated letter written in the fall of 1833, declares: “We are as happy as can be separated from our dear sisters. Tell each and every one that I can never forget them and that no distance or length of time shall ever alter my love, affection or gratitude for my dearest Community.”⁵⁵

Interestingly, the letters indisputably establish that the sisters wrote, as well as read, their letters as a community. Sister Magdalene ends her letter by declaring, “My dear Rev. Mother I must now take leave of you, as Rev. Mother and the Sisters intend writing, but I will write again very shortly.”⁵⁶ The letter dated September 22, 1833 from M. X. Molony observes: “You have got a description of this country—I have only to say that our dear Sisters could scarcely give a full description of its beauties.”⁵⁷ Mary

⁵⁴ Letter from Magdalene to My ever dearest Sister M. Augustine, November 24, 1833. The Four Foundresses/First Letters to Ireland, Presentation Congregation Archives, St. John’s, Newfoundland.

⁵⁵ Letter from M. X. Lynch to My dearest Rev. Mother, no date (circa September 1833). The Four Foundresses/First Letters to Ireland, Presentation Congregation Archives, St. John’s, Newfoundland.

⁵⁶ Letter from Magdalene to My ever dear Revd. Mother, September 22, 1833. The Four Foundresses/First Letters to Ireland, Presentation Congregation Archives, St. John’s, Newfoundland.

⁵⁷ Letter from M. X. Molony to My ever dearest Rev. Mother, September 22, 1833. The Four Foundresses/First Letters to Ireland, Presentation Congregation Archives, St. John’s, Newfoundland.

Xaverius Lynch says, "Nothing could equal the kindness of the Bishop...but as I suppose S. M. has given you an account of his kindness to us, I shall say no more on that subject, for indeed no pen could express it. She told me she left me to give an account of our entry into the New World. I shall do so as accurately as I can."⁵⁸ The cross-referencing to what other sisters have written suggests a certain generic pre-determination and consensus about the kinds of information such letters should contain, establishing it as a form of disciplined, as opposed to spontaneous, communication. It also materially and narratively reinforces D. M. R. Bentley's claim that the "complex moments of an emigrant's departure and arrival resemble boundaries" that function as key sites of "differentiation" and "communication" against which the larger process of emigration operated (94). The sisters' collaborative narratives reinforce the value they placed on communal interdependence. Their ordered division of narrative labour suggests that the perspectives contained within their accounts about their journey were consensual, communally structured, and shared. Such strategies kept the possibilities of reporting inappropriate and alarming New World mayhem under careful narrative control. More importantly, as Tamara Harvey has observed of the letters of Marie de l'Incarnation, this division of labour reveals a commitment to "community life" (115).

In this regard, the sisters did not have the same degree of freedom to create the

⁵⁸ Letter from M. X. Lynch to My dearest Rev. Mother, no date (circa September 1833). The Four Foundresses/First Letters to Ireland, Presentation Congregation Archives, St. John's, Newfoundland.

types of textual personas constructed by Catharine Parr Traill, Anna Jameson, Susanna Moodie, and other women travellers and settlers to New World Canada in the nineteenth century. They had to interpret the novelties of the New World while still maintaining their identities as women religious, navigating and transforming secular interior space into religious space, even when they were far away from the structured order of the convent. As a result, they were distinct from many women travellers and settlers, who viewed visiting or settling in the New World as an opportunity to cultivate a certain model of femininity, open to the opportunities of participating in unusual “masculine” and heroic adventures such as canoeing, hunting, and mapping, but equally mindful of an intrinsic feminine, middle-class propriety that was often positioned in opposition to the “wildness” of the landscape and its “rough” inhabitants, upon whose help the success of the journey often depended: Native guides, Aboriginal peoples, and assorted domestic servants. As Sister Mary Bernard Kirwan, who would become the Superioress of the Presentation Convent in St. John’s, observes in an undated letter to “My every dearest Rev. Mother,” written presumably in late September 1833: “The Bishop expects a great deal from us, he never lets us forget that we are nuns and he our Superior.”⁵⁹ The sisters, therefore, in their letters had the special responsibility of “representing the self according to cultural criteria” of religious “femininity” (Corbett “Feminine 55).

⁵⁹ Letter from Bernard to My ever dearest Rev. Mother, no date (circa September 1833). The Four Foundresses/First Letters to Ireland, Presentation Congregation Archives, St. John’s, Newfoundland.

**1.5 “The Inhabitants came to meet them and received them with the greatest joy”:
Representing Mission Progress in the Early Correspondence and the Early Annals
of the Presentation Order**

One of the important duties performed by mission correspondence was communicating the progress of the mission to those with a vested interest in its advancement. Both private and more formal letters were used to communicate the visible achievements and some of the less evident preparatory work upon which the eventual success of the mission could possibly be attributed. As was just discussed, the four sisters divided up the tasks of communicating the important news that needed to be reported back to their Reverend Mother in Galway. Sister Magdalene described in detail the turbulent sea voyage; Sister Xavierius Lynch, their landfall and the description of the country in the New World; Sister Molony discussed Bishop Fleming and offered a description of their accommodations in Fleming’s house; and Sister Bernard Kirwan, as the new order’s Reverend Mother, gave a general account of her concerns about establishing the mission amidst the novelties of New World life.

In her letter to “My ever dear Revd. Mother,” dated September 22, 1833, Sister Magdalene stresses the difficulty and uncertainty of the sea voyage in order to demonstrate the mission’s foundation in suffering, uncertainty, and sacrifice.⁶⁰ They

⁶⁰ Interestingly, Fleming maintained that the voyage was not a difficult one. See Howley: “The weather was fine; there was one storm. The nuns, of course, thought the passage long and dangerous, and, we may be sure, prayed very fervently” (*Ecclesiastical* 1: 289).

encounter “violent” storms which damage the ship’s masts and make the sisters “deadly sick”; there are “monstrous” waves which “washed over the deck in so terrific a manner that you would suppose that every moment was your last.”⁶¹ Magdalene uses the violence of the storms to moralize: “As for myself, I did not lose my confidence all this time. I had a feeling almost amounting to certainty that God would not abandon us and as we left all those we so fondly loved for love of Him, this encouraged me to hope, I may say even against hope.”⁶² Magdalene narratively represents the voyage as a spiritual test that revitalizes her commitment to the mission and that inserts drama into its establishment. At a later stage of the journey, she similarly affirms: “The vessel became unmanageable so that the crew could no longer work and in such cases they think it better to let her trust to the mercy of the wind and waves.... I often thought of the secure and comfortable home our dear Sisters enjoyed but I must acknowledge at the same time I did not regret for a moment the step we had taken.”⁶³ The dynamic instability of the ocean voyage is counterpointed with the domestic comfort of Ireland as the *Ariel* is, by insinuation,

⁶¹ Letter from Magdalene to My ever dear Revd. Mother, September 22, 1833. The Four Foundresses/First Letters to Ireland, Presentation Congregation Archives, St. John’s, Newfoundland.

⁶² Letter from Magdalene to My ever dear Revd. Mother, September 22, 1833. The Four Foundresses/First Letters to Ireland, Presentation Congregation Archives, St. John’s, Newfoundland.

⁶³ Letter from Magdalene to My ever dear Revd. Mother, September 22, 1833. The Four Foundresses/First Letters to Ireland, Presentation Congregation Archives, St. John’s, Newfoundland.

propelled by God's love and protection towards Newfoundland. In maintaining that she is under God's protection, Magdalene echoes the sentiments of Marie de l'Incarnation, who, during her ocean voyage to the New World, made similar claims about being under God's watchful protection.⁶⁴

As revealed in Sister Xaverius Lynch's undated letter to "My dearest Rev. Mother," the entry of the Presentation Sisters into the New World is described as a triumph. Sister Xaverius Lynch observes that after being greeted by government officials:

We crossed the harbour in a small boat and when we came near the shore there were crowds of small boats full of people, the banks and hills were crowded and as soon as the boat that the Bishop and we were in arrived there were nothing to be heard but shouts of joy and acclamations. Our ears were stunned with the noise and cries of: "You're welcome, my Lord, and may you live long." All hats were off and several gentlemen were dressed in scarves. Protestants, Orangemen and all kinds of people came to welcome us and you may guess how we felt when we found ourselves in the midst of such a concourse of people and received in the most flattering manner. Everyone was most attentive to us.⁶⁵

Lynch's description of unbridled festivity is notable in that she stresses Protestant

⁶⁴ See Letter 5 "On the High Seas" in *Word from New France*: "...the tempests of the sea...have been very great. Yet our hearts have not been troubled by the disturbance of the elements, because the One to whose providence we have surrendered ourselves makes us forget ourselves and all things" (67). I am grateful to Valerie Legge for pointing out the similarities between the missions of Marie de l'Incarnation and the Presentation Sisters in Newfoundland.

⁶⁵ Letter from M. X. Lynch to My dearest Rev. Mother, no date (circa September 1833). The Four Foundresses/First Letters to Ireland, Presentation Congregation Archives, St. John's, Newfoundland.

participation in the celebration.⁶⁶ The arrival of the Presentation Sisters in St. John's is depicted as a cultural event that is able to unify diverse groups of people and transcend sectarian and religious rivalries. Lynch continues: "The Bishop told us that our entry made the greatest impression on the people, so much so that several persons were dissolved to tears, even those who were, as he said, with hearts of stone, on whom he often endeavoured to make an impression."⁶⁷ She also stresses that several of the "most respectable people called and left their visiting cards, Protestants among the rest."⁶⁸ She optimistically surmises of the mission: "Indeed everything gives us hopes that with the assistance of God we will succeed."⁶⁹ Lynch's early anticipation of the mission's progress reveals the sense of anxiety that underlay it and the responsibility that she felt towards making it a success.

Lynch offers an account of the St. John's landscape and harbour that is notable, and even perhaps surprising, for its emphasis on Newfoundland's domesticated beauty:

⁶⁶ In contrast, an account of the nuns' arrival that appeared in the *Newfoundlander* newspaper on September 26th 1833 confirms the large crowds but makes no particular mention of Protestants (Dinn 16).

⁶⁷ Letter from M. X. Lynch to My dearest Rev. Mother, no date (circa September 1833). The Four Foundresses/First Letters to Ireland, Presentation Congregation Archives, St. John's, Newfoundland.

⁶⁸ Letter from M. X. Lynch to My dearest Rev. Mother, no date (circa September 1833). The Four Foundresses/First Letters to Ireland, Presentation Congregation Archives, St. John's, Newfoundland.

⁶⁹ Letter from M. X. Lynch to My dearest Rev. Mother, no date (circa September 1833). The Four Foundresses/First Letters to Ireland, Presentation Congregation Archives, St. John's, Newfoundland.

We were agreeably surprised at the appearance of the country which we heard so terrific an account of. The view of the harbour and surrounding country from the Bishop's house is most picturesque and beautiful on whatever side you turn and appears to be in a perfect state of cultivation.... All around there is to be seen hills and mountains, perfectly green, interspersed with houses, green fields and small gardens. At the foot of these hills at the very edge of the water there are houses and gardens and as far as the eye can carry you on the tops of these hills and mountains there are houses to be seen and cows and trees.... At present the weather is beautiful and all is like what spring would be in our own country, every place looking perfectly green.⁷⁰

As opposed to "terrific" and "dreary," the landscape is "picturesque" in that it is measuredly undulating, delightfully fertile, and reassuringly expansive. Even though her letter was written some time in the autumn, certainly after September 26, Lynch repeatedly stresses the country's greenery and, as her allusion to "spring" suggests, the land's capacity for renewal and growth. Her emphasis on Newfoundland's cultivated aspects, the repeated emphasis on houses and gardens and "fresh beauties," invoke it as an established, as opposed to an emerging, civilization—a New World Ireland. This portrait would no doubt have been a reassuring one to the Presentation community in Galway, particularly the Reverend Mother to whom the letter was addressed.⁷¹ Sister

⁷⁰ Letter from M. X. Lynch to My dearest Rev. Mother, no date (circa September 1833). The Four Foundresses/First Letters to Ireland, Presentation Congregation Archives, St. John's, Newfoundland.

⁷¹ Her stress on Newfoundland's cultivated aspect echoes Fleming's own emphasis on Newfoundland's agricultural potential. Newfoundland's agricultural history, like its fishing, settlement and religious history, was one founded on legislative repression. In order to discourage settlement and ensure that its status as a migratory fishing outpost was not threatened, it was illegal for settlers to cultivate land in Newfoundland for 150 years (Hatton and Harvey 303-04). William Hutch observes that

Xaverius Lynch, like many nineteenth-century women travellers, therefore, uses the picturesque tradition rhetorically to reconfigure an alien landscape into familiar and reassuring terms.⁷²

Indeed, Lynch's descriptions are in marked contrast to the descriptions of another religious woman, Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna, an Irish Evangelical tract writer, who visited St. John's in the mid-1800s and published an account of it in *The Newfoundland Fishermen, and Other Books for the Young* in 1853. In her essay, "The Newfoundland Fishermen," Tonna uses the ominous narrow portal into St. John's harbour and the inherent danger of fishing to establish Newfoundland as a place of "danger and anxiety" (3). She observes: "Newfoundland is such an extremely barren place that there is not pasture even for a flock of sheep, in any part of it that I saw. A short, coarse moss covers the hard rocks; and if a person manages to raise a few herbs, after being at great trouble and expense in making a small garden, it is quite a wonder" (5). Tonna stresses the craggy barrenness of the landscape and the struggle to grow even the simplest vegetation. Tonna also discusses the "very great anxiety" of entering into the harbour: "The opening is so extremely narrow, that the greatest caution is necessary in entering it; for there are

Fleming "was the first to point out to the colonists the folly of confining their labours to...their fisheries, neglecting meanwhile to improve the soil which a bountiful Providence has given them for their support" (294). This adds an interesting political dimension to Lynch's comments.

⁷² For more on the rhetorical construction of the picturesque tradition in nineteenth-century Canadian literature, and how this tradition can be read politically, see Susan Glickman, *The Picturesque and the Sublime* and W. H. New, *Land Sliding*.

steep rocks on both sides, and if a ship missed the middle of the passage, it would strike upon the rocks" (6). Tonna's parable is organized around a near perilous collision between her sailing vessel and a fishing boat. She uses the allusions to fishing within Christ's ministry⁷³ to draw a moral lesson on the importance of being aware of moral danger and of being receptive to deliverance: "Dear children, you are like the poor fishermen in that little boat. Great and terrible danger approaches you, and if you do not get out of the way, you will be destroyed" (15). Tonna describes the same physical terrain as Lynch, but creates a decidedly different narrative emphasis. The reassuring visual distance that Lynch is careful to cultivate, which domesticates the Newfoundland landscape, evaporates in Tonna's descriptions of the dangerous proximity of the looming cliffs of the Narrows.

Sister Molony's letter to "My ever dearest Revd. Mother," dated September 22, 1833, particularly focuses on Fleming's exemplary behaviour as a transatlantic escort: "We are all enchanted with our dear Bishop he minded each of us in the vessel with paternal kindness and still continues to be Father, Brother, Friend and everything to us."⁷⁴ In this praise, she echoes all the sisters who claim that Fleming was "like a tender parent, physician and priest" (Magdalene), that he was a "kind and tender parent to us" (Lynch)

⁷³ When forming His early apostolic community, Christ told the apostles to leave their fishing boats to "become fishers of men" (Matthew 4: 19).

⁷⁴ Letter from M. X. Molony to My ever dearest Revd. Mother, September 22, 1833. The Four Foundresses/First Letters to Ireland, Presentation Congregation Archives, St. John's, Newfoundland.

whose "kind attention" cannot be "equalled" (Kirwan).⁷⁵ The stress on Fleming's paternal character needs to be situated within the gender and ecclesiastical relations of the mid-nineteenth century. In his treatment of the sisters as "children," Fleming can be seen to be engaging in a construction of ecclesiastical authority that emphasized the supremacy of his governance. Jo Ann Kay McNamara observes that clerics such as Fleming "all too willingly pushed their sisters/daughters into the roles fashioned for Victorian womanhood. Indeed they were trained to regard nuns in their charge as childlike and deficient in judgement" (612). Yet the sisters' constant approving references to Fleming's authority and character also gave them an active means of textually reconstructing their own submission to it. It allowed them to narrate the process of honouring religious authority outside the confines of the convent. This was important in the structured nature of religious life, where submission and obedience were seen to have cultural value. The references to Fleming's ability to administer paternal protection would also function as an important source of consolation to the Presentation community in Galway, for whom these accounts were specifically composed, particularly the Reverend Mother.

Sister Mary Bernard Kirwan, more so than the other sisters, outlines the

⁷⁵ Letter from M. X. Lynch to My dearest Rev. Mother, no date (circa September 1833); Letter from Magdalene to My ever dear Revd. Mother, September 22, 1833; Letter from Bernard to My dearest Rev. Mother, no date (circa September 1833). The Four Foundresses/First Letters to Ireland, Presentation Congregation Archives, St. John's, Newfoundland.

immediate challenges to the Newfoundland mission and describes the interruptions to their religious identity created by the transatlantic crossing and entry into the New World. This anxiety was compounded by the fact that the sisters were not living a segregated life in a designated convent during their first weeks in Newfoundland, but were sharing a house with the Bishop and his sister: "Though the priests are in the house we know nothing of them. We are T.G. very happy in each other, all anxious to be in our own little Convent. We endeavour as much as possible to be exact to our duties but 'tis not easy in a secular house. You know best how much depends on us four and how unequal we are to establish that regularity necessary in a Convent."⁷⁶ Sister Molony, too, notes the difficulties of life in a "secular house" as she describes the elegance of the Bishop's residence only to observe: "It is too comfortable for us and we long to go to a house for ourselves where I trust we will be happy together."⁷⁷ Kirwan confides her anxieties about the success of the mission to her Reverend Mother as one who has become a newly appointed Reverend Mother herself. She uses a self-effacing rhetoric to establish her credentials: "I trust as the Lord has always made use of the weakest instruments to promote His Glory it will be so with us, and under God we depend, dearest Rev. Mother

⁷⁶ Letter from Bernard to My dearest Rev. Mother, no date (circa September 1833). The Four Foundresses/First Letters to Ireland, Presentation Congregation Archives, St. John's, Newfoundland.

⁷⁷ Letter from M. X. Molony to My ever dearest Revd. Mother, September 22, 1833. The Four Foundresses/First Letters to Ireland, Presentation Congregation Archives, St. John's, Newfoundland.

on yours and our darling Sisters' prayers for success in our great undertaking."⁷⁸ In this, she echoes the words of the order's foundress, Nano Nagle, who herself claimed, "The Almighty makes use of the weakest means to bring about his works" (Wyse 120). In emphasizing her weakness, Kirwan was aligning herself with her congregation's spiritual founder, as nuns were often encouraged to do. Kirwan also echoes St. Paul's spirited defense of weakness that occurs in 2 Corinthians 12: 8-9: "Three times I begged the Lord about this, that it might leave me, but he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.' I will rather boast most gladly of my weakness, in order that the power of Christ may dwell with me." Kirwan positions herself through her rhetoric with Nano Nagle and St. Paul; by rhetorically stressing her weakness, she is also stressing her fitness for the leadership role in the mission she is about to assume.

A more dissenting voice is that of Sister Magdalene O'Shaughnessy in a letter to "My ever dearest Sister M. Augustine," dated much later, November 24, 1833. Unlike the earlier letters, O'Shaughnessy gives an early glimpse into the teaching mission of the Presentation Sisters.⁷⁹ Sister Magdalene describes the children as "docile" and "most

⁷⁸ Letter from Bernard to My dearest Rev. Mother, no date (circa September 1833). The Four Foundresses/First Letters to Ireland, Presentation Congregation Archives, St. John's, Newfoundland.

⁷⁹ The Presentation Convent school opened on October 21, 1833, so Magdalene would have been teaching in the school for approximately a month. Fleming estimates in *Letters on the State of Religion of Newfoundland* that, by 1844, the sisters had taught over four thousand students.

anxious” to learn.⁸⁰ She then observes that Newfoundland children are “fond of dress-wear, necklaces, ear-rings, rings, so that from their appearance you would scarcely think you are teaching in a poor school. No such thing as a barefoot child to be seen here, how great the contrast between them and the poor Irish! How often do I think of the poor children in Galway.... [I] must not be moralising in this way but hasten to amuse my dear sister with an account of the Labrador Indians.”⁸¹ In O’Shaughnessy’s carefully worded comment, the word “moralising” can perhaps be construed as a rhetorically encoded term for the type of incisive questioning in which truly obedient religious were not expected to engage. Her observations suggest that she thinks poverty is greater in Ireland than in Newfoundland, and that she is perhaps displaced in a community where the children do not appear to suffer in comparison to the “poor Irish.” To teach any but poor children was a violation of the Rules of Presentation Order. The Fifth Rule “inviolably” states that they “shall admit none to their schools but poor children” (Hutch 150). Sister Magdalene also frames the mission more pragmatically within the context of St. John’s religious politics, suggesting some of the tensions of the mission that Xaverius Lynch mystified with her early triumphant descriptions of conquest: “I must now say a word of the people

⁸⁰ Letter from Magdalene to My ever dearest Sister M. Augustine, November 24, 1833. The Four Foundresses/First Letters to Ireland, Presentation Congregation Archives, St. John’s, Newfoundland.

⁸¹ Letter from Magdalene to My ever dearest Sister M. Augustine, November 24, 1833. The Four Foundresses/First Letters to Ireland, Presentation Congregation Archives, St. John’s, Newfoundland.

of St. John's. They are honest and well disposed but very ignorant and surrounded by Protestants and Methodists. Indeed only for the great exertions Dr. Fleming makes and his constant watchfulness over their spiritual concerns, there would be scarcely a vestige of Catholicity amongst them."⁸² Sister Magdalene, therefore, echoes Fleming's own cautions about the unstable nature of religious progress within St. John's.

The Presentations Order's imaginative relationship with Newfoundland, their narrative reconstruction of their integration into the broader social community, is also revealed in its Early Annals. The Early Annals are handwritten records of the history of the Presentation Order in Newfoundland that begin in 1833 and extend into the twentieth century. The Annals contain the Acts of Professions of many of the sisters who joined the order in Newfoundland throughout the 1800s. They contain eulogies of the deaths of the foundresses and record the names of those laity who served as postulants but who were later dismissed from the order due to their "being totally unfit for the Religious Life."⁸³ They also offer historical eyewitness accounts of the foundations of new sites of the Presentation Order throughout Newfoundland in the 1850s and 1860s and beyond, in places like Harbour Grace, Fermeuse, Torbay, Witless Bay, and Placentia. These accounts are particularly valuable because they narrate rare points of public contact

⁸² Letter from Magdalene to My ever dearest Sister M. Augustine, November 24, 1833. The Four Foundresses/First Letters to Ireland, Presentation Congregation Archives, St. John's, Newfoundland.

⁸³ Early Annals, Book 3. Presentation Congregation Archives, St. John's, Newfoundland.

between the Newfoundland populace and the Presentation Sisters in their early history outside the confines of the more traditional places of interaction within the convent, the church, and the classroom.

The Annals differ from more general and private correspondence in that they were written in the expectation that the accounts would be preserved and read by generations of future readers, and that the writings would one day function as historical testimony. As Elizabeth Smyth and Maria Luddy have argued, convent archives are important repositories of historical and cultural knowledge about the local societies in which they were situated. Smyth maintains that “women religious were also among the first women to record women’s experiences for future readers,” affirming their privileging of a formal European literacy and the “power in the written word” (“Writing” 101).⁸⁴ In her assessment of the historical writings of German nuns in the early modern period, Charlotte Woodford makes this important claim: “Historiographical writing was not a private affair; nuns wrote history in the service of their convent. A monastic institution—whether a convent or monastery—was interested, just as a royal court was, in recording,

⁸⁴ This is in contrast to the oral traditions of Aboriginal cultures. Smyth observes, for instance, that Marie de l’Incarnation claimed that the lack of a written tradition within Native culture caused their history to be laden with “fables” and “irrelevancies” (“Writing” 101). For the epistolary writings of Marie de l’Incarnation, see *Word From New France*. Interestingly, Euro-Newfoundland was defined by a vibrant oral tradition that has influenced its identity and the means by which it preserved its history, stories, and traditions. The kind of formal literacy the sisters espoused, modeled, and taught was, in some respects, contrary to this oral tradition, despite the sisters’ dedication to teaching music.

and hence controlling, its own past" (32). Elizabeth Smyth sees Annals as important in maintaining "institutional memory" within women's religious communities ("Writing" 103). Smyth argues that "[r]emembering would help build a sense of community over time and across distance" and that, as a result, the "writings were deliberately inspirational and instructive," often describing the ideal characteristics and "daily domestic and spiritual duties" of nuns that would offer contemporary members a sense of continuity and tradition ("Writing" 106). Yet, in writing and maintaining Annals, women's religious orders were also self-consciously producing a version of history that, as Isobel Grundy has observed regarding the writings of early modern nuns, would be directed towards "an eventual merging with community history" (128). In the case of the Early Annals of the Presentation Order, this meant a merging with the more general history of Newfoundland.

Here is a typical account from the historical Annals by the Presentation archivist describing the seventh foundation of the Presentation Order in Ferryland on 2 October 1858 by Sister Mary Ignatius Quinlan:

As soon as the Vessel that conveyed them was perceived the Inhabitants came to meet them and received them with the greatest joy. The town was illuminated. Colours floated in the air on all the surrounding Hills. The streets thro' which they passed were tastefully decorated by triumphal Arches the children of the different schools went to meet them with lighted candles and with the Inhabitants conducted them to their new convent amidst deafening cheers and firing of guns, which was kept up until the late hour. In short nothing was left undone by them to shew how much

they valued the blessing of a religious education.⁸⁵

Here is another, describing the ninth foundation of the Presentation Order at Witless Bay on Sunday June 3, 1860, by Sister Mary Bernard O'Donnell:

Sunday 3rd June 1860 was a day that can never be forgotten by the people of Witless Bay and its neighbouring settlements, who witnessed its glorious manifestation of faith and devotion. It was for a long time the intention of his Lordship Dr. Mullock and the venerable Dean Cleary to introduce here a community of the Presentation Order to take charge of the education of the poor female children and to thus scatter in this locality some portion of that blessed seed which has been so beautifully distributed over most parts of the island.... The road for miles leading to the place was completely lined with people from the earliest hours and triumphant arches were erected at various places with flags in countless numbers, giving the most holiday-like and joyous appearance of the whole line of country and to the settlements. As soon as the carriages with the Clergy and Nuns came in sight, the people demonstrated their joy in a degree which I have never seen surpassed. It seemed as if every man in Bay Bulls and Witless Bay had brought out a sealing gun. The firing was so well and spiritedly kept up along the lines, and shouts of welcome and gladness, rung from the whole people with such heart and soul as showed their intense gratitude for the great boon then conferred upon them and their just estimation of its value. I have never seen His Lordship [Bishop Mullock] on any such occasion received by his people with greater enthusiasm. Surely such a people prove themselves worthy of the solicitude and affection he bestows upon them and which cannot be better proved than in the establishment of such Institutions of that of Witless Bay has now the happiness to possess.⁸⁶

The above passage makes use of a common metaphor in missionary writing—that of the sower—to establish the larger cultural project in which the foundation is involved. The

⁸⁵ Early Annals, Book One. Presentation Congregation Archives, St. John's, Newfoundland.

⁸⁶ Early Annals, Book One. Presentation Congregation Archives, St. John's, Newfoundland.

accounts of the eighth Foundation in Salmonier, the tenth in Placentia, and the eleventh in Torbay invoke a similar rhetoric of hyperbolic carnival and celebration. They combine the reliability and authenticity of a first-person, eye-witness account with a formal and epideictic rhetorical style. In *Tropics of Discourse*, Hayden White makes this claim about the different writing styles used in the writing of history: "The language used serves as a 'code' by which the reader is invited to assume a certain attitude toward the facts and the interpretation of them offered on the manifest level of the discourse" (107). If this is the case, then what cultural 'codes' can we read into the above historical accounts?

The dominant impressions that emerge are ones that establish the spread of the Presentation Order in Newfoundland as a clearly defined and differentiated act of ceremony and spectacle. The elevated language and festive energy suggest the transforming power of nuns and clergy to inculcate Catholic institutions and influence, creating the spectacle of an uncontested cultural authority. The visual and aural markers are repeatedly emphasized: arches, candles, flags, the ceremonial firing of guns, the cheering and acclamation, and the throngs of people. The fact that the foundations were ceremonially marked by public processions is culturally significant. Mary Ryan has argued that "the parade is a peculiar text, intricately entangled with its social and historical context" (133). The parade as a form of text, therefore, merges with the Annalist's celebratory textual descriptions of it. Bonnie Huskins, Susan G. Davis, and Mary Ryan variously claim that such processions enacted "ideas about social relations" that allowed women a role in defining public "ceremonial space" (Huskins 145; Davis 3-

4; Ryan 138-39). This was particularly pertinent for women in religious orders because of their lives of enclosure. As Mary Ryan has observed, parades and processions in nineteenth-century America were significant in that different sectors of society “presented *themselves*, rather than abstract symbols, for public view” (137, my emphasis). The presence of the nuns in the parade, therefore, emerges as part of the spectacle described in the narrative, enacting a dramatic shift from their position hidden in the margins of society into its ceremonial centre. In their writings, outport Newfoundland itself becomes consecrated as newly created “ceremonial space.” The Annals are consistent with earlier accounts that also described the expansion of the Presentation Order in Newfoundland as an uncontested public and ceremonial event. Similar to the sisters’ epistolary writings, these historical accounts of the order’s growth and development erase both sectarian rivalries between Catholic and Protestants and resistance to their presence—resistance that was fictionalized in books such as Lowell’s *New Priest in Conception Bay*. Yet female missionaries often encountered both hostile curiosity to their presence and resistance to their work. In *Taking the Veil*, for instance, Marta Danylewycz describes the early years of the foundation of the Sisters of Miséricorde, a religious order, which provided charitable services to poor and pregnant women in the 1850s and 1860s in Montreal. The Sisters of Miséricorde were often subject to hostility and abuse, as the sisters’ own accounts establish: “All too often we were accompanied by deliberate shouting, by organized crowds, by nameless charivaris. Sometimes it was necessary to cross the street in order to attend the religious functions of the community and an

unhealthy, indiscreet, animal curiosity brought together two rows of men with their sardonic and impudent eyes, their ill-sounding and sarcastic words” (qtd. in Danylewycz 86). The hostility to the missionary presence in nineteenth-century Montreal described by the Sisters of Miséricorde provides an arresting contrast to the celebratory rhetoric describing the spread of the Presentation Sisters throughout Newfoundland.

The Presentation Sisters valued the documentation of acceptance as opposed to perseverance. In this, therefore, the Annals differ from the historical accounts written by Bishop Fleming, who never missed an opportunity of congratulating himself on his achievements, and who did so by emphasizing, often in Herculean terms, the personal labours involved and the opposition with which he had to contend. For instance, in his second letter in *Letters on the State of Religion in Newfoundland*, Fleming describes his efforts to secure a suitable site for the Basilica:

How much of tribulation did I not endure during that period! Every effort that malice the most ingenious could devise has been resorted to to thwart my views: calumny, insult, and opprobrium, were heaped upon me to impede the accomplishment of my wishes—to blight the prospect of my success; but conscious of the integrity of my intention, I persevered; and after having travelled 20,000 miles of the Atlantic Ocean solely upon this business, amid storms, tempests, danger and death, and undergoing all the hardship and privation I could endure, God ultimately crowned my hopes.... (12)

In *Metahistory*, Hayden White describes four dominant narrative modes that characterized the practice of historical writing in the nineteenth century: comic, romantic, satiric, and tragic. To use White’s categories, the Presentation Sisters used a predominantly comic mode to emplot the story of their presence in Newfoundland,

emphasizing harmony and unification, while Fleming used the romantic mode, emphasizing inevitable victory, but only after tribulation and persecution. The Presentation Sisters, then, can be seen to be producing and narrating a discourse of progress that erases hostility to their presence and embraces their acceptance by Newfoundland society. The elevated rhetorical style of these writings reinforces their depiction of a recognized and uncontested cultural authority. In the nineteenth-century *Early Annals*, the sisters represented themselves as unifying and enriching the communities into which they entered, while still maintaining an inherent cultural difference that suggested that they would never truly be assimilated into them.

1.6 "I suppose, dear Ann, you think all this incredible": Representations of Wonder and Piety in the Newfoundland New World

The sisters' epistolary writings are also distinguished by the extent to which they cultivated the discourse of wonder in their writings, both in constructing themselves as objects of wonder and in using wonder, in Stephen Greenblatt's phrase, as a "calculated rhetorical strategy" (73). Greenblatt defines wonder as "an instinctive recognition of difference" and, using René Descartes's phrase, "a sudden surprise of the soul" that often defined "first encounters" (20). Greenblatt claims that the "expression of wonder stands for all that cannot be understood, that can scarcely be believed," as it "calls attention to the problem of credibility" while insisting upon the "undeniability, the exigency of the experience" (20). In this regard, it is no surprise that wonder was an integral part of

responses to the New World by European newcomers. In *Imagining Culture*, Margaret E. Turner uses the critical work of Edward Said, as well as Greenblatt, to argue that the New World was an invented European category that fed the European imagination and that mystified Europe's colonial aggression in a rhetoric that effectively "dispossessed natives and appropriated both [native] land and language" (5). Turner claims that "the ability of Europe to create the new world was dependent" upon "the Americas' continued resistance to recuperation, containment and ideological incorporation by Europe" (7). Greenblatt argues that the marvelous, or wonder, is "the central figure in the initial European response to the New World" and that it "gestures toward the world by registering an overpowering intensity of response" (14; 16). This, as Turner suggests, creates a sense of "radical displacement" that gives "power and resonance" to New World writings (6).

Turner traces the complex operation and developments of New World discourse well into the twentieth century in Canadian literary texts by Jane Urquhart and Robert Kroetsch, establishing it as a viable cultural narrative form. Turner's investigation, however, begins in nineteenth-century Canada with the writings of John Richardson and, hence, excludes the role that Europeans visiting Newfoundland in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries specifically played in the formation of Canadian New World ideology. Indeed, Newfoundland today still bears the name that summarized its imaginative relationship to European geography and civilization in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Sir Richard Whitbourne, for instance, in *A Discourse and Discovery*

of *New-Found-Land* establishes Newfoundland as a site of the marvelous when he claims to have seen a “strange Creature” that he determines was a mermaid in St. John’s Harbour in 1610. Other important historical accounts include Edward Hayes’s “A Brief Relation to the New Found Land,” John Mason’s “Discourse of the Newfoundland,” Sir William Vaughan’s *The Golden Fleece*, Richard Eburne’s “A Plaine Pathway to Plantations,” and Robert Hayman’s verse sequence *Quodlibets*—the latter of which provides such a delicious source of humour in Wayne Johnston’s important novel, *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams*.⁸⁷ M. F. Howley in the *Ecclesiastical History of Newfoundland* also establishes Newfoundland as a more contemporary site of wonder when he cites a passage from Seneca’s *Medæa* which he claims contains “the well-known prophecy of the discovery of Newfoundland”: “In latter years shall come a wondrous age,/When ocean shall the chains of things unbind./And show the mighty world that lies behind./And Tiphys shall a NEWFOUNDLAND explore,/Nor Thule shall longer be the last known shore!”(289).

At the beginning of her argument, Turner usefully counterpoints the New World with the *known* world, the cultural geography that stabilized the European world outlook, establishing these worlds as distinctive discursive categories that generated the cultural tensions that characterized New World narratives (3). This distinction has relevance in

⁸⁷ For a detailed examination of the historical responses to Newfoundland by European explorers and voyagers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see Patrick O’Flaherty’s *The Rock Observed*, Chapter One, pp. 3-15.

creating a context for the examination of the correspondence of the Presentation Sisters in terms of how they constructed Newfoundland and the nature of their own presence in it within their own writings. For these women religious, the distinction became allied with ideas of religious progress and the nature of their life of religious structure and enclosure that influenced their imaginative relationship to it. Enhancing this imaginative relationship was the fact that Newfoundland was seen to be uniquely positioned in nineteenth-century Old World/New World discourse. Historians such as Joseph Hatton and Moses Harvey claimed that Newfoundland formed an important transitional point and stepping stone between the Old World and the New (vii). Perceptions such as this complicated Newfoundland's New World identity, establishing it as an "in-between" and marginal culture, a position that has been more recently argued by contemporary critics such as Shane O'Dea.⁸⁸

Integral to the Presentation Sisters' representations of their entry into the New World were their depictions of the initial reactions of native Newfoundlanders to their presence. Xaverius Lynch says on their arrival: "Some pious women came into the room where we were and I was never more astonished when they threw themselves on their knees and asked our blessing and kissed our hands and welcomed us a thousand times."⁸⁹

⁸⁸ See Shane O'Dea, "Newfoundland: The Development of Culture on the Margin." Homi K. Bhabha explores the complexities of "in-between" culture in "Culture's In-Between" in *Questions of Cultural Identity*.

⁸⁹ Letter from M. X. Lynch to My ever dear Rev. Mother, undated letter (circa September 1833). The Four Foundresses/First Letters to Ireland, Presentation

In a letter dated January 6, 1834, Lynch again writes: "You would be astonished at their [Newfoundlanders'] simplicity and ignorance. When we first came they asked the priests would we be sent to out-harbours...to hear Confessions and if we say Mass for ourselves or in the chapel! They thought we would live underground and some of the most respectable people asked if we would ever speak or laugh. The poor people regularly kneel down to us. They took me for the Superior on account of my spectacles."⁹⁰ In local perceptions of them, therefore, the nuns were seen to be synonymous with Catholic clergy, having more ecclesiastical power and privilege than they ever possessed in historical reality.⁹¹ Interestingly, this reaction to the Presentation Sisters closely echoes the reaction to the Grey Nuns by Natives at Fort Chipewyan in August 1867: "The Indians of Chipewyan were most curious about the Nuns, whom they thought different

Congregation Archives, St. John's, Newfoundland.

⁹⁰ Letter from M. X. Lynch to My dearest Ann, January 6, 1834. The Four Foundresses/First Letters to Ireland, Presentation Congregation Archives, St. John's, Newfoundland. The reason the sisters inspired this reaction was no doubt due in part to their wearing of holy habit. The habit of the Presentation Sisters was modelled on the Ursuline habit with whom Nano Nagle had an early association; she even contemplated joining that order before establishing her own. The Newfoundland sisters are for the most part silent on the wearing of the habit. However, there are a couple of brief references in Howley that establish that the Presentation Sisters in Newfoundland did wear habits. For a general consideration of the cultural implications and religious significance of the habit, see Rebecca's Sullivan's excellent article, "Breaking the Habit," as well as Elizabeth Kuhn, *The Habit: A History of the Clothing of Catholic Nuns*.

⁹¹ Women religious in the nineteenth century were not permitted to engage in such sacramental offices as hearing confession, administering Communion, and conducting masses, which could only be performed by ordained clergy.

from ordinary mortals. They wanted to know if we said Mass, if we heard confessions, at least, of women. One of them came to me to kneel for my blessing" (qtd. in Duchaussois *Grey* 110). The sisters establish themselves as misunderstood figures of cultural curiosity, religious power, and mystery. Underlying these observances appears to be the belief that a form of cultural power lay in establishing oneself as a figure of curiosity. As Gillian Beer has observed: "Curiosity was so strong a driving force in Western expeditions, and so valued as a disinterested or scientific force that the absence of an answering curiosity was felt as rebuff or even insult" (62). Such descriptions establish the sisters' religious difference as one of the features that determined the conditions by which they were integrated into Newfoundland society. Through their own self-depictions, they emphasize their own capacity to generate wonder and curiosity in Newfoundland settlers, hence reformulating the paradigm of the New World as a site of wonder to include themselves.

Willeen Keough has observed that the "spiritual life of any group is a site of continuous negotiation between the natural and supernatural worlds" ("Old Hag" 11). To extend Keough's observation, the "spiritual life" of any group is also a site of "continuous negotiation" between the visible and the invisible energies of the world. One sister, in particular, establishes a complex relationship with the discourse of wonder in her elaborate depictions of winter in Newfoundland. Sister Xaverius Lynch uses an ingenious conceit—that of cold and ice—to organize a sustained description of the nature of mission life on the island.

The relatively insular nature of their life in Newfoundland meant that the sisters had few opportunities to participate in outdoor activity. Sister Magdalene observes of their life in Newfoundland: "We live very retired, no idle visits here. We scarcely ever see anyone except on business—labour and self-denial, the virtues practised by Bishops, priests and nuns."⁹² As a result, winter itself was experienced from inside the convent. Ice and freezing cold, in particular, emerged as particularly important themes to describe the nature of life in the new mission. Catharine Randall identifies the emergence of this thematic tendency in the earliest letters of the *Jesuit Relations*. Randall argues that the image of the "cathedral of ice," a phrase used by one of the Jesuit Fathers to describe a particularly spectacular ice formation, conflated Old World cultural extravagance and New World natural splendour to create a complex metaphor that reinforced the Jesuit projects of cultural and linguistic translation, as well as religious conversion (17-18). In nineteenth-century culture, ice had an imaginative history that captivated many thinkers and writers. In his book, *The Spiritual History of Ice*, Eric G. Wilson discusses the influence and the impact of the scientific discourse surrounding ice formation as a physical phenomenon on the cultural poetics of early nineteenth-century writers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Blake, Mary Shelley, and Edgar Allan Poe. The science of ice crystals, glaciers, and polar stability represented the

⁹² Letter from Magdalene to My ever dearest Sister M. Augustine, November 24, 1833. The Four Foundresses/First Letters to Ireland, Presentation Congregation Archives, St. John's, Newfoundland.

unpredictable and unruly energies of the universe, still governed by God's laws, against which poets could measure their own transcendence and their own ingenious capacity to capture these dynamic processes in language (Wilson 7-71). Ice, therefore, arrested the nineteenth-century literary imagination as much for its possession of mystical properties as for its scientific interest.

The mystical properties of ice and cold were also articulated in selected passages of the Old Testament, where they were seen to demonstrate the workings of God's omniscient power. The Book of Job, for instance, is a complex defence of God's unlimited majesty and power that is waged after Job, an innocent man of exemplary honour, is forced to undergo a perplexing level of loss and suffering for no explicable reason. Job 37: 10 claims, "By the breath of God frost is given: and the breadth of the waters is straitened," concluding in Job 37: 14, "Hearken unto this, O Job: stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God." Psalm 147: 16-18, elaborating on this reflection and engaging a similar theme, claims: "He giveth snow like wool: he scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes. He casteth forth his ice like morsels: who can stand before his cold? He sendeth out his word, and melteth them: he causeth his wind to blow, *and* the waters flow." In this context, the phenomena of cold and freezing, like all processes in the natural world, were presented as signs of God's sublimity and mystery, against which human kind were expected to humble themselves.

Sister Xaverius Lynch, in a lengthy letter to "My dearest Ann," dated January 6, 1834, plays with these multiple imaginative, metaphorical, and religious possibilities:

We are just beginning to feel the severity of the weather. Indeed, dearest Ann, we would require all the fervour of our devotion to keep us warm. You may imagine what cold is when in our bedrooms we cannot leave a drop of water in the basins or jugs. We must wait ever so long before we can get it to melt. As for our towels you might as well have a sheet of paste board for after using them and putting them to dry they are frozen quite hard and stiff. I washed my stockings and put them to dry. What was my amazement when going to mend them to see them stiff as a board and icicles hanging from them. Water freezes in a room even with a fire and the water which is left on the altar for the priest is in ice before he uses it, though only left a little before he comes. As for the milk for breakfast it is like lump sugar and we are obliged to cut it with a knife. There was a mug of tea left on the chimney piece, a fire in the room—it was in ice in a few minutes. When we are out walking our breath freezes on our cloaks. Everything we leave out of our hands, jugs and mugs are frozen to the tables. If we leave two basins one over the other they will be stuck together. As for the clothes, when they are put in to steep they become a complete mass of ice; and the meat is obliged to be sawn. I suppose, dear Ann, you think all this incredible for we thought so ourselves until we began to experience it. I suppose there is not a finer climate anywhere....

We all bear the cold very well and were never in better health. It does not in the least cool our ardour for the salvation of these dear little ones for whom Christ died, but I have so much to say that I have not time for moralising now.⁹³

The domestic interior, the enclosed space of the convent, and the ecclesiastical space of the altar are revealed to be permeable, subject to the cycles of the natural world, and, hence, do not provide predictable protection from the winter elements. Sister Xaverius Lynch uses a deliberate antithetic counterpointing between heat and cold at several points

⁹³ Letter from M. X. Lynch to My dearest Ann, January 6, 1834. The Four Foundresses/First Letters to Ireland, Presentation Congregation Archives, St. John's, Newfoundland.

to structure her descriptions,⁹⁴ and establishes contrasts between internal devotional fervour and external bodily limitations to draw attention not only to these manifestations of the “incredible,” but to the nature, depth, and pliancy of piety required to navigate in such a world. The delineated rigidity of these external shapes counterpoints the amorphous depth of her internal fortitude and capacity for sacrifice, which the cold constantly tests, but cannot vanquish.

The cycles of rapid freezing also challenge ideas about the static nature and cultural definition of interior space itself that was so critical to leading an enclosed religious life. This has recently been explored by Jennifer Blair in her examination of the architectural and spatial arrangements and representations of Quebec convents. Blair maintains that the “question of the interior...will always traverse the span between the building material, the exterior walls, the frame, and the space enclosed inside” (“Surface” 69-70). Blair links the conception of interior space to an “openness to unforeseen, unpredictable movement” (“Surface” 70). This “movement” is substantiated by the imaginative conception of interior space presented by Xavierius Lynch as a space defined by natural processes and cycles that require and demand constant “re-orientation” on the part of both her, as the letter writer, and Ann, as the reader of the letter (“Surface” 70-71).

Sister Xavierius Lynch, after reporting other news, returns to a discussion of the intense cold:

⁹⁴ Interestingly, Catharine Randall observes a similar play with “alternating states of fire and ice” in the letters of the *Jesuit Relations* (25-26).

The sky is beautiful and clear and while the frost is most intense and ready to freeze your limbs off you are cheered by the most beautiful atmosphere and the brilliancy of the sun and it would appear that the frost and the sun were contending together....

Since I began this letter so intense has been the frost that while Bidy was mopping the stairs the water was frozen on the boards so that it was like glass though she used boiling water. The water in our mugs at dinner became ice before we drank though there was fire in the room and at night the breath on our sheets is frozen. Whilst Bidy was pumping water her hand was frozen to the handle and this is not unusual in this country for if you touch iron in this intense frost it will burn and cause as much pain as if you burnt yourself with the fire. I was going down one morning with a brass candlestick in my hand and my fingers were burned. If hot sealing wax fell on them I could not feel more pain. Let not all this frighten you for we can bear it very well and we were never better in health but I think we would be obliged to put on warmer clothing than in Ireland.⁹⁵

Newfoundland emerges as a wondrous culture where ice “burns,” where frost and fire are equivalent, where milk has to be sawn, and the cycles of freezing occur with exaggerated speed. Again, a noticeable counterpointing between heat and cold emerges, stressing the fire’s ineffectiveness at combating the cold. Xaverius Lynch speaks of the hills of St. John’s as “hills of glass”; this is reinforced by the stairs of “glass” found in her own residence. Rhetorically, then, in Lynch’s description, the barrier between indoors and outdoors becomes ephemeral as she challenges the definitions and perceptions of New World interior space itself. Such passages in private letters legitimated accounts of the New World as a site of arresting physical and cultural difference. As Cynthia Lowenthal has said of the writings of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu on Turkey, Lynch sees

⁹⁵ Letter from M. X. Lynch to My dearest Ann, January 6, 1834. The Four Foundresses/First Letters to Ireland, Presentation Congregation Archives, St. John’s, Newfoundland.

Newfoundland as a place “where things metamorphose into meaning, where objects are suffused with significances not to be found in dull, one-dimensional English life” (Landry 58). Yet Lynch seems also to be engaging in a form of encoded discourse, using the elaborate rhetorical play to suggest the level of cultural adjustment needed for life in the new mission—perhaps even expressing her feelings of inadequate preparation for it—as summarized in her understated conclusion, “I think we would be obliged to put on warmer clothing than in Ireland.”

The passage is also a manifestation of Lynch’s own narrative power to create wonder for “dear Ann,” as opposed to merely documenting it. Imaginative disbelief and wonder emerge as “rhetorical effects” of her careful and considered descriptions. She playfully hints at the intellectual labour involved in this construction when she claims: “I hope, dear Anne, you will have a long letter for me. I think this deserves it.”⁹⁶ The intellectual labour is amplified by the physical labour of letter writing. The adverse conditions under which the letter was written, like her written descriptions, allow her to frame the act of writing the letter as a form of labour and sacrifice, yet this works in tension with the relatively liberal rhetorical play she allows herself in the course of writing the letter. She conflates the discourse of sacrifice with the discourse of wonder to create an encoded discourse that demonstrates the cultural resilience and adaptability

⁹⁶ Letter from M. X. Lynch to My dearest Ann, January 6, 1834. The Four Foundresses/First Letters to Ireland, Presentation Congregation Archives, St. John’s, Newfoundland.

needed to lead a devotional life in the New World.

It also allowed Lynch an alternative means of describing the hardships and the unpredictable nature of mission life in Newfoundland beyond the predictable parameters of the discourse of sacrifice, in a more playful, amusing, and detached way.⁹⁷ It granted her a limited degree of subjectivity in which she could share, in a sustained manner, some of the difficulties of the Newfoundland mission without appearing to be complaining about the physical conditions in which she had elected to serve, which would be a violation of the Presentation Order's vows. The rules governing the manner and spirit in which members of the Presentation Congregation were to execute their religious duties were quite specific. William Hutch observed of the Presentation Sisters: "Their labours are not performed in any servile spirit; they have been undertaken *voluntarily* and are daily performed in a spirit of love and self-sacrifice, sanctioned and approved of by religion" (Hutch 151, emphasis in original). The Rules of Conduct of the Presentation Order, which stipulated *how* the Sisters should perform their duties, declared: "The Sisters...with all zeal, charity and humility, purity of intention, and confidence in God,

⁹⁷ In contrast, Sister Magdalene engages in a similar discussion of the cold but places greater emphasis on privation and sacrifice: "The severe weather has just commenced. We had ice-cream for weather today—or in other words the milk was frozen and the water so frozen in our rooms though we had a large fire that it might be cut. It is well if we are not frozen ourselves and for our comfort we are informed that this is only summer to what it will be. However we bear one consolation which sweetens all our trials—that it is for God we suffer." Letter from Magdalene to My ever dearest Sister M. Augustine, November 24, 1833. The Four Foundresses/First Letters to Ireland, Presentation Congregation Archives, St. John's, Newfoundland.

undertake the charge, and *cheerfully* submit to every labour and fatigue annexed thereto” (Hutch 151, my emphasis). Indeed, the narrative frame for Sister Xaverius Lynch’s entire letter is an admonition from Bishop Fleming, established at the beginning of their letter, that the sisters’ conduct be determined by the order’s rules. Sister Xaverius Lynch declares at the beginning of her letter:

but what am I about to indulge any longer in these too natural affections as we have just got a lecture from Dr. Fleming telling us that we have given up all for Jesus Christ and disengaged our hearts from this world and all that is in it by the Vow of Poverty and therefore it would be a breach of our Vows to look back on those things we have forsaken....

As soon as we had renewed our vows he gave us a long exhortation which lasted for about an hour. He spoke on the happiness of a Religious Life and the great perfection we are called to. He said that the portion of a Religious is self-denial, continual renunciation and the thorns of the Cross. He also spoke of the danger of relaxation and the necessity of observing our Rules with the utmost rigour and exactness.⁹⁸

Yet that Xaverius Lynch expresses her desire to be reunited with Ann, only quickly to stop herself, allows her rhetorically and textually to reproduce the process of self-renunciation that defines the ideal religious life within her letter. In the course and structure of her letter, therefore, she escorts Ann into a tentatively interior world of rhetorical intimacy and self-confessed indulgence, out of which Ann is escorted at the end of the letter. Xaverius Lynch ends her letter thus: “I am sorry I must now bid you goodbye. Once more give my love a thousand times to all my dear Sisters... I must do

⁹⁸ Letter from M. X. Lynch to My dearest Ann, January 6, 1834. The Four Foundresses/First Letters to Ireland, Presentation Congregation Archives, St. John’s, Newfoundland.

violence now and stop for if I were to indulge myself much longer my tears would flow and that would be contrary to the lecture Dr. F. gave us.”⁹⁹ Fleming’s admonitions both begin and end the letter and provide the material and ideological frame against which Ann’s immersion into New World culture, and Sister Xaverius Lynch’s own rhetorical wanderings surrounding it, can be structured and assessed.

1.7 Concluding the “Perfect Pilgrimage”

Sister Mary Bernard Kirwan, Sister Mary Xaverius Lynch, Sister Mary Xavier Molony, and Sister Mary Magdalene O’Shaughnessy never returned to Ireland. They remained in Newfoundland until their deaths and so, in the end, did enact the “Perfect Pilgrimage” in their missions. As more Newfoundland-born Catholic women joined the Presentation Congregation throughout the nineteenth century, the four founding sisters played an active role in establishing foundations outside of St. John’s. In 1853, Sister Bernard Kirwan left the Motherhouse and helped establish a new foundation in Fermeuse on the Southern Shore of the Avalon Peninsula, where she remained until her death in February 1857. In 1851, Sister Xaverius Lynch became the Superioress for the foundation in Harbour Grace until her death in 1882. Sister Xavier Molony, the oldest of the four foundresses, helped establish the new foundation of the Presentation Order at

⁹⁹ Letter from M. X. Lynch to My dearest Ann, January 6, 1834. The Four Foundresses/First Letters to Ireland, Presentation Congregation Archives, St. John’s, Newfoundland.

Harbour Main; she died in 1865. With the departure of Sister Bernard Kirwan, Sister Magdalene O'Shaughnessy became the Superioress of the Motherhouse in St. John's. Her verbal testimony about the beginnings of the mission and its transatlantic crossing became an integral part of Michael Howley's efforts to recount the story of their arrival in the *Ecclesiastical History of Newfoundland*. Howley would summarize the mission thus:

This undertaking [the establishment of the Presentation Order] must certainly be looked upon as the greatest work of his [Bishop Fleming's] glorious episcopate, for though the building of the cathedral was a mighty and noble act, and one which strikes the eye more immediately, still the building up of the moral temple in the souls of his faithful children must rank as a holier and nobler work before the eyes of God, though not so prominent to those of the world. (*Ecclesiastical* 1: 275)

Howley, in determinedly elevated language, uses the metaphor of architecture itself to describe the gradual building of religious and moral community in Newfoundland in which he maintains the Presentation Sisters played a vital, albeit a less visible, part.

Howley also found a more public and aesthetically stylized way to honour and celebrate the arrival of the Presentation Order in Newfoundland. On the fiftieth anniversary of their arrival in Newfoundland, the Presentation Sisters were honoured with a three-act operetta with a libretto that was composed by Howley and performed by the school children, which debuted in St. John's on September 20, 1883. Of the four founding sisters, only Sister Magdalene O'Shaughnessy was still living, and, at the age of 89, she reportedly attended the performance. The operetta later toured Newfoundland and was performed as late as 1889 in Carbonear (Woodford 86). This stylized drama is structured in the manner of a masque, as Howley personifies Newfoundland through a

range of “sprites” such as Seagull, Baccala, and Iceberg, as well as six spirits that he calls the Daughters of Terra Nova: Erin, Terra Nova, Avalonia, Elnuki, Talila, and Shananditi, all of whom represent the founding nations which settled Newfoundland. The spirits extend invitations to the Presentation Sisters to relocate to Newfoundland: “And now, dear Mother, thee I pray,/That thou would’st o’er the ocean send,/And bring to us the children’s friend—/The daughter of Nano’s Holy band—/ To teach the youth of Newfound Land” (7). The four sisters actually appear as characters in the play that depicts the drama of their own arrival to Newfoundland. The operetta exaggerates and aestheticizes, and yet naturalizes, the terms of the conditions of the sisters’ entrance into a foreign land and their cultural transformation of it:

And we felt that God’s love had come down from above,
And blessed our Island Home.
And now we behold, rise graceful and bold,
In the erst uncultured waste,
A noble pile, with cloister and aisle,
All shaped in beauty and taste; (18)

The character of Mother Magdalene celebrates:

Here upon this western shore,
We are truly home once more;
And our lives henceforth we give
To the land where now we live.
Faith and learning shall extend
O’er its shores from end to end;
Till the Newfound Countrery
The IRELAND OF THE WEST shall be! (17)

Yet there is a note of descent from the spirit of Shananditi, the last Beothuk woman, who, interestingly, has the last word in Howley’s libretto, and whose sorrowful anguish casts a

pall over the celebration: "But the sad lesson we've been taught,/Forbids that we should hope for aught/Of Friendship from the white man's hand,/But death and ruin to our band"

(9). The spirit of Shananditi, in many respects, dislocates the claims to "home" and to native womanhood made by the Presentation Sisters. These claims were tenuously being articulated and negotiated, but also, in some measure, resisted, in their earliest letters to Galway, when it was Ireland, and not Newfoundland, that the sisters considered home.

There is also another spirit of native womanhood, elusively present, contained in one of the letters of the foundress themselves, and that is the figure of the silent Newfoundland servant girl, Biddy, who mopped the stairs and drew water so cold that it "burned" her hands while Sister Xaverius Lynch sat writing in the freezing room next door. It was such girls that the Presentation Sisters came to teach and transform, and yet the cultural distance between the two remains intact within the letter by their differing cultural labours. As does Shananditi, Biddy represents yet another form of native womanhood, in proximity with, but never directly in full encounter, with women religious. Sister Xaverius Lynch, in the same letter, marvels at the "simplicity and ignorance" of the "poor people" in St. John's, reflecting very particular cultural judgments about her charges that are seldom expanded upon.¹⁰⁰ Biddy's elusive presence generates questions about hierarchies of gender, class, and power, and how these

¹⁰⁰ Letter from M. X. Lynch to My dearest Ann, January 6, 1834. The Four Foundresses/First Letters to Ireland, Presentation Congregation Archives, St. John's, Newfoundland.

interacted with the aims of education, charity, and philanthropy, as well as claims of cultural authority and cultural belonging, that undoubtedly played out in the Newfoundland mission of the Presentation Sisters and that require further investigation. One wonders, for instance, how these religious figures were viewed by nineteenth-century Newfoundland girls and young women who were learning to be literate, as well as by those who would never learn to communicate their thoughts in writing. Bidy, fleetingly, hints at a world of possible cultural dynamics into which we never satisfactorily receive entrance. All three women invoke the haunting cultural invitations extended by the epistolary and historical writings of women religious, not just those of the Presentation Sisters of Newfoundland, but in communities of women religious throughout Canada, if we would only care to consider, critically and imaginatively, about what they dared to wonder whenever they lifted their freezing fingers to their pens.

Chapter Two

The Hidden Leaven: Gender Roles, Domestic “Borderlands,” and the Quest for Influence in the Missionary Writings and Experience of Charlotte Selina Bompas

The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.

Matthew 13: 33

A feminist reading can ask, therefore, what happens to that problem, and the *voyage/domus* opposition, if ‘home,’ rather than the voyage, is rewritten as chaos and fragmentation, labor, transience, ‘lag’ (43)

Meaghan Morris
“At Henry Parkes Motel”
(1998)

Division is the divinely constituted state of the earth. Half day and half night. Half ocean and half land or ice. Half winter and half summer. Half earth and half sky.

So in religion, half Pagan and half Christian. Half Papal, half Protestant. Half virtue, half vice. Half upward and half downward and ever a borderland between....

[I]n our imperfect humanity we must expect much borderland. (3-4)

William Carpenter Bompas
Northern Lights on the Bible (1892)

Perhaps no other figure in nineteenth-century Western mission history laboured in the “borderland” between formal, organized professional and ecclesiastical designation and spontaneous, self-proclaimed personal calling than the missionary wife. The privileges of professionalization that, by the late nineteenth century, had solidified North

American and British single women's participation in entering the foreign mission field as full-fledged missionaries were only barely extended to missionary wives.¹ Even though missionary organizations at home and in the field relied on missionary wives to offer religious instruction to native women and children, to model the virtues of Christian domestic duty to heathen families, and, through letters home, to communicate the needs and the results of the mission to organizations in the homeland, they typically received neither remuneration nor formal accreditation for their labours, contributions, and sacrifices.

The limits and expectations imposed upon the nineteenth-century missionary wife are summarized deftly in the Dedicatory Letter of Edward Wix's *Six Months of a Newfoundland Missionary's Journal, From February to August, 1835*, published in 1836.

¹ For an examination of the evolution of professionalism in women's missionary work in the nineteenth century, see Rhonda Anne Semple, *Missionary Women: Gender, Professionalism and the Victorian Idea of Christian Mission*, particularly Chapter 6; and Clare Midgley, "Can Women Be Missionaries? Envisioning Female Agency in the Early Nineteenth-Century British Empire" For specific scholarly studies on the role and dilemmas of missionary wives in mission work, see Semple, *Missionary Women*, Chapter 6; Midgley, "Can Women be Missionaries?"; Myra Rutherdale, *Women and the White Man's God*, Chapters 3 and 4; Patricia Grimshaw, *Paths of Duty*; Maina Chawla Singh, Gender, Religion, and "Heathen Lands," Chapter 2; Dana L. Roberts, "Evangelist or Homemaker? Mission Strategies of Early Nineteenth-Century Missionary Wives in Burma and Hawaii" in *North American Foreign Missions*; Jane Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility*, Chapter 4; Anna Johnston, *Missionary Writing and Empire, 1800-1860*; Jane Haggis, "'Good wives and mothers' or 'dedicated workers'? Contradictions of domesticity in the 'mission of sisterhood', Travancore, south India" in *Maternities and Modernities*; Patricia Grimshaw and Peter Sherlock, "Women and Cultural Exchanges" in *Missions and Empire*; Mary Taylor Huber and Nancy C. Lutkehaus, eds. *Gendered Missions*; Barbara E. Kelcey, *Alone in Silence*.

Wix was the second archdeacon of the Anglican Church in Newfoundland from 1830 until 1839 and did missionary work for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts in Nova Scotia and throughout Newfoundland in the 1820s and 1830s. His journal records his travels throughout Newfoundland in 1835, where accounts of an endless succession of baptisms are interspersed with musings about his own difficulties, deprivations, and the apparently monumental nature of the task that has been set forth for him. One of the most interesting parts of the journal is its Dedicatory Letter to Wix's wife, Fanny, "one of the best of women," on whom he lavishes praise for sharing an engaged interest in his mission and for delivering incalculable comfort and "cheer" to him during his years of missionary work in the British colonies (8; 5-6). Acknowledging the difficulties of maintaining "dearest domestic ties" in the face of constant travel, Wix presents her nurturing instincts, domestic inclinations, and interest in his work as a seamless complement to his own tortured ambivalence about what he has undertaken and the dangers and anxieties of his itinerant wanderings (8). Her intense sympathy with his aims causes him to claim: "You have all along felt a Missionary's anxiety for all of a Missionary's objects" (6). Fanny Wix's labour, judgement, compliance, piety, and even her delicacy and silence, are presented as indispensable adjuncts to male missionary endeavour.

Even while effusively praising her, however, Wix shares with his reader—and "dear Fanny"—some interesting information: that she was, in fact, his second choice for his Dedication. Wix initially wanted to dedicate his book to a higher, more formal

patron, such as the Board for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, or his own Diocesan, but, in the end, deemed his account too personal and unworthy to merit the weight of such laudatory patronage (4-5). Therefore, even while praising her courage, sacrifice, piety, and industry, Wix still solidifies his wife's secondary status in mission work and the degree to which it was often situated and contained within male-determined definitions of female duty. At the end of his letter, Wix praises his wife as his "Fellow-worker" in the mission field (11); yet, despite Wix's rhetorical generosity, he also reveals the degree to which the missionary wife's status in missionary work was uncertain and capricious, dependent upon unpredictable, albeit affable, gestures of personal masculine whim, such as those proffered by Wix, as opposed to more reliable, professionally rigorous criteria.

Wix's Dedication, therefore, is testament to the unique position the missionary wife held in mission culture. By the mid-nineteenth century, the missionary wife was more than a personal companion and "helpmeet" to her husband, but an emerging cultural figure with distinctive attributes and expectations. In *The Church Missionary Gleaner* in January 1897, an article entitled "The Missionary Wife" summarized the characteristics of the ideal missionary wife: "[S]he guides the house, cares for her husband's health and comfort, gives due honor to him as the head of the house, and is more anxious to strengthen and supplement his work than to have special work of her own" (2). The same article also observes that the ideal missionary wife "gives up many things which are not in themselves wrong, but might hinder her usefulness" and that "her whole life is a

sermon" (2-3). Her willingness to be a public moral example, to sacrifice and to work without acknowledgment in difficult circumstances and settings, meant that she had inestimable utility and value; however, her presence still challenged conventional attitudes regarding the propriety of women being actively involved in public religious and evangelical work. Missionary organizations were uncertain about what to do about missionary wives and how to promote their involvement in foreign missions; yet it simultaneously gave them responsibilities and duties, such as teaching, that were at times indistinguishable from those of their husbands. In a discussion of marriage and missionaries, the Editorial Notes of *The Church Missionary Gleaner* in March 1889 noted: "In C. M. S. ranks, two-thirds [of missionaries] are married and one-third single. Though we value the latter, we must not forget that a missionary and his wife are in most cases really two missionaries" (33). The qualifying phrase, "in most cases," suggests the tentative nature of the missionary wife's relationship to missionary work as a profession.

The sometimes indeterminate boundaries between men's and women's roles also suggests the degree to which the term "missionary" itself was under negotiation and expansion during this period. Who could be a missionary in the nineteenth century? This is one of the questions implicitly posed by Clare Midgley in her examination of women's missionary writings and pamphlets in the 1830s and 1840s. Midgley documents the developments which "established that 'missionary' could be a female as well as a male noun" by the mid-nineteenth century, arguing that, well before the late nineteenth century, women were doing the public work of missionaries, albeit without formal recognition

(348; 356). Any answer to this question, of course, must equally consider how ideologies of race, class, and religion intersected with gender ideologies to determine the missionary's qualifications and cultural identity. Yet it is difficult to ignore completely the issue of the reluctance of many missionary societies to acknowledge formally its women workers. The institutional and bureaucratic discomfort, and even the deliberate mystification,² surrounding the status of missionary women by organizations such as the Church Missionary Society reflected a cultural willingness within mission societies to promote indirect "womanly" attributes such as influence and to emphasize the supplementary nature of her role at the expense of individualism, direct action, and professional recognition. If the life of a missionary's wife was to be a "sermon," it was a sermon that only few would hear.

The Church Missionary Society, or CMS, the particular organization which appointed William Carpenter Bompas to spread the Gospel and to establish the rudiments of Anglicanism to the indigenous peoples in the Canadian North, never formally or statistically recognized many of the wives who worked alongside their husbands as

² Eugene Stock observes in *The History of the Church Mission Society*: "In 1859 the Rev. W. Pennefather, then at Barnet, wrote to the Society offering to train ladies at an institution he proposed opening. The Committee replied sympathetically, thought they might use the institution, and undertook to pay the expenses of any candidates they might send to it. But they shrank from saying much in print about even the few women the Society was employing. Twice over, in the published 'Selections from Proceedings of Committee,' in 1863, it is announced that 'a lady' had been appointed to the Female Institution, Sierra Leone. Both of them, Miss Kleiner and Miss Adcock, laboured there till their health failed" (2: 398).

“missionaries” in the mission fields of India, China, Africa, the Canadian North, and the other sites where they were established.³ The Church Missionary Society was a mammoth and formidable organization founded by John and Henry Venn in 1799. According to Rosemary Keen, the formation of the CMS was influenced by the Evangelical Revival occasioned by the rise of Methodism in the eighteenth century in England; the organization formally resolved that it was “highly incumbent upon every Christian to endeavour to propagate the knowledge of the Gospel among the Heathen.”⁴ Keen notes that the organization placed great emphasis on “individual conversion” and “justification by faith” and it put forth four guiding principles: “to follow God in the same way as the missionaries of the early Church”; “to begin humbly and on a small scale”; “to put money after prayer and study”; and “to depend on the Holy Spirit.” Within twenty-five years after its formation, the CMS had dispensed missionaries to most of the “heathen nations” of the world, including Canada, where, in 1822, the first CMS

³ For instance, Eugene Stock in *The History of the Church Missionary Society* states when reviewing numbers for CMS missions in India: “Out of 208 men and 39 women on the roll in 1899, 72 men and 14 women remained in 1914. The total figures in 1914 were 174 men and 107 women, showing a net decrease of 34 men and a net increase of 68 women. This does not count the wives, except that one of the fourteen women of 1899...had married a missionary in the interval” (4: 195). Stock acknowledges that some widows were added to mission rolls in the wake of their husbands’ deaths, after decades of formally unacknowledged service: “But it was in the years 1864 to 1869 that the Society...entered on its roll the names of the widows of John Thomas, Henry Baker, Sen., H. Andrews, and J. E. Sharke” (2: 399).

⁴ See “Editorial Introduction: Church Missionary Society” by Rosemary Keen available at <http://www.adam-matthew-publications.co.uk> for this and the subsequent quotation.

missionary, John West, and, later, his native protégé, Henry Budd, established themselves in the area of the Red River in the diocese of Rupert's Land.⁵ Despite the inclusive nature of its own guiding principles, the CMS quickly became riddled with bureaucratic issues, including an undue preoccupation with the worldly qualifications of its candidates. In particular, it favoured young, single men with a university education or those who had received suitable training at preferred institutions such as Islington College.

The CMS was profoundly ambivalent both on the role of women in its foreign missions and on married missionaries. An article entitled "The Missionary's Wife," published in *The Church Missionary Gleaner* in January 1897, approvingly recalls the reluctance of the CMS to admit women for mission service:

At the time that the Church Missionary Society began its work it was the opinion of most good men that woman's work should be confined to her own home, and she was hardly allowed to visit her poorer neighbours and speak to them of heavenly things. We read, for example, in Mr. Simeon's life, of a meeting held in 1807, by the Eclectic Society. The subject for their consideration was: 'How may pious women best subserve the interests of religion?' 'The generality,' wrote Mr Simeon of his brother clergy, 'seemed to think that they did best by keeping at home and

⁵ For the early history of the CMS in Canada, see Sara Tucker, *Rainbow of the North*; Eugene Stock, *The History of the Church Missionary Society*, Vols. 2-4; T. C. B. Boon, *The Anglican Church from the Bay to the Rockies*; Davena Davis, "'Dayspring From on High Hath Visited Us,'" (Diss. McGill U); Frank A. Peake, *From the Red River to the Arctic*; John Webster Grant, *Moon of Wintertime*; Andy A. den Otter, "Entering the Christian World: Indigenous Missionaries in Rupert's Land" in *Canada and the British World*; Jean Usher, "Apostles and Aborigines: The Social Theory of the Church Missionary Society" in *Prophets, Priests and Prodigals*; Barry Ferguson, ed., *The Anglican Church and the World of Western Canada, 1820-1970*. Myra Rutherdale provides a brief but useful synopsis from a gender perspective in *Women and the White Man's God*, Chapter One.

minding their own business.' (2)

The work of active evangelization was, therefore, seen to be inappropriate behaviour for pious Christian women, who were expected to administer female influence privately from the domestic sphere. The article also observes that "[m]issionaries' wives were for some time the only women sent forth by the Church Missionary Society and they have proved themselves worthy of the honour to which they have been thus called" (2). As Eugene Stock documents in *The History of the Church Missionary Society*, the CMS was repeatedly pressed to accept women candidates for mission employment, being formally approached by various organizations in 1859, 1863, and 1867 (2: 398-99). Yet, somewhat ironically, the CMS rejected the opportunity to recruit women on the grounds that instruction of native women and work within Zenanas was already being suitably performed "through the wives, sisters and daughters of missionaries" already serving in the fields (2: 398). Indeed, it did not formally admit women for mission service until 1887. Mission organizations like the CMS, therefore, reaffirmed the social and economic impediments to female equality that were transpiring in British society at large, as they sought, with increasing difficulty, to reinforce the ideology of separate spheres directly in the mission fields. Moreover, the lack of formal professional acknowledgment actually allowed the contributions of missionary wives to be framed in the discourse of self-sacrifice that permeated missionary work. As a writer in *The Church Missionary Gleaner* observed in January 1897: "Thousands [of missionary wives] have toiled unremittingly and uncomplainingly.... [A]nd they have proved that women can and do suffer, and yet

not lose their womanliness" (2).

The question as to whether missionaries ought to be married was also a source of conflict for the CMS. Eugene Stock quotes from a CMS resolution on the importance of married and single missionaries in which they conclude:

Furthermore while thankfully recognizing the great value of the service the missionary's wife may render, and very generally has rendered, both by direct work and by the exhibition of the purity and beauty of a Christian home, the Committee could not forget that there are also spheres of duty in the mission-field which demand the acceptance on the part of the missionary of the single life. When rightly accepted, after experience in the Mission-field, that state of life would bring its own blessedness. (3: 356)

Married male missionaries were, at times, depicted as leading more luxuriant and advantaged lives than single male missionaries, who, presumably, in addition to all their other duties, had to care for themselves. This resulted in some feelings of resentment in the mission fields.⁶ More important was the dire possibility that the male missionary might choose an unsuitable mate. In her classic novel, *Jane Eyre*, published pseudonymously in 1847, Charlotte Brontë fictionalizes this dilemma when St. John River, the zealous and coldly ardent missionary bound for India, refuses to propose to Rosamund Oliver, the woman he loves, because she is not suited to the role of a missionary's wife. Jane Eyre, on the other hand, embodies all that a missionary wife should be. St. John says of her: "I acknowledge the complement of the qualities I seek.

⁶ See Editorial Notes, *The Church Missionary Gleaner* March 1889, referencing this situation.

Jane, you are docile, diligent, disinterested, faithful, constant and courageous; very gentle and very heroic" (425). Societies like the CMS worried that their male missionaries would not exercise the discretion and judgement of St. John Rivers—who was inspired by the real life Anglican missionary to India and Persia, Henry Martyn. As the century progressed, the CMS actually increased the amount of time a male missionary had to serve in the field—from one year to three years—before he could take a wife. As the editor of *The Church Missionary Gleaner* mused when contemplating the topic in March 1889:

The advantage will be that men will have more time to get thoroughly into the work before taking on the responsibilities of married life; and also that they will be more certain to make a good choice.

This last point is important. It is wonderful how helpful to the missionary cause most wives have been; but there are exceptions. It is not every lady who has done what one lady has done who sailed lately to marry a young missionary in Punjab. She has been fitting herself for missionary life for the last seven years, learning nursing and dispensing, qualifying at the special hospitals for women and children, studying Hindustani, &c., &c. She would be a good missionary if she were not going to be married. (Editorial 33)

The increased expectation was that missionary wives were expected to qualify themselves professionally for mission work, even though they would receive neither professional nor formal distinction for doing so.

Although mission work continued, at least ideologically, to be divided along gender lines until well into the twentieth century, many historians acknowledge that the missionary wife was often viewed in relation, if not in actual opposition, to the single woman missionary. Maina Chawla Singh, in her discussion of American missionaries in

South East Asia in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, claims that single women missionaries “disrupted the social formations within the missionary community” by offering an alternative social arrangement to married and family life, and also by highlighting the missionary wife’s position of social and economic dependence with their relative autonomy (205; 79).⁷ Hence, any potential feelings of gender solidarity were often overridden by feelings of displacement and rivalry. Moreover, as Eliza F. Kent has noted in her excellent study of Protestant missionaries in India, *Converting Women*, single women missionaries were often considered preferable to missionary wives by sending societies precisely because they were less unencumbered by the demands of running a household, caring for a husband, and raising children once they were situated in the mission field (91). This, Kent observes, resulted in the irony that, by the end of the nineteenth century, single women missionaries were often favoured to model Western ideals of “motherhood, conjugality and domesticity” for native populations (92). While increasingly celebrated and acknowledged as pioneers by historians and writers of mission history, by women’s organizations and church groups, and even by other male missionaries, therefore, missionary wives were, at times, marginalized by the developments of professionalization that often excluded them, and even by suffragette organizations, which demanded that woman’s role be more individualistic and less complementary to male endeavour. In Canada, the task of promoting the work of the

⁷ Rhonda Anne Semple also alludes to this dilemma in *Missionary Women*, pp. 197-202.

wives of Anglican missionaries, women such as Arabella Cowley, Charlotte Bompas, Sadie Stringer, Emily Reeve, Jane Ridley, and others, fell to the Woman's Auxiliary of the Anglican Church of Canada and its monthly publication, the *Letter Leaflet*, as well as publications such as the *Canadian Churchman*, which regularly printed letter excerpts from women missionaries in the mission fields at home and abroad.

The missionary career and legacy of Charlotte Selina Bompas reflects in full the tensions, ironies, limits, and dilemmas of being a missionary wife. She spent thirty-two years, from 1874 to 1906, engaged in missionary work throughout the Canadian North with her husband, William Carpenter Bompas, yet never was formally recognized as a missionary by the Church Missionary Society. She entered the Canadian North as a published writer, but, with the exception of her missionary correspondence, much of her work was published anonymously, tenuously situated in the "borderland" between private and public letters. While embodying the spirit of the philanthropic and civilizing forces that motivated women's participation in mission work, she very often found herself in positions of dependency and deprivation, and ended up actively—and effectively—enlisting the aid of the benevolent organizations she symbolically represented and creating an alternative to the discourse of Providence to which missionaries, including herself, so often deferred. Celebrated for her refined intellectual learning and taste and for being an emissary of white, British middle-class cultural values, she learnt, as did her husband, to reify white culture, to dissociate herself from the forces of progress which she embodied, and to detach herself rhetorically from white culture in order to criticize and

mourn its negative effects upon Native populations. Like many nineteenth-century Europeans, she saw the Native populations she sought to convert and “civilize” as “children”; yet, simultaneously, she admired their artisan skills and had a demonstrable, if inconsistent, sympathy for Native women. While she characterized the Indian children whom she taught, cared for, and informally adopted by their racial difference, she also elided that difference by assuming the role of “Mama” towards them.

Disparities also existed between her and her husband which offer some insight into the practical impact of gender relations upon mission work. The ideal of man and woman working seamlessly and in full complement with one another in the mission field masked the reality that many husbands and wives, at times, had conflicting ideals about their duties and radical differences in their religious doctrines. While Charlotte Bompas’s husband, William Carpenter Bompas, an Anglican bishop, CMS missionary, translator, and scholar, criticized his wife’s weakness of mind, impulsiveness, and explosiveness,⁸ her letters and journals show a respect for duty and decorum and the discipline of self-regulation that defy his conclusions. While her husband considered her participation in northern missions a failure,⁹ historians such as Kerry Abel argue that her contributions

⁸ Letters from William Carpenter Bompas to My dear Selina, dated 31 July 1883 and 24 January 1886. Bompas Papers, General Synod Archives, Anglican Church of Canada, M89-3.

⁹ Letter from William Carpenter Bompas to My dear Selina, dated 31 July 1883. Bompas Papers, General Synod Archives, Anglican Church of Canada, M89-3. As early as 1876, two years after their marriage, William Bompas wrote the CMS to claim that the “experiment” of bringing Nina up North had failed and that he could not fulfil his duties

outweigh his in terms of their lasting impact and practical value.¹⁰ William Carpenter Bompas published two books of information and religious meditations pertaining to his mission experiences;¹¹ in neither of these books does he once allude to his wife. Despite his public silence on her contribution to their mission, Charlotte Bompas remained loyal to her husband and to the mission cause, as she struggled to create self-definition and meaning within a domestic sphere compromised by her husband's continued absence, by the extreme physical limitations of the Canadian North, and by the nature of mission work itself. She played an active part in shaping the heroic reputation that, up until recently, had been generously bestowed upon William Bompas by his various biographers, by the CMS, and by the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the Anglican Church.¹² For instance, she wrote the hagiographic account of Bishop Bompas's death and funeral that was included in his 1908 biography, *An Apostle of the North*, by H. A. Cody. Charlotte Bompas is posthumously remembered as a "missionary heroine," but to what

"while retaining my wife in the North" (qtd. in Peake 93).

¹⁰ See "Cox, Charlotte Selina," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*.

¹¹ See *Diocese of the Mackenzie River* (1888) and *Northern Lights on the Bible* (1892). Bompas also published a third book, *The Symmetry of Scripture*.

¹² The accomplishments of William Carpenter Bompas have lately come under some marked scrutiny, most particularly by Frank Peake in *From the Red River to the Arctic*, who vilifies Bompas, presenting him as hapless, eccentric, deluded, disobedient, uncivil, and uncooperative, leading Peake to conclude that Bompas was an "idiot." Coates and Morrison interrogate the ambiguities of Bompas's achievements in more measured tones in their lengthy introduction to the reissue of H. A. Cody's *An Apostle of North* (2003).

degree did she promote herself as one? Bompas's restrained relationship with missionary work and her representation of herself, her "work," her husband, and the Aboriginal women and children with whom she lived and visited in her letters and publications emphasize the tensions that underlay women's missionary work in the Canadian North at an important transitional period in Canada's mission history. As well, Charlotte Bompas's missionary experience and writings, like many of the writings by the women of this era, are of critical value because they allow insight into how influential cultural concepts such as 'domesticity' and 'civilization' were negotiated textually within public and private discourse in the nineteenth century.

Charlotte Selina Cox was born in Montague Square, London, in 1830, the daughter of a doctor, Joseph Cox, and Charlotte Skey. She was one of four children, along with her elder sister Emma, her younger sister Julia, and her brother Joseph, who would later become a vicar of Bishop's Townton. In the 1840s, the family went to live in Naples, Italy for several years due to Joseph Cox's health. The experience proved to be an influential one. The entire family mastered the Italian language and Italy would later become the setting of the only novel that can be reliably ascribed to Charlotte Bompas, *Niccolo Marini*. She returned to England and lived with her sister Emma at Babbacombe, Torquay for several years, up until the time of her departure for Canada. According to her niece, Beatrice Bengough, her "aunt Nina" was a "brilliant musician" and was also a dedicated writer, who, when she visited, always had a special room reserved for her in which she could write (Archer xii). She contributed regularly to magazines, "wrote many

charming verses, beautiful thoughts, grave or gay” and published at least one novel pseudonymously, *Niccolo Marini or The Mystery Solved: A Tale of Naples*, in 1862 (Archer xi-xii). She became attracted to mission work after Anglican Bishop John Coleridge Patteson, the missionary bishop of Melanesia—and grand-nephew of Samuel Taylor Coleridge—was murdered by natives on September 21, 1871. She claimed the event awakened her “enthusiasm” for missionary work, as, when she was a younger woman, she regarded the missionary meetings hosted by her vicar brother as “the dullest affairs” and missionaries as “old dismal slow coaches” (Cody 154). When her cousin, William Carpenter Bompas, returned from a nine-year period as a CMS missionary in Canada in order to be consecrated as the Bishop of Athabasca in 1874, she accepted his proposal of marriage and the opportunity he offered her to do mission work in the newly formed Diocese of Athabasca in northern Canada. Five days after their marriage on May 7, 1874, they left England for the Canadian North.

In the brief biographical sketches that appear of Charlotte Bompas in the early twentieth century, primarily as adjuncts to her husband’s achievements, much is made of her refined aesthetic and cultural taste. As discussed above, her niece, Beatrice Bengough, praised her musicality and interest in writing, as well as her “wonderfully active brain” and her vivacious energy: “She was full of spirit and *joie de vivre*, musical, cultivated, artistic, loving all that was beautiful in Rome and Florence” (Archer xi). H. A. Cody claims, “Mrs. Bompas acquired that love for the Italian language which ever after continued to be a great source of pleasure for her. No matter where she went in the

northern wilds of Canada, she carried her Dante with her, which she studied, with much delight, in the original" (Cody 154). The anecdote is repeated some twenty years later, not only by Beatrice Bengough, but by Emily Murphy, writing as Janey Canuck, who, in 1929, composed a brief book for the Ryerson Canadian History Readers series entitled *Bishop Bompas*. Bengough observes of her aunt: "Even as an old lady she always carried her Dante in her pocket" (Archer xii). Murphy, herself a devout Anglican, was, like many Canadian writers such as Agnes Deans Cameron, an enthusiastic admirer of William Bompas. To date, she offers one of the only appreciative Canadian commentaries that exist on his fascinating meditation, *Northern Lights on the Bible*. In Murphy's account, Charlotte Bompas is presented predictably as devoted to her husband, culturally accomplished, but with no real "work" of her own:

Writing of Mrs. Bompas, in 1903, Bishop Ridley of Caledonia said: "She is accomplished far beyond the standard one meets in London drawing-rooms." One of her favourite pastimes was the study of Dante in the original. Oftentimes she may have read aloud *The Divine Comedy*, and, while her husband listened, perhaps he beheld her as his Beatrice. It may be, too, that he said of her even as Dante said:

"Here is a deity stronger than I
Whose coming shall rule over me." (*Bishop* 25-26)

By quoting Dante's *La Vita Nuova*, his famous poetic cycle to secular love, Murphy fancifully places the Bompas's relationship in a highly speculative romantic and domestic framework of passion and harmony that the realities of their marriage contradict. Such anecdotes became a substitute for any sustained acknowledgment of Charlotte Bompas's missionary labours, sacrifices, and practical achievements, which were circulated publicly

in articles and letter excerpts in *The Church Missionary Gleaner*, *The Net*, *Canadian Churchman*, *Letter Leaflet*, *The Yukon Press*, *The New Era*, and in her 1886 book, *Owindia*. Such anecdotes also allowed missionary endeavour to be sanctified and contained within the “civilizing” veneer of Western high culture. They suggest the degree to which the contributions of women missionaries tended to be represented and evaluated in terms which privileged class and its consequent civilizing, aesthetic, and elevating influences, even if these appeared to have little practical value. This discursive, repeated emphasis on female “accomplishment” and respectability became one of the influences that allowed mission work to be documented and memorialized in idealized, romanticized forms, as women’s influence in mission work became increasingly recognized. As Rosemary Gagan observes, the mission texts of many of the early women missionaries to Canada raise “serious concerns” about what Renato Rosaldo has called “imperialist nostalgia,” which bestows an apparent “innocence” upon cultural encounters such as missionary work in which both the readers and the writers of these texts become implicated (“Gender” 44). Renato Rosaldo emphasizes “the elegance of manners governing relations of dominance and subordination between the ‘races’” that often became manifested in cultural practices such as missionary work (68). This “elegance of manners” tended to mystify and aestheticize aspects of mission culture that were inherently transformative and destructive. The emphasis on Bompas’s learning and her elegant deportment also testifies to the narrative power of the stereotype of the respectable gentlewoman, which has been studied by scholars such as A. James

Hammerton in *Emigrant Gentlewomen*. The descriptions of Bompas solidified what Eliza F. Kent has identified as “the discourse of respectability” that surrounded many nineteenth-century missionary women (9).

Given the prominence of this anecdote about Dante, it is also noteworthy that while she makes several nostalgic allusions to life in England and to musical figures such as Mendelssohn, Mozart, and Haydn, Charlotte Bompas does not once allude to Dante in any of the edited versions of her letters that appear in *An Apostle of the North, Heroine of the North*, and the *Letter Leaflet*.¹³ This suggests how much was suppressed and unspoken of in her letters, reflecting what, in 1906, she would call the “true inwardness”¹⁴ of her missionary experience (10), and testifying to all that Robert Krotesch claims is “silent” and “unspeakable” about writing in the Canadian North (*Likely* 16). Authorities on women’s life writing such as Helen Buss have established the importance of identifying and reading the silences in women’s writing, arguing that encoded in narrative gaps and omissions are cultural assumptions about what types of female experience merit, or are permitted, narration and explication.¹⁵ Yet critics such as Mary

¹³ In contrast, there are several references to Dante in her novel, *Niccolo Marini*.

¹⁴ “Annual Address of Mrs. Bompas, President, Delivered at Dawson. Y.T., August 13th, 1906” 6-10. Anglican Church Series 111.5 a, Cor. 98, File 1 of 11, Diocesan W.A. Annual Reports, 1906-1923, Yukon Territory Archives.

¹⁵ Buss, for example, studies the diaries and letters of Elizabeth Simcoe and notices her narrative silence on the birth and death of her infant daughter, Katherine, which Buss argues represents the failure of prevailing cultural discourses to find suitable expressions and “idioms” for such specific female experiences as pregnancy and labour,

Jean Corbett see the “tactful” silences that pervade the spiritual autobiographies and writings of nineteenth-century religious women in different, more powerful terms than Buss, in which textual silence becomes intimately allied to their religious vocation (*Representing* 72-75). Corbett argues that it is in “maintaining the sanctity of the interior that spiritual women writers are authorized to represent themselves publicly. That something of themselves remains private and goes unrepresented—the intricacies of family life, for instance—marks them as proper inhabitants of the domestic sphere, where neither self nor others should be commodified” (*Representing* 73). “Remaining private,” Corbett concludes, “empowers the religious woman writer” (*Representing* 75).

This may explain, in part, the core of silence that pervades the personal writings of Charlotte Bompas. In Charlotte Bompas’s 1862 novel, *Niccolo Marini*, one of the most interesting exchanges in the story occurs between the English-born Laura and the Italian ingénue, Guila, in which they discuss the respective merits of English and Italian society and their differing treatments of women writers and artists. Laura claims:

It is perfectly true that our female authors write under feigned names, and like to remain unknown; but this is not that either man or woman grudges them their meed of praise, or would hesitate for a moment to give them the homage to which they are justly entitled, but simply because there is that in the heart of every Englishwoman which shrinks from display. The presence of our gifted woman is felt, not seen.... [H]er mission is at all times but little less than divine, and, whatever be her inspiration, however bold and ambitious her projects, they yet all bear the truest imprint of womanhood in the modesty with which they are enshrouded. We have no

and maternal grief. See *Mapping Our Selves*, pp. 43-44.

Corinnes¹⁶ in England, not because they exist not, but because the triumphal car, the public honours, would be too dear a penalty to pay for having yielded to an inspiration! (1: 179)

One must be cautious of reading the words of a fictional character as autobiographical or personal testament. Yet *Niccolo Marini* was published anonymously; and the tenor of Bompas's other writings reveals that she saw, in female reserve and modesty, and in the indirect powers of influence, silence, and contemplation, "the truest imprint of womanhood." The comments provide some insight into her beliefs and unease about women's relationship to public accomplishment and heroism a full twelve years before her decision to marry William Bompas and pursue missionary work in the Canadian North would place her on a trajectory in which she would have to deal with the implications of both.

2.1 Missionary Work in the Canadian North

In order to assess fully the tensions contained in Charlotte Bompas's missionary writings and experiences, they need to be explored fully and contextualized within key cultural concepts and traditions which particularly underlay mission experience in Canada. These include the perceived "masculine" nature of mission work in the

¹⁶ Corinne is the heroine of Germaine de Staël's 1807 novel, *Corinne, or Italy*. Through the character of Corrine, the novel engaged ideas about female genius and creative suffering and abandonment, which culminates in Corinne's spectacular suicide at the end of the book. See Patrick Vincent, "A Continent of Corinnes: The Romantic Poetess and the Diffusion of Liberal Culture in Europe, 1815-50."

Canadian North, the figurative power of muscular Christianity, and the implications of domesticity for women engaged in missionary work in the North.

Myra Rutherdale in *Women and the White Man's God* discusses the degree to which missionary work in the Canadian North became intertwined with elements of the Scouting movement, explorer discourse, and trapper narratives.¹⁷ Rutherdale observes that “[m]issionaries were considered an integral part of this masculine culture” in that the images “fused to produce an image of masculinity associated with empire” (10). In addition to being dominantly masculine, these related elements combined to help construct the northern missionary as mobile, noble, isolated, and heroic. The exalted and complex masculine discourse, by extension, became intertwined with an emerging Canadian nationalism. Along with explorers and other figures of historical importance, missionaries were depicted as inspirational figures who could guide Canada to full maturity and potential. In her 1892 novel, *Marjorie's Canadian Winter: A Story of the Northern Lights*, for instance, Agnes Maule Machar celebrates the heroism and daring of the Jesuit priests who first visited Canada to attempt to convert Native populations to Christianity in the seventeenth century. Their unflinching faith and their stories of martyrdom counterpoint the moral malaise that Machar sees as afflicting late nineteenth-

¹⁷ Rutherdale cites an interesting quote from Lord Baden Powell's *Scouting for Boys* in which he claims, “The ‘trappers’ of North America, hunters of Central Africa, the British pioneers, explorers and missionaries over Asia and all the wild parts of the world, the bushmen and drovers of Australia, the constabulary of North-West Canada and of South Africa—all are peace scouts, real men in every sense of the word” (qtd. in Rutherdale 9-10).

century urban Canada, characterized by inattentive, nominal Christians who fail to execute their social responsibilities to the poor and disadvantaged, and the evolution of what Machar terms a "rose-water Christianity," a weak, delicate faith unable to withstand the urgent temptations and responsibilities of contemporary life. Machar presents and constructs Christianity as a privileged religion, just as she constructs Canada as a privileged nation, one whose foundation, located in male martyrdom, heroism, and hardiness, is something to be celebrated. Both the deeds and—just as importantly for Machar—the repetition of the stories of the founding missionaries to a receptive audience emerge as "a cluster of Northern Lights shining amid the Northern darkness" (191). The image of the Northern Lights, one of the defining attributes of Canada's northern geography, becomes a powerful metaphor for Christian influence that offers a distinctively Canadian deviation on the discourse of light and darkness so seminal to missionary discourse. Indeed, William Carpenter Bompas pays tribute to the power of the Northern aurora in his aptly titled *Northern Lights on the Bible*, where he sees the northern lights as a sign of God's Providence that parallel the providential nature of his own mission. The Northern Lights are imbued with a religious and cultural significance that elevate them from a climatic phenomenon into a symbol of Christian significance and influence.

Defining the cultural and literary role of the Canadian North has been a project that has preoccupied many critics and writers. John Moss, Robert Kroetsch, Rudy Wiebe, Renée Hulan, and Sherrill Grace, to name some of the more influential critics, as well as

a host of male and female travel writers, have explored how the Canadian North has influenced the formation of Canadian identity and Canada's imaginative geography. It has been constructed as a "discursive formation," as a "text" needing interpretation and translation, as an emptiness that makes possible a "new story," as a magical and enchanted space, redemptive for the human and national spirit (Grace "Gendering" 165; Moss *Enduring* 105; Kroetsch *Likely* 35).¹⁸ Historically, like missionary work, it has also been identified with "masculinist" culture, tradition, and narratives (Grace "Gendering" 164-65). Joanne Saul observes: "Within the context of narratives of exploration, mad trappers, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), the Canadian north has necessarily been portrayed as the land of masculine hardiness, strength, and self-reliance," which presents "the male individual in a struggle to survive against nature" (97). The exploration narratives of Samuel Hearne and Alexander Mackenzie, the travel writings of William F. Butler and Agnes Deans Cameron, the fiction of Agnes C. Laut, and the poetry of Robert Service elevated this struggle, where the "Law of the Yukon" collided

¹⁸ For these considerations, see Sherrill Grace, "Gendering Northern Narrative"; John Moss, *Enduring Dreams*; John Moss, ed., *Echoing Silence*; Robert Kroetsch, *The Lovely Treachery of Words* and *A Likely Story*; Renée Hulan, *Northern Experience and the Myths of Canadian Culture*; Rudy Wiebe, *Playing Dead*. The motifs of magic and enchantment often emerged in descriptions of the Canadian North found in women's travel writing. See, for instance, Charlotte Cameron, *A Cheechako in Alaska and Yukon*; Isobel Hutchison, *North to the Rime-Ringed Sun: Being the Record of an Alaskan-Canadian Journey made in 1933-34*; Theodora C. Stanwell-Fletcher, *Clear Lands and Icy Seas: A Voyage to the Eastern Arctic*; Emily Murphy, *Seeds of Pine* and *Bishop Bompas*. In *Bishop Bompas*, for instance, Murphy observes, "The north may whiten a man's hair, harden his voice, and wrinkle his skin but it pours a magic into his veins so that he dies with longing for it in any other land" (7).

with the limits of masculine strength and will to produce not merely heroes, but what Laut deemed as the actual “makers of history” in Canada (*Lords* 9). Such encounters, of course, very often displaced or minimized the cultures and lifestyles of Native Aboriginal populations in their emphasis on white male heroism. Charlotte Bompas’s letters reveal the difficulties of settlement in a region that did not traditionally or ideologically invite white, middle-class female influence; concurrently, the North, defined by wildness and determined primarily by masculine enterprise, created a small but uncertain space for the ameliorating energy of female improvement, in which women could function, in Agnes C. Laut’s phrase, as the North’s “moral compass” (Legge xviii).

The Canadian North, moreover, presented an effective environment for the discourse of muscular Christianity to prosper. According to Donald Hall, the term “muscular Christianity” originated in a review of Charles Kingsley’s *Two Years Ago*, written by T. C. Sandars in the *Saturday Review* in 1857. Sandars says of Kingsley: “His ideal man is a man who fears God and can walk a thousand miles in a thousand hours—, who,...breathes God’s free air on God’s rich earth and at the same time can hit a woodcock, doctor a horse and twist a poker around his fingers” (qtd. in Hall 7). Hall claims that one of the defining characteristics of muscular Christianity was “an association between physical strength, religious certainty, and the ability to shape and control the world around oneself” (7). The dilemmas represented by muscular Christianity were explored in the writings of mid-century British writers such as Thomas Hughes and Charles Kingsley, in which, according to Hall, “the male body appears as a

metaphor for social, national and religious bodies" (8). In the Canadian cultural context, the muscular Christian has been recently identified by Daniel Coleman in *White Civility* as one of "four ubiquitous allegorical figures" whose "regularly repeated literary personifications for the Canadian nation mediated and gradually reified the privileged normative status of British whiteness in English Canada" (5; 6-7).¹⁹ For Coleman, the muscular Christian offers a resonant critical model which helps trace the history and paradoxical nature of Canada's "fictive ethnicity" and its eventual emergence into a "wry civility" (*White* 7; 211). He argues that "the serious study of the figure of the muscular Christian can enable us to trace the interweaving of nationalist ideas about ethnicity, gender, religion, class, and race in early twentieth-century Canadian fictional and social texts" (*White* 129). Coleman asserts that "discourse of muscular Christianity linked the physical ideal of a vigorous male body with the spiritual ideal of a passionate but disciplined morality" (*White* 135). Coleman maintains that muscular Christians functioned as figures of "progressive" masculinity in early twentieth-century Canadian society, who could be viewed as "partners in the campaign for social reform" that was being waged by both male and female advocates for social change (*White* 147).

From a Canadian literary perspective, muscular Christianity is best seen in the early twentieth-century writings of Ralph Connor. Ralph Connor is the pseudonym under which Charles Gordon, a Presbyterian missionary, wrote numerous novels, and his fiction

¹⁹ The other allegorical figures Coleman identifies are "the Loyalist brother," "the enterprising Scottish orphan," and "the maturing colonial son" (6).

very often straddles the ground between historical fact and fictional creation, as his characters exchange ponderous and didactic diatribes on Canada's history, geography, and cultural relations with Britain and the United States. An extreme—and very literal—example of muscular Christianity can be found in the opening paragraphs of Ralph Connor's *The Sky Pilot in No Man's Land* in which the ardent young missionary, Barry Dunbar, is presented in startlingly physical terms: "High upon a rock, poised like a bird for flight, stark naked, his satin skin shining like gold and silver in the rising sun, stood a youth, tall, slim of body, not fully developed but with muscles promising, in their faultless, gently swelling outline, strength and suppleness to an unusual degree" (9). Embodied in the flawless and majestic physical masculine body are both the horizons and limits of Canada's national potential. Dunbar's idealized youthful body reinforces the internal attributes—innocence, optimism, strength, self-worth—needed for missionary work, just as Dunbar's elevated physical position high on a rock reinforces his moral elevation over his secular environment. American Osborne Howland, as he observes Dunbar, asks: "'What is this thing I see? Flesh or spirit? Man or god?'" (10). Dunbar's godlike form visualizes the cultural tensions and imbrication between physical temptation and spiritual discipline that he, as a young missionary, and the North's masculine "moral compass," is forced to negotiate and withstand.

Connor's presentation of Dunbar also represents the degree to which muscular Christianity and missionary activity became intertwined with Anglican missions and mission discourse in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Canada, whose male

missionaries embodied the idea of “progressive masculinity” identified by Daniel Coleman (*White* 147). In its descriptions of its missions to “North-west America,” as Canada was then described, the CMS emphasized the vastness, isolation, and dramatic appeal of the Canadian landscape, the curious and intricate customs of its Natives, and the spectacular efforts by lone male missionaries to dominate and tame all these dissident elements. The feats of Anglican missionaries such as William Duncan, Edmund J. Peck, John Horden, William Ridley, Isaac Stringer, and William Carpenter Bompas in the North-West were defined in part by this complex interaction between physicality and faith; indeed, their “Christian manliness” became an important element in promoting and attracting resources—both human and financial—to their respective missions.²⁰ The stories and pictures that demonstrated the physical prowess of male missionaries and tested the limits of their capacity for endurance, suffering, and survival were regularly repeated and were also seen as outward expressions of their inner moral strength and fortitude.

For women missionaries, domesticity served as a persuasive counterpoint to muscular Christianity and, within mission discourse, became instrumental, not in simply

²⁰ In *The History of the Church Missionary Society*, Eugene Stock says: “No C. M. S. Missions have excited deeper interest than those in the Far West and the Far North of Canada.... No speakers have been more welcomed at C. M. S. meetings than those who could tell of life in the snow and ice. It used to be said that North-West America raised the funds which the C. M. S. spent in Asia and Africa. And even now, what missionaries are more eagerly listened to than Bishops Stringer and Lofthouse or Mr. Peck and Mr. Greenshield?” (4: 366).

arguing for women's participation in mission work, but in offering them a compelling rhetoric for strengthening, representing, and propagating that participation. In *Imperial Leather*, Anne McClintock offers a comprehensive definition of domesticity. She claims that, apart from its immediate association with matters of the household and family, "[d]omesticity denotes a *space* (a geographic and architectural alignment) and a *social relation to power*. The cult of domesticity—far from being a universal fact of 'nature'—has a historical genealogy" (34, emphasis in original). Domesticity also "involves processes of social metamorphosis and political subjection in which gender is the abiding but not the only dimension" (35). The role that the discourse of domesticity played in women's missionary work, both practically and ideologically, is one that cannot be over-emphasized. As Rhonda Anne Semple argues, "women's professional development" in missionary work "was defined in ways that emphasised their position relative to family, societal structures" (199). Missionary wives were particularly charged with the task of upholding and modelling white, middle-class domestic and family values in environments that did not readily invite their implementation, and these resulting tensions and struggles, often expressed in their writings, help to clarify the tensions that underlay domesticity as a cultural practice. Concurrently, however, by the end of the nineteenth century, domesticity was appropriated by women's mission organizations as a more encompassing power, something competitive with, as opposed to merely complementary to, the traditions of martyrdom, heroism, and muscular Christianity commonly represented by male missionaries. Women's missionary writing helps reveal, therefore, that, far from

having one meaning, domesticity had embedded, within its many discursive expressions, multiple, often unreconcilable, meanings. The cult of domesticity yielded within it contradictory notions of extension and restraint, both for women themselves, as well as for constructs of "home," and these shifting emphases created both multivalent layers of meaning and ideological ruptures that simultaneously gave domesticity cultural vitality and practical and social difficulty.

Domestic imagery was prevalent in the parables and Biblical teachings of Jesus. In parables such as the Hidden Leaven, the Lost Coin, and the Vineyard Tenants, Christ used the social structure, relations, and objects of the household to explain the nature of the Kingdom of Heaven to his disciples in imaginative and culturally resonant terms for his own society. Moreover, God's kingdom of the faithful often was represented metaphorically and rhetorically as a "household,"²¹ and women's church and mission organizations eagerly seized upon these images because, as the sanctioned household managers of their day, the domestic metaphors helped naturalize and solidify their participation in activities that traditionally discouraged female involvement. For instance, in the *Letter Leaflet* for March 1894, in an article entitled "The Duty of the Woman's Auxiliary Towards Missions in the North-West," levels of meaning in the words 'home,' 'domestic,' and 'household' interplay to justify the presence of the Woman's Auxiliary in

²¹ For instance, see Ephesians 2: 19: "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God" and Galatians 6: 10: "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all *men*, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (King James Version).

the Canadian North:

There are several reasons why the N.W.T. should be a specially chosen field for our Missionary effort—not but that Missionary work everywhere appeals to our sympathy, and justly claims our support. But it must not be overlooked that we are met to-day to act; not on individual impulse, but as members of a society bound to exercise a discreet management on behalf of the household of God. Now the N.W.T. is our Domestic Mission—the one nearest home. There is more truth than might at first appear in the well-worn signpost: 'Charity begins at home'.... As a consequence of this enthusiastic love of home, a wave of Christian influence would beat in an ever-widening circle from our centre, until it reached some little hamlet at the ends of the earth to find that its citizens, too, were trying to get some of the prizes of Christianity for themselves.... (180)

Such statements reveal the extent to which domestic discourse, merged with Christianity, was appropriated and framed as a form of dynamic and self-propagating power for women wishing to justify their importance within organized missionary work. Home as an ideological and social construct becomes intertwined with the structural divide of missionary societies between 'home' and 'foreign' missions, where the home is upheld as the moral centre of the world. This elevation—and, some might say, this politicization—of the domestic reinforces the claims of several critics, including Nancy Armstrong, Mary Poovey, Laura Wexler, Anne McClintock, Adele Perry, and others, who argue that women derived cultural authority from domestic structures and relations which affected their emergence as figures of influence in literary, religious, cultural, and social spheres, and which concurrently energized class, race, and imperialist ideologies.²² Nancy

²² See Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction*; Mary Poovey, *Uneven Developments*; Laura Wexler, *Tender Violence*; Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather*; Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*; Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family*

Armstrong claims that, in many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century conduct books, the household tended to be represented as “a world with its own form of social relations,” one with “a distinctly feminine discourse” (*Desire* 63); conversely, in the above passage, the expansive energy of home pulsates outward to contain the entire world. Jo Ann Kay McNamara sees such movements as a part of a broader project of the feminization of Protestantism, which restored “a measure of authority and activity to women through a broad concept of social housekeeping that would eventually justify their demand for suffrage” (600). The domestic, therefore, is envisaged not simply as a complement to male endeavour—as male missionaries and the mission organizations who sponsored them would like to have it—but as a distinct collective energy that promoted female organization and agency.

An integral aspect of the power of domesticity in mission work was intertwined with the idea of female domestic influence. Influence was an indirect, as opposed to a direct, emanation of power and its effects were often not immediately apparent or observable. In her 1799 publication, *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education*, Hannah More describes influence as a “talent” and a “power” that women possessed, one that benefitted from being deliberately cultivated and consciously exercised (1: 1-5). Influence was associated with—yet was larger than—other behavioural characteristics associated with the ideal nineteenth-century woman such as

Fortunes; Mary Taylor Huber and Nancy C. Lutkehaus, eds., *Gendered Missions*; Barbara E. Kelcey, *Alone in Silence*.

piety (an excessive observance of religious devotion), propriety (social self-regulation and conformity), and virtue (the outward appearance of sexual purity). Rhetorically, it was embraced as an important compensatory power for white, middle-class nineteenth-century women precisely because it could be exercised from a position of relative economic and social disadvantage. A woman could lack direct economic and political power and institutional support and still have influence. Its amorphous nature corroborated Victorian notions of men's and women's respective moral, religious, and economic responsibilities, in which women tended to hold moral and spiritual, as opposed to economic and material, power. Domestic influence was even represented as a possible transforming agent in institutions of reform in nineteenth-century British society. Anna Jameson, who wrote *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles*, became, in her later life, a passionate advocate for the role of "motherly and sisterly influence" in social reform in Britain (*Communion* 118). In her descriptions of one of the most worrying of the home mission institutions in England, the nineteenth-century workhouse, Jameson deplores the lack of models of female morality for work-house residents, espousing such models as essential for the social rescue of the inmates. She states: "[W]hat is wanted is a domestic, permanent, ever-present *influence*, not occasional *inspection*" (*Communion* 123, emphasis in original). Domestic influence was framed in terms that suggested its potential to generate social change.

This possibility became equally pronounced in the mission field, where one of the underlying goals of missionary work was the implementation of cultural change which

could foster the growth of Christianity. Influence was one of the cultural powers claimed by missionaries and it found expression in a range of metaphors, such as sowing and leavening. Like the metaphor of sowing, the metaphor of leavening was a useful one for missionaries in describing the preparatory work in mission fields that often yielded no immediate results. As a rhetorical feature, it allowed missionaries to narrate their work in assertive terms using a discourse of progress—even when there was no real progress to report.

The image of the leaven also represented the ideals of self-extension and self-propagation that were so essential to nineteenth-century views of mission work and the Church itself (Stock 1: 23; Pierson “Plea” 194-95). William Carpenter Bompas, in his early correspondence to officials at the CMS, often made use of the term. In one letter dated 4 September 1865 from Cumberland Mission, he stated: “It has been pleasant to me to find that part of the country which I have already traversed decidedly much leavened with the knowledge of the Gospel.”²³ In another dated 19 March 1867 from Fort Rae, he declared:

Mission work in this country needs much patience, and as we deal rather with individuals than with numbers, we must not expect those exciting successes by which in other lands multitudes are sometimes brought to bow together at the foot of the cross. A quiet walk with God & the hope of gradually leavening the country with the influence of the Gospel, and raising the Indians [sic] mind to comprehend the momentous concerns of

²³ Church Missionary Society Papers, National Archives of Canada C C1/010/3.

eternity such must I think be the effort of a Missionary here.²⁴

Early historians of the women's missionary movement, such as Helen Barrett Montgomery in *Western Women in Eastern Lands*, interpreted the image of the leaven as a metaphor for female influence and power by focussing on the action of leaven in the parable as opposed to the nature of leaven itself. Montgomery ponders the place of missionary wives in mission history and finds that their contribution has been misrepresented. She mourns the fact that their work is "for the most part unrecognized" and that "in missionary history, there is a tendency to pass over lightly the contribution of missionary wives and mothers" (158; 159). Montgomery uses the image of the leaven to describe the nature of the missionary wife's contribution to missionary work:

Her greatest service is the founding of a Christian home. One object lesson of a real home, incarnate, tabernacled among them is worth volumes of Christian apologetics. To see a home where the girl baby is as welcome as her brother; where the wife is queen and not servant; where husband and wife confer as friends; ...to see the minutiae of everyday living actually lived in sweetness and power before them; these things are the leaven hidden in the meal that will surely leaven the whole lump. (160-61)

The image of the leaven has an ambiguous history in Biblical hermeneutics and Biblical scholars are divided on how to interpret it. The ambiguity of parables such as the Hidden Leaven meant it could withstand multiple cultural interpretations. As William Bompas uses the term, the Gospel is the leaven. As Montgomery uses the term, female influence is the leaven. The image of the leaven is powerful because it *visualizes* woman's

²⁴ Church Missionary Society Papers, National Archives of Canada C C1/010/7.

influence by utilizing a common domestic image while still preserving its amorphous character. This suggests both the vitality and adaptability of missionary discourse to generate a range of cultural meanings. Using a framework of quantification favoured in the late nineteenth century, something small and seemingly insignificant and innocuous becomes a transforming agent to create something larger and more substantial.²⁵ In a social atmosphere that extolled women's capacity to elevate morally those unable to govern their baser impulses (men, the poor, etc.), and which simultaneously privileged the domestic sphere as the ideal space from which women should exercise influence, the image of the leaven proved useful. It represented white, middle-class women's elevating nature in irresistibly literal terms.²⁶

In a recuperative gesture, therefore, Montgomery reframes domestic influence in an elevated style that allowed it to compete with the heroic legacy generated by muscular

²⁵ This image also parallels the use of the expression "Bread and Roses" associated with woman's "rising," which was often used to describe the female emancipation movement in Canada and the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

²⁶ Interestingly, this image has also been appropriated by contemporary women religious to describe the nature of their religious experiences. In Robin Whitaker's M.A. thesis "Staying Faithful," she cites Sister Sheila O'Dea, a Mercy Sister, who, in a homily given on July 18, 1993, declared, "What an image of the reign of God!! A woman taking yeast and mixing it with flour until all of it is leavened. A woman transforming flour and yeast to dough and bread and nourishment and life. We are called to build the reign of God in our midst"(qtd. in Whitaker 215). In Corona Wyse's *Not Words But Deeds*, there is a poem by Sister Laurane Pittman, PBVM, written in June 1992 called "Rich Dough," which reads: "White rising, delicate bulk, dough/Bread making, soft, foamy mound/Yeast infested, watered flour,/Germinating, unfolding power/In the warm quiet hour./Clearly this panned dough/Caresses the mystery of life" (qtd. in Wyse 85).

Christianity, while still complementing it. Yet Montgomery's conclusions, while well-intentioned, are so idealized that they elide over the labour of *creating* that Christian home, accepting its outcome as conclusive as opposed to precarious—if not altogether impossible—and suppressing any meaningful discussion of what the impediments to “founding” a Christian home really were in areas where Christianity was far from established. In the language used by cultural critics, such as Meaghan Morris, to describe the challenges and problems of theorizing domestic space as stable and homogeneous within historical and emerging cultural activities that privilege movement and mobility, the Christian home, while a moral centre, becomes an empty signifier, stripped of its labour (41-44). It is the tensions and labour of “founding” a “Christian home,” when the boundaries between work and home often faltered, that the writings of Charlotte Bompas and other white female missionaries in the Canadian North at once mystify and recount and restore.

2.2 “Tell me where my home is?”: Self-Definition and Domesticity in the Canadian North

A defining aspect of the missionary writing and experience of Charlotte Bompas was her engagement with the practical and symbolic obstacles with which she had to contend in order to fulfill the domestic role of missionary wife. How was the missionary wife to establish a home when she was never sure where her home was or what were her duties? What was the primary function of the missionary home? This was the dilemma

posed by Charlotte Bompas's friend, Sarah Stringer, in a letter excerpt contained in the *Letter Leaflet*, the publication of the Woman's Auxiliary, in July 1897:

You asked me to tell you what kind of a home I had here. Well, I hardly know where my home is yet. This is our home for a short time at least, for we are living in Arch. McDonald's house till his return. Then about 150 miles from here at Kittygagzyooit I have another home; it has been built after the "Husky" style, but I'm thankful to say has a door by which we can go in and out without breaking our backs. At Herschel Island, which is 100 miles from Kittygagzyooit, I have still another; it is a sod house and the only window consists of one pane of glass in the roof. Besides all these there is a log house here which Mr. Stringer has practically built himself and which may be our home after a time. During the greater part of the journey of 400 miles or more to the coast and back, our home was wherever night overtook us, and in fact, a good deal of the time since I left you I've lived in a tent. Now this is somewhat of a riddle: Tell me where my home is? (289-90)

Sarah, or Sadie, Stringer was also a missionary, the wife of Bishop Isaac O. Stringer—commonly known as the Bishop Who Ate His Boots, so named after a particularly gruelling missionary journey in which he was required to do just that in order to fend off starvation. The Stringers spent the early years of their missionary career primarily, although, as Stringer's account makes clear, not exclusively, on Herschel Island. In contrast to Charlotte Bompas, Sadie Stringer often accompanied her husband during his travels. Isaac Stringer succeeded William Bompas as the Bishop of Selkirk when Bompas resigned his bishopric in 1905. Sadie Stringer and Charlotte Bompas were good friends and corresponded regularly until Bompas's death in January 1917. Even though she does so playfully, Stringer expresses both the physical and ideological dislocation from the traditional view of domestic life that missionary work created. She presents the

difficulties of achieving domestic stability in the Canadian North and, in so doing, challenges her culture to expand its definitions of "domesticity" and "home" in order to accommodate her distinctive experience. In this, she echoes the domestic experiences and writings of many Canadian and American settler women that are explored in Janet Floyd's *Writing the Pioneer Woman*. As Floyd has argued, the writings of pioneer women like Susanna Moodie, Catharine Parr Traill, and Anne Langton challenged cultural definitions of domesticity and the home as a "monolithic ideological system" (3). Citing critics such as Avtar Brah and J. Douglas Porteus, Floyd maintains that, in women's emigrant and settler literature, domesticity merged with ideas of "diaspora" in which the home was best defined in terms of the "journey," and was hence placed in formulations of "multi-placedness" and "perpetual suspension" (3).²⁷ Floyd asserts that the "emigrant home, then, is a space quintessentially unstable in meaning" (3). In her study of the experiences of European women in the Canadian North, Barbara E. Kelcey similarly maintains that "'home' had a double meaning" for many of the early female settlers to Canada (34). Obviously, the writings of missionary women, who wrote as emigrants and settlers, as well as missionaries in nineteenth-century Canada, and whose personal and professional lives were organized upon unpredictable mobility, expand and support such theoretical conjectures; yet missionary women have received little critical

²⁷ In addition to the Introduction of Janet Floyd's *Writing the Pioneer Woman*, see Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities* (Routledge, 1996) and J. Douglas Porteus, "Home: The Territorial Core" *Geographical Review* 66 (1976): 383-90, both of which Floyd cites in her introductory argument.

consideration under these categories.

Like Sadie Stringer, Charlotte Bompas, too, had several "homes" in the course of her missionary career in the North. William Bompas's conviction that he was called to do missionary work in the most remote and least accessible areas of his dioceses, as well as the formal shifting of diocesan boundaries that occurred in the northern territories between 1873 and 1896 meant that, in her early missionary career, Charlotte Bompas seldom stayed in one place for more than one or two years. This nomadic existence was punctuated by absences due to illness and extended family visits, and was amplified by William Bompas's active efforts to induce his wife to leave the mission field. She spent her first two years in the mission field at Fort Simpson between 1874 and 1876. Between the years 1876 and 1883, Bompas lived in Fort Chipewyan in Athabasca, Fort Norman, Fort Simpson, and Fort Resolution; she also left the mission field and spent time in Winnipeg between 1877 and 1879 due to illness. In 1883, she returned to England to visit her family. Upon returning to Canada in 1885, she was delayed in Winnipeg for one year due to the North-west Rebellion. In 1886, she returned to Fort Simpson for two years before she again returned to England in 1888. When she returned to the mission field in 1892, she settled with her husband at Forty Mile on the Yukon River, where she stayed until 1896, when she was summoned to England with some urgency due to her sister Emma's serious illness. In 1897, upon attempting to return to Forty Mile, she was stranded at Fort Yukon for the entire winter during the height of the gold rush at a time when food supplies were particularly scarce. These were often difficult journeys, with

long periods of separation from her husband, and they embodied many of the challenges that faced white women who pursued missionary work in the Canadian North. The remaining years of her missionary career were spent in relative stability at the mission station at Forty Mile until 1900, and at Carcross, until Bishop Bompas died in June 1906.

Charlotte Bompas also had to endure specifically the challenge of being the wife of the most “travelling Bishop in the world.” The spirit of heroic individualism that defined the wandering missionary career of William Carpenter Bompas, and that was ceremonially celebrated in missionary journals, such as *The Church Missionary Gleaner* and the *CMS Intelligencer*, precluded domestic stability. At a missionary meeting in Pittsburgh in June 1883, Archdeacon Kirby, the former Diocesan of Rupert’s Land, stressed the itinerant nature of Bompas’s career, comparing him to such roaming historical icons as St. John the Baptist, whose wandering and ascetic lifestyle in the wilderness Bompas emulated, and Alexander the Great, longing “for a new world to conquer for Christ.”²⁸ In July 1888, in an article in *The Church Missionary Gleaner*, which celebrated the ongoing missionary legacy of William Bompas, the writer claimed of the Bishop: “All those years he has had no home; and he has no home now. He spends all his time in journeying from station to station and staying a few weeks or months at each. There is no other such travelling Bishop in the world. Mrs. Bompas has shared his hard life, but they have often had to be separated because there was not enough

²⁸ See “Episcopal Pioneers” *The Globe* Saturday June 30, 1883, p. 7 for a full account of these anecdotes.

food at one station to keep them both through the winter" ("Bishop" 105). Part of the heroic personal mythology of Bishop Bompas, therefore, was that he "had no home." What were the implications of his "homelessness" and of his lengthy absences for Charlotte Bompas? Her role as a domestic homemaker, with the narrative and practical possibilities that it provided, was considerably circumscribed by the fact that she had no biological children, and often no husband, to care for.²⁹ In a journal entry dated just six months after her marriage, she says: "I am leading now a solitary, widowed life,³⁰ and find it hard, at times, to realize I am married!"—a remarkable declaration for a newly wed woman (Archer 29). In another entry dated January 4, 1875, she claims: "I feel so lonely and desolate at times. Still, I have a definite aim in life—a work, I trust, given me to do for the dear Master. I long to be more fully occupied with the real mission work" (Archer 35). As she dwells on her isolation and the delay of her letters from home, she despairs: "One hope after another has failed me.... God's love and mercy are great in sustaining me through this trial" (Archer 30). Another entry, dated April 23, 1875, states: "My loneliness sometimes seems very great. I tell myself to work harder and not to brood or

²⁹ Charlotte Bompas informally adopted and cared for many Indian children, however, a point that will be discussed later in this chapter.

³⁰ Bompas's use of the phrase "solitary widowed" perhaps echoes Oliver Goldsmith's sketch of the distressed gentlewoman, "the sad historian of the pensive plain," in "The Deserted Village": "All but yon widowed solitary thing/ That feebly bends beside the plashy spring;/ She wretched matron, forced, in age, for bread/To strip the brook with mantling cresses spread" (ll. 129-32). Bompas was familiar with Goldsmith's poem because she used a quotation from it in her 1862 novel, *Niccolo Marini*, p. 2.

despond. I want to live a higher, more spiritual life, and then I should not feel lonely” (Archer 48). In a journal entry dated “Tuesday in Easter Week [1876],” she confesses: “I always feel so very thankful for one’s work here; without it existence in this country would be scarcely tolerable. Still, one is often depressed concerning the mission work, the disappointments are so great, and there is so much that is painful and unsatisfactory to contend with” (Archer 57).

The prospect of eminent movement also created consternation for Charlotte Bompas because of the disruption and further isolation it would impose. In a journal entry dated June 1876, she declares:

The Bishop has resolved on moving his headquarters from Fort Simpson to Athabasca. He thinks it is desirable for many reasons, and it holds out some advantages to me, but the undertaking is a formidable one as it involves for me a canoe journey of some weeks without my husband.... This, I feel, is the greatest trial of our mission life. The hardships and roughness weigh lighter far than these doleful separations, when we must necessarily be for months without a line of intercourse, and which make me feel more than ever the immense distance which involves the long, dreary silence of my dear ones at home. (Archer 59)

Collectively these statements, written during her first two years in the mission field, reveal her struggles and uncertainties about her early missionary career; and yet it also seems, by her own admission, these struggles helped her to consolidate her identity as a missionary, as her “work” distracted her from her loneliness. While Bompas, in some sense, defined herself as a missionary from the very beginning of her arrival in Fort Simpson, speaking of undertaking “our mission work” to her sister Emma as early as September 1874, she still did not place her own labours in the same category as the “real

mission work” of her husband (Archer 27; 35). She distinguished her domestic-based duties from her husband’s scholarly and intellectual pursuits of translating Biblical texts into the Chipewyan, Slave, Tenni, and Beaver languages, grappling with the nuances of the Syriac version of the Bible, and, of course, his constant and physically demanding travels. Her domestic-based duties included teaching school and Sunday school, playing the organ at church services, establishing a choir and teaching hymns to Native children, visiting nearby Native tents, opening her home to hospitable visits from hungry and curious Natives, training Aboriginal girls as servants, and, most significantly and emotionally for Bompas, caring for young Native infants, whom she regarded with maternal affection.

They also included the formal act of writing both private and public accounts about her own experience and her husband’s work. As Michel Foucault argues in “Technologies of the Self,” the practice of writing in Western and in Christian traditions emerged as an important “technology” which allowed individuals to document, examine, and contemplate their own spiritual progress and their own efforts at self-transformation, which Foucault saw as one of the seminal tenets of Christianity (18).³¹ This impulse became particularly formalized within the genre of spiritual autobiography in the

³¹ Foucault claims in “Technologies of the Self”: “Christianity belongs to the salvation religions. It’s one of those religions which is supposed to lead the individual from one reality to another, from death to life, from time to eternity. In order to achieve that, Christianity imposed a set of conditions and rules of behavior for a certain transformation of the self” (40).

eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a genre that both men and women used to record the vicissitudes of their earthly spiritual journeys.³² Linda Peterson defines traditional spiritual autobiography as a form that treated “lives as struggles between opposing forces. They delineated a pattern of spiritual progress from bondage in sin and spiritual darkness to enlightenment and victory over the world, flesh and devil” (6). However, according to Foucault, diaries, letters, and other more sporadic, less formal modes of writing also constituted important “technologies” that allowed the spiritual condition of the self to emerge and be assessed.³³ By directly relating her loneliness to her missionary aims, and recording her struggles with despair and discouragement, as she does in the quotations cited above, Bompas honoured this tradition of self-examination by vigilantly recording journals and writing letters that testified to the nature of her own spiritual struggles,

³² Important examples of spiritual autobiography in Western culture that influenced the production of spiritual autobiographies in the nineteenth century include Augustine, *Confessions*; John Bunyan, *Grace Abounding in the Chief of Sinners*, and its literary cousin, *The Pilgrim's Progress*. For a detailed examination of women's use of the spiritual autobiography form in the nineteenth century, see Linda Peterson, *Traditions of Victorian Women's Autobiography*; Mary Jean Corbett, “Feminine Authorship and Spiritual Authority in Victorian Women Writers' Autobiographies” in *Women and Autobiography*; Corbett, *Representing Femininity*. In his article “Elements of Spiritual Autobiography in *The Labrador Doctor*,” Ronald Rompkey examines Wilfred T. Grenfell's appropriation of the elements of the spiritual autobiographical form during his writing career.

³³ Foucault claims: “Writing was also important in the culture of taking care of oneself. One of the main features of taking care involved taking notes on oneself to be reread, writing treatises and letters to friends to help them, and keeping notebooks in order to reactivate for oneself the truths one needed” (27). Foucault identifies this practice of care of the self as an important development in the evolution of confessional discourse in early Christianity.

labours, and self-development, a tradition in which recounting one's progress, earthly and spiritual, constituted a valuable form of spiritual work.³⁴

In addition to writing letters and keeping journals, Bompas began publishing short, anecdotal sketches about her missionary experiences. Stephen Greenblatt and Carole Gerson have both identified the ideological and rhetorical importance of anecdotal narratives in recounting Western encounters with New World novelties and the unknown. Greenblatt argues that the "anecdote is the principal register of the unexpected" and "among the principal products of a culture's representational technology" (2-3). Anecdotes are "seized in passing from the swirl of experiences and given some shape, a shape whose provisionality marks them as contingent—otherwise, we would give them the larger, grander name of history—but makes them available for telling and retelling" (Greenblatt 3). Acknowledging the work of Greenblatt, Gerson observes the importance of the anecdote in the writings of early pioneers to Canada such as Catharine Parr Traill and Susanna Moodie ("Nobler" 77; 84). Anecdotal narratives allowed women such as Traill and Moodie to devise their own rhetorical means of recounting and conveying the "immediacy" their own experiences, while still "gesturing" towards larger cultural experiences, outside the models provided by traditional literary culture ("Nobler" 79; 84).

³⁴ For an excellent formal example of spiritual autobiography written by a nineteenth-century Canadian woman, see Eliza Bentley's *Precious Stones for Zion's Walls* (1897). Bentley uses devices such as dream visions and hearing "the Voice" of God to argue for her own spiritual and narrative authority and she establishes interesting tensions between her unrelenting domestic labours and her call to be chosen to perform the spiritual labour of writing about her own life in her opening chapter.

Maina Chawla Singh has observed that, in missionary writing, “anecdotes became surrogates for...women’s voices,” whereby “writers of missionary texts claimed and perpetuated...anecdotal narratives as *knowledge*, couching them in a language ideologically familiar to a western/Christian readership” (115, emphasis in original).

Short anecdotal sketches, such as those written by Charlotte Bompas, performed a similar function in missionary culture in that they allowed women to convey the subjective nature of their experiences while registering them within a wider cultural context.

Not surprisingly, the progress of Northern missions, and her relation to them, became an emerging theme in Bompas’s writings. *The Church Missionary Gleaner*, one of the principal publications that recounted the activities of CMS missions throughout the world, published a brief article, “A Lady’s Thousand-Mile Journey With Indians” in 1878, which described Bompas’s descent from Lake Athabasca to Winnipeg in 1876. Excerpts from this article were reprinted in 1899 in Eugene Stock’s *The History of the Church Missionary Society*. The evocative title suggests that Bompas’s experiences will be framed using discourses found often in women’s travel writing, which amplify the tensions of a refined and—in this instance—a Christian “lady” encountering the novelty of heathen Indians in a wild and vast land. This was not the case. As the editor of the *Gleaner* aptly expressed it, “Her letter is another testimony to the happy result of the preaching of the Gospel in those vast territories” (5). Emphasizing the ongoing success of Christian missions in the North took precedence over any generic pressure to emphasize the excitement and danger of novel encounters. Life on the Athabasca as

Bompas depicts it is a pastoral one, well-contained by the civilizing and soothing work of the missions at Cumberland and Stanley, as well as the presence of a succession of HBC Forts. "Indians" are open and receptive to the missionaries; they go to Church; they sing rousing hymns such as "The Sweet Bye and Bye" and "Nearer My God to Thee."

Bompas recalls: "I visited many Indian camps, where one seldom fails to meet with a hearty welcome. Sometimes I had prayers with some of the women and children in my tent. They seem to like to come, and enjoy singing hymns" (5). Her Native rowers, described as "orderly" and "well conducted," also sing hymns and have "prayers without fail," and she is treated with "kindness" along the way (5). The reader also learns that Bompas was not alone with her Indian crew during her entire trip, and that, in the latter part of her journey, she enjoyed the company of prestigious escorts, Governor-General Dufferin and Lady Dufferin, who also happened to be travelling to Winnipeg from Grand Rapids; and their duly noted presence extends an implicit imperial blessing to all the "good work" that Bompas describes. There is a shift in the public and private expressions of her role as missionary. In this public construction of her vocation, Bompas establishes herself as a sentimental witness to Christian progress in which the labour and struggles of Christianizing Indian populations, which is well documented in her journals and private letters to family, all but disappears. Anguished self-doubt about her struggles with missionary work has been suppressed and replaced by a gentle confidence that affirms her future consecration to it: "I deplore my having to leave my work so soon, but I earnestly trust in God's mercy to bring me back to it again in the early spring" (5).

Two months later in March 1878, *The Church Missionary Gleaner* published a lengthier article written by Bompas describing her experience at the Cumberland Mission, which she visited on the same journey. Similar in tone to her first article, the Mission emerges as a pastoral community of civility, fertility, prosperity, harmony, and self-sufficiency: "The number of neatly built log-houses by the side of the lake, most of them with a small potato-ground and barley fields attached, gave an air of comfort to the little colony which it was pleasing to contemplate" (56). Bompas emphasizes the "refreshing" nature of the time spent there (56). She vacillates between describing the physical labours that brought the mission to fruition—as a tribute to missionary vision—and stressing the resulting fertility and fruit of that labour, a feat made easier by the fact that she is visiting in late summer: "There were tomatoes, full sized and red, such as I used to gather years since at Naples; there were beans and cauliflowers, beetroot, carrots and turnips; nasturtiums for present beauty and future pickling, and dainty little herb beds, and a small flower garden with fragrant mignonette and shining China asters, hearts' ease, &c., &c." (57). This pastoral "structure of feeling," to use Raymond Williams's influential phrase from *The Country and the City*, extends to efforts to Christianize the Natives: "As soon as I had started a number of other canoes appeared in sight, filled with Indians all making for the Mission. All was so peaceful and Sunday-like and when we walked up to the house, it was pleasant to see the crowd of Indians gather round and awaiting the little bell to summon them to service" (57). The eagerness of the Indians to participate in Christian service becomes figurative fruit to be savoured. There is room for

improvements, however; the choir is lacking in finesse and the Church is “rough-looking,” creating space for Bompas to issue a plea for donations that will complete the transformation of the mission community. The account ends with an interesting anecdote in which Bompas effaces the spectre of Aboriginal hostility to the missionary’s presence by having the Natives “spontaneously” present him with a gift. The missionary is established as a successful builder of community, one that is governed by principles of reciprocity and mutual good will over which he exercises effortless authority and into which he is seamlessly integrated and elevated. As in her previous piece, Bompas establishes herself as a romantic witness to mission progress.

The descriptions of these two early published accounts also contrast interestingly with earlier written descriptions of her initial journey up to Athabasca Lake, contained in S. A. Archer’s edited version of Bompas’s letters and journals, *A Heroine of the North*. In these private letters and accounts of her journey in 1874, she engages in narrative practices such as the tendency of seeing the new northern landscape as empty and unvarying. This tendency has been identified by Mary Louise Pratt as a trait of imperial travel writing (61); in the context of mission literature, Myra Rutherdale has observed it was also characteristic of the written descriptions of many Anglican women missionaries travelling in the Canadian North (74). While admiring its beauty, Bompas sees little variety in the northern landscape. She wrote to her sister Emma in October 9, 1874: “We went through the same constant monotony of lake and river and portage over and over again, the only variety being that the weather became ever more damp and chilly in the

evenings and nights" (Archer 23). She also claims that "there was not much to look at beyond the tall pines and the little bay in which we so unexpectedly found ourselves" (Archer 20). She observes in an early description of her diocese: "[S]uch is the solitary waste of this land. Again, were all the diversity of landscape changed into an unbroken line of pines and willows—such is this country!" (28). The Indian rowers, unlike the docile, Christianized ones who row her down the Athabasca two years later, are described in terms that stress their uncooperativeness and their capacity to generate anxiety. Bompas confides her fears of being detained by "rebellious Indians" and she claims of the crew: "Our men gave William a great deal of trouble, and at one time I feared a complete mutiny" (Archer 23-24). The danger is further emphasized as Bompas describes her exhilaration at witnessing bear tracks and a bear hunt for the first time, punctuated by "shouts of triumph, with cries and screams such as only Red Indians can give" (Archer 20-21). In so doing, she invokes the novelty of a woman witnessing animal hunts similarly captured in writings by female travellers, such as Mina Hubbard, Clara Vyvyan, Elizabeth Taylor, Grace Gallatin Seton-Thompson, and Agnes Deans Cameron, and their simultaneous reactions of attraction, excitement, pity, and revulsion. Bompas, for instance, creates aesthetic tension by emphasizing that the "trophy" of the slain bear was lain at her feet "amid the ferns and bluebells and pretty golden tansy," deftly juxtaposing death and delicacy (21); she also stresses that she did not initially eat its meat, although she admitted to doing so the next day (21-22). Before she has any true sense of the demands and constraints of mission life, she adopts in her earliest correspondence the

perspective of the perceptive but leisured tourist, stressing what is novel, adventurous, empty, and dangerous about journeying in the North.

In addition to writing letters, sketches, and journals, Bompas had very specific labours which occupied her attention. Domestic concerns such as organizing her household were an immediate priority for her. In a letter to her sister Emma dated October 9, 1874, she notes:

I have been here nearly five weeks and begin to feel more settled, though our house is not as comfortable as I hope to make it. All my provision stores I have arranged up in the attic (no cupboards). Alas, they are not so much as one could wish, owing to our having had to open our flour bag in the boat to satisfy the men; also our bag of rice got wet, and a great part has had to be thrown away, and the rest is injured, and I must confess—very nasty! (Archer 25-26)

Nestled in these descriptions of household management are many of the tensions of trying to re-establish a cultural identity that had been interrupted by the travel, novelties, and responsibilities of mission life. Charlotte Bompas's immediate concern with ensuring that her domestic space is ordered and well supplied was in keeping with the role of the mistress of a middle-class home, a concern with which her sisters would have identified. Moira Donald has noted that "the burdens of being the mistress of a middle-class establishment" in the nineteenth century were "considerable," including hiring and training servants, "organising the overall management of domestic space, supervising purchases of food and other household purchases," and other duties (110-11). Yet the exceptional circumstances in which Charlotte Bompas found herself elevated these regular duties into the realm of frustrating difficulty. These circumstances included the

difficulties of obtaining a regular supply of food in the isolated Canadian North and the cultural tensions engendered by training young Aboriginal girls for service in a white Christian household. During the winter months in the Canadian North, food was scarce and had to be rationed. Often, boxes of supplies were lost en route, forgotten, or spoiled during the journey, which meant that household supplies were always uncertain. There were actually difficult years of famine in which supplies of native game dwindled and Native and visiting populations suffered starvation. In her very first year in Fort Simpson, Charlotte Bompas observes: "Also, by mistake, our chief grocery box was left behind, and we shall not get it till next fall, so we want many things I should have been thankful for. We have no coffee or cocoa, only a little arrowroot given me by a friend. No cornflour or starch. It is very vexatious, but one must cheer up and make the best of it" (Archer 26).

As the fantasy of material self-reliance gradually faded, Bompas learnt to engage in traditional forms of barter and exchange with Aboriginal traders and other Native women in order to maintain a food supply to her household. When Bompas offers some Indian visitors tea and barley cakes, she writes: "This made me immensely popular, and the next day one and another brought me bladders of grease and marrow—the former for candles and soap, the latter for cooking purposes. I paid them—some in tea, some in pieces of coloured braid. I got also one small bladder of pounded meat" (Archer 40). Another time, she trades her petticoat for a "feast" of beaver and a supply of bear and beaver grease (Archer 70). In a memorable sketch, she relinquishes her beloved red

shawl in exchange for a feast of ducks, and a winter supply of beaver and berries (Archer 72-74). The loss of the shawl appears to represent her past identity in the homeland and she narrates her own resistance to giving it up: "The dear home-look and smell were still about it, and how could I part with such an old friend and treasure?" (Archer 73).³⁵ Her initial resistance and eventual capitulation to the Cree woman's request represent Bompas's complex relationship to mission work in microcosm, one in which she frames both the difficulties and the rewards of mission work as being built upon acknowledged loss and sacrifice.

Very often, the losses with which Bompas dealt were more obliquely acknowledged in her letters and journals, particularly with regard to her own personal privacy and space. As Anne McClintock maintains, domesticity first and foremost denoted a relationship to "space" (36); how nineteenth-century females related to interior space, particularly the Victorian home, had cultural significance. Moira Donald argues that "the middle class Victorian home must surely rate as one of the most consciously contrived creations of domestic space in history" (106). Donald describes the intricacies of the spatial layout of middle-class homes in which "domestic Victorian space...was elaborately segregated according to social status, age and gender" (107). Time and time again in her journal and letters, Charlotte Bompas alludes to the lack of space in which

³⁵ For an interesting examination of how shawls particularly were regarded as status symbols by women in Victorian society, see Napur Chaudhuri, "Shawls, Jewelry, Curry and Rice in Victorian Britain" in *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance*.

she was expected to reside. In her Journal from Fort Norman, written June 1881, she records: "Our home here has certainly no large dimensions—just a 'But-and-a-ben,' as the Scotch have it, and, as the same Northern Singers observe, 'three sparrows might dance on the floor' of my largest apartment, yet, when I see the number of Indians who can assemble in it, I begin to think my eyes must deceive me as to its diminutive size..." (Archer 91-92). In another entry from Fort Norman, written 13 February 1882, she observes: "It has been rather a trying winter in some respects; the wee house is rather a cram for six of us to live in" (Archer 106). At Forty Mile Creek, on 20 January 1893, she writes: "The little Mission House is very plain and homely, and very small, as, especially in winter, we have to live in the smallest space possible to economize fuel, as, of course, we burn only wood here.... [W]ith the four Indian girls, we are confined to the three rooms, and they none the largest, and I find it difficult to keep them all in order" (Archer 135-36). On 29 November 1897, she says: "I am staying with the Hawksleys, so to speak—that is, I take meals with them, but I have a small compartment curtained off in the schoolroom.... They have only two small bedrooms, and as they have four boys of their own, I am thankful not to be in the house itself" (Archer 156). In a "Letter to J," written in 1898, she states: "Think of me in a small two-roomed house on the banks of the Yukon, one room used by Mrs. Beaumont, a trader's wife, whose husband is away. Rather close quarters, is it not?" (Archer 160). These descriptions are more than merely incidental descriptions of the realities of mission life. The confined space represents for Charlotte Bompas not merely the loss of physical space, but the loss of symbolic,

ideological space in which she can claim and constitute part of her identity as a white, middle-class female.

This loss of identity extended beyond matters of space. The difficulty of training and retaining household staff was also a concern for Bompas, one she shared with earlier emigrants to Canada such as Catharine Parr Traill and Susanna Moodie. Moodie, in *Roughing It in the Bush*, confesses similar exasperation about finding suitable household help in the Canadian wilderness. Moodie's sister, Catharine Parr Traill, delineates this social problem in *The Canadian Emigrant Housekeeper's Guide*, as she warned would-be female settlers of the peril of being without suitable servants: "But if they live in a country place, they may be left without the assistance of a female servant in the house.... [I]n such an emergency, the settler's wife may find herself greatly at a loss, without some knowledge of what her family requires at her hands" (5). Bompas's sister, Emma Cox, in a letter excerpt printed in the *Letter Leaflet* in January 1895, confirmed these domestic difficulties. Cox states: "I wish my sister could write more. She has such a fund to draw upon, but her difficulties are great in their household where they have Indian girls in training, who need constant supervision. Lately she has had eleven in their small household, and the Bishop has a night school for men and boys..." (516). The lack of servants meant that Bompas had to assume many of those household jobs herself. Bompas observes in her journal of June 1876 that she found herself in a "servantless condition," a situation that she finds "perplexing" (Archer 59). In one letter to her sister, she confides: "With all of this, my dearie, I am in the happy condition of no maidservant,

only one man—Jemmy the Louchou—to cook and draw water for us. For some time I had no help at all, and as I have a little baby to attend to, it did come rather hard, and Bishop's wife—'Yatte Dzeke'—had to be general servant to the mission" (Archer 60). When Bompas confesses to her sister that she had become "general servant to the mission," she is not merely commenting on her multiple labours, but acknowledging the demotion of her status as mistress of her own establishment, a confession with which her middle-class sister would have sympathized.

Charlotte Bompas's concerns with organizing interior space and the management of servants highlight one of the interesting ironies that defined women's missionary work. Both L. K. Worley and Myra Rutherdale have noted, for instance, that while women travellers and missionaries "challenged the idea of Victorian femininity by going off to see the world, they also felt a need to create familiar domestic spaces in their new locales" (Rutherdale 88).³⁶ Far from living a "native" lifestyle, many nineteenth-century mission families attempted to replicate the Victorian home in miniature by shipping in elaborate furniture, pianos, photographs, pictures, and bric-a-brac. This helped to

³⁶ Rutherdale credits Worley for making this observation in Worley's study of women German travellers, "'Through Others' Eyes': Narratives of German Women Travelling in Nineteenth-Century America" *Yearbook of German-American Studies* 21 (1986): 40. For an excellent examination of this issue in a Canadian context, see Rutherdale, Chapter 4, "Making a Home Away from Home" in *Women and the White Man's God*. Rutherdale, for instance, shows a photograph of the interior of the mission home of Isaac and Sadie Stringer on Herschel Island which contained a traditional and crowded Victorian parlour; Rutherdale also makes specific allusions to Charlotte Bompas throughout the chapter.

reinforce—and perhaps to amplify—the cultural importance of a Western lifestyle in regions where its value and utility were continually challenged. It also created an interesting tension between the missionary's difficulty in renouncing the trappings and practices of Western materialism while professing a Christianity that discouraged dependence on such needs, hence underlying the vexed position occupied by material culture in nineteenth-century mission work.

The contradictory position held by material culture within mission work is highlighted by Agnes C. Laut in her searing indictment of capitalist expansion, *Freebooters of the Wilderness*. In her novel, Laut uses a potent material image, that of china, to reflect the anachronistic nature of traditional missionary culture in the new social order. Isolated on Holy Cross Mountain, the missionary couple, Mr. and Mrs. Williams, are described as “gentlefolk keeping up the amenities of refined life, spreading the contagion of beautiful example like an irrigation plot widening slowly over arid sage brush” (Laut 71). With Laut's controlled ambivalence, the word “contagion,” which suggests both influence and disease, indicates what was ultimately ineffectual and ill-fated about missionary endeavour. The work undertaken by the missionary couple is likened to “a frail bit of China putting itself to the coarse uses of earthenware,” “a piece of Bisque or Dresden” (74). Laut uses this image to stress that, with their outdated and romantic philosophies, missionaries were typically ill-equipped to deal with contemporary realities, yet she is not without sympathy for their intentions. The missionaries ultimately become poignant victims when they lose their only child in a

horrible plot of sabotage, during which their gentle civility, like a piece of Dresden china, shatters against the anarchy and lawlessness that prevails in the wilderness, stressing their ineffectiveness in the new social order.³⁷

Many missionaries wrestled with the role of material cultural in the Canadian North, including the Bompases. There is an anecdote told by Bishop William Ridley in which he describes a hospitable visit to the Bompases in their log house at Carcross in 1903. Ridley describes the meanness of the surroundings, the gaps in the floor boards, the scanty insulation, the insufficient roofing, yet he exultantly concludes: "Everything around is as simple as indifference to creature comforts can make it, excepting the books, which are numerous, up to date, and as choice as any two excellent scholars could wish" (Cody 293). Ridley's conclusions regarding the Bompas's hermetic life and indifference to "creature comforts," while offered to show evidence of their virtuous life calling, may not be entirely accurate. Certainly, as revealed in her journals and letters, Charlotte Bompas often seemed most at ease in the North when she was enacting the cultural practices and surrounded by the material furnishings that represented her middle-class, cultured existence. Indeed, in a personal letter to his sister discussing his wife's personal ailments, William Bompas claims that "comfort" would be her best cure.³⁸ One of the

³⁷ With this bleak outcome, Laut, while somewhat admiring of missionary culture, seems to share William Butler's conclusion in *The Wild North Land* that missionary work was a "practical failure" (71).

³⁸ Letter from W.C. Bompas to My dear Selina from Resolution Mackenzie River, 24th January 1886. Bompas Papers, General Synod Archives, Anglican Church of

truly exultant moments Charlotte Bompas narrates is when she describes her painstaking efforts at delivering an authentic Victorian Christmas, complete with Christmas tree, home-made individual presents, and a Christmas feast with a plum pudding during the Christmas of 1875 to both Native and white visitors (Archer 31-34). Bompas contrasts her own elaborate ingenuity as the creator of the delights with the Indians' passive astonishment and curiosity: "The poor Indian mothers, black and grimy as ever, squatted down in a bunch on the floor, with faces radiant from astonishment and delight" (Archer 34).

Because mission life was defined by both mobility and stasis, furniture often had to be left behind to be reshipped later. In a letter to her sister Julia from Fort Simpson dated June 19, 1876, Bompas confides a list of things she is "troubled about," including the fact she has to leave all her furniture behind as she travels to Athabasca (Archer 60). For Bompas, her personal possessions embodied the spirit of both civilization and home. In an excerpt from Bompas's journal in Fort Norman, she observes: "We have been very busy settling into our little halting-place and it begins to look homelike already; a few chairs and a table, some sacred prints and dear home pictures do very much to make it look civilized" (91). When settled in Forty Mile, she similarly celebrates:

I have taken up my quarters for the present in a good-sized loft, which is divided into three rooms by means of curtains. I have my own furniture

Canada, M89-3, A2. "Nina suffered from the same thing [an inflamed leg] in the north and I feared she might have more trouble with her leg. The first cause was probably cold but I have learned that next tonics stimulants & comfort are the best cure for her."

round me, which came quite safely, my chairs and little tables and carpet and mats, all the dear home treasures of pictures and photographs, with my bookshelves which are quite full, so you may think of me as very snug and comfortable, although with only sloping rafters. (Archer 132-33)

Even a wall covering of "cotton twill" on their mission house is described with approbation because it "looks warm and our pictures look well upon it" (Archer 135).

Myra Rutherdale suggests that there is a cultural significance to the accumulation of material objects in that it allowed the missionaries to distinguish themselves from Native populations and assert a form of "cultural hegemony" in which they could assert the supremacy of Western values (90; 88). Certainly, the continued practice of Western customs and the display of material objects helped mitigate any potential blurring between "civilized" missionary and "heathen" Natives that Northern life might encourage and allowed for a dramatic visual reminder of the missionary's cultural difference. From this context, the missionary home was not only the outcome of personal resolve and expert management; from the perspective of missionary culture, it was viewed as a triumph of the forces of cultural ascendancy and of European civilization itself.

Bompas's attempt to establish herself as mistress of her own space was also compromised by the fact that the space she occupied served a multitude of functions. In their landmark study of nineteenth-century middle-class life, *Family Fortunes*, Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall document the emergence of separate spaces for work and

home that occurred during the nineteenth century in England.³⁹ Professional or cottage work previously done in unsegregated space within residential dwellings began to be relocated to exclusively professional premises or was performed in clearly delineated professional or work spaces within the home (Davidoff and Hall 358-59). Nineteenth-century middle-class culture naturalized this separation between work and home in which the home emerged as an idealized powerful cultural force, a privileged space, expertly managed by women. Such spaces provided essential sanctuary from the social stress of everyday life, in which children could be nurtured and in which both men and women could restore and elevate their respective identities and powers. This image of home received powerful reinforcement in domestic fiction, which privileged the home as the moral centre of Victorian society. The nineteenth-century Canadian mission station, however, defied this cultural tendency of separating home space and work space. The physical and financial constraints upon establishing any kind of dwelling in the Canadian North meant that it was often impossible for home life and work life to remain segregated. Like the nineteenth-century working class home, with which it has some parallels, the nineteenth-century mission home could be viewed as a "thoroughfare,"⁴⁰

³⁹ See Davidoff and Hall, Chapter 8, pp. 357-96, especially pp. 364-69, for a focussed discussion of this emergence in nineteenth-century England.

⁴⁰ Martin Hewitt interprets the nineteenth-century working-class home as a "thoroughfare," the revitalization of which depended upon its permeability, in "District Visiting and the Constitution of Domestic Space" in *Domestic Space*, eds. Bryden and Floyd, pp. 121-41, especially p. 123.

permeable space that was open to a variety of cultural forces and social traffic.

The tension of the mission station being simultaneously home space and work space is continually reflected in Bompas's writing, as she wrestles with the difficulties of creating a personal sanctuary for herself while still offering a public rehabilitative space for potential Native converts in which to teach school, offer Church services, and model Christian and domestic practices and customs. As early as 28 October 1874, one month after her arrival at Fort Simpson, she claims: "Besides these, there are constantly Indians coming and going, and they all sooner or later turn up at the Mission House" (Archer 27). In a lengthy journal entry dated 12 February 1875, she observes in fuller detail:

The chief event of the past week has been the arrival of a number of Dogrib Indians from Fort Rae.... The men have been constantly in and out from early morning to between ten and eleven o'clock at night. One evening came the Chief with three or four others.... They walk straight in without knocking, and extend their hand for you to shake. I was just going to have some tea, having been suffering all day with a bad headache. We made the men welcome, and then all sat down—some on the benches, some on the floor—and I gave them tea and a barley cake all round. (Archer 39-40)

The fact that the missionary's door was always open to unexpected visitors meant that it seldom functioned as private space. In addition to all the informal visits and gatherings, there were often more formal claims on domestic space. When she moved from Fort Simpson to Athabasca, Bompas expresses disappointment both in the condition of the Mission house itself, as well as the fact that there is no separate Church for services. As a result, even though the house is small, cold, and "hastily finished," she is forced to establish a temporary chapel in its "largest room" and place "the cooking stove in the yard

enclosed in a skin tent or lodge" (Archer 68-69).

Bompas was ambivalent about Native culture, and while she often characterized Aboriginals using uncomfortable stereotypes that objectionably established their cultural difference to herself, she seemed to enjoy, at times, emotional relations with some Native women. A moving story is her account of her relationship with a woman that she calls the Cree Wife, Madeline, a Native woman, who, one day, visited unannounced to help Bompas through a particularly difficult illness. Bompas confesses: "Oh, how can I describe my feelings of joy and thankfulness at this sudden and unlooked-for help! I could only take that small dark-coloured hand in mine and stroke and press it while I thanked God for putting it in this poor woman's heart to come to me in my extremity" (Archer 75). Bompas characterizes the woman as a maternal saviour and spiritual 'wife,' whose care of her and her adopted baby induces quiet thankfulness. Her emotional response to Madeline's interest in her closely echoes Anna Jameson's intimate friendship with Mrs. Murray in *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles*. Yet the moment is still defined by racial difference, as Bompas emphasizes Madeline's "dark-coloured" hand and attributes Madeline's appearance to "God," as opposed to any independent initiative on Madeline's behalf.

While Bompas appears to have enjoyed affectionate relations with some Native women, she appeared to have been less comfortable with Native men, and she expresses unease in her ability to manage her Native male servant and, by extension, her own household at Fort Simpson. In a brief journal entry dated 16 January 1875, she alludes to

this trouble obliquely as she tersely observes: "A bad headache yesterday put an end to my writing. Household worries have inclined me of late to much headache. This week's Collect (First Sunday after Epiphany) helps me now as it has done so often before in troublous times" (Archer 37). Three weeks later on 9 February 1875, she confides more expansively to her diary: "I have had peaceful days since William's return home. These Indians, like all savage tribes, despise women. They call them among themselves 'the creatures,' and will not submit to a woman's sway, so my household was disorganised, and Jacob was growing more and more insubordinate. It was time for the master to return, and he has put things to rights, and the peace and quiet is most refreshing" (Archer 39). In Bompas's narrative, therefore, the mission home is constructed as a space open to the forces of Native knowledge, labour, and hospitality, but also to Native resistance, intrusion, and hostility.

Ironically, perhaps, Bompas, like many women settlers and travellers, eventually learnt to find "home" beyond the domestic interior, locating and finding the domestic within the act of describing and categorizing the beauties and usefulness of the natural world.⁴¹ There is a noticeable shift in Bompas's descriptions of the Canadian North as a "solitary waste" to a land whose beauties provided relief from the inexorable monotony

⁴¹ Catharine Parr Traill best summarizes this tendency in Canadian letters as a female writer for whom the natural world became an ordered extension of domestic space. Wendy Roy argues in *Maps of Difference* that Mina Hubbard extended the properties of domesticity into the Labrador wilderness as a rhetorical strategy for arguing the propriety of her journey. See Roy, pp. 95-98.

and loneliness of missionary life. Charlotte Bompas, it seemed, had to learn to appreciate the unique splendour of the North. Two natural phenomena, in particular, seemed to fascinate and comfort her: the mountains; and the northern lights, or the aurora. Bompas seemed to derive particular strength from contemplating the mountains: "In my loneliness and isolation I talk a great deal to these grand old mountains, and they say much to me. There is one particular group, which I see from my window, which is to me quite a family of friends. I think they never appear twice over alike—such a constant variety of light and shade" (Archer 99-100). Another time from Fort Norman in August 1881, she claims that the mountains seem to "'live in Holy Families,' [they] are so grand and beautiful" (Archer 96). Again, from Fort Norman on 13 February 1882, she relishes the view from her mission home: "There are two windows here, one at the end looking up the hill toward the master's house, and the other towards the river and the dear, dear mountains" (Archer 106).

The mystical energy of the aurora also fascinated Bompas:

[T]he aurora, which is at its best between eleven and twelve at night, and which has, on some nights lately, been most glorious, heaving and waving, flickering and shimmering across the sky with ever-changing shades and tints. One night it assumed the most perfect sea-green, another, it was crimson, fading down at the edges and sometimes it is like a fringe swaying in the wind. Oh, if Mendelssohn had but seen an aurora! None could describe it in music as he would do, and I know no other means of portraying it! (Archer 104-05)

Similar ecstatic descriptions appear in *Owindia*, in which Bompas observes the aurora "spreading itself out with indescribable grace and beauty. Then it would seem to gather

itself together, folding its bright rays as an angel might fold its wings: for a time it is motionless, but this is but the prelude to more wondrous movements. Soon it commences to play anew, sending its flaming streamers in new directions, and now contracting now expanding, filling the whole heavens with glory of an everchanging hue" (44). In contemplating the mountains and observing the arresting patterns of the northern lights, with their capacity for infinite variation, Bompas, it seemed, learnt to expand the parameters of home, to recreate its personal, if not its cultural meaning, as she found in their natural splendour sanctuary, sublimity, and succour. All, it seemed, brought her comfort and strength when the intimate and crowded—and yet lonely and empty—interior spaces of the mission station, despite the "dear" pictures, books, and chairs, failed to tell her that she was home.

2.3 "Gunpowder": "Burnt fingers" and Religious Tensions in the Northern Mission of William and Charlotte Bompas

One of the defining theological events in the nineteenth-century Anglican Church was the tensions and internal division generated by the emergence of Tractarianism, which is also known as the Oxford movement, or the High Church movement. Tractarianism emerged in the 1830s in England, fuelled by the energetic conviction of John Keble and John Henry Newman that the Anglican Church was in need of aesthetic and theological revitalization. According to Terrence Murphy, Tractarianism emerged from a desire to emphasize the Anglican Church's "apostolic origins" and "spiritual

independence,” as opposed to the Evangelical or the Low Church position, which “derived the authority of the church largely from the state” (*Concise* 171). Tractarians, as well, “under the influence of the Romantic movement, extolled the place of emotion and aesthetic judgement in authentic Christian piety” (Murphy *Concise* 171). Mark Knight and Emma Mason maintain that the movement was “literary,” as well as theological, in that it saw “poetry as the ideal genre through which to filter High Church values” (87-88). As they explain, “[w]hile dogmatic and doctrinal innovation was a key part of this process, a focus on how aesthetic experience might merge with faith in one’s relationship to God held a pivotal place for many leading Tractarians” (89). The movement led to a demonstrative change in worship practices with more emphasis on ritual. There were more frequent communions, daily masses, confessions, and ritualized bowing and kneeling; clergy often wore more elaborate garments (Murphy *Concise* 172). Ecclesiastically, it led to more emphasis upon the authority of Bishops and a privileging of ecclesiastical rank and the principal of apostolic succession, in which bishops were held up as “successors of the apostles” in an “unbroken” transmission of power (Murphy *Concise* 171). These developments horrified Low Church Evangelicals, for whom the elaborate and aestheticized rituals had many surface parallels with Roman Catholicism. They felt that the emphasis on aesthetic ritual and Church hierarchy obscured the authority of the Bible as the basis of traditional Protestantism. When she visited England in 1898, Low Church Anglican and Canadian writer Emily Murphy was appalled at the ritualistic nature of High Church services. In *The Impressions of Janey Canuck Abroad*,

she would declare:

Yesterday, I went to a Ritualistic Church and found myself in Oriental quarters.... Curtains of scarlet plush were hung on rods and angled out from the walls as screens, against which were erected white marble crucifixes....

Pictures, incredibly bad, marked the stations of the cross. There were tawdry representations of little cherubs all heads and wings, and apoplectic saints on clouds, or what might be a more true portrayal of fat Dutchmen beating up feather beds. The air was oppressive with the sickening reek of stale incense. The officiating priest looked every inch an ecclesiastic. His disfiguring tonsure was about the size of an American dollar. It is unbecoming to a bulbous head. (31-32)

This distinction between High and Low Anglicanism also became crucial to the philosophical structure of missionary organizations in Canada such as the CMS.

According to Myra Rutherdale, “[a]t the heart of the philosophy of this society [the CMS] was the idea that the missionary must represent the Church principles, not the high Church principal. The fact that John Venn distinguished between high and low church was crucial to the establishment of the society and later to the endurance of the Church Missionary Society in Canada” (5).

The emergence of the High Church movement was a troubling development for Low Church clergymen like William Carpenter Bompas. Time and time again in his personal letters, he alludes to the “strife” in the Church from which he is thankful to now be distant and isolated. A staunch Evangelical, Bompas denounced the excessive and glorified rituals of the Tractarians as “Romish”; he often refused to wear clerical robes; and he insisted that the Northern churches that he played a role in physically erecting have a simple and unadorned style. It must have been a shock, therefore, when he

became aware that his wife and missionary partner, Charlotte Selina Bompas, was a High Church practitioner, who shared neither his abhorrence of the High Church movement nor his antipathy towards the “Romish enemy,” which was Bompas’s preferred description for the Catholic missionaries working in the North. Bompas’s discomfiture was in part bound to his cultural role as a clergyman. Leonora Davidoff and Catherine Hall confirm that Anglican clergymen had a strong sense of the importance of familial power and control and that the clergyman’s wife was expected unquestioningly to defer to her husband’s authority (Davidoff and Hall 123-26). William Bompas’s professional and personal letters are filled with oblique and overt dismay about his wife’s apparent unfitness for missionary life, her High Church leanings, and her “explosive” and impulsive behaviour. According to Frank Peake, Bompas began claiming in his formal correspondence to the Church Missionary Society—some of which was written as early as 1875—that his wife was a hindrance to the execution of his missionary duties (93). These comments become more direct in Bompas’s personal letters to his family, most especially to his sister Selina. In a letter written from Resolution, Athabasca, Canada dated 31 July 1883, Bompas observes: “It is now a month since I set off Nina⁴² & her party & I feel all the better for the quiet time I have had since.... I think I had best place Nina in your charge & care while she is absent from me for I do not think her fitted to live

⁴² Charlotte Selina Bompas was known as “Nina” to her friends, family, and husband.

alone.”⁴³ Later in the letter, he states: “It was not I think a successful experiment my bringing Nina to this country & I think if her life is spared she may do more good outside.”⁴⁴ Bompas concludes his letter with an ominous forecast: “I trust that you & Nina will flourish & be happy together. I shall always be glad to hear good news of you & I hope you will try & keep Nina out of High Church extravagances or she will compromise me with the Missionary Society. Her mind is weak & her impulses strong. Tell me the truth about her.”⁴⁵ These admissions shatter the carefully constructed ideal of the missionary husband and wife working as a complementary and seamless unit that the hagiographic and popular biographies of William Carpenter Bompas and Charlotte Selina Bompas promote, most notably of all H. A. Cody’s biography, which Charlotte Bompas herself played an active role in bringing to publication.⁴⁶

It appears that Bompas’s criticism of his wife was a source of contention with his

⁴³ Letter from W.C. Bompas to My dear Selina, 31st July 1883. Bompas Papers, General Synod Archives, Anglican Church of Canada, M89-3, A2.

⁴⁴ Letter from W.C. Bompas to My dear Selina, 31st July 1883. Bompas Papers, General Synod Archives, Anglican Church of Canada, M89-3, A2.

⁴⁵ Letter from W.C. Bompas to My dear Selina, 31st July 1883. Bompas Papers, General Synod Archives, Anglican Church of Canada, M89-3, A2.

⁴⁶ In addition to Cody’s 1908 biography, *An Apostle of the North*, see H. A. Cody, *On Trail and Rapid by Dog-sled and Canoe*; A. H. Sovereign, *In Journeyings Often*; Constance Savery, *God’s Arctic Adventurer*; Keith Wilson, *William Carpenter Bompas*; Janey Canuck, *Bishop Bompas*; Nigel B. M. Grahame, *Bishop Bompas of the Frozen North* for some of the popular accounts of William Bompas’s life. Accounts of Charlotte Bompas’s life are found in Dana Thomas, *Crusaders for God*; Jean Johnston, *Wilderness Women*; and *Five Pioneer Women in the Anglican Church*.

own sister Selina, with whom Charlotte Bompas had a close relationship. In letter written by William Bompas to Selina from Resolution on 24 January 1886, he makes a strained attempt to repudiate some questionable comments that he had made about Charlotte Bompas in an earlier letter that apparently has not survived:

I am glad to hear of Nina's success in bringing Joseph [William Bompas's brother] to Quebec....

Nina deserves as you say praise for her efforts for his good generally. So far as I know she has behaved with judicious discretion at home I am not conscious of other than affectionate feelings towards her especially in her absence, & in comparing her to gunpowder I meant no offence but rather a playful compliment as implying that I only burnt my own fingers by seeking to keep her within rules of my fixing. Every letter I receive from her is some new explosion so then it does not now startle me that she has undergone an operation....⁴⁷

The religious and domestic friction between the two was not only documented in Bompas's personal letters. Émile Grouard was a Catholic missionary with the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. Grouard performed mission work in the Canadian North in the nineteenth century and he is the focus of Emily Murphy's enthusiastic praise in *Seeds of Pine*, which will be discussed in Chapter Four of this study. Grouard and William Carpenter Bompas had a notoriously hostile relationship. In his autobiographical account of his missionary career, Grouard recalls his first meeting with Bompas, which erupted into an amusingly heated theological debate on the merits of the Greek text of the Bible over all other versions. Grouard then makes this observation:

⁴⁷ Letter from W. C. Bompas to My dear Selina from Resolution Mackenzie River, 24th January 1886. Bompas Papers, General Synod Archives, Anglican Church of Canada, M89-3, A2.

I have met Reverend Bompas several times and I must testify in his favour that he is tireless in his efforts and with his time to bring Indians to his church. He had the advantage of being a bachelor while his colleague, Reverend Kirby from Fort Simpson had a wife and children, for which the Indians did not particularly respect him. Later Reverend Bompas became an Anglican Bishop of the Mackenzie and decided that it would be a good thing to get married. His wife belonged to the High Church and kept images of the Holy Virgin which her husband loathed. And if one believes the public rumour about it, there was more than one problem in that household. Madame Bompas had Catholic tendencies, she even had enough devotion to ask for benediction from Father Laity during one prolonged absence from her husband. How do you expect such a wide divergence in ideas between husband and wife not to bring some problems with it? (90)⁴⁸

Given the number of years that she spent in Naples, Italy, during her formative years, it is not surprising that Charlotte Bompas had “Catholic tendencies.” Her novel, *Niccolo Marini*, shows an acquaintance with many of the observances and traditions of Catholic religious practice. The novel opens with an act of formal confession between a dying man, who had been about to engage in a horrible act of deception, and an affable Catholic priest. The man’s dying confession—that he had promised to pose as a priest in order to perform a “marriage” that would have no legal or religious validity at the behest of the despicable “groom” and fortune hunter, Niccolo Marini—leads the priest to go and perform the marriage himself. Marini, none the wiser, believes that a true marriage has not occurred. The ramifications of the marriage being legal, as opposed to a false charade, when revealed, have repercussions that help propel the novel to its bitter-sweet

⁴⁸ This quotation is a translated passage from Émile Grouard, *Souvenirs de mes soixante ans d'Apostolat*. The translation is the work of Virginia Hargar-Grinling, for whose assistance I am grateful.

conclusion. As well, the novel's Italian ingénue, the beautiful and musical Guilia, retreats to the safety and sanctity of a nunnery, when the man she loves, Frank Percival, marries her English aunt. Bompas offers a sympathetic portrayal of the Catholic nun and celebrates the romantic and rewarding character of life in the convent as opposed to emphasizing its abstemiousness and isolation.

Although there is nothing in Bompas's journals to suggest she had converted to Catholicism, there is no doubt that her sympathies lay with the High Church movement. Although she does not make direct reference to being High Anglican, her letters and journals make references to Saints and Feast days, a High Church tendency. These specific religious tensions overlapped with more general tensions as to what Charlotte Bompas's missionary duties should entail. She makes subtle allusions in her journal to her husband's desire to keep her at home. At one point she observes: "It is not often that I am permitted to accompany my husband on any of his more lengthened missionary journeys, for he deems the necessary privations, exposure and hardships far beyond my powers of endurance, although these have been very sufficiently taxed" (Archer 85). At another, she says: "He is accustomed to taking winter trips, and I am always afraid of hindering him in his work" (Archer 53). When William Bompas attempted to explain his wife's departure from the North, he said: "'I tell the Indians and every one else...that I have sent you home against your will. I told them yesterday that Christ died for them long ago, and that was enough. There was no occasion for you to die for them as well, however willing you might be'" (Cody 243). Charlotte Bompas obliquely alludes to her

husband's controlling personality and his desire to "keep her in rules of his own fixing" as he involved himself in managing the domestic affairs of the mission. As the Bompases begin the process of moving from Fort Simpson to Fort Norman, she observes: "My dear many-sided husband had forestalled every want that could possibly occur during the next six months, and by his lawyer-like power detected at once every flaw in any arrangement which had seemed to me faultless" (Archer 86). William Bompas even helped select the servants: "My Indian girl, Theresa, is improving, but she has given me much trouble. She was about the very worst girl at Fort Simpson, and, therefore, I brought her away with me. My husband feels that it is such we should select, and strive to civilize and train to higher influences" (Archer 69). The Bompas' civilizing mission, therefore, became intertwined with the intricacies of household management. Even the decision to care for Native children eventually became a source of conflict for the couple. In a letter written to Judge Henry Bompas, his nephew, from the Buxton Mission on 4 August 1896, Bompas confesses that "Nina fidgets me with her petty worries about the children so that I would send them away if I could rather than have them with her."⁴⁹ Charlotte Bompas in a later letter dated July 13, 1900 speaks of her distress at having to "disperse" the mission children. She claims: "I do get so terribly fond of them, however bad they are, that I miss them sadly and seem to have lost an object in life" (Archer 165).

Charlotte Bompas also appeared to have been more tolerant of Catholic

⁴⁹ Letter from W. C. Bompas to My Dear Henry, 4 August 1896. Bompas Papers, General Synod Archives, Anglican Church of Canada, M89-3, A2.

missionaries than many of her Anglican contemporaries. The prejudice against Catholic missionaries voiced by William Bompas was shared by many of the Anglican missionaries labouring in the Canadian North, often emerging in the letters that were submitted both by male and female correspondents in the monthly *Letter Leaflet*, published by the Woman's Auxiliary for the Anglican Church of Canada. For instance, a letter from Miss Tims, an Anglican missionary at the St. Peter's Mission, published in the *Letter Leaflet* of May 1898, frames the hostile and competitive nature of relations between Protestant and Catholic missionaries: "Two Indians have come of their own accord and asked us to take their children, it shows their growing confidende [sic] in us as they are professidly [sic] Roman Catholic; also a Mr. Nagle has asked us to take his wife to live here for the rest of winter.... Roman Catholicism is our great enemy, and it will be good to make friends with Mr. and Mrs. Nagle, both Roman Catholic" (226). In contrast, Charlotte Bompas expressed thankfulness for the work and commitment of the Catholic missionaries in the area: "There is a French Mission House just beyond the Fort, with some priests and sisters who work very energetically. It is a great thing in the work when it is carried on, not singly, but even in small handfuls of earnest-hearted workers together" (Archer 68-69). In a letter in the *Letter Leaflet* dated January 1900, she praises: "To meet the emergency the Roman Catholics have come to the fore as in every case. They have built a large and beautiful church and hospital well equipped. They have a staff of sisters, lay brothers and four or five clergy; they also keep school..." (38). Again, in her Annual Address to the Woman's Auxiliary in Dawson 1906, she cautions its

members: "Let us not allow worldliness or the spirit of rivalry to intrude into what is intended to be solely work for Christ and His Church" (10).⁵⁰ In the context of missionary publications such as the *Letter Leaflet*, Bompas's praise and tolerance is startlingly distinct, and suggests that she did not regard Roman Catholic missionaries with the same animosity as did her husband and other Anglican missionaries in the mission field.

2.4 The Quest for Cultural Motherhood: *Owindia: A True Tale of the Mackenzie River Indians, North West-America*

Charlotte Bompas published only one book during her missionary career, the 1886 publication, *Owindia: A True Tale of the Mackenzie River Indians*.⁵¹ *Owindia* tells the story of how a baby Indian girl named Owindia came to be informally adopted by the Bompases; it is, in part, a story about the quest for motherhood, a quest undertaken by Owindia and answered by Bompas, written by an adoptive mother for her new daughter, whose picture adorns the frontispiece for the book. Owindia, whose name means 'the

⁵⁰ "Annual Address of Mrs. Bompas, President, Delivered at Dawson. Y.T., August 13th, 1906" 6-10. *Second Annual Report of the Selkirk Diocesan Branch W. A. Anglican Church Series 111.5 a, Cor. 98, File 1 of 11, Diocesan W. A. Annual Reports, 1906-1923, Yukon Territory Archives.*

⁵¹ Bompas arranged for the book's publication during her visit to England in 1884 and 1885. Published anonymously, with only her initials at the bottom of the book's final page and the autobiographical events outlined in the book itself to identify her as the book's author, *Owindia* attracted little notice and I was unable to find any reviews and notices for it, apart from a reference to it in H. A. Cody's *An Apostle of the North*.

weeping one,' was the infant daughter of Michel, a gifted "Indian" hunter and inveterate hater of the "white man," and his submissive wife, Accomba. Michel and Accomba leave their community due to Michel's antipathy to the white's intrusive presence. One night, in a fit of rage, Michel shoots Accomba. As the Native community mourns the death of Accomba and pursues Michel, who flees the scene of his crime, baby Owindia is forgotten about on the steep banks of the Mackenzie River and is left there for seventeen hours. Three Natives travelling in a canoe down the Mackenzie River hear Owindia's cries and rescue her from her precarious perch, returning her to the community that fleetingly abandoned her: "Oh! cruel Michel has made his children motherless! The baby looks pitiful—it looks pitiful: it stretches out its hands for its mother's breast; it longs to taste the sweet draughts of milk" (55). When Owindia fails to thrive, she is brought to the Mission station at Fort Simpson to be cared for by the Bompases.

In its broadest form, the story has archetypal parallels with the birth story of Moses. A child is abandoned by a river and is found by strangers who rescue him, and this special event marks the child for life. Bompas takes the facts of the story, and her conclusions regarding the cultural fate of Aboriginal women, and weaves them into an argument for the necessity of Christian missions in the North. In cultural terms, the rescue of baby Owindia functions as a metaphor for the necessity of the cultural rescue of Slave native life. This predictable position is offset, however, by Bompas's somewhat ambivalent presentation of white culture within her text. *Owindia* presents contradictory positions regarding the "white man." In addition to being presented as a model of

civilized salvation, white culture is also presented as an intrusive force in Native life, one that usurps Native rights, claims, and traditions. This rhetoric, which betrays an apparent questioning of the relationship between white and Native cultures, began to creep into Bompas's private and public writings in the 1880s. These insinuations, bolstered by Michel's violent anger, destabilize her attempts to portray the Mackenzie River Indians as an emerging pastoral Christian community. In its subdued assertions of mission progress, the text operates as a revealing cultural testament about the dilemmas that confronted the missionary in the North.

If *Owindia* is about motherhood, then the text needs to be situated against the cultural and symbolic position held by motherhood in missionary culture. Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall assert that the "assumption as to the *naturalness* of the family as the primary form of social organization underpinned Christian thinking" (109, emphasis in original). This resulted, as Myra Rutherdale argues, in the "metaphors of motherhood and family" being organized as "a sustained structural intrusion into the lives of northern Aboriginal peoples" (64). Eugene Stock confirms the fostering of familial relations between missionaries and converts in the mission field was encouraged by the Church Missionary Society: "In the early days the paternal system prevailed in Missions. In Indian phrase, the missionary was *Ma Bap* (father and mother) to his converts. His spirit was that of St. Paul at Thessalonica—'We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children'" (2: 412). Stock, as well, shares a sentimental cultural anecdote that ostensibly confirms how northern missionaries were viewed as mothers and fathers

by the “Indian” tribes in Canada. Upon the death of Mrs. Ridley, wife of the CMS missionary and Bishop William Ridley, who administered the Diocese of Caledonia in 1898, Bishop Ridley departed for England and claimed the following:

At the end of the Confirmation Service, after the Benediction, a voice was heard “as from a man sobbing.” It was the voice of Sheuksh [a native Chief]; “and this,” said the Bishop at Exeter Hall the following May, “is what I heard *last* in my diocese:— ‘*O God of heaven, have mercy! Have mercy upon us: we are orphans. O God of heaven, Thou hast taken our mother, and now Thou hast called our father across the deep. Oh, take care of him on land and sea*’” (3: 640, emphasis in original)

Frances Murray shares a similar observation regarding Isaac and Sadie Stringer, missionaries in the Arctic Circle: “The self-sacrifice and privations of such a life can be but faintly realized, yet the Rev. Mr. Stringer and his devoted wife are braving all difficulties, and have so endeared themselves to teaching the children and caring for the sick during an epidemic that they have been named the ‘Father’ and ‘Mother’ of that tribe” (302). The power of the discourse of motherhood and fatherhood becomes amplified when, within such anecdotes, it is represented as originating from the Natives themselves. These anecdotes confirm the degree to which missionary culture used familial structures to create, define, defend, and mystify its own position within Native culture. Even William F. Butler, as he encountered missionaries in his travels through Canada in *The Great Lone Land*, mused: “He who has travelled through the vast colonial empire of Britain...must often have met with men [missionaries] dwelling in the midst of wild, savage peoples whom they tended with a strange and mother-like devotion” (262).

As Myra Rutherdale has specifically argued, Canadian women missionaries

working in the North used motherhood as a means and as a metaphor to claim certain powers for themselves. Rutherford observes that the "idea that missionary wives could be 'mothers' to the church and those who attended the church was remarkably consistent" (47). Critics such as Rutherford, Margaret Jolly, Anna Davin, and Susan Thorne argue that the discourse of maternity that pervaded relationships between female missionaries and women and children in the mission field allowed the colonial nature of some of these relationships to be diffused and expressed into complex "tensions" between "superordination and identification, between detachment and agonized intimacy, between other and self" (Jolly 104).⁵² There was also a certain "moral" and "social" authority bound up in nineteenth-century ideas of motherhood that female missionaries could claim to better define their professional and personal roles (Rutherford 47-48). As Rutherford tellingly observes, "The motherhood image was most strategic and ironic for those women who were not mothers themselves.... These women transcended gender expectations but relied on traditional rhetoric to construct their identities" (63-64). Indeed, Rutherford sees Charlotte Bompas as "undoubtedly gaining a sense of accomplishment and self identity through her motherhood role" (51). This is confirmed not only throughout Bompas's journals and letters, where she speaks of Indian children with considerable affection, claiming that she viewed them from the beginning as her

⁵² See Margaret Jolly, "Colonizing Women: The Maternal Body and Empire"; Anna Davin, "Imperialism and Motherhood"; Susan Thorne, "Missionary-Imperial Feminism."

especial charges, but through the publication of *Owindia* itself.⁵³ For instance, in the *Letter Leaflet* of October 1893, she observes “...here you will believe how happy I am to be among the Indians again.... We have six mission children at present, of whom my youngest is two and a half years old. Her mother deceased, a Tarkish Lake Indian; a lovely child, and a great pet, but wild and passionate to a degree” (367). In an earlier letter from 1893 published in the *Letter Leaflet*, she observes: “My youngest girl is only 3 ½ years old, a great pet, but a great pickle too. She leads me a life and is quite aware of her power to disarm ‘Mama Bompas’... (59). The discourse of motherhood allowed the asymmetrical relations of racial and cultural difference that existed between white female missionaries and Native children to be subsumed into a sentimentalized discourse of affection and compassion. Bompas’s symbolic role as a “mother” became intertwined with her identity as a missionary, perhaps all the more because she had no biological children.

Bompas’s lengthy subtitle claims her story to be “true,” but this claim is compromised by her ambiguous position as narrator of the story. Bompas was not eye witness to most of the events she narrates. Indeed, she alludes to the arrival of *Owindia* in her household in her journal entry of June 1881 written from Fort Norman (Archer

⁵³ As well as the above cited page, see Chapter 2 for Rutherford’s specific discussions about Charlotte Bompas’s complex relationship to aboriginal women and children. While Rutherford quotes from Bompas’s journals and letters, she makes no mention of *Owindia*.

86).⁵⁴ Most of *Owindia*, hence, is Bompas's imaginative reconstruction of the events that preceded Owindia's arrival at Fort Simpson. Bompas's claims of "truth" and authenticity are also compromised by her lack of a specific vocabulary when referring to Aboriginal peoples. Bompas consistently refers to them as "Indians," making only one reference to the Slave language, and offering no sense of the distinction between different tribal ancestries and customs. C. L. Higham levels a similar charge at Bompas in *Noble, Wretched and Redeemable*, when she claims that Charlotte Bompas, like many Protestant missionaries, generalized her perceptions of Native culture with an inaccurate vocabulary when referencing their tribes and language dialects (82). Certainly, there is no documentation in Bompas's journals offering evidence that she made any efforts to learn Native languages as did her husband. In an interesting comment in a letter published in the *Letter Leaflet* in October 1893, she observes: "We have several tribes of Indians in the Diocese, and as many different languages! My husband can make himself understood in most of them.... As for me, I make a dash in Mackenzie River Indian occasionally, or else

⁵⁴ Bompas states: "We have with us two Indian children—little 'Owindia,' called May since her baptism, the youngest child of Nicktell, who shot his wife some twelve months since and left this poor little one on the river bank for seventeen hours, crying her life away, until she was rescued by some kind-hearted Indians who were passing in their canoe, and brought eventually to the Mission House, looking so pitiful in her starving and well nigh frozen condition that the Indian who saved her said, 'She seemed to take hold of my heart.' May is now a bonny two-year-old, bright and thriving, and as full of fun and mischief as a child can be" (Archer 86). Interestingly, Bompas in her journal entry intimates that Owindia was brought directly to the mission station, a claim that she contradicts in *Owindia*, where Owindia is returned to the Indian community for a few weeks before being brought to the Mission House.

shake my head over this break-jaw tongue, lamenting more than ever the presumption of the builders of the Tower of Babel" (367).

Owindia also needs to be positioned against some of the dominant images of Aboriginal women that emerged within nineteenth-century Canada. Critics such as Sarah Carter, Adele Perry, Kristin Burnett, Myra Rutherdale, Carole Gerson, Suzanne James, and Barbara Neis have examined the representations of Aboriginal women in women's missionary, settler, and historical writings, and have identified the degree to which these images helped to energize the cultural construction of Euro-Canadian white womanhood, as well as the projects of imperialism and Canadian nation building with which they were intertwined.⁵⁵ Carter and Burnett have identified the prevalence of the image of the "degraded squaw" in Canadian literature of western settlement and in missionary texts themselves (Carter "Categories" 31; Burnett 118). Burnett maintains that the image of the "squaw" drudge "legitimized the spatial and social segregation of First Nations women and the appropriation of Aboriginal land, while undermining and undervaluing

⁵⁵ See Sarah Carter, "Categories and Terrains of Exclusion: Constructing the 'Indian Woman' in the Early Settlement Era in Western Canada"; Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire* and "Metropolitan Knowledge, Colonial Practice, and Indigenous Womanhood: Missions in Nineteenth-Century British Columbia"; Kristin Burnett, "Aboriginal and White Women in the Publications of John Maclean, Egerton Ryerson Young, and John McDougall"; Myra Rutherdale, *Women and the White Man's God*, pp. 28-50; Carole Gerson, "Nobler Savages: Representations of Native Women in the Writings of Susanna Moodie and Catharine Parr Traill"; Suzanne James, "The 'Indians' of Catharine Parr Traill's *The Backwoods of Canada*"; Barbara Neis, "A Collage Within a Collage: Original Traces of First Nations Women"; Carole Gerson and Veronica Strong-Boag, "Championing the Native: E. Pauline Johnson Rejects the Squaw."

Aboriginal culture” (118). She claims that the “image of the ‘squaw’ as an overworked and abused drudge...was used to exemplify the supposed brutality of contemporary First Nations culture, particularly its men” (105). Bompas both appropriates and refashions these stereotypes. She stresses the degraded treatment and condition of Aboriginal women in general terms: “Peter, being the brother of Michel, would, with true Indian pertinacity take part with him in whatever were his offences, and moreover, looking with his native instinct upon woman as the ‘creature’ of society whose duty was to endure uncomplainingly, whatever her masters laid upon her” (21-22). She later claims: “[T]he female infant occupies an insignificant place among those uncivilized people: the birth of one of them is greeted with but a small fraction of the honour with which a male child would be welcomed” (42). Bompas insinuates that such treatment of females is systemic to Indian culture as opposed to being aberrant. Yet Bompas also emphasizes Accomba’s personal dignity and she admires the artisan skills of the women and motherly love demonstrated by them as they created moss bags for their children, an admiration that was shared by her contemporary, Catharine Parr Traill (15-16).

She also emphasizes the sisterly affection that exists between the Indian women, an affection that erupts into wails of mourning when Accomba is discovered murdered: “‘Se tûe! Se tûe!’ ‘My sister, my sister!’ cried the women, as one by one they gazed upon the face of the departed; then kneeling down, they took hold of the poor still warm hand...; then as they found that it was truly so, there arose within that lodge the loud, heart-piercing wail, which, once heard, can never be forgotten” (35). The figure of the

wailing woman becomes, in this context, the Indian woman's cry for help from the prejudices and inequities of her own society.

While drawing attention to their ostensibly degraded lives, however, Bompas stresses their potential for individual salvation. Bompas's portrait of Aboriginal women hence merged with another powerful image, identified by C. L. Higham as that of the "redeemable" Indian (181-86). This redeemable potential was not restricted to the women. The character of Sarcelle, Accomba's brother, most powerfully displays the restraint that Christian intervention imposes on the "natural" passions of Aboriginal men:

Sarcelle's first impulse was to seize his gun and launch his canoe, and to sally forth in pursuit of Michel; but he was a Christian Indian, having been baptized at the little English Church at Fort Simpson, and further instructed at the Mission School. The conflict going on in his own mind between the desire to avenge his sister's death, and the higher impulses which his Christian faith suggested, were very touching. It ended in his throwing down his gun, and bowing his head on his hands while he sobbed aloud, 'My sister, my sister, I would fight for you; I would avenge your cruel death, but the Praying man says we must forgive as God forgives us. I throw down my gun.' (56)

Sarcelle embodies the struggle between revenge and forgiveness, as he embraces the redemptive potential of Christianity, despite its apparent "unmanliness" (56).

Yet Bompas complicates her narrative and cultural position through her presentation of Slave culture as a corrupted culture, one which has suffered degradation and diminishment. She states: "A very marked feature in the character of the Indian is jealousy. How far the white man may be answerable, if not for the first impulse of this, at all events for its development, it were perhaps better not to inquire.... [T]hey are keenly

sensitive to the treatment they receive from those, who, in spite of many benefits bestowed, they cannot but look upon as invaders of their soil, and intruders upon some of their prerogatives” (11-12). Later, Bompas claims of Michel’s anger: “He would have asked, too, if it were not enough to invade his country, build houses, plant his barley and potatoes, and lay claim to his moose-deer and bear, his furs and peltries, but he must needs touch, with profane hands, his home treasures, and meddle with that which ‘even an Indian’ holds sacred?” (13). Similar comments appeared throughout her private journals, her letters published in the *Letter Leaflet*, and in her public speeches. In a letter in the *Letter Leaflet* of October 1893, she declares: “The elder Indians have learned much evil from the white man. Our chief hope is in the children” (367).

With her accusations, Bompas appears to be interrogating not only white culture, but mission culture itself, as she structures it as an “invasion” to create a context for Michel’s anger. By so doing, she is engaging in what Renato Rosaldo has called imperialist nostalgia. Imperialist nostalgia occurs when “agents of colonialism—officials, constabulary officers, missionaries...long for the very forms of life they [have] intentionally altered or destroyed,” where “people mourn the passing of what they themselves have transformed” (69). Bompas displays imperialist nostalgia by using a form of rhetorical empathy in which she seems to be offering an accusing perspective on white culture from a Native point of view. By so doing, Bompas reifies white culture and rhetorically detaches herself from it, mitigating her agency as a missionary. These rhetorical shifts in narrative voice allow for a mystification that permitted Bompas to

create cultural innocence for herself while the dualities between Christian and heathen, civilization and savagery, could, at least, on surface, appear intact. Interacting with Aboriginal populations forced her to come to terms with the impact and the limits of her culture's definitions of civilization. The woman who so enthusiastically attempted to recreate the ideal Victorian Christmas during her first winter in Canada appeared to have undergone a shift in her thinking. In a letter written to Sadie Stringer in 1907, she mourns that "Indian children droop under the weight of civilization."⁵⁶ Her imperialist empathy allows her, at least rhetorically, to transform herself into an "innocent bystander," who acts as a witness for Native oppression, as opposed to being an active participant in it.

It was not only Charlotte Bompas who made rhetorical use of imperialist nostalgia. Her husband, too, had difficulties in seeing himself as an active agent in the transformation of Native culture. Even as he exulted in the progress of Christianity, the erection of churches that transformed the landscape, and the advancement of missions within the North, William Bompas could still write poems such as "The Tukudh Indians," published in *The Church Missionary Gleaner* in July 1888, that celebrated the self-sufficiency, the nobility, and the providential purity of the Tukudh tribe: "When white-man to the Indians came/What taught he them but sin and shame?/ Alas! that such the arts he tries/Poor savages to civilise" (106). Bompas portrays Christianity as a "moral spring/To Arctic lands her way doth wing/In frozen climes are hearts that melt/When

⁵⁶ Letter from C. S. Bompas to Sadie Stringer from Clifton, 3 April 1907. Stringer Papers, General Synod Archives, Anglican Church of Canada, M74 -3.

Christian influence is felt ” (106). Yet he spends much of the poem idealizing Native culture, establishing the Tukulth as noble savages who need neither uplift nor intervention. That missionaries could, without irony, occupy such contradictory cultural positions, testifies to the complexity of missionary work as a cultural practice.

Owindia ends on a note of exasperation as Bompas confides her despair that Michel the Hunter has managed to elude the forces both of civil justice and Christian redemption. The reader may share some of this exasperation. *Owindia* is a very uneven work. Yet these tensions, which make its literary merits dubious, also make it a revealing cultural document on the problematics of missionary experience in nineteenth-century Canada.

2.5 “It is pleasant to be remembered by any of the good busy workers of the W.A.”:

Writing a Rhetorical Alternative to the Discourse of Providence

An important rhetorical feature that was written into many nineteenth-century missionary narratives was the missionary’s belief that the nature of their missionary experience was determined through a discourse of Providence, the belief that God shapes and guides human destiny. Both Terrence L. Craig and Jeffrey Cox identify Providence as one of the important cultural narratives that shaped the representation of missionary experience (Craig 67-68; Cox 4-7). As a narrative and rhetorical feature in written discourse, Providence is distinguished by being retrospective, reminding us that the narrator has already contemplated and interpreted the events that are being described to

the reader. The use of Providence, therefore, was an interpretative strategy which helped naturalize missionary experience and which demonstrated that the missionary enjoyed God's favour. In her earliest correspondence, Charlotte Bompas frequently made use of the discourse of Providence, especially with respect to the incessant quest for food. In a letter to her sister Emma dated October 8, 1874, she writes regarding this uncertainty: "However by God's great mercy we were helped on day by day, and supplies never *did* fail, though at one time we ate our last piece of meat for dinner, without the slightest knowledge of where we should find supper" (Archer 24, emphasis in original). Later in the same letter, she confirms:

Last autumn the stock provisions in the stores was [sic] lower than ever before—*i.e.*, only sufficient for one week. Most of the men had to be sent away to hunt for themselves, and there was great difficulty in collecting scraps of meat for the wives and children. It came at last to the point when there was not another meal left. But on the evening of that very day two Indians came in bringing fresh meat. From that moment the supplies have never failed. As surely as they got low, so surely would sledges appear unexpectedly bringing fresh supplies. (Archer 25)

The idea that food "unexpectedly" and "miraculously" appeared when needed imparted mystery and importance to missionary experience and gave the missionary's deprivation and uncertainty about the food supply narrative interest.

Moreover, the discourse of Providence was often used by missionaries to argue the omniscient power and mercy of God to doubting Native populations. For instance, Mrs. Spendlove, a missionary, who, along with her husband, spent time with Charlotte Bompas in the North during a difficult winter, shared an interesting story of deprivation

in the *Letter Leaflet* in July 1893: "Mrs. S. and Mrs Bompas (the Bishop's wife) 'never actually went longer than two days quite without something,' that something being a stray fish, caught by themselves, of a kind only eaten by Indians in their extremity—the good fish having failed as had all else. She had told how God had almost worked a miracle to save them, and by it not only restored their poor bodies but the expiring faith of their starving converts" (266). Mrs. Spendlove then tells this story of the "miracle":

My husband, who had gone on a fruitless search for relief was starting home. On the third day they were utterly exhausted. My husband knelt down on the track to pray. The Indians said it is no use, 'God will not hear.' One of the dogs came back with his nose covered with blood. The Indians followed and found a moose killed by the wolves and actually left by them untouched. The Indians said we will never say again, 'There is no God,' and one of them wept. (266)

Using Providence as a rhetorical device also allowed difficult information from the mission field to be communicated in a palatable and reassuring way. In a region where food supplies were unpredictable, famine was common, and physical living conditions challenging, the idea that "God's merciful hand" was guiding the missionary experience was a comforting one, not only for the missionaries themselves, but also for the families and friends far away in the homeland. Bompas herself acknowledges the unique challenges the isolation of living in the North imparted to missionaries: "Mr. Hardisty said that in order to increase our thankfulness to God for His merciful supply of our needs, we must realize what is the meaning of famine in this country. In India and elsewhere, as soon as such a calamity is made known, subscriptions are raised and supplies sent off as soon as possible, but here months and months must elapse before the

tidings could even reach our friends in England, and in the meantime, to what extremities might we not be reduced!" (Archer 41). This observation helps provide a specific context for the use of the discourse of Providence in the Canadian North.

Female missionaries, in particular, were sensitive to the fact that the personal hardships that their letters and journals described and documented might create distress for those who loved them in the homeland. Charlotte Bompas very often personalized her correspondence with amusing comments as she anticipates the impact that her letters will have on her audience: "How you would smile..." and "Now you must try to picture the scene..." (63). In a journal entry dated St. Stephen's Day, 26 December 1881, she directly addresses the issue of the discomfiture her letter might arouse in her sister as she writes about their dwindling supplies: "Now, do not think because I tell you the state of things that you must wring your hands over them, and pity and make yourself unhappy about me, for indeed you need not do so—all these things are trifles when one gets used to them, and when one's need is real I find God's merciful hand always supplies it in some way or other" (Archer 103-04). In an entry dated 13 February 1882, she observes: "We have been mercifully helped on with respect to food, but times have been pretty hard, and Mr. Irvine, the H. B. Company officer-in-charge, and dear William himself, have been somewhat anxious. Last week they announced that we must be put on half rations.... All this I tell you, my dearest, to incite you to pray on for us, not to make you anxious" (Archer 106).

In this respect, one of the interesting developments that emerged during Bompas's

missionary career was her creation of an alternative to the discourse of Providence that she located in the agency and power of female community and organization. Bompas increasingly began to recognize and respect her own ability to raise funds for much needed ecclesiastical embellishments and to help persuade her "sisters" in the homeland to send valuable "bales" that delivered both practical and psychological comfort. The formulation of the Woman's Auxiliary to the Home and Foreign Domestic Boards for Missions in 1885, and its accompanying publication the *Letter Leaflet*, gave Anglican Bishops and missionaries working throughout Canada, diocese workers, ecclesiastical personnel, and members of the Woman's Auxiliary a public vehicle in which they could share stories of need and progress, solicit aid and funds for mission work, and offer appeals for assistance when needed. Between the years 1890 and 1905, the *Letter Leaflet* published dozens of letter excerpts written by Charlotte Bompas, often through her network of friends and supporters in the Montreal and Huron Dioceses, women such as Mrs. Boomer and Mrs. Walter Drake. As a Bishop's wife, any correspondence from Bompas would be treated with respect, but, in addition, Bompas seemed genuinely well-liked; she was often affectionately called "our dear Mrs. Bompas"; one admirer reported having "had the pleasure of seeing the cheery face of Mrs. Bompas, wife of the Bishop of Selkirk Diocese" while she was visiting Montreal.

A typical letter excerpt by Mrs. Bompas was published in the October 1894 *Letter Leaflet*, offering "a glimpse at the daily family life of the noble, self-sacrificing people." A detailed letter follows which outlines the labours and difficulties of daily domestic life:

A temperature of 59 degrees below zero, is not favourable to letter writing, nevertheless I must take advantage of a benevolent miner going to Junneau [sic] to send news.... It is really a great business to keep everything going this weather. All eatables have to be thawed before they are prepared for cooking.... The fetching of our wood and water is a serious business, and requires some of the Bishop's wise planning to organize.... Our food supplies have not failed yet, I am thankful to say. We had our fish season—one gets rather tired of salmon much sooner than white fish, of which we have none here. (393)

Bompas stresses the extreme cold, the endless work, and the monotony and uncertainty of the food supply, albeit in a sprightly tone. Her account makes explicit both her personal and the mission's physical and material wants and, as such, invite consideration as informal "poverty narratives," an important Canadian cultural narrative produced by women that Roxanne Rimstead has detected in the writings of Susanna Moodie and Nellie McClung, and that later emerged in the writings of Margaret Laurence and Alice Munro. Poverty narratives do more than document material and physical deprivation; they also "testify to the texture and feeling of cultural exclusion"(Rimstead 50), an exclusion to which missionary women often gave voice in their letters as they emphasized their geographic and cultural isolation from their sisters in the homeland.

Two months later, her October 1894 letter generated this response. A Branch President asked in the December 1894 edition of the *Letter Leaflet*:

Is it not time to think about sending another bale to Mrs. Bompas? 'Between the lines' of the brave bright letter given on the first page of the October LEAFLET, is written a pathetic tale of daily toil, privation and self-denial. Equally pathetic are the half jesting admissions 'our food supply has not failed yet,' (what an eloquent adverb), 'One gets rather tired of salmon'—do you not think dear W.A. sisters, that you too would get 'rather tired' if you had to eat it week in week out? It will be remembered

that a bale was sent to Mrs. Bompas from Woodstock, about three years ago, to make up which, several W.A. Branches had contributed. Could not this be done again, *all* helping? ... Think what an event the arrival of friendly greetings in the shape of a helpful bale must be in such distant solitudes, 77 below zero. Try to put yourselves in the place of these devoted missionaries, and then *please* say through the LEAFLET, '*Our Branch will help.*' (483, emphasis in original)

The grounds upon which this plea for assistance is waged suggest the degree to which writers and readers of missionary correspondence understood it as affective, connotative, and encoded. It reveals the complex dynamic generated by missionary correspondence as what David Gerber calls "a mutual creation conceived in dialogue" (143). Writers exercised their rhetorical power to persuade, affect, and induce action. Readers were encouraged to read below the surface or, as above, "between the lines" to reconstruct the realities that, at times, were only obliquely conveyed. This reinforces claims made by contemporary critics of mission and epistolary writings that challenge reading practices that accept the surface or literal meanings contained in such correspondence.⁵⁷

The December 1895 *Letter Leaflet* contains Bompas's confirmation that she has

⁵⁷ For instance, Ruth Ann Miller has examined women's missionary correspondence as a form of interrogation in "The Missionary Narrative as Coercive Interrogation: Seduction, Confession and Self-Presentation in Women's Letters Home." David A. Gerber, while not specifically dealing with missionary correspondence, similarly maintains that letters written by nineteenth-century immigrants to their families back home contained what he calls "epistolary masquerades," silences, omissions, and withholdings that required rhetorical decoding. See his article, "Epistolary Masquerades: Acts of Deceiving and Withholding in Immigrant Letters" in *Letters Across Borders*. Nancy Christie in "Female Begging Letters and Familial Obligation," sees such women's correspondence as rooted in an "economy of obligation," which established boundaries of "family" that were broad and often "fictive" (70-73).

received the box: "Dear Mrs. Boomer, the steamer arrived yesterday and brought us the wonderful box. The Bishop unpacked it, and we have been inspecting the contents; I need not tell with how many exclamations of surprise and admiration.... I must not dilate but express our grateful thanks to you and to all the kind friends who have furnished us with such a bountiful supply of good things that the very sight of them would be enough to fatten one" (55). In an earlier letter published in the *Letter Leaflet* of June 1895, Bompas observed: "It is pleasant to be remembered by any of the good busy workers of the W.A." (696). These written exchanges were important because encoded within them was the creation of an alternative to the discourse of Providence to which missionaries so often deliberately subscribed, an alternative that firmly valorized not only female labour and perception, but also female judgement. Such communal rhetorical exchanges need to be located within the greater project of women's benevolence and the social conditions that created it. It is an interesting and unexpected outcome of Bompas's missionary experience that she found herself needing to solicit the philanthropic and charitable aid that she came to deliver. Bompas herself in the Annual Address delivered to the Woman's Auxiliary in Dawson City on August 13th, 1906, would declare that "in the far North at all events, we workers of the Woman's Auxiliary are disciples of holy poverty" (9).⁵⁸ Bompas's experience provides an intriguing perspective on the affective processes

⁵⁸ "Annual Address of Mrs. Bompas, President, Delivered at Dawson. Y.T., August 13th, 1906" 6-10. *Second Annual Report of the Selkirk Diocesan Branch W. A.* Anglican Church Series 111.5 a, Cor. 98, File 1 of 11, Diocesan W. A. Annual Reports, 1906-1923, Yukon Territory Archives.

and the particular labours required to invoke and deliver "women's work for women." Bompas must have been mindful of the power and the significance of the work. One of her first acts upon leaving the northern mission field was the formation of the Yukon or Selkirk Branch of the Woman's Auxiliary, of which she became its first president.

2.6 Conclusion: Charlotte Bompas's Quest for Influence

The missionary career of Charlotte Bompas did not end with the death of her husband on 9 June 1906. From 1904, when she briefly assumed the Presidency, and then, in 1906, the life-long position of Honorary President of the Yukon Diocese Branch of the Woman's Auxiliary, up until her death on 31 January 1917, at the age of eighty-six, Charlotte Bompas continued to be actively involved with mission work in the Canadian North. She regularly contributed letters and addresses that were published in the *Letter Leaflet* and the Annual Reports of the Woman's Auxiliary and she continued to raise funds for northern missions. Although she physically left the North and settled in Westmount in Montreal, Quebec, with her niece Beatrice Bengough, Bompas continued to be engaged emotionally by the North and its missions. In her only address as President to the Woman's Auxiliary, just a little over two months after the death of her husband, she would declare:

I cannot quite loosen my hold on the Woman's Auxiliary; I must still work for our common object as long as God spares my life, and although leaving Selkirk Diocese, I have still a claim and an inheritance in it. The Israelites of old asked for a piece of ground of the sons of Heth that he might bury his dead wife. He knew that that grave alone would give his

descendants an interest and a claim upon that land according to the well-known tradition of the children of Israel. And I, too, have an inheritance which I claim as mine forever, a small portion on the Indian Reserve, only eight feet of ground, but most sacred in my eyes, and binding me forever to this dear northern land. (10) ⁵⁹

In Bompas's novel, *Niccolo Marini*, written before she formally became a missionary, the English clergyman, Frank Percival, pays tribute to "Pompey's widow, one of the few who maintained a life long-constancy to her departed hero" (1: 170). With the public rhetoric she maintained, Charlotte Bompas, in some sense, occupied the ideological terrain of Pompey's widow, maintaining a "life-long constancy" and narrative loyalty to her husband, even though his own private writings reveal a difficult, deluded, and an occasionally cruel man who actively resisted her attempts to stay in the North and pursue a missionary career. When H. A. Cody agreed to write the biography of William Carpenter Bompas after his death, Charlotte Bompas became intimately involved with the process of helping Cody complete the task, supplying photographs, journals, and correspondence, and offering feedback on possible titles for the book and photographs for the book's cover.⁶⁰ Moreover, the romantic account of William Bompas's death that is contained in *An Apostle of the North* is written, not by Cody, but by Charlotte Bompas

⁵⁹ "Annual Address of Mrs. Bompas, President, Delivered at Dawson. Y.T., August 13th, 1906." *Second Annual Report of the Selkirk Diocesan Branch W. A. Anglican Church Series 111.5 a, Cor. 98, File 1 of 11, Diocesan W. A. Annual Reports, 1906-1923, Yukon Territory Archives.*

⁶⁰ See Ted Jones, *All the Days of his Life*; H. A. Cody Papers, General Synod Archives, Anglican Church of Canada.

herself, and she is careful to frame her husband's life and death in hagiographic terms that would provisionally preserve his noble, self-sacrificing, and heroic reputation.

Yet the passage quoted above reveals more than Charlotte Bompas's loyalty to her husband. In *The Journals of Susanna Moodie*, Margaret Atwood created an emotional definition of nationhood in the poem, "Death of a Young Son by Drowning," when she wrote: "I planted him in this country/like a flag" (31). Sixty-four years before Atwood published those words, Bompas used the death and burial of her husband to settle, to solidify, and to establish the inchoate beginnings of her own cultural and personal narrative and claims of belonging, both within the formal structures of mission culture and within Canada itself. It was a narrative she would continue tenuously composing until the end of her life, a narrative that vacillated between insisting on recognizing her own place in the mission history of Canada, but that continued to find comfort and repose in the powers of hiddenness and influence on which she never stopped placing value.

Charlotte Bompas spent thirty-two years labouring in the northern missionary fields of Canada as her husband's "helpmeet," and, in so doing, she defined and expanded the parameters of the difficult cultural role of the missionary wife. Yet, somewhat ironically, it was with her foundational work with the Yukon Diocesan Branch of the Woman's Auxiliary that she truly appeared to realize fully her capacity to deliver influence and to receive appreciative acceptance of her work. Indeed, the motherly role that Bompas assumed toward the Native children she cared for throughout her missionary career became transferred to the Woman's Auxiliary itself once she left the mission field.

In her first Address as Honorary President, Bompas declared: "And if I may greet you as your fellow worker, you must allow me also to do so with sisterly—may I not also claim motherly—interest in all your undertakings for the Auxiliary" (11).⁶¹ In another speech, Bompas vowed that "wherever I may be stationed I shall take a loving interest and be ready to help in any possible way, the dear Woman's Auxiliary" (10).⁶²

In formally acknowledging Charlotte Bompas's death, Sadie Stringer, in her capacity as President of the Yukon Woman's Auxiliary said of her old friend:

Since our last Annual Meeting our beloved Honorary President, Mrs. W. C. Bompas, has been called "Home." She was much beloved by every one of the Woman Auxiliary members. She won the affection of all with whom she came in contact. She lived a useful life, honored and esteemed. For about half a century she was interested in Yukon [sic], having come out to the work in 1874. That interest kept up till the very last, and even after her death, a sum which she had collected was sent to the Diocese by her niece for the church at Herschel Island, the most remote mission in the Diocese—"the uttermost part of the earth." She was devoted to the cause of missions. Her letters and messages to us were always an inspiration to us, and it was a personal sorrow to every member when she was called away. (26)⁶³

⁶¹ "Address of Honorary President, Mrs. Bompas." *Third Annual Report of the Selkirk Diocesan Branch W. A., 1910*. Anglican Church Series 111.5 a, Cor. 98, File 1 of 11, Diocesan W.A. Annual Reports, 1906-1923, Yukon Territory Archives.

⁶² "Annual Address of Mrs. Bompas, President, Delivered at Dawson. Y.T., August 13th, 1906." *Second Annual Report of the Selkirk Diocesan Branch W. A.* Anglican Church Series 111.5 a, Cor. 98, File 1 of 11, Diocesan W. A. Annual Reports, 1906-1923, Yukon Territory Archives.

⁶³ President's Address. Minutes of the Tenth Diocesan Meeting of the Yukon Woman's Auxiliary, 25-26. Anglican Church Series 111.5 a, Cor. 98, File 1 of 11, Diocesan W. A. Annual Reports, 1906-1923, Yukon Territory Archives.

Stringer frames Bompas's contributions by focussing on her individual accomplishments and the motherly inspiration she provided to other female missionaries through her own writings.

Once out of the mission field, Bompas began to exhibit in the writings and speeches of her late career a capacity to re-imagine her own contribution to the missionary movement in revitalized terms. She seemed particularly determined to write herself into the history of the Woman's Auxiliary. At the beginning of her first Address as Honorary President, Bompas asserts:

Your President kindly gives me an opportunity of sending you my loving greeting on the event of your annual meeting, to take place in the near future. I might also claim it as my RIGHT, as well as my privilege, to take part in your meeting, being, I fancy, the oldest member in years as also in membership; a contemporary, I believe, of Mrs. Tilton and the other six ladies who first set the ball rolling, which has so increased in size and importance as to number its thousands of members, spread over three parts of the world. (11) ⁶⁴

Charlotte Bompas, therefore, began to situate herself and her accomplishments in a broader cultural history that she was never able to envision when she was actually in the mission field, with its endless responsibility, dislocation, and monotony.

Yet, despite her enhanced capacity to re-imagine her accomplishments in a more continuous cultural narrative than she had ever been able to compose within the disjointed and episodic writings which she produced throughout her missionary career,

⁶⁴ "Address of Honorary President, Mrs. Bompas." *Third Annual Report of the Selkirk Diocesan Branch W. A.*, 1910. Anglican Church Series 111.5 a, Cor. 98, File 1 of 11, Diocesan W. A. Annual Reports, 1906-1923, Yukon Territory Archives.

Charlotte Bompas did continue to privilege “hidden” influence, introspection, and contemplation. Her articles and speeches are full of poetry, some of which she composed herself, others of which are snippets of verse from Tennyson and Wordsworth. In an article published in the *Canadian Churchman* in 1907, entitled “Our Women of the North,” Bompas directly addresses her “sisters” with this conservative advice:

Dear sister-settlers among the Indians, there is a power given you from on high which it is intended you should use among them or any other race with which you may be placed—it is the power of **influence**; it is woman’s strongest most prevailing weapon, too, as the pages of history have shown, and our daily records make manifest. It has swayed the destiny of kings, it has turned the course of events as truly as the helm turns the course of a ship. It is dangerous, because it often works strenuously but unsuspected. You are going among a people unsuspecting of evil;—may the power which God has given you be exercised for their good, and not their injury.... So will the Indians’ country grow and prosper, not only from the wealth of its gold mines, but also from the refining, permeating influence of its Christian gentlewomen. (739, emphasis in original)

Linking it with material resources, Bompas describes influence as a tangible energy, one cultivated by a woman who saw in self-effacement a form of cultural power. Charlotte Bompas, despite the public acknowledgment of her accomplishments, never quite relinquished the power of being “the hidden leaven.” She left it to others to frame her accomplishments in the rhetoric of missionary heroism.

In my next chapter, I will consider the narrative dilemmas confronted by a female missionary who, while advocating the power of female influence, more overtly embraced the heroic tradition, and who, to her personal peril, privileged action and evangelism over organization and influence. Unlike Charlotte Bompas’s more hesitant forays into

publication, Dr. Susie Carson Rijnhart courted the privileges of narration and publication and found herself dealing with a new range of narrative tensions that became structured into her representation of her missionary journey.

Chapter Three

In Heroism's Shadow: Textual Tensions, Cultural Dilemmas, and Narrative

Redemption in Dr. Susie Carson Rijnhart's *With the Tibetans in Tent and Temple*

The past carries with it a temporal index by which it is referred to redemption. There is a secret agreement between past generations and the present one. Our coming was expected on earth. Like every generation that preceded us, we have been endowed with a *weak* Messianic power, a power to which the past has a claim. That claim cannot be settled cheaply. (254, emphasis in original)

Walter Benjamin
"Theses on the Philosophy of History"
(1950)

The subject of the mission text is now exhorted to resist control by taking over the form rather than allowing the form to take them over. (171)

Gareth Griffiths
"'Trained to tell the Truth': Missionaries,
Converts and Narration" (2005)

respectable as you look
you are an outlaw

Adrienne Rich
"Heroines" (1980)

With the Tibetans in Tent and Temple (1901) is a compelling book, one that created "a world-wide sensation" (Butchart 265). Early twentieth-century reviewers

summarized the book as being “remarkable”¹ and “thrilling and tragic,”² with a story that featured “the double charm of a missionary of genius and a land of mystery”³ and with an outcome that enacted “a baptism of suffering.”⁴ Written by Dr. Susie Carson Rijnhart, a Canadian medical doctor and missionary, the book describes the journey undertaken by Rijnhart and her husband Petrus as independent missionaries to China and Tibet between 1894 and 1898, in which they established a mission presence on the Chinese-Tibetan border. During this time, they settled in small towns such as Kumbum and Tankar, preaching the Christian Gospel, administering medical aid, and distributing Bibles to the Buddhist populations of these regions. The journey took a tragic turn in 1898 when the Rijnharts made the decision to journey through inner Tibet toward the great “forbidden city” of Lhasa. Their beloved infant son, Charles, who was born on the journey, unexpectedly took ill and died and had to be buried in an isolated region of the Tibetan interior. Soon afterward, the Rijnharts were abandoned by their native guides, became lost in the Tibetan interior, and were attacked by Tibetan robbers. Then on September 26, 1898, Petrus Rijnhart left his wife to approach a native camp for help on the other side of a large river and dramatically disappeared. Rijnhart summarizes: “Then he followed a

¹ *Idaho Daily Statesman* 7 July 1901, n. pag.

² *Christian Guardian* 12 June 1901, 14.

³ *The Expository Times* 13.3 (1901), 112.

⁴ “A Canadian Heroine.” *Methodist Magazine and Review* September 1901: 276.

little path around the rocks that had obstructed our way the day before, until out of sight, and *I never saw him again*" (311, emphasis in original). Remarkably, alone and abandoned, equipped with her husband's revolver and remnants from their caravan, Rijnhart was able to negotiate her way to safety, travelling hundreds of miles in native disguise with the dubious assistance of "wicked" Tibetan guides, who placed her in both social and sexual jeopardy, until she reached the mission station of the China Inland Mission at Ta-chien-lu in China. She then remained in China, conducting inquiries into her husband's disappearance and presumed murder, until her broken health led her to return to North America in 1899, where she delivered numerous lectures throughout Canada and the United States about her journey and the plight of the Tibetan people. It was during this period that she wrote the lengthy manuscript, *With the Tibetans in Tent and Temple*, which was published by the evangelical publishing house, Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier, in Canada and Britain and by Fleming H. Revell in the United States in 1901.

Rijnhart's unconventional missionary experience had its foundation in a conventional religious upbringing, yet one supplemented with an unusual degree of educational privilege, especially for a nineteenth-century Canadian woman. She was born Susannah Carson in Chatham, Ontario in 1868, the daughter of Joseph Standish Carson and Martha Carson. As a child, she was raised as a Methodist and was an active member of the Methodist Church, as well as being involved with the Epworth League. Her father, a high school principal and school inspector, was a proponent of advanced education for

women, and Rijnhart, along with her sister Jennie, became one of the first women in Canada to enter a Canadian medical school. At the age of twenty, she graduated with first-class honours from Trinity College in Toronto—the first female student in Canada to earn this distinction—after taking the University and the College of Physicians and Surgeon's Examinations. She earned a MD as a member of the second graduating class of the Women's Medical College in Toronto in 1888. According to Isabel Robson, who wrote a summary of Rijnhart's life in 1909, Rijnhart had "often talked of her great desire to enter the foreign mission field" while at medical school,⁵ but she had to postpone her plans due to "duties and responsibilities" laid upon her as a result of her father's death in 1889 (114). She established a medical practice with her sister, Jennie, in Strathroy. It was in Ontario, while he was on a speaking tour promoting the necessity of mission work to Tibet in the spring of 1894 that she met Petrus Rijnhart, and the two were married on September 15, 1894. The Rijnharts, along with a third missionary, William Neill Ferguson, immediately began travelling and preaching throughout America towards San

⁵ The fact that so many of these women felt "called" to be missionaries is interesting given the very small size of the graduating classes—most classes only comprised between four and ten graduates per year. Many of the Canadian women who served as foreign missionaries overseas were medical doctors. For more information on the emergence of the woman doctor in Canada, see Carlotta Hacker, *The Indomitable Lady Doctors*; Ruth Compton Brouwer, *New Women for God*; Augusta Stowe Gullen, "Women in the Study and Practice of Medicine" in *Women: Her Character, Culture and Calling*; Wendy Mitchinson, *The Nature of Their Bodies*; Veronica Strong-Boag, "Feminism Constrained: Canada's Women Doctors" in *A Not Unreasonable Claim*; Elizabeth Shortt, "The First Women Medical Students, Queen's University, 1916" in *The Proper Sphere*.

Francisco, the starting point of their missionary journey.

Susie Rijnhart's remarkable and dramatic missionary experience is predicated on numerous difficult inconsistencies and textual tensions which emerge in her narrative, some of which are rooted in the dilemmas of self-representation that confronted nineteenth-century women who wished to document their travels and personal, professional, and religious experiences, others of which are the outcome of her quest for a narrative, religious, and cultural authority that will impart her entire family's missionary experience with redemptive meaning. In this chapter, I will identify and contextualize some of these generic and discursive tensions in order to establish her text as a conflicted space which allowed for a range of contradictory discourses about female missionary identity to emerge within the confines of a single publication. These tensions cover a broad range of areas, including Rijnhart's relationships to textuality, heroism, and professionalization within missionary work, her construction of Canadian civility, and her dual role as a creator of Tibetan knowledge and a critic of what Nigel Leask has identified as "sentimental orientalism" (*Curiosity* 207). Her meticulous research and her textual sparring with previous Western travellers to Tibet signal a desire to help produce cultural knowledge and categorize the history of a land, which, from a Western perspective, was still emerging and being negotiated. Rijnhart also attempts to demystify Tibetan religion itself, particularly the figure of the lama, who had become aggressively sentimentalized in Western culture as an emblem of restraint, wisdom, mystic power, and inscrutability, with her eye-witness accounts of her penetration into the sacred space of

the lamasery and her ostensible observances of the lama's rapacious and hypocritical nature. However, this desire to disclose and reveal the "true" nature of Tibetan and lama culture collided with her guarded and careful narrative construction of herself as a female missionary personality, as a wife and mother transformed into a childless widow, and as a Western Christian woman guided by humanitarian principles in an unfamiliar and "hostile" foreign setting. Rijnhart's representation of herself and her husband, symbolically and religiously, as a source of Christian "light" for the people of Tibet is dramatically counterpointed with the shadow of her own personal darkness, given stark narrative emphasis by the fact that the chapter in which she loses her son is entitled "Darkness." Her use of imaginative geography to establish Canada as a stable bastion of civilization, safety, and liberty is structured upon troubling suppressions of Canada's legal, political, and social inequities respecting women in the nineteenth century. Her book also reveals the tensions between documentation and faith, between rationality and belief, between purity and hybridity, between professionalization and divine sanction, between restraint and action, and between civilization and evangelization that missionary work generated and that Rijnhart, as a female medical missionary, particularly embodied.

However, it is with the tensions of genre and form, with Rijnhart's artful negotiation and expansion of missionary writing's textual landscape, and her complex bid to create a cultural model of female missionary heroism, that this discussion of *With the Tibetans in Tent and Temple* will begin. Rijnhart's missionary experience reinforces the degree to which missionary writing and culture were energized by their intersections with

numerous textual forms, genres such as the female travel narrative and the "male" imperial adventure story. Her work also reinforces the challenges of self-representation posed by autobiographical writing itself, particularly for women who struggled with how to self-define and interpret their cultural contributions and positioning within missionary culture while utilizing its dominant textual forms. Rijnhart, as did many women travellers, missionaries, and writers, had an uneasy relationship with the heroic tradition that her text both lays claim to, and yet distances itself from, as her strong sense of female propriety and Christian purpose tamed—but also defined—her spirit of individualism and structured her narrations of her elemental struggle for survival. In so doing, she ventured into an area of textual self-representation and appropriates a version of a cultural role which few female missionaries at the time had directly dared to do in their missionary accounts. With her text, she creates a sustained and coherent narrative of mitigated female missionary heroism, one which laid claim to the privileges of action and judgement, unfettered by bureaucratic structures and the niggling authority of mission boards, one in which she demonstrates the savvy instinct for survival embodied by the masculine heroes of mission culture, represented globally by such icons as David Livingstone and John Geddie, and, within Canada, by men such as William Bompas, Isaac Stringer, John Horden, James Evans, John McDougall, and Egerton Ryerson Young. Yet Rijnhart's carefully constructed account of her own heroism is weighted with a compensatory emphasis on her personal and social interest in the domestic organization of Tibetan women, her aesthetic and narrative interest in the picturesque, her privileging

of female propriety, her emphasis on her maternal role, her protracted narrative gratitude for her husband's protective impulses— even after he has disappeared—and her repeated emphasis that she is a “child” under God's watchful protection and that she is a chosen player in His ongoing drama of salvation history.

By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, while there was a select body of books celebrating the heroism of women in the mission field,⁶ there were few actually written in the first-person narrative voice by these anointed “missionary heroines,” many of whom, as Judith Rowbotham has argued, were given the designation of ‘heroine’ “simply for leaving their comfortable domestic spheres” (“Soldiers” 84). Many of these biographical accounts were third-person renderings written by such enthusiastic supporters of the missionary movement as Emma Raymond Pitman, E. C. Dawson, and Helen Barrett Montgomery. Missionary women's own writings, their own accounts of life and progress in the mission field, tended to be narrated in letters, reports, and informative articles and sketches in missionary periodicals and religious newspapers such as *Missionary Outlook*, *Letter Leaflet*, *Heathen Woman's Friend*, *The Church*

⁶ Some of these books include E. R. Pitman, *Heroines of the Mission Field: Biographical Sketches of Female Missionaries who have Laboured in Various Lands among the Heathen* (1888) and *Missionary Heroines in Eastern Lands: Women's Work in Mission Fields* (1882); Annie Ryder Gracey, *Eminent Missionary Women* (1898); Helen Barrett Montgomery, *Western Women in Eastern Lands* (1910); E. C. Dawson, *Heroines of Missionary Adventure: True Stories of the intrepid endurance of missionaries in their encounters with uncivilized man, wild beasts and the forces of nature in all parts of the world* (1909); J. Telford, *Women in the Mission Field: Glimpses of Christian Women among the Heathen* (n.d.); F. Mundell, *Heroines of the Cross*, (c. 1890s).

Missionary Gleaner, and *The Female Intelligencer*. These periodicals provided heavily edited, censored, structured, and embellished sites, and a very specific context, for the circulation and the interpretation of these narrative pieces and edited fragments, on the one hand, presenting mission culture as progressive and global with its many shared trials and victories, but also, on the other, reinforcing it as sporadic and disjointed, with its mesmerizing array of stories and information. The range of stories within any one periodical created a discomfiting, and ultimately fictive, cultural equivalence between radically different cultures, many of which had little in common beyond the common desire of missionary organizations to see them Christianized.

Very often, editions of the letters and diaries of female missionaries who served in foreign fields, sometimes for decades, were compiled and published posthumously by family members and close friends, such as we saw with the letters and journals of Charlotte Bompas in the last chapter. Few women actually represented their missionary experience in a self-contained, sustained autobiographical narrative form which could compete with the autobiographical works of David Livingstone and John Geddie, and, in a Canadian context, the writings of male missionaries such as Egerton Ryerson Young, John McDougall, and Wilfred T. Grenfell, all contemporaries of Rijnhart, who were textually prolific and who envisioned their cultural contributions in the frameworks invited by muscular Christianity and heroic adventure. This was even the case for women who were otherwise celebrated within mission culture as missionary pioneers, women such as Dr. Clara Swain, Dr. Isabella Thoburn, Dr. Ida Scudder, and more iconoclastic

figures such as Annie Royal Taylor. Indeed, Anna Johnston observes that “[i]n tales of ‘missionary adventure’...women had little active place, except as passive victims awaiting salvation” (44). In this respect, Rijnhart was not only a missionary pioneer, but a textual pioneer, in that she revised and expanded the missionary adventure tale—albeit with some caution—to write women, namely herself, in a central and commanding role. By choosing to narrate her story in the first person in a sustained narrative form, Rijnhart appropriates and writes a narrative variation of missionary heroism that had most often only been written by male missionaries.

Indeed, the scope of Rijnhart’s achievement, her textual temerity, is perhaps best emphasized when *With the Tibetans in Tent and Temple* is compared briefly with the writings of her contemporary and rival, Annie Royal Taylor. The relationship—or lack thereof—between Rijnhart and Taylor is an intriguing one. Annie Taylor, like Susie Rijnhart, was a female missionary pioneer, who dedicated tremendous effort to the Christianization of Tibet. Born in Cheshire, England in 1855, Taylor, like Rijnhart’s husband, Petrus, became involved with the China Inland Mission and spent years working in Tau-chau, Kumbum, and territories in China and India before making the bold and radical decision to infiltrate Lhasa with her Tibetan servant, Pontso, and a small native entourage in September 1892. After a journey that lasted over seven months, Taylor was arrested by Tibetan authorities and forced to journey from Lhasa territory into China in April 1893. Taylor then formed the Tibetan Pioneer Mission Band, which established a mission house on the Tibetan-Chinese border. She delivered an account of her

experiences in Tibet in an address to the Royal Scottish Geographical Society and published an account of her journey entitled "An Englishwoman in Tibet" in the *National Review* in September 1893, before issuing *Pioneering in Tibet* in 1895. The book primarily consists of previously published versions of her experiences, as well as conventional accounts of religious customs and manners of the Tibetan people and facts on the fauna and flora of Tibet. In fact, *Pioneering in Tibet* proved to be so disappointing in its failure to construct a coherent narrative of missionary heroism to commemorate Taylor's journey that an exasperated William Carey initiated the publication of Annie Taylor's Tibetan diary five years later in 1900. The diary, Carey felt, better represented Taylor's adventurous spirit, English feistiness, and courageous faith than did her initial disjointed, episodic, and low-key publication, which failed to amplify or develop narratively Taylor's heroic persona.⁷

Biographers of Taylor and Rijnhart have since been eager to forge a connection between them, despite their very different approaches to "memorializing" their efforts at Christianizing Tibet. William Carey maintained in his publication of Annie Taylor's

⁷ Carey states: "Summaries of [Taylor's] journey already published have made this deep impression. But summaries are far from satisfying.... However crude and imperfect the form in which these are preserved, they are always immensely more interesting than mere general descriptions, the brevity of which deprives them of practical value, while their free coloring is a seductive snare. It is a pity that Miss Taylor's diary was not published at the first, in place of the altogether disappointing and unimpressive accounts which are all that have appeared down to the present time. The narrative, as we find it there, in its wholeness and in its simplicity, is best fitted to form the permanent memorial of a deed which is illustrious in the history of missions and epoch-making for Tibet" (16-17).

diary that the Rijnharts were inspired to go to Tibet because of Taylor's pioneering work.

Carey states:

Yet it cannot be forgotten that the impulse which created that mobile and gallant little army was the impulse given by the Spirit of God under the simple recital of Miss Taylor's story, the story of her wonderful journey into the heart of Tibet. Nor is that all. It was that journey which fired the imagination of the Rijnharts, and led them, five years later, to make the same attempt; and their story, with its tragic mystery and speechless pain, has been a new and powerful appeal to the sympathies and intercession of the Christian world. (145)

This viewpoint is corroborated in a review of Carey's book that appeared in the *Methodist Magazine and Review* in June 1902, which lists Taylor, Henry Savage Landor, and the Rijnharts as recent examples of a succession of Western heroes attempting to penetrate Tibet. And a biographical account of the two women published in 1909, one year after Rijnhart's death, *Two Lady Missionaries in Tibet*, also links Taylor and Rijnhart by situating the two in a continuum and also claiming that Taylor's earlier journey inspired the Rijnharts. Isabel Robson states: "Six years after Miss Taylor reached Ta-chien-lu, enfeebled and well-nigh destitute after her adventurous journey into Tibet, another little party inspired by her example and eager to complete the task she had been compelled to relinquish, crossed the border from China into the 'Great Closed Land'" (113). Yet there is little evidence in Rijnhart's published account to support this contention. Rijnhart herself only makes two brief specific references to Annie Taylor in the course of her narrative. Both occur late in her narrative and are incidental in tone. The achievements and accomplishments of earlier travellers, such as the French Jesuit missionaries, Régis-

Evariste Huc and Joseph Gabet, and the American traveller, W. W. Rockhill, are given more cultural and narrative weight in Rijnhart's text than those of Taylor. While inaccurate, however, it was obviously important, and perhaps irresistible, to those who sought to Christianize Tibet to present efforts to do so in a coherent narrative of progress and unity that elided religious and cultural differences and parochial mission politics and rivalries, and that could hence be easily narrated, distributed, and circulated, rather than presenting those efforts as isolated attempts at Christianization by competing religious and missionary organizations and individuals. Perhaps Rijnhart herself, too, privileged the accomplishments of male travellers over female ones,⁸ a fate that her own narrative on Tibet would also suffer as its cultural value was later assessed. Scholars such as Sir Thomas Holdich, in his book *Tibet the Mysterious*, for instance, would observe that Rijnhart wrote an "interesting account of her travels," but he ultimately dismissed its cultural significance, concluding, "Expeditions of this nature, however, do not throw much new light on the geography of Tibet" (206).

The historical continuity that observers of missionary culture established between Taylor and Rijnhart was also, no doubt, due, in part, to the "audacity" of their respective missions. Rijnhart's missionary experience, like Annie Taylor's, had irresistible narrative

⁸ Rijnhart, surprisingly, makes no references to Isabella Bird Bishop's travel books to Tibet, even though Bishop was an ardent supporter of Western missions. This is in marked contrast to Rijnhart's contemporary, Jane E. Duncan, who in her 1905 travel account, *A Summer Ride through Western Tibet*, quotes Bird Bishop's *Among the Tibetans* extensively.

raw elements for an early twentieth-century audience: death, mystery, martyrdom, physical peril, violent natives, and threatened female virtue. Rijnhart shapes those raw elements into a pre-figured cultural and narrative framework in which a respectable Western woman who has been abandoned by all but God in a “heathen” country matches wits with wicked Tibetan natives and escapes with her virtue intact.⁹ Yet, as she makes a spirited attempt to frame and justify her decision to proceed toward the city of Lhasa on her doomed itinerant evangelical mission, Rijnhart forcefully reiterates: “Let it be clearly understood that the purpose of our journey was purely missionary; it was not a mere adventure or expedition prompted by curiosity or desire for discovery, but a desire to approach our fellow men with the uplifting message of Truth and to share with them blessings that God had ordained for all mankind” (195). Rijnhart aspires to create the illusion of both cultural and textual purity for her missionary journey, linking cultural purity with moral purity, as she attempts to distance missionary activity from the other cultural projects that motivated Western travel to, and Western interest in, Tibet. That she emphatically fails to do so—that she, in part, embraces the cultural roles and textual hybridity she claims to reject—becomes one of many ironies that characterizes *With the Tibetans in Tent and Temple*. Rijnhart observes that “the eyes of the traveler and scientist

⁹ In addition to the disappearance of her own husband, the sensational murder of the French scientist, Jules Leon Dutreuil De Rhins, by Tibetan natives in 1894 and the publication of Henry Savage Landor’s somewhat controversial first-person narrative, *In the Forbidden Land*, in 1899, in which he claimed to be spectacularly tortured by Tibetan natives, created a cultural context that made her own physical escape that much more remarkable.

as well as the missionary, are eagerly watching for the development of events that will lead to the downfall of barriers that too long have kept a people in darkness, and bid defiance to the march of Christian civilization" (192). Rijnhart herself situates the missionary within this triumvirate of mingled cultural gazes.

Rijnhart's claims to textual purity are equally compromised and complicated by the fact that she and her husband were travelling in native disguise, which destabilized the categories of race and nationhood, as well as the structures of cultural purity and femininity upon which Rijnhart placed value. Rijnhart states: "Knowing the advantages of traveling in native costume, each of us donned a Chinese suit" (13). Cultural disguise was very often used by Western missionaries in foreign mission fields as both a potential means of deflecting native resistance to the missionary presence and as a gesture of cultural accommodation, and yet, like many of the practices associated with missionary work, it was an ambivalent one. Sara Mills claims, "The westerner in disguise is a figure of great textual power since it demonstrates great knowledge to a western audience, and at the same time it asserts even greater power over the people of the colonised country since they are represented as being fooled by the disguise" (*Discourses* 140). This was certainly the case for certain travellers such as the French intellectual, Alexandra David-Neel, who, in the 1920s, travelled throughout Tibet in disguise. In her book, *My Journey to Lhasa*, she exults in the seemingly impenetrability of her disguise and her continued ability to deceive a naïve and credulous people. The confidence that writers like David-Neel exhibit is missing in Rijnhart's account of her adoption of native disguise in its early

stages. As she dons the garments, she claims that they are “unwieldy” (13). She then reveals that “to my consternation, I had discovered I had appeared in public with one of the under garments outside and dressed in a manner which shocked Chinese ideas of propriety” (13). Such a move visualizes the awkwardness at assimilation into a foreign culture, while emphasizing the value that Rijnhart herself places on propriety. Rijnhart’s simple gesture embodies cultural misunderstanding. Her innocent transgression and violation of the boundaries of intimate space will culminate in a dramatic reversal of intimate boundaries—the lengthy and deliberate attempted violation of Rijnhart herself by “wicked Tibetan guides,” to which she gives such sustained narrative emphasis later in her narrative.

Yet, as Rijnhart unwittingly reveals, the custom of foreign missionaries adopting native dress was not always viewed as a gesture of triumph or cultural ascendancy by those whom the mission was intended to attract. For instance, Robert Markley notes that the Jesuit missionaries who adopted Chinese and Buddhist native dress in their mission work in Ming China in the seventeenth century were often ridiculed as “idolators” engaged in “mummery,” particularly by Protestant observers who were already uneasy about Catholic “popery” and excess (94). There was, Markley claims, a “nervous fascination with the prospect of Western Christians going native” because missionaries were seen as “surrender[ing] the essentials of faith” (90; 94). The missionary in disguise

was able to experience an “interrupted identity”¹⁰ that, at times, called into question the distinct and superior nature of the West’s conception of its own influence and formations. In Rijnhart’s text, this “interrupted identity” allowed for many tensions in the realm of narrative which argued for, and destabilized, her cultural and narrative authority. Rijnhart seemed particularly interested in how she was regarded by others and she offers verbatim excerpts of other travellers’ encounters with her. In one of these excerpts, M. S. Wellby offers an interesting perspective on the physical appearance of Petrus Rijnhart: “I could hardly make up my mind whether he was a European or a Chinaman, and when he addressed me in a mixture of French and Chinese I was still more mystified” (qtd. in Rijnhart 153). This moment of cultural dislocation is interesting because it reminds the reader of the instability of the categories of native and traveller, “heathen” and Christian, upon which Rijnhart, in part, structures her text. Wellby cannot determine Petrus Rijnhart’s cultural identity simply by looking. When Rijnhart describes her husband as being viewed by Tibetan natives as a “Great White Teacher,” Wellby’s contrasting textual description amplifies the degree to which Rijnhart was using the term “white” symbolically, in a predictable paradigm, where Western beliefs are constructed as white/light, while native Tibetans and their beliefs become part of the darkness. And we

¹⁰ The phrase “interrupted identity” is inspired by the title of Kevin Robins “Interrupting Identities: Turkey/Europe.” Robins maintains that cultural identity is “dynamic” and always “in movement,” a condition that the missionary in disguise literally and figuratively embodies (63). See Kevin Robins, “Interrupting Identities: Turkey/Europe” in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, pp. 61-86.

are reminded, as well, by the fact that, although she and her husband were travelling in disguise, Rijnhart constantly emphasizes the whiteness of her baby, who, while he is alive, functions as a shining beacon of Western privilege.

Moreover, the fact that Rijnhart feels that she must defend herself from charges of secular advancement testifies to the instability of missionary literature as a genre and reveals the extent to which it had become intertwined with other discursive categories, such as journeys of imperial adventure and missions of exploration and scientific procurement. As a literary and discursive category, missionary writing is highly unstable and anything but pure. It particularly became implicated in the literature of imperial and popular adventure that proliferated in the nineteenth century. In *Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire*, Martin Green defines adventure as “a series of events partly but not wholly accidental, in settings remote from the domestic and probably from the civilized...which constitute a challenge to the central character. In meeting this challenge, he/she performs a series of exploits which make him/her a hero, eminent in virtues such as courage, fortitude, cunning, strength, leadership, and persistence” (23). Missionary experience intertwined with and extended the literature of travel and adventure, particularly in the way it often presented and naturalized resistance between missionaries and natives. Encounters between the two became framed in constructed tropes of disguise, excitement, mystery, and danger that made for thrilling reading and that emphasized the missionary’s courage and self-reliance and, when events turned tragic, his courage and sacrifices, while, most often, suppressing any meaningful discussion of why

it is that native resistance is being waged. Its linear plot structure and narrative patterning conveyed the missionary and the reader forward in time, generating suspense, and substituting episodes of conflict and resistance for reports of progress in the field. Adventure narratives gave missionaries who wanted to write of their missionary experience a narrative form that allowed the tensions and the capacity for resistance that underlay their cultural encounters with Native Others to be externalized, to be staged and formalized, in a culturally simplistic and palatable way. As Jean and John Comaroff observe, it is not coincidental that so many missionary lives were later able to be economically compressed and retold as adventure stories for children (1: 52). Missionary narratives, by using the common generic features and formal properties of the adventure narrative—a progressive linear structure, the setting of a dangerous “uncivilized” landscape, and the drama of opposition between a central heroic individual and natives who ranged in behaviour from curious to hostile—were able to give literary form and narrative extension, possibility, and vitality to the cultural ideal of a lived and living faith manifested as an adventure.

As numerous critics have argued, the adventure story, including missionary adventure tales and missionary endeavour itself, were also deeply imbricated with imperialism.¹¹ Indeed, Martin Green has argued that the “adventure narrative” was “the

¹¹ Many critics have recognized the relationship between missionary activity and imperialism. For some of the influential studies, see Helen Callaway, *Gender, Culture and Empire: European Women in Colonial Nigeria*; Torben Christensen and William R. Hutchison, eds., *Missionary Ideologies in the Imperialist Era: 1880-1920*; Anna

generic counterpart in literature to empire in politics" (37). As Carl Berger has argued in *The Sense of Power*, imperialism was a powerful political and ideological force in the nineteenth century. It consolidated Western ideas of Christian stewardship and responsibility with secular ideals of expansion, "progress and civilization," whereby "the attainment of nationhood itself was made contingent upon the acceptance of the white man's burden" ("Sense" 222). Berger claims that "[t]he main justification for imperial power was work directed toward the Christianization and civilization of these races" ("Sense" 226). As he concludes, "it came to mean [it was] the duty of advanced nations to work for the well-being of less developed ones" and honouring that duty would inculcate national greatness ("Sense" 222-23). Heightening this sense of destiny and responsibility was a prevailing cultural tendency to see Christianity, not simply as God's

Johnston, *Missionary Writing and Empire*; Sara Mills, *Discourses of Difference and Gender and Colonial Space*; Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*; Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*; Jean and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*; Norman Etherington, ed., *Missions and Empire*; Nicholas Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture*; Clare Midgley, *Feminism and Empire*; Jeffrey Cox, "Master Narratives of Imperial Missions"; Jane Haggis and Margaret Allen, "Imperial Emotions: Affective Communities of Missions in British Protestant Women's Missionary Publications, 1880-1920"; Susan Thorne, "Missionary-Imperial Feminism"; Margaret Jolly, "Colonizing Women: The Maternal Body and Empire"; Nupur Chaudhuri and Margaret Strobel, eds., *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance*; Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, eds. *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*. For specific discussions of imperialism and missionary work in a Canadian context, see Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power*; Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*; Brett Christophers, *Positioning the Missionary*; Myra Rutherdale, *Women and the White Man's God*; Ruth Compton Brouwer, *Modern Women Modernizing Men*; Mary-ellen Kelm, Conclusion, *The Letters of Margaret Butcher: Missionary-Imperialism on the North Pacific Coast*.

chosen religion, but as a purveyor of democracy and enlightenment, capable of effecting political and cultural liberation for those countries not fortunate enough to enjoy the civility of Anglo-Saxon customs and governance. Missionaries, with their forays into relatively unknown and alien space, preceded the institutions and governmental structures and social practices of empire and, hence, became important harbingers of its beliefs and values. To some extent, missionary journeys replicated in microcosm the belief in continuous expansiveness that gave ideological sustenance to the growth of empire. Samuel de Champlain's assertion that "the salvation of a single soul is worth more than the conquest of an empire," which was often repeated throughout the nineteenth century,¹² framed missionary work rhetorically in aggressive terms of appropriation and conquest that echoed the mechanisms of discovery and expansion fostered by the quest to grow and develop Empire.

Yet, despite some obvious abstract parallels between missionary work and imperialism, there were tensions and ambivalences respecting the missionary's relationship with imperial culture. Missionaries contradicted, as well as embodied, aspects of imperial organization. The problematic relationship between missionary work and imperialism has been noted by critics such as Andrew Porter, Jeffrey Cox, Brett

¹² Agnes Maule Machar paraphrases Champlain's quotation in *Marjorie's Canadian Winter*, p. 125.

Christophers, and Maina Chawla Singh.¹³ Porter maintains that “missionary interests had carried little weight in contests with other agents of empire—settlers, merchants, local assemblies, colonial agents, imperial politicians—to shape the character of Empire and the management of colonial society” (“Overview” 45). Jeffrey Cox argues that, far from being figures of influence, “[i]n the master narrative of imperial history, Western missionaries and their domestic supporters are for the most part mindless humanitarian bumblerers who get in the way of imperial progress” and whose “presumption of marginality remains deeply rooted” (8). Brett Christophers maintains that the “Anglican missionary agenda” “could not be reconciled with more worldly discourses of Empire” in that missionaries “disputed the fixity in most colonial stereotypes” with their beliefs about the possibilities of heathen conversion and redemption (21). Singh, too, has observed that missionaries challenged the “spatial arrangements” within “colonial social formations,” “disrupting existing boundaries that specified the social, racial, and linguistic spaces separating the colonizer from the colonized” (47). Unlike colonial agents, who ruled and maintained their authority by keeping a careful cultural distance between native populations and themselves, missionaries often worked by integrating themselves into native society through adopting their native dress and languages and opening their homes in order to better spread the Good News (Singh 47-48). In my last

¹³ See Andrew Porter, “An Overview, 1700-1914” in *Missions and Empire*; Maina Chawla Singh, *Gender, Religion and “Heathen Lands”*; Jeffrey Cox, “Master Narratives of Imperial Missions” in *Mixed Messages*; Brett Christophers, *Positioning the Missionary*.

chapter, I explored the personal difficulties these collapsing cultural and material boundaries created for Charlotte Bompas. Rijnhart, in contrast, appeared to support the integration of missionaries into the native societies they were attempting to convert, claiming: "I think, on the whole, in new places it is wise for missionaries to have their homes open so that natives may at times see into the smallest corners, and thus, as 'seeing is believing,' crush at the outset any ideas of mystery which heathen people are only too ready to entertain" (383). Even though, as a Canadian citizen, she was a representative of Empire, and even though she asserts the supremacy of Western culture and Christian beliefs, Rijnhart was still an ambivalent ambassador for imperialist values precisely because she challenged the cultural divisions and hierarchical separation privileged by colonial power structures. Moreover, Rijnhart's claims about "mystery" are rendered ironic in light of the fact that Christianity itself is predicated on a series of mysteries, such as the Trinity, the divine conception of Jesus Christ, and His miraculous resurrection, an irony into which she does not delve.

Adventure and conquest stories, popularized in the writings of Rudyard Kipling, Joseph Conrad, G. A. Henty, R. M. Ballantyne, Rider Haggard, Charles Kingsley, and Ralph Connor, also played a role, as Elleke Boehmer has observed, in reinforcing the principles of imperial duty and responsibility through the model of male relationships, both adversarial and amenable (71-75). In addition, as Jen Hill has argued, the "repetition of the predictable adventure plot" and its "mapping of alien geography into the space of empire" both establishes and reinforces the repetition of a grander cultural plot, that of

“the stability of empire” (157; 155). Nineteenth-century travel and exploration writings, including missionary narratives, did similar work, albeit in a more fractured, less cohesive fashion. Terrence L. Craig particularly sees within missionary writings the “articulation of a stable society replicating itself to erase all opposition, and doing so in the guise of ‘life-examples’ modelled on a single great ‘proto-life’” (89). The travel and exploration writings of John Franklin, Francis Leopold McClintock, Alexander Mackenzie, David Livingstone, and Henry Stanley repetitively fed and reinforced the thematic concerns of adventure literature. Scholars such as Martin Green, Andrea White, and Jean and John Comaroff maintain that the two genres “shared features of intent and style” and that “the line between the two discourses was often a thin one” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1: 172; White 39). Gareth Griffiths similarly maintains that texts produced by white missionaries in the late nineteenth century were “frequently indistinguishable from the popular adventure tale” (“Popular” 54).

Like the imperial adventure, missionary writing also had a role in reinforcing and establishing what Elleke Boehmer has identified as the “textuality of colonial experience,” a textuality that she claims was primarily “inscribed in a male hand” (75). David Livingstone’s *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa*, published in 1857, created a textual model that incorporated the dissonant and contradictory elements of missionary experience while still creating a formal autobiographical narrative. Indeed, Livingstone claimed that the labour of *writing* about his missionary experience, of refashioning it in a cultural form suitable for public circulation and consumption, was

more onerous than travelling through the mission field itself. Livingstone states: "As to those literary qualifications which are acquired by habits of writing, and which are so important to an author, my African life has not only not been favorable to the growth of such accomplishments, but quite the reverse; it has made composition irksome and laborious. I think I would rather cross the African continent again than undertake to write another book. It is far easier to travel than to write about it" (20). With such claims, the cultural labour of textual production itself became bound up into missionaries' self-representation and self-definitions of their life's work. Textuality extended missionary work as a cultural practice, as reading what others had written about geography, customs, and manners in a particular field was seen to be essential preparation for a meaningful missionary life. Conversely, the mission fields, to adapt a phrase from John Moss, themselves became "extended texts"¹⁴ that missionaries felt uniquely prepared and positioned to read, reinterpret, and reinscribe for their homeland readerships. When, for instance, Agnes Deans Cameron visits the northern territories of Canada, she is able to track the presence of the Anglican missionary, William Carpenter Bompas, not only through anecdotal accounts and material artefacts, but through textual traces, with the Canadian North emerging as an elaborate archive, a "library" whose textual treasures are awaiting a new cultural readership—that of the woman who "must see" with her "own

¹⁴ In *Enduring Dreams*, John Moss claims: "When you enter Arctic narrative, you enter every narrative of the Arctic ever written. When you enter the Arctic in person, you become part of the extended text" (105).

eyes” (*New* 185-86; 14). In particular, Laurie Hovell McMillin argues that “travel texts on Tibet are enabled by an ‘intertext’ on Tibet” (50). These writers, influenced by numerous genres and the “struggles” to account for their journeys, “‘write’ Tibet and in so doing mobilize existing knowledge on that place” (McMillin 50).

In her own narrative, Susie Rijnhart confesses that “[i]n common with all other missionaries and travelers interested in Tibet, we had thought, read, and dreamed much about Lhasa even before we reached the border” (193). Rijnhart’s comment testifies to the “textual attitude” that Edward Said claims underlay the cultural project of Orientalism and the attempts by Western explorers, scientists, and missionaries culturally to contain and document Eastern culture in which the “schematic authority of a text” is preferred over the “disorientations of direct encounter” (*Orientalism* 92-94). It is such texts, Said argues, that create both knowledge and the traditions that give them cultural authority (94). Rijnhart’s studied displays of knowledge regarding the important nineteenth-century travel books about Tibet also reinforces Maina Chawla Singh’s assertion that, along with being “co-producers of missionary texts,” missionary women were “readers of the texts (produced by the male missionaries) and thus recipients/consumers of the discourses and ideologies projected through them” (140). Being situated as both producers and consumers of missionary literature influenced missionaries’ efforts at self-interpretation and self-definition.

Certainly Susie Rijnhart shows an impressive knowledge of a range of texts about Tibet. She cites from and demonstrates knowledge of the accounts of many of the

nineteenth-century travellers to Tibet, particularly the French Jesuit missionaries, Huc and Gabet, the Russian General N. M. Prejaval'ski, the American explorer, W. W. Rockhill, with whom her husband had some contact on his first journey to Tibet, as well as two travellers who reciprocally document their encounters with her, Captain M. S. Wellby, and the Swedish explorer, Sven Hedin. In broader terms, Tibet is seen to be within a continuum of discovery and conquest by Western travellers, whereby its history and knowledge emerge as something to be negotiated. The fact that Rijnhart so directly positions her route in the context of past travellers and that she demonstrates a willingness to challenge some of their geographical and cultural claims¹⁵ shows her desire for her work to be seen as a contribution to geographical and cultural scholarship, which contradicts her claims that the purpose of her journey is "purely missionary." By directly alluding to the writings of past travellers, particularly male travellers, she is entering into the imperial project of building and creating knowledge by energizing and creating debate. Rijnhart shows her desire for cultural relevance and significance, her eagerness to write herself into, and be written into, the history of Tibet. Rijnhart has a restrained narrative style, but one of the true moments of pleasure she shows is when she realizes that she and her husband had been alluded to in a Tibetan sacred book: "We had never

¹⁵ For instance, she challenges Rockhill on points of geography (232) and challenges the claims of Huc and Gabet that they had witnessed the letters of the Tibetan alphabet on the sacred Tree of Tsung K'aba (113) and their claims of authenticity regarding the ceremony of identification (122). As well, Rijnhart observes the presence of a river that she notes was missing on the Royal Geographical Society map, which she asserts is "worthy of notice on our maps" (284).

suspected that our names were recorded in the sacred books of Buddhism” (164).

Rijnhart’s references to other books about Tibet remind us of the extent to which her account is as much a textual reconstruction as it is an imaginative and autobiographical one.

Moreover, Rijnhart’s willingness to situate her narrative in a particular time and place is important from the perspective of her missionary intentions. Maina Chawla Singh notes that many American missionary accounts were defined by their “curious lack of a sense of history,” which gave them a static, ahistorical, and homogeneous quality (159). In contrast, Rijnhart documents extraordinary specific historical events in Tibet, such as the Mohammedan rebellion, to which she is a compelling eyewitness. By situating Tibetan culture firmly within an unfolding history, she is presenting it as an evolving culture that possibly has a future of Christian redemption. Yet her preoccupation with documentation is also ironic, signaling her painstaking preoccupation with needing to authenticate her own experiences. Her tendency to privilege empiricism and Western knowledge and rationalism over the mystic beliefs and customs and local knowledge and customs of the Tibetans intersects with the spiritual nature of her own calling and actions, which are, as she continually reminds her readers, beyond human understanding and rationality.

3.1 Missionary Women, Heroism, and Propriety

Susie Rijnhart chose to narrate her story using a narrative form which, as Patricia

Meyer Spacks observes, “implies self-assertion and self-display,” and which, in effect, worked in tension with some aspects of the narrative persona she was trying to cultivate and represent (114). Spacks, in her important article, “Selves in Hiding,” has analyzed the difficulties that many women, often women of great accomplishment, experienced in narrating their lives using the autobiographical genre. She observes: “The writer who displays himself or herself in print claims an authority of individual personal experience.... Commitment to formal autobiography, a story of the self written with the intent of dissemination implies also a claim of significance—a fact that troubled early [female] practitioners of the form” (114). Spacks argues that women’s creation of a selfless persona challenged the fundamentals of the autobiographical form. This intersected with what Jean and John Comaroff have identified as the “assertively personalized epic form” of many missionary writings, a “pervasive belief in the author’s passage itself as emblematic and hence as worthy of record” (1: 172-73). The tensions between what Sean Gill has identified as “self-assertiveness” and “self-abnegation” were particularly prominent in certain forms of women’s missionary literature (176-77). Jean and John Comaroff maintain in their masterful study, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, that missionary work relied in part on the generative power of the heroic individual for its cultural vitality (1: 61). Indeed, the Comaroffs claim that missionary literature, “guided by the spirit of [Thomas] Carlyle,” participated in the formation of a version of history that itself unfolded “as the autobiography of heroism” during the nineteenth century (1: 172). Thomas Carlyle, in his influential *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in*

History, argued: "Difficulty, abnegation, martyrdom, death are the *allurements* that act on the heart of man. Kindle the inner genial life of him, you have a flame that burns up all lower considerations.... Not by flattering our appetites; no, by awakening the Heroic that slumbers in every heart, can any Religion gain followers" (61, emphasis in original).

Such sweeping statements obfuscated women's strained relationship to the heroic tradition that their particular missionary experiences generated and challenged. As Shirley Foster and Sara Mills argue, women's positioning as "adventure heroes" within the colonial adventure tradition was problematic because of the genre's "rejection of the domestic" and "the values associated with domesticity" (260; 252-53). It was "difficult for women writers to adopt" unambiguously the "adventurer role" because of "its association with national masculine subjectivities," and this uncoordinated relationship created "fissures" within some women's travel writings of this era (255). Judith Rowbotham, in particular, offers a more complex view of the specific relationship of missionary women to the heroic tradition, arguing that heroism as a "human" and cultural category was "profoundly gendered" ("Soldiers" 85). Rowbotham argues that women in the nineteenth century had a different, more constrained relationship with the traditions of heroism and martyrdom within missionary discourse than did men. She observes that "modern heroic deeds, performed in dangerous surroundings, were shown to be a predominantly masculine preserve. The activities of male missionaries could easily be fitted into this mould. Hagiography preferred depictions of *women* who were heroic in ways that related to a more passive endurance of unpleasantness or hardship" ("Soldiers"

85, emphasis in original). As women's presence became more prominent in the world's mission fields, and their duties more varied, their exploits "demanded a reassessment of the female variety of missionary heroism" ("Soldiers" 84). Yet, at the same time, the popular rhetoric that saw missionary work as "spiritual warfare," with men as "soldiers of Christ," was considered too volatile for some missionary women, and it needed a rhetorical complement that could better represent woman's heroism on the mission field in more muted terms.

This complement emerged in E. R. Pitman's popular 1895 book, *Missionary Heroines in Eastern Lands*, which begins by praising the missionary woman thus: "The annals of Christian missions furnish copious records of womanly heroism. From the days of Ann H. Judson, in the early part of the century, until now, the succession has not failed. Alike in the frozen regions of Greenland and under the tropical heats of India delicate women have been found labouring side by side with their husbands among their untaught, heathen sisters" (1). Pitman's emphasis that the women are "delicate" and are located "labouring side by side with their husbands" delineates the character of "womanly heroism" by placing firm limitations upon it. Indeed, Judith Rowbotham claims that "[w]omen were stereotypically expected to confine themselves to more passive forms of 'greatness,' requiring distinctly feminine versions that were traditionally quintessentially domestic" ("Soldiers" 88). The cultural emphasis remained on what women "were" rather than on "what they did," in which "[f]eminine personal heroism was not supposed to involve the deliberate placing of her person in peril" ("Soldiers" 88;

90). Sean Gill also confirms this to be the case in his analysis of the portrayals of missionary women in Victorian biography. Missionary biographers ensured that a “delicate balance of appropriate gendered behaviour was maintained,” and, in so doing, they revealed a “contradiction between the self-abnegation expected of women and the self-assertiveness needed to succeed in a missionary calling” (176-77).

If Rowbotham and Gill are correct, this then means that in the context of nineteenth-century missionary culture, it *was* possible for a woman to be inappropriately heroic. Was Susie Rijnhart such a case? Did she overstep the acceptable boundaries of gendered behaviour for her era? This may explain some of the press that Rijnhart received after her journey. While praised as a heroine in some publications,¹⁶ Rijnhart also endured veiled criticism for going to Tibet as a freelance missionary, instead of affiliating herself with a missionary society with its accompanying protection and resources. For instance, while praising the impetus for the Rijnhart’s mission, the *Methodist Magazine and Review* also stated: “It would, in our judgement, have been much wiser to have gone out under some Missionary Society, which can exercise direction, oversight and some degree of protection than in this freelance style” (383). In an article published in *The Church Missionary Gleaner* in 1907, entitled “The Evangelization of Tibet,” Ernest F. Neve calls Susie Rijnhart’s journey “heroic,” but also

¹⁶ See “A Canadian Heroine,” *Methodist Magazine and Review* September 1901, pp. 276-78; “An Heroic Canadian Missionary,” *Methodist Magazine and Review* 1899, p. 383.

“disastrous” and “rash” (8). Sean Gill argues that missionary culture encouraged “conservative constructions of femininity” that relied upon a “strict organizational control of the sisterhood” to contain missionary women who strayed from the proscribed gender roles favored by missionary societies, which preferred to cultivate the feminine qualities of “delicacy” and “feebleness” as opposed to valour and independence (175).

Rijnhart’s cultural dilemma also becomes clear when situated against the construction of female heroism within Canada during the era in which she was writing. Who were Canada’s “heroines” in the early twentieth century? And where is Susie Rijnhart positioned in relationship to that tradition? The Ryerson Canadian History Readers, a popular series of school texts published in Canada in the early twentieth century, featured a special section on “Heroines” that included Madame La Tour, Madeleine de Verchères, Laura Secord, Marguerite Bourgeois, the Sisters of St. Boniface, and the Strickland Sisters, Catharine Parr Traill and Susanna Moodie. In their book, *Heroines and History*, Colin M. Coates and Cecilia Morgan examine in depth the cultural reception of two of these Canadian women, whose acts of spontaneous courage elevated them to the rank of heroine: the “Canadian Joan of Arc,” Madeleine de Verchères, and the triumphant icon of sweet domestic bravery, Laura Secord. By examining the reception of these two figures, Coates and Morgan are also, by implication, interrogating the social and cultural relationships between women and heroism in nineteenth-century and twentieth-century Canada. Their analyses reveal it was a complex and shifting process. The creation of the cultural narratives surrounding Laura Secord in the late nineteenth

century, for instance, privileged a version of gendered heroism that participated in “the metaphorical defence of the national family,” and that created a role for women in the task of nation building, while keeping intact the cultural ideals of a wholesome and “fragile” “white womanhood” (Coates and Morgan 9; 13). This suggests that a surface female fragility, far from working in opposition to “womanly heroism,” was, in fact, instrumental to its cultural consummation and subsequent vitality. Rijnhart’s text recognizes the expansive possibilities, and the boundaries, engendered by the framework of female heroism, as she devises and presents a narrative model by which a woman could be both respectable and heroic, especially a woman who has ventured beyond the boundaries of respectable society. One of the key themes that animates Rijnhart’s narrative is the challenge of modelling exemplary propriety in the face of physical hardship, spiritual trials, and bewildering encounters with the unknown. Rijnhart’s propriety, then, becomes one of the stabilizing forces of her narrative, especially in an environment where a woman’s character was constantly tested and threatened, both by aesthetic excess and direct moral assault, as well as her own nomadic and impulsive wanderings.

Rijnhart emphasizes her propriety and respectability by emphasizing her cultural roles as a domestic manager, a mother, and a wife. There are few humorous moments in *With the Tibetans in Tent and Temple*, but one of them occurs early in the journey, when Rijnhart expresses concern about her husband’s ability to organize their new home: “Mr. Rijnhart had left me at Sining and had gone on to Luser to complete the preparation of

our house; but I had become impatient, not having too much confidence in masculine ability to set a house in order in a way altogether pleasing to a woman, so I rode up to Lusar with Mr. Hall.... Assisted by some native carpenters, they had been very busy at the house, but when I arrived I found everything in confusion, just as I had anticipated" (28-29). This wry anecdote emphasizes Rijnhart's femininity in conventional terms, demonstrating the value that she places on domestic management. Her construction of herself as an ordering domestic authority tempers her intimidating level of medical training and education and offers reassuring manifestations of her middle-class femininity. A focus on domesticity also allowed her to negotiate the terms of her cultural role as a missionary. Rijnhart's interest in the details of domestic organization, such as furniture placement and food preparation, leads her to conclude that "we were, taking it all in all, as happy in our far-away, isolated home as we possibly could have been in America" (32). Rijnhart later refers to their home at Lusar as a "clean" and "airy dwelling," in contrast with the "vermin"-filled abode of Ishimina, their Tibetan language teacher (40). Upon her return from a pre-empted journey to Koko-nor, she relishes "sweet dreams of the safety and shelter that awaited us in our little home at Lusar" (47). This narrative pattern is repeated when the Rijnharts later move to "dear old Tankar," when she again relays the trials of domestic management and again places emphasis on the importance of domestic sanctuary. Rijnhart's appreciation of the cleanliness, stability, and sanctuary of domestic space acts as an important counterpoint to her own nomadic wanderings and stabilizes her own feminine identity and claims to respectability and

propriety.

Rijnhart's emphasis on domesticity becomes particularly evident in her descriptions of her new role as a mother, which occurred three years into her residence in Tibet. As was discussed in the last chapter, the discourse of maternity was an important one for female missionaries, who relied on it to constitute and expand their cultural roles. The birth of her son well into the missionary journey created a huge narrative challenge for Rijnhart. How was she to broach such a disconcertingly uncomfortable subject to a homeland readership sensitive to its sexual implications? Helen Buss has observed in her examination of women's pioneer and settler writings that women of this era did not have "an idiom in public language, to express emotions and thoughts," as well as the physical and practical realities, of pregnancy, labour, and birth (*Mapping* 44). Given these discursive limitations, Rijnhart is forced to create her own idiom. The scientific vocabulary that Rijnhart uses with such ease and authority when diagnosing diseased Tibetans disappears into a sentimentalized discussion of flowers and sunshine as she describes the "arrival" of her own son:

We had in the center of our courtyard a square flower garden, where we coaxed some native flowers resembling yellow poppies, marigolds and asters to bloom with our own violets, nasturtiums and sweet peas, which gave our home a delightful whiff of old-fashioned far away gardens in the homeland.... When the first dark velvety nasturtium bloomed there came to our home another blossom, who brought with him a budget of love and a stock of sunshine which will remain always, but now only in memory—dear little Charles Carson Rijnhart, who came to us on June 30th, 1897.
(165)

Rijnhart's narrative silence on her own pregnancy, the sentimental discourse and the

vaguely unspecific language with which she introduces her new “blossom,” reinforces her status as a respectable woman. Her cultural expertise as a medical doctor is sublimated to the requirements of modesty, decorum, and propriety.

More importantly, the discourse of flowery sentiment and sunshine that she devises also clearly aligns Charles with the forces of cultivated nature and light that Rijnhart consistently links to safety, civilization, and the “homeland” throughout her narrative. Rijnhart allies gardening to the homeland early in her text when she observes: “Behind the house on the hill we afterwards prepared quite a large piece of garden, in which we raised several kinds of vegetables from seeds sent to us by a friend in Canada” (31). Gardening was, of course, one of the means by which missionaries could replicate the structure of the middle-class home in a foreign land—offering a literal application of the metaphor of “sowing seeds.”¹⁷ Charles’s birth further reinforces Rijnhart as a builder of home and a creator of family in cultural terms attractive to a homeland readership. Moreover, Rijnhart uses the privileges of her new status as a mother to make comparisons between white and Tibetan motherhood. Rijnhart gives little credence to Tibetan mothers and Tibetan child-bearing methods, bleakly concluding of Tibetan children: “Their lives

¹⁷ For an enlightened discussion of this idea in the context of other international missions, see John L. and Jean Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, Vol. 2, pp. 119-65. In the Canadian context, Doug Owram in *Promise of Eden* explores how Canada was transformed from “a semi-arctic wilderness to a fertile garden” in a range of nineteenth-century writings from missionaries, explorers, and settlers (3). Jamie S. Scott particularly discusses the metaphor of cultivation in “Cultivating Christians in Colonial Canadian Missions” in *Canadian Missionaries, Indigenous Peoples*.

are destitute of pleasures, for they have no playthings, no candy, fruit, or cake, which children in this land [Canada] and even in China have in such abundance. They are not loved and cuddled the way children are in the homeland, and oftentimes the calves and fawns tied to the post on the tent receive more attention than the bairnies" (167). Charles may have been born in Tibet, but he still embodies white, Canadian homeland privilege.

Rijnhart also uses her relations with her husband to establish her own propriety. Accounts of Petrus Rijnhart that appear in scholarship by A. J. Broomhall and Alvyn Austin offer glimpses of a darker, more unsavoury character¹⁸ than the portrait offered by Susie Rijnhart, who portrays her husband in hagiographic terms as a "Great White Teacher." Rijnhart accords her husband shared status as medical missionary, praising his skill as a surgeon, even though he had not received comparable formal training and professional certification. As well, it is Petrus Rijnhart who, while he is alive, navigates the difficult political spaces of Tibet, sparring with figures of political and religious power, while Susie Rijnhart silently witnesses and provides admiring testimony of his verbal prowess. Rijnhart also demonstrates instances of her husband's "thoughtful care"

¹⁸ According to A. J. Broomhall, Petrus Rijnhart was accused of being an "imposter" by the CIM, and he had an antagonistic confrontation with Hudson Taylor, the founder of the China Inland Mission, in which he vowed to destroy the work of the mission (194-96). Broomhall also maintains that Rijnhart became engaged to CIM missionary Annie Slater. Alvyn Austin, using information contained in personal records from the China Inland Mission, maintains that the reason Petrus Rijnhart left Holland and came to Canada was due to accusations of sexual impropriety in his home country ("Only" 305). Petrus Rijnhart recounts a more saintly version of his first trip to Tibet in a first-person account published in *The Globe* 11 November 1893, p. 8, "Where Buddha Holds Sway."

and protective impulses. At one treacherous point, Susie Rijnhart encourages her husband to leave her alone so that he can go to seek help: "He looked at me a moment, then said: 'No, I could not leave you here alone—travelers may come along and find you, and you are a woman. We must stay together as long as we can, and when we have reached a place opposite the tents I can watch you while I am gone'" (308). Even Petrus Rijnhart's final decision to leave his revolver with his wife is interpreted by her as a protective act of love: "Oh! how I thanked my husband for his thoughtful care in giving me that protective revolver, for it was the only instrument to keep in control the abusive and insulting tendencies of those men" (333). Rijnhart maintains that she is still the recipient of her husband's efforts to protect her even after he has disappeared, and her gratitude suggests her deferral to his protective masculine authority.

Rijnhart's claims of fulfilling what Spacks calls a "distinct sense of individual destiny," therefore, are mitigated and restrained by nineteenth-century notions of propriety. The conflict between "self-abnegation" and "self-assertiveness" that Rijnhart embodies is poignantly encountered in a strange and unexpected place: within the index of her own book. The index, which was compiled by Rijnhart, contains lengthy entries for her husband, her child, and even her dog, Topsy. Yet, tellingly, Rijnhart did not create a comparable index entry for herself. She fails to place herself within her own story, to identify and deconstruct herself as a figure of narrative interest, using the methods of painstaking documentation which she valued.

3.2 Penetrating the Enchanted, Forbidden Land

The Rijnharts' decision to evangelize within Tibet needs to be situated within the imaginative and Orientalist discourses constructed by Western and European cultures about Tibet in the nineteenth century. Tibet had been the focus of Christian attention since the thirteenth century. However, cultural interest in Tibet intensified exponentially in the nineteenth century. Peter Bishop affirms in *The Myth of Shang-ri-La* that, by the end of the nineteenth century, Tibet had acquired a mythic status in the Western imagination. Bishop argues that "[Tibet] was for the fin de siècle what Tahiti and China had been for the eighteenth century, what the Arctic was for the early to mid-nineteenth century.... Tibet touched some fundamental surface of the era's imagination" (143). Common Western epithets for the country included "The Great Closed Land," "The Forbidden Land," and "The Roof of the World," epithets which emphasized Tibet's precarious geography, physical impenetrability, and its seeming cultural opacity. Tibet's reputation of impenetrability attracted a wide range of cultural traffic, as missionaries, travellers, explorers, and scientists sought to discover and disclose its history, geography, religious customs, culture, and "mystery." As Edward Said's classic study, *Orientalism*, argues, these travels had as much to do with the West's need to define and re-imagine itself as it did with its desire to appropriate the knowledge of a little known culture. As Bishop claims, "Tibet was part of the oppositional fantasy between East and West, between Occident and Orient" (7). Indeed, Edward Said claims Orientalism was not an "airy European fantasy," but a "system of knowledge" in which there was "considerable

material investment” and which operated as an “accepted grid for filtering through the Orient into Western consciousness” (*Orientalism* 6). Kumari Jayawardena confirms that social and religious developments such as the cultural impact of Darwinism, the revitalized social gospel movement, advanced hermeneutical scholarship, and the establishment of fashionable religious sects¹⁹ began to weaken belief in Christianity as “the one true religion” (108-09). Jayawardena maintains that even “intellectually sophisticated Christians” began to regard other religions, not as “heathen idolatry but as systems of knowledge and belief worthy of study” (108-09). Publications such as George Grant’s *The Religions of the World* make this point. Grant declares in his Introductory Remarks: “The true way, however, to meet criticism of this kind is not by taking up a pharisaic attitude toward other religions, but by instituting a thorough and impartial examination of all. We believe in the superiority of Christianity to other religions, but we cannot entertain this belief intelligently until after such comparison. For the first time in the history of the world, too, we are enabled to undertake it successfully. There is no great religion, the content and the form of which we cannot now study” (5). Similar thoughts are echoed by Canadian historian, literary writer, and Anglican Agnes Maule Machar, who, under the pen name, Fidelis, wrote two intellectually focussed articles on Buddhism and Christianity in the *Canadian Monthly* in February and May 1878,

¹⁹ Stephen Leacock brilliantly satirizes the North American infatuation with Buddhist and Oriental mysticism and occultism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in “The Yahi-Bahi Oriental Society of Mrs. Rasselyer-Brown” in his 1914 publication, *Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich*.

explicating some key tenets of Buddhist thought, and situating them in relationship to Christianity. Machar, citing religious scholar Ernest J. Eitel, acknowledges Buddhism to be a comprehensive source of knowledge:

“Buddhism is a system of vast magnitude, for it embraces all the various branches of science which western nations have been long accustomed to divide for separate study. It embodies in one living structure grand and peculiar views of physical science, refined and subtle theories on abstract metaphysics, an edifice of fanciful mysticism, a most elaborate and far reaching system of practical morality and finally a church organization as broad in its principals and as finely wrought in its most intricate network as any in the world.” (qtd. in “Buddha” 166)

The Rijnharts were certainly not alone in their preoccupation with the religious salvation of Tibet. By the late nineteenth century, it had become a cultural project that concerned many religious denominations and missionary organizations throughout the world. Mission treatises such as Annie Taylor’s *Pioneering in Tibet* and Annie Marston’s *The Great Closed Land* present pictures of a land burdened by a complex heathenism, starkly imploring their readers to enlist to the great cause of Tibetan enlightenment. By 1890, the Moravian Missions had established a Tibetan Prayer Union, which implored subscribers to pray daily for Tibetan salvation. A review of William Carey’s publication of Annie Taylor’s diary in the *Methodist Magazine and Review* would declare in 1902: “Tibet is still emphatically The Forbidden Land. It is the only country in the world in which Christian missions and Christian civilization are unable to find entrance. The Hermit Nation of Corea has thrown wide open its doors. The islands of the sea await the coming of Christ. But the bleak, sterile, isolated highlands of Tibet are still hermetically

sealed against the Gospel and civilization” (528).

If Tibet was characterized by its precarious geography, its dangerous heathenism, and its mixture of uncertain knowledges, it had concurrently become sentimentalized as an exotic landscape, as its culture of lamas, mahatmas, and mystic incantations became attractive to Western writers and intellectuals who hungered for the mystical unknown and for alternative spiritualities. Lamas appeared in influential texts such as Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim* and the spiritual writings of Helen Blavatsky as attractive and sentimental figures of inscrutable and mystic power. Tomes such as Sir Edwin Arnold’s *The Light of Asia* and, more generally, Edmund FitzGerald’s *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*, offered luxuriant and indulgent descriptions of the beliefs and deities of Eastern culture that had the effect of romanticizing the Orient and offering a decadent imaginative, if not practical, alternative to Christianity. Indeed, Oliver Wendell Holmes would say of *The Light of Asia* in the *International Review*: “It is a work of great beauty... Its tone is so lofty that there is nothing with which to compare it but the New Testament” (Arnold n. pag.). Doubtless, such comparisons were a source of consternation to missionaries such as Susie Rijnhart and some of the most intriguing parts of her narrative are when she directly addresses the aesthetic seductiveness of a religion and culture she ultimately wishes to eradicate.

These imaginative developments were bolstered by the fact that Tibet was seen as the repository of an ancient and uncorrupted spirituality, an important source and “preserve” of “occult and secret knowledge and the abode of lost races” (Lopez 50).

These beliefs became articulated by Helena Blavatsky in her publications, *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine*. Blavatsky formed the Theosophical Society in New York with Colonel Henry Steel Olcott in 1875. Rijnhart does not allude to Blavatsky directly in her narrative; however, she does directly mention western “Theosophists” and attempts to counter the mystic allure of the figure of the mahatma. Rijnhart interviews Mina Fuyeh, who “had never seen a mahatma, and was much surprised when we told him that western people believed such to exist in Tibet. On the question of mahatmas we made very careful and minute inquiries of many lamas, all of whom confessed their ignorance of any such beings” (124). By directly attacking the figure of the mahatma, Rijnhart is also attacking implicitly the radical alternative and mystic spiritualities espoused by women such as Helena Blavatsky and Annie Besant.

In order to provide meaningful testimony on countering the aesthetic attractiveness of Tibetan religion, Rijnhart uses the image of the whited sepulchre from the Gospel of Matthew. She states:

[T]he lamasery was pervaded by a strange and melancholy quiet, indescribably peculiar, but somewhat akin to that atmosphere of silent awe which fills the galleries and crypts of some old mediæval cathedral, subduing the voice and even the thoughts of the traveler, as he stands with uncovered head before the tombs of the illustrious and saintly dead.... In some respects the æsthetic side of Tibetan Buddhism is irresistible, and it is not surprising that it has thrown a strong fascination over the credulous Tibetans. It is, however, like the Pharisaism of old, only a whited sepulchre, having a beautiful exterior, but full of rottenness and dead men’s bones within. (65-66)

It is not to “credulous Tibetans” that this passage is addressed, but to “credulous”

Westerners, those cultural Pharisees in the homeland, whose intellectual and aesthetic interest in Buddhism threatened Christianity's alleged supremacy as the one true religion. The aesthetics of Buddhism are acknowledged to be attractive, but are also represented as a form of deceptive imprisonment, an aesthetic assault, what Joseph Conrad in *Heart of Darkness* would call "the fascination of the abomination" (6). Similar conclusions are drawn by Rijnhart as she is given a rare opportunity to witness a sacred festival of the Tibetans:

The idol truly had never been more radiant than on that day, when the sheen of many sacred flames beat upon it and caused the golden rays to flash out like the beams of the sun. But as I looked I found no spark of intelligence darting from the pupilless eyes; there was no change of expression on the placid countenance to indicate that the ears had been touched by the heart-cries of the prostrate worshippers; no word of blessing fell from those silent lips, immobile and set as on the day when they received the last touch of the artist's hand. (110-11)

Rijnhart presents Buddhism as a form of idolatry, soulless and unredemptive, whose frozen and static grandeur contrasts with the ongoing revelation of the living truth of Christianity. Rijnhart, therefore, uses her status as a privileged eye witness and her own personal testimony to indict these powerful religious alternatives to Christianity. She attempts to deliver a penetrating critique to counter the effects of sentimental Orientalism that the aesthetics of her own language both captures and condemns. Yet her own respectful acknowledgment of it betrays how powerful and seductive that allure must have been.

3.3 Questioning Female Professionalism

As well as capturing many of the generic tensions associated with narrating Rijnhart's story, *With the Tibetans in Tent and Temple* also captures the practical tensions of professionalization that defined the growth of missionary work in the late nineteenth century within Canada. Susie Rijnhart's decision to travel to Tibet as an independent missionary suggests that she rejected, or at least held a powerful ambivalence regarding, the forces of professionalization that defined women's missionary work in Canada in the 1890s. By the time she entered the Chinese-Tibetan mission field, the professionalization of women's missionary work within Canada was well established. All the major Protestant religions had established foreign mission stations and, more importantly, they had established the machinery within Canada—through formal organizations, educational and fundraising campaigns, and newsletters such as the *Letter Leaflet*, *Foreign Missionary Tidings*, and *Missionary Outlook*—to finance and promote mission activity. The establishment and implementation of both home and foreign mission organizations was the zenith of a variety of charitable and religious endeavours that sought to improve the social, spiritual, and physical well-being of those in moral and bodily distress. In *Women of Canada: Their Life and Work*, which was compiled by the National Council of the Women of Canada in 1900, Frances Elizabeth Murray would declare: "Having thus far watched the Church work of Protestant women through its earlier stages, we now come to its latest, its highest, its most unselfish development, in the great organizations formed to carry on Missionary work among the Red Indians of our North-West Territory

and among the heathen of China, Japan, India and the islands of the sea” (300).

“Women’s work for women” was the rubric used by many Protestant denominations to describe the belief that women missionaries were best qualified and suited to administer to their “heathen sisters” in countries like India and China. Murray invokes this rhetoric when she claims: “The great object of all this work of Protestant women is to extend the knowledge of Christian truth, and the benefits of Christian education and civilization to their sisters deprived of these blessings, by sending out Missionaries and school teachers, and by building and supporting churches, schools and hospitals” (301). Missionary organizations argued that the custom of segregating native women from the public sphere in Zenanas and other settings necessitated the presence of female missionaries in foreign fields, as it would have been inappropriate for male missionaries to enter these secluded domains and preach the Gospel message.

Accompanying this practical necessity was the cultural tendency to see women as the upholders of morality and benevolence in Canadian society. Like many cultural practices, missionary work was organized, in part, along gender lines and, as Ruth Compton Brouwer observes, women’s prominent involvement in field work and the emergence of organizations such as the Woman’s Foreign Mission Society and the Woman’s Auxiliary had to do with the fact that, culturally, it was felt that “matters of religious and moral responsibility were ones for which women had a special affinity” (*New 5*). As the Rev. I. B. Aylesworth, Pastor of the Grace Methodist Church in St. Thomas, Ontario would dramatically declare: “The economy of God is seen in the history

of woman" (191). In an article published in the *Canadian Methodist Magazine*, "Women's Work for Heathen Women," Isabel Hart presents the women's missionary movement as divinely ordained with women as a vital redeeming force: "And womanhood is everywhere, under all conditions, in all civilizations, the fountain of life and influence. Who will, who can, teach, rescue, renew, raise, the women of heathendom? Then *down* goes heathendom, *up* the family, the community, the civilization, the country, the race" (265, emphasis in original). Hart's article is informative because she envisages women's sphere of influence in reciprocal terms in which the native woman's power of influence was constructed and framed using Western notions of family that privileged women's "innate" goodness. Native women were viewed as a force that could encourage the establishment of Christianity or impede its progress. As J. T. Gracey observed in "Women and Missions," "[t]he speediest way to evangelize a nation is, undoubtedly, to evangelize the women of that nation" (163).

Moreover, Hart's argument that women were specially suited for foreign missionary work was one that was eagerly embraced by women looking for professional opportunities in which they could vindicate their emergence into the public sphere, as well as expand their means of influence. Ruth Compton Brouwer observes that "foreign missions occupied a prominent place in the consciousness of Canadians of the late-Victorian and Edwardian eras," serving as "a pre-eminent vehicle for Canadians' contact with a distant and exotic world" (*New* 3). Both Brouwer and Rosemary Gagan argue that foreign missions work afforded many women, particularly single, educated women,

opportunities to pursue unconventional career opportunities beyond those most commonly available to them in nineteenth-century Canada: teaching, nursing, sewing, domestic service, fishing and farm work in rural areas, factory work in urban areas, and, for a select and educated few, writing or journalism. Women's missionary work—at least in theory—“became a vehicle for female liberation” and a “siren call to a vocation and to a larger life than any they could contemplate in Canada” (Gagan *Sensitive* 4; Brouwer *New* 5). The reality was that Canadian missionary organizations offered women a form of “liberation” that was highly structured, organized, and monitored, with many pre-determined duties, a point that will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. Yet writers such as Hart managed to frame this threatening notion of women's “liberating” involvement in a new sphere of influence in non-threatening language that, as Guli Francis-Dehqani argues, kept intact distinct gendered roles and emphasized the nurturing nature of woman's work (199). Hart describes the women's missionary movement as a “still, small voice” to the male's “thunder tones,” claiming “the harmony will not be complete until there is added to the deep bass and strong tenor the thrill of the treble and the softness of the alto” (265; 264). Such rhetoric argued for the special effectiveness of the women's foreign missionary movement, while still solidifying privileged gender distinctions about female decorum and propriety.

The best means of delivering heathen enlightenment was an issue of growing dissension for mission boards, however. David Livingstone, heralded as an icon by all who pursued missionary work in the late nineteenth century, declared in *Missionary*

Travels and Researches in South Africa: "Sending the gospel to the heathen must...include much more than is implied in the usual picture of a missionary, namely a man going about with a Bible under his arm. The promotion of commerce ought to be specially attended to, as this more speedily than anything else, demolishes that sense of isolation which heathenism engenders.... [N]either civilization nor Christianity can be promoted alone. In fact, they are inseparable" (31). Could Christianity and "civilization" be practically or meaningfully separated? As Leslie Flemming, Ruth Compton Brouwer, Torben Christensen, William Hutchison, Judith Rowbotham, Andrew Porter, and other critics have argued,²⁰ there had emerged in the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century missionary movement a demarcation between the forces of "evangelization and civilization," or, as Guli Francis-Dehquani has more recently framed it, between "salvation" and "service" (198). Flemming claims that it was generally recognized by missionary societies that, in order to effect meaningful change in native communities, emphasis had to be placed on establishing "the social institutions" that "would prepare the soil for the reception of the Gospel," as well as preaching the Gospel (3). She states

²⁰ See Leslie Flemming, "Introduction," *Women's Work For Women: Missionaries and Social Change in Asia*, pp. 2-4; Ruth Compton Brouwer, "Opening Doors Through Social Service: Aspects of Women's Work in the Canadian Presbyterian Mission in Central India, 1877-1914," pp. 11-12; Torben Christensen and William R. Hutchison, Introduction, *Missionary Ideologies in the Imperialist Era: 1880-1920*, pp. 5-9; Judith Rowbotham, "Ministering Angels, not Ministers: Women's Involvement in the Foreign Missionary Movement, c. 1860-1910"; Guli Francis-Dehquani, "Medical Missions and the History of Feminism: Emmeline Stuart of the CMS Persia Mission"; Andrew Porter, "An Overview, 1700-1914."

that, as opposed to being preachers, “most women responded more strongly to the call to be civilizers, characterizing themselves as agents of change and emphasizing the ‘uplifting’ nature of their acts” (3). However, Brouwer, Flemming, Rowbotham, and Francis-Dehqani rightly identify tensions within these theoretical models and, more particularly, in the ways in which the woman missionary related to them, particularly women who wanted to engage directly in itinerating work. Certainly, these tensions exist in Susie Rijnhart’s narrative, for while Rijnhart favours pure evangelism over the administration of medical relief and social justice, her status as a medical missionary meant she was also an active ambassador for Western values, and she, at times, engages in the discourse that merged salvation and service and saw Christianity as a political and economic liberator.

Yet Susie Rijnhart’s relationship to established mission organizations appears to have been a complex one. Rijnhart states in her book: “We left America for our distant field without any human guarantee of support, for we were not sent out by any missionary society” (12).²¹ Despite this claim, however, the Rijnharts were not entirely without religious affiliation or support. In particular, they were associated with the Disciples of Christ. The Disciples of Christ, or the Church of Christ, which today is commonly

²¹ Alvyn Austin claims the Disciples of Christ were involved with sponsoring the Rijnharts, although Susie Rijnhart does not acknowledge that support in her book. Austin’s claims are verified in Reuben Butchart’s *The Disciples of Christ in Canada Since 1830*. See Austin, “Carson, Susannah (Rijnhart Moyes),” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*.

known as the Stone-Campbell Restoration movement, was a Christian reformation movement dedicated to eradicating what it called the “corruption of human error” from the delivery of Christ’s message of salvation (Butchart 1). The Disciples felt that more mainstream faiths placed an undue emphasis on bureaucracy and the extraneous textual elements of Christianity, such as elaborate creeds and doctrines, which had resulted in a dismaying sectarianism and a privileging of “verbal niceties” and “the perfected literary statement” over the authority of New Testament Scripture (Butchart 2). The Disciples saw this as a form of “corruption” from the origins of Christ’s ministry, which was defined by its unity and by simple declarations and deeds of faith. Reuben Butchart claims that “[t]he chief aim of the Disciples of Christ...is to secure for Christ’s Church the vital union for which he prayed” (5). The movement was founded in Scotland by Thomas Campbell and his son Alexander in the 1700s. In North America, while the movement was energized by the formation of several sects in various states, it was the support of Barton W. Stone, an enthusiast from Kansas, who is given credit for its spread in North America. Like the birth of any religious organization, the movement’s entry and inception into Canada was complex,²² but concurrent efforts by a variety of preachers and historians, including John McKellar, James Black, and David Oliphant—a partner in the publishing house Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier, which published the Canadian edition of *With the Tibetans in Tent and Temple*—led to the formation of sects of the Disciples of

²² See Reuben Butchart, *The Disciples of Christ in Canada Since 1830*, Chapters 5 to 9, for detailed historical information on the growth of the movement in Canada.

Christ in Ontario. Because they believed that "world-wide missions is the chief project of the One who died on the Cross," missionary activity became integral to the work of the Disciples of Christ (Butchart 256).

Rijnhart's decision to go to Tibet as an independent missionary meant that she, in some respects, rejected the formal and professional aspects of missionary and female organization within Canada. Yet, even though she was not formally affiliated with the Protestant missionary societies, Rijnhart still made use of the cultural rhetoric and frameworks used by them to generate support for her missionary work, amassing within her own narrative account of her mission work in Tibet the kinds of anecdotal and documentary descriptions that the rubric 'women's work for women' encouraged. This is evident throughout her missionary writings. As early as 1896, Rijnhart was communicating about her mission in Tibet through letters home that were subsequently edited for publication. For instance, on 12 October 1896, *The Globe* published excerpts from letters written from the Tibetan mission field by Rijnhart to Charles T. Paul, then pastor of the Disciples of Christ Church on Cecil Street in Toronto, in response to what would turn out to be eerily prophetic rumours that Petrus Rijnhart had been killed and that Susie Rijnhart had been "abducted by rebels" ("Bloodshed" 6). In those letter excerpts, she offers unflinching descriptions of the barbarities which Chinese and Tibetan women suffered, which were intensified, she claims, by the lack of Christian influence. She says: "The Chinese and Tibetans who fell into the hands of rebels have been butchered and mutilated in a most barbarous manner. Ah ! You in the home lands have

no idea of the horrors of a rebellion here. In civilized countries in times of war women and children are safe but here no tongue can tell the fate of some of the weaker ones that fall into the hands of either the rebels or the Chinese troops.... How our hearts burn and bleed for womankind and little children in these dark places!" ("Bloodshed" 6).

Rijnhart's descriptions of "mutilation" and "butchery"—descriptions that become even more dramatic and explicit in *With the Tibetans in Tent and Temple*—give narrative body and expansion to an influential cultural viewpoint summarized in a speech by Isabella Bird Bishop that was published in *The Church Missionary Gleaner* in December 1893.

Bird Bishop argues:

I think very often that we are getting into a sort of milk-and-water view of Heathenism.... Missionaries come home and they refrain from shocking audiences by recitals of the awful sins of the Heathen and Moslem world. When travelling in Asia, it struck me very much how little we heard, as to how sin is enthroned, and deified, and worshipped.... It is an astonishment to find that there is scarcely a single thing that makes for righteousness in the life of the un-Christianised nations. There is no public opinion interpenetrated by Christianity which condemns sin or wrong.... Just one or two remarks as to what these false faiths do. They degrade women with an infinite degradation.... ("Mrs. Bishop's" 183)

The dual idea that it was the missionary's duty to condemn publically moral wrong and that complacent Christians in the homeland had to be shocked into offering financial and practical support to missions through explicit descriptions of female degradation and the barbaric treatment of innocent people is an outlook that Rijnhart's narrative corroborates. The fact that Rijnhart, even in private letters, makes direct addresses to the people "in the home land" reveals the extent to which she was structuring her observations to generate

public sympathy and interest in the Tibetan cause, particularly through descriptions of suffering women and children.

These themes become developed and expanded in her longer and more formal book publication. Rijnhart says of Tibetan culture: "The entire social system, and especially the domestic relationships of the Tibetans, needs purifying" (142). Rijnhart's focus on Christianizing the women of Tibet stemmed from the broader cultural belief that native women had the power to foster or impede the spread of Christianity within the mission field. Rijnhart vacillates between describing the degraded conditions in which women and children live in emotional terms that emphasize the urgent necessity of mission work and describing them as heathen "mothers" with definite possibilities for redemption. Articles such as J. T. Gracey's "Women and Missions" described the "female degradation" to which Tibetan women were subject, observing that Tibetan women were "'pawnd' and loaned" and open to "systematic debasement and oppression" due to their marriage practices (157-58). Rijnhart claims that "morality" among Tibetan women "was an accident rather than a rule" in which "fidelity is not at all deemed an essential quality of womanhood" (142). Rijnhart often references their "unseemly" behaviour, and she creates a point of reference between her own cultured white womanhood and Tibetan womanhood. As she visits the Tanguts of the Koko-nor, she maintains: "The women were so filthy that close contact with them inside the tents was as usual nauseating to me, so I spent as much time as possible outside, where they congregated round me and evinced the deepest interest in the white baby [Charles]. Even

the fresh lake breezes, the limpid azure sky above and the crystal clearness of the little stream near by could not drive away the odor of their gowns, or make us unconscious of the abandoned filthiness of their persons" (179). Tibetan women contradict the aesthetic purity she espies within the Tibetan landscape, yet the self-consciously artificial nature of her landscape descriptions, with their determined poetic diction, also place the Tibetan women directly in contest with Rijnhart's heightened and refined aesthetic sense.

These images of a degraded Tibetan womanhood are counterpointed with warmer portraits of them, as Rijnhart also describes the company of Tibetan women as offering sanctuary during unsettled times—particularly at times of parting and when her husband is away from her and she feels alone. For instance, she speaks of her affectionate interactions with a native woman, Ani. Ani is a Mongolian widow, who embodies many of the ideal characteristics of Victorian womanhood: hardworking, respectable, docile, protective, and maternal. However, Ani also drinks, which makes her treatment of her family "barbarous" (141). Rijnhart describes her cultural "rescue" of Ani's daughter, Doma, who, like many Tibetan women, consumed alcohol from a young age:

"Repeatedly, and with final success, I coaxed Ani to keep Doma away from drinking companies and allow her to follow the natural girlish instinct of purity I felt she possessed. To my exhortations Ani would reply in great sincerity, 'What a pity it is that poor women in our land are not respected as in yours; here they are not expected by parents or any one else to lead what you call moral lives.' Alas, poor Ani's words tell only too truly the sad story of Tibetan women's lives" (141-42). Perhaps because she

wished to stress the redeemable nature of Tibetan women, Rijnhart tended to represent women as being victims of insidious social customs as opposed to actively choosing their "degraded" life. She demonstrates the success of intervention by restoring Doma's "purity." By having Ani "freely" speak these words, as opposed to directly narrating the ideas they express, she uses cultural collaboration, the perspective of the Other culture, to reinforce her own position. Respectable Tibetans are seen to possess an intrinsic desire for conversion and gravitate "naturally" towards Christianity's elevating force.

Later, when she is alone in Tankar, Rijnhart again describes the women in a kind and emotional way which stresses their maternal natures and potential for redemption:

During his absence the natives bestowed on me the greatest kindnesses, and I felt perfectly safe with them. The women especially did all in their power to entertain me, inviting me to their houses and bringing me gifts, thus enabling me to get acquainted with them in the most intimate way. They seemed to feel they had me under their protection, and vied with each other in bestowing upon me the most considerate attention of which they were capable. Here, too, was a golden chance to speak to them of Christ and of all that His religion had done for women in other lands, and of what it could do for them. During these memorable weeks I learned to understand and sympathize with the heathen women as never before.
(155)

As she moves from Tankar to the Tibetan interior, Rijnhart similarly observes, "My heart sometimes overflows as I think of the love and tenderness of these dark-faced women, and wish it were within my power to do more for them, to bring them out of the condition in which they live into the liberty which the gospel brings to woman wherever it is known" (203). Rijnhart's belief that the Gospel would release Tibetan women into a life of "liberty" was one to which many missionaries subscribed. Many missionaries in

Rijnhart's era believed in Christianity's civilizing agency. As Helen Barrett Montgomery famously declared: "If women fully recognized the emancipatory nature of the pure religion of Jesus, the force of the religious missionary arguments would be greatly strengthened" (45). Yet the argument falters when Montgomery directly addresses the difficult cultural and moral issues that affected her own society: "...in Christendom we have the white-slave trade, the red-light district and other hateful and debasing traffic in womanhood. It may be inquired why we send Christianity to others when it has been powerless to control these great social injustices among ourselves?" (68). Montgomery's answer to her own question is unconvincing,²³ yet it is a question that Rijnhart chooses not to confront at all, and hence becomes a notable narrative repression in her story. It is an interesting tension that Rijnhart finds safety, kinship, and civility with the ostensibly degraded Tibetan females. Rijnhart fails to deal with the irony that she holds up Western culture as a beacon of liberation and enlightenment at a time when her contemporaries, women of "her land," such as Emily Murphy and Nellie McClung, were just beginning to undertake their life's work of publicizing and attempting to transform the social inequities²⁴ suffered by all women citizens of

²³ Montgomery weakly argues: "The evils that in Christian lands are recognized as sin, known to be contrary to all religious standards and practiced only by those who do not accept their standards are in non-Christian lands unashamed because embedded in the religious sanctions of the nation" (68).

²⁴ These inequities included the realities that Canadian women could not own or inherit property, could not hold governmental office, and could not vote. Murphy and McClung were important judicial pioneers in creating and challenging legislation that

Canada—including white Protestant Christians. This contradiction is intensified when one looks at the difficult struggle encountered by Canadian women—including Rijnhart herself—to receive medical training at a Canadian university and to practice medicine in Canada.²⁵ Rijnhart, like many missionaries, is trapped in a rhetoric where she must suppress the inequities of life within her own homeland and society in order to argue for the uplift of native Tibetans.

Moreover, the literature about Tibet written by Rijnhart's female contemporaries, writers such as Annie Marston and Isabella Bird Bishop, offer interesting perspectives on the position of the Tibetan woman that vary from Rijnhart's. While, for instance, Tibetan women were completely excluded from the religious and political power structures of Buddhism and lama culture, they were still represented by these writers as possessing some degree of cultural privilege. Annie Marston actually celebrates what she calls "the equality of the sexes" in Tibet, which she claimed could potentially lessen the burden on

allowed women to be perceived as "persons" under Canadian law.

²⁵ In "Canada's Women Doctors: Feminism Constrained," Veronica Strong-Boag argues the impediments came from a tendency to see women as too delicate and refined to pursue rigorous and scientific training; the growing professionalization of medicine to which women practitioners could not easily be accommodated; the growing "masculinity" of medicine; and the unwanted competition to established male practitioners that female doctors would provide. Canada's earliest women doctors primarily received their training in the United States. The first Canadian women licensed to practice in Canada were Jennie Kidd Trout (1875) and Emily Howard Stowe (1867); both were trained in the United States. The first female doctor born in Canada who received medical training in Canada and was then licensed to practice was Augusta Stowe Gullen, who qualified in Toronto in 1883.

the missionary: "It is not the case with the women in Tibet, as with those in China and India, that they can only be reached by women, and by personal visitation. There is no female degradation or seclusion, but a woman may take her place in the crowd in the open air, or with the men in the house, and listen to the preaching of the male missionary, as freely as the man..." (105). Isabella Bird Bishop in *Among the Tibetans* describes women as being active beneficiaries of the practice of polyandry, the custom whereby a Tibetan woman could have more than one husband:

The resolute determination, on economic as well as religious grounds, not to abandon this ancient custom, is the most formidable obstacle in the way of the reception of *Christianity* by the Tibetans. The women cling to it. They say, 'We have three or four men to help us instead of one,' and sneer at the dulness and monotony of European monogamous life! A woman said to me, 'If I have only one husband, and he died, I should be a widow; if I have two or three I am never a widow! (94-95).

Bird Bishop and Marston stress that Tibetan women possessed a degree of social power that Rijnhart never acknowledges or documents. For instance, she never openly documents the custom of polyandry, only polygamy. In fact, she tells a heartrending story of polygamy to show the social destructiveness of a practice in which women are emphatically the victims (142). It is possible that Rijnhart avoided discussing polyandry openly because she did not want to offend conservative homeland supporters of missions with descriptions of native female behaviour that could be construed as wanton, immoral, or offensively independent, and that violated the principles of monogamy and domestic subordination privileged by Canadian and American society. Rijnhart presents a carefully constructed portrait of Tibetan women as cultural and social victims, whose redeemable

potential is highly promising, and who, with their motherly sympathies, are open to the possibilities of Christian intervention.

3.4 Civilization's Healers: Medical Missionaries

Rijnhart's ambivalence about professionalization was also exacerbated by her status as a medical missionary. Rijnhart refers to Christ as "the Great Physician" (87); in Biblical accounts of His ministry, healing, resurrection, and miracles were presented and interpreted as signs and wonders. Christ's ministry of healing allowed His message of salvation to be presented visually, which emphasized the metaphoric correlation between healing the body and healing the soul, and medical missionaries aligned themselves with this powerful ministry accordingly. Nineteenth- and early twentieth-century missionary societies eagerly seized upon the advantages of the use of medicine in attracting a captive heathen audience to a living manifestation of the Gospel message.²⁶ Renowned nineteenth-century traveller Isabella Bird Bishop who, late in her career, became a powerful advocate for Western missions, summarizes this outlook in a letter excerpt in *The Church Missionary Gleaner*, April 1892, when she declared: "To my thinking, no one follows in the Master's footprints so closely as the medical missionary.... The Medical Mission is the outcome of the living teachings of our faith. I have now visited

²⁶ This discourse of miraculous healing was reinforced by the type of Gospel stories that were considered influential. Rijnhart, for instance, confirms that Tibetan favourites included the stories of blind Bartimeus, and the miracle at the gate of Nain, both stories of miraculous healing (87).

such Missions in many parts of the world, and never saw one which was not helping, healing, blessing" ("Tribute" 54). At the International Conference for Missions held in 1888 in London, it was declared: "The Saviour's method for caring for soul and body together was strongly emphasised as the true one," arguing that Christ Himself was the first medical missionary ("World's" 36). The medical missionary, therefore, emerged as a figure of power in whom the forces of civilization and evangelization were compellingly merged, an irresistible combination of Western achievement and Christian influence. Developments in science, medicine, and pharmaceutical cures allowed missionaries to engage in a kind of healing that, at times, differed radically from that offered by native medicine and traditional cures and that was sometimes construed by native societies as being not only effective, but miraculous.

As Andrew Walls has argued, the reasons for the proliferation of medical missions in the mid to late nineteenth century were a complex intersection of competing interests and beliefs.²⁷ While inspired, in part, by motives of humanitarianism and compassion, medical missions also proliferated for shrewdly pragmatic reasons. They became the "means of making an opening," both cultural and religious, in "less responsive fields" such as China, Tibet, and Islamic countries, where traditional evangelical methods had proven frustratingly ineffective (Walls 213-14). In an article in

²⁷ Walls claims the four main classifications for the proliferation of medical missions were imitative; humanitarian; utilitarian; and strategic (213). See pp. 211-20 in Walls's *The Missionary Movement in Christian History* for a fuller discussion of the impact of the medical missionary.

the *Presbyterian College Journal*, "The Prospective Missionary's Best Equipment," J. T. Reid observes: "From a utilitarian standpoint, the prospective missionary will find a knowledge of medicine to be of great advantage. In the interests of his own health and of his future work that knowledge is important. Geddie found such knowledge invaluable. Livingstone was a graduate in medicine. One of our Klondike missionaries has already done good work as a medical missionary" (191). Yet medical missionaries were not always seen favourably. Even as they extolled the usefulness and attraction of medical skills for missionaries, some missionaries claimed that a skilled doctor in the mission field without sufficient faith was actually a liability. At the International Foreign Missionary Conference, held in London in 1888, Medical Missions was one of the topics under discussion. Canada was exhorted as a leader in the field and three Canadian medical missionaries, Dr. McClure of Crescent Street Church, Rev. Dr. Buchanan, and Dr. Smith, facilitated a session in which "they testified with perfect unanimity to their belief that the medical missionary must be first and chiefly a teacher and preacher of the gospel, and subordinately a healer of disease" ("World's" 36). They even went on to "declare that a doctor in heathen lands who ignores the gospel, who is silent upon it, who never speaks of its favor, is a great hindrance to the cause of God" ("World's" 36). This view was corroborated by President of the British Medical Association, Dr. Gardener of Glasgow, who argued "the physician who even inclines towards irreverence in his habitual attitude of mind, is thereby disqualified for performing aright the best service he can at times render to the sick" ("World's" 37).

Just as women missionaries were represented as specially qualified for certain aspects of foreign missions, so women medical missionaries were similarly regarded as being uniquely fitted for the challenges of the mission field. An article published in 1896 in *Acta Victoriana*, "Women Medical Missionaries," claimed:

A very great advantage to be derived from medical missions in the countries already opened to the Gospel, but where women are secluded, is to be found in the power of the woman physician to open the doors (closed to all others) of harems, zenanas and anpagns, and thus to carry the Gospel to the most secluded, where its benign influences are in truth most needed. Many and many a woman has thus been brought under the influence of the Gospel; many and many a mother's heart thus won to the Saviour. (28)

In choosing to become a medical missionary, with professional credentials and formal medical training, Rijnhart joined the ranks of other nineteenth-century British and American pioneers, including Dr. Isabella Thorburn, Dr. Ida Scudder, Dr. Clara Swain, and Dr. Leonora Howard King, who is historically recognized as Canada's first foreign female medical missionary. Rijnhart became one of numerous Canadian women who used their professional medical training and certifications to pursue careers as medical missionaries.²⁸

Veronica Strong-Boag argues that, in the late nineteenth century, "the concept of the essentially religious mission of female doctors was influential and very few of the

²⁸ Many of the early graduates of the Women's Medical College in Kingston and Toronto went on to pursue missionary work in India and China, two areas where Canadian missionary organizations had established mission stations. These women include Dr. Margaret O'Hara, Dr. Bell Choné Oliver, Dr. Margaret MacKellar, Dr. Jean Dow, Dr. Agnes Turnbull, Dr. Jessie McBean, Dr. Lucinda Graham, Dr. Retta Kilborn, Dr. Elizabeth Beatty, and Dr. Marion Oliver.

new physicians seriously questioned its validity” (“Canada’s” 116). This sense of mission—predicated on principles of service and self-sacrifice—became both amplified and conflated in the mission fields, where it gave missionaries the opportunities to live the doctrines they preached. Rijnhart stresses, for instance, that when she and her husband offered medical aid to those who suffered during the Mohammedan Rebellions, they treated the aggressors in the conflict, the Mohammedans, as well as the Chinese and Tibetans. She claims: “The prospect of riding to within a mile of the rebel position was not inviting, but...remembering that we were servants of Him who ‘went about healing all that were oppressed,’ we hesitated not” (77). Medical missionaries, therefore, used their medical training not only to emulate Christ’s mission of healing, but to model tolerance and compassion, the tenets of a civil society: “When they saw that the missionary was just as kind and tender to the Mohammedans as to themselves, they were utterly amazed. The law of Christian kindness impelling love and mercy even for one’s enemies was vividly brought to their attention, and some, as they pondered the lesson, thought again of the colored Bible picture on the wall of our house in Lusaar—the picture of the Good Samaritan. There they had learned the lesson in story—the missionary had translated it into action” (100-01). Rijnhart’s forceful representation of her husband as a “missionary” Good Samaritan at this juncture reinforces his position as a powerful teacher imparting a successful lesson to questioning and contemplative students, deftly summarizing power relations between the two while granting the mission the chimera of success.

Rijnhart also uses the language and rhetoric of medicine to argue for both the

cultural supremacy of Western medicine and to establish her own personal authority. She places Western medicine in opposition to native medicine and knowledge with the latter found to be wanting in its effectiveness. Rijnhart claimed of Tibetan medicine: "The Tibetans themselves having no medical science worthy the name, the treatment given by the native doctors generally means an increase of agony to the sufferer" (34). Several times, she points to the failure of native medicine to deliver effective cures, such as with this anecdote:

Our reputation having spread through the village we were called upon to visit a young girl of sixteen who had been accidentally shot below the left knee two months before. The wound was a ghastly sight, the leg being shattered for several inches. Native doctors could do nothing; the limb had not even been bandaged. Only after such a sight does one appreciate the blessings which the sciences of medicine and surgery lay at the feet of the sick and suffering in Christian lands. We informed the girl's friends that only the amputation of the diseased member could effect a cure, a proposal which they resolutely refused to entertain, in accordance with the Confucian teaching that a person should quit this life with an entire body. (79)

Yet Rijnhart also intimates that she and her husband were viewed as miraculous healers by Tibetan natives: "Every day refugees arrived at the lamasery; sick and wounded were brought in from all directions to receive our treatment, the news having spread that the foreign doctors, under the very roof and patronage of the abbot, were performing miracles of healing and were prepared to treat all who came to them" (71). Rijnhart structures and then permits competing narratives about the Western doctor to exist side by side in her own account. The native perceptions of herself and her husband as "magic individual[s]," who are, in essence, working miracles (Beer 152), co-exist with her

forceful self-representations of herself and her husband as the embodiment of Western scientific expertise, whose diagnoses are guided, described, and restrained by the language and vocabulary of scientific description and by the framework of empirical rationality.

As well, Rijnhart seemed uncomfortable with some of the other professional issues surrounding her medical services, including the issue of remuneration. For instance, in his account, *Through Unknown Tibet*, M. S. Wellby describes his encounter with the Rijnharts when he was a guest in their home in Tankar in October 1896. He supplies the interesting information that the Rijnharts were, in fact, paid for their medical services to the Chinese and Tibetans. Wellby states:

The Rijnharts, when by themselves, lived in the Chinese fashion, and were on most friendly terms with all the Chinese and Tibetan officials in the town. Besides being engaged in the great aim of all missionaries, these two good people administered bodily medicine as well; in fact, their sole means of existence arose from the small sums and kind they received in return. They were, indeed, leading a hard, unselfish life, yet they were a very happy couple, for they knew they were doing good.

The fact of their receiving payment for their doctoring may meet with censure from some people, but the results should be looked at. At Tankar the Rijnharts had entirely won over the hearts of the Chinese, and in consequence of this, we ourselves were treated with courtesy and civility by the officials. The customary hatred of foreigners by the Chinese had disappeared from Tankar. (262)

The information that they received payment for their medical services is information that Susie Rijnhart herself never provides, perhaps because she felt it would weaken her moral authority and her stated charitable and missionary aims to be seen to be engaged in commercial transactions and the recipient of material gain with those whom she was

seeking to rescue spiritually. This may suggest some of Rijnhart's personal unease with the issue of professionalization—both within the missionary profession and the medical profession. Moreover, it reveals the extent of the cultural pressure on medical missionaries, particularly women missionaries, for their work to be represented from a position, and in a rhetoric, of service and self-sacrifice. Dr Paulina Root, in an address at the Conference of Woman's Work held in 1894 in Chicago, confronted this issue when she stated of women medical missionaries: "We take it for granted that any woman entering into this work does so from religious or philanthropic motives.... A cold, materialistic or selfish woman could hardly win the hearts of our reserved eastern women, however clever she might be as a doctor. Love for God and woman must needs be her passport.... One should go to a foreign land with Christ-like charity and meekness" ("Women" 30).

Rijnhart's ambivalent relationship to professionalization meant that she was forced to rely on the frameworks of individualism, heroism, and apostolic suffering and sacrifice to create a rhetoric of authority for her journey. But in eschewing the professionalization the missionary enterprise had undergone in Canada, did Rijnhart weaken her bid to attract new candidates to the Tibetan mission field? In the Preface of her book, Rijnhart unequivocally states that one of her intentions in publishing her story was to attract workers for Tibetan missions: "If I may succeed in perpetuating and deepening the widespread interest in the evangelization of Tibet, already aroused by the press and platform accounts of the missionary pioneering herein described, I shall be

glad" (n. pag.). Rijnhart's rejection of professionalization may have also discouraged the type of worker she wished to attract. For a young Canadian woman in the 1890s, Rijnhart had achieved an extraordinary amount of education and professional training—as extraordinary as any aspect of her pioneering travels in Tibet. Yet, as Veronica Strong-Boag has argued, many nineteenth-century women doctors in Canada, despite the advanced nature of their education and professional qualifications, embraced conventional views about women's nurturing role that deflected attempts to frame their efforts at professionalization in more radically feminist terms, such as those represented by the New Woman. This was similarly the case in missionary work, where woman's role was often justified in conservative and maternal terms. Early in Lily Dougall's novel, *The Madonna of a Day*, there is an amusing encounter between a missionary and a New Woman, Mary Howard. The missionary's probing questions about her behaviour, and Mary's dismissal of the missionary on the grounds that his opinions were irrelevant due to his social marginality, suggest that they represent competing points of view about a woman's place in the public sphere. Dougall counterpoints silence and contemplation, the model provided by the Virgin Mary, with the voice and brisk action of the New Woman (19-20). The encounter is fictional, and the missionary in Dougall's novel is male, of course, yet this scene raises some intriguing questions about the position of the missionary in Canadian society and female agency. Was the female missionary a radical figure or was she a conservative one? Was Christianity a liberating force for Canadian women or a repressive one? Were the female missionary and the New Woman

necessarily in opposition? They did, after all, share certain values about the emancipatory benefits of female education, the importance of social reform, and the desirability of modern health care for women and children. In the short stories and writings of Sara Jeannette Duncan, Jessie Sime, Nellie McClung, and others, the New Woman emerged as a brash and independent figure who was willing to challenge the confines placed upon a woman's traditional role in society.²⁹ Could, therefore, the New Woman be affiliated with serious religious endeavours, or was she too irreverent, radical, and secular?

Certainly works such as Helen Barrett Montgomery's *Western Women in Eastern Lands* (1910) contextualize the importance of women's missionary work in American society in proto-feminist and intellectual, as well as religious, terms. The female missionary, as Montgomery describes her, is the New Woman: audacious, urban, intellectual, humanitarian, and dedicated to reform. Moreover, Montgomery pays tribute to the "New Women" of India, China, Turkey, and Japan, actually identifying their emergence in the "heathen lands" as a direct legacy of Christian intervention—New Women creating New Women. Barbara Welter has declared that the transformation of

²⁹ For examinations of the Canadian New Woman, see Misao Dean, *Practising Femininity: Domestic Realism and the Performance of Gender in Early Canadian Fiction*; Gwendolyn Davies, "The Literary 'New Woman' and Social Activism in Maritime Literature, 1880-1920" in *Separate Spheres*; Veronica Strong-Boag and Carole Gerson, *Paddling Her Own Canoe: The Times and Texts of E. Pauline Johnson (Tekahionwake)*; Joanna Dean, *Religious Experience and the New Woman: The Life of Lily Dougall*; Janice Fiamengo, *The Woman's Page: Rhetoric and Journalism in Early Canada*; Wayne Roberts, "Rocking the Cradle for the World: The New Woman and Maternal Feminism, Toronto, 1877-1914" in *A Not Unreasonable Claim*.

the “True Woman” into the New Woman was “a transformation as startling in its way as the abolition of slavery or the coming of the machine age” (41). Yet Rijnhart rejects the progressive model of the female missionary, conceptualized by writers like Montgomery, in favour of a more conservative, decorous, and restrained one. When considered in the context of writers such as Montgomery, and within the tensions of her own life history, Rijnhart’s appeals for missionary workers, therefore, while emotional, seem curiously conventional, and at odds with the intellectual defiance she demonstrates in other parts of her book, such as when she exposes the hypocritical lifestyle of the lamas or when she challenges esteemed travellers such as Rockhill and Huc and Gabet on details of geography and characterization of customs. Judith Rowbotham and Rosemary R. Gagan have observed that most nineteenth-century women missionaries were socially conservative and few were linked to difficult, radical, and progressive women’s causes at home, such as the suffrage movement (“Soldiers” 102; Gagan *Sensitive* 8). Rijnhart’s rhetorical tactics, too, remained conservative and static, despite glimmers of an intellectual confidence and impatience that may have harnessed and attracted the New Woman’s radical and unconventional energy, had she chosen to court it.

3.5 Defending the Pauline Apostolic Tradition

The construction of authority was an important issue for Rijnhart, both as an

evangelizing figure and as a woman writer, and from a religious,³⁰ as well as a narrative, perspective. Without the formal backing of a recognized mission society, the Rijnharts' mission lacked the kind of institutional support that afforded them resources, publicity, and protection. Indeed, independent and freelance missionaries were looked upon with skepticism, most surprisingly by other missionary societies, perhaps because the screening process instituted by the missionary organizations was so rigorous.³¹ Rijnhart uses her stated lack of affiliation with any mission society and organization as an opportunity to draw parallels between the ministries of the early pioneers of the Church, such as Paul and Peter, and that of herself and her husband. Paul, in particular, was an instrumental figure in the formation and spread of early Christianity throughout Greece, Rome, Galatia, and Macedonia, and his theological letters and accounts of his missionary journeys in Acts were influential components of the New Testament. Rijnhart states:

...our visible resources were limited at best. We went forth, however, with a conviction which amounted to absolute trust that God would fulfil His promise to those who 'seek first the Kingdom,' and continue to supply us with all things necessary for carrying on the work to which He had called us. From the outset we felt that we were 'thrust forth' specially for pioneer work, and although anticipating difficulties and sacrifices we were filled with joy at the prospect of sowing precious seed on new ground. (12)

Many key themes emerge in this statement: the metaphor of seeds and sowing, which

³⁰ Authority was instrumental to Christ's ministry. Matthew 7: 29 states: "For he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes."

³¹ For instance, see Chapter 3, "The Context of a Calling," in Brouwer's *New Women for God* for the detailed socioeconomic requirements of Protestant women missionaries.

was the most predominant one employed by missionaries to describe their work; the trope of being especially “called” for the journey, which removes it from the realm of human accomplishment and will and situates it in the realm of divine ordination; the idea of visibility versus the unseen; and the reference to sacrifice, which was not simply, in Rijnhart’s case, an instance of understated foreshadowing, but was instrumental in how mission work was conceptualized and circulated to the broader community.

Rijnhart, however, committed herself to a Pauline-style ministry at a time when it may not have been necessarily welcomed. Well into the nineteenth century, Paul’s ministry was held up by missionary advocates as a model and motivation for foreign missionary work. An article published in the *Presbyterian College Journal* in 1888, “Paul’s Missionary Principles,” celebrates Paul’s “heroic” missionary career, calling him “the colossal commanding figure that even distance cannot diminish” (43). The Pauline model was one of personal conviction and emotion, as well as sacrifice. It emphasized intangible and unquantifiable attributes such as faith and belief, and qualities such as self-abnegation and a capacity for introspection that were almost impossible to assess by outside agents and admissions boards. Edmund M. Hogan summarizes the tenets of the Pauline mission as follows:

The Pauline model of ‘missionary evangelization’, emerging principally from the pages of the Acts of the Apostles, comprised five elements, namely ‘commission’, ‘exile’, ‘primary proclamation’, ‘consolidation’ and ‘mobility’. Commissioned by his church of origin, Paul embraced exile for the sake of the kingdom; he preached to those who had no knowledge of the Gospel; once Christian churches were established, he proceeded to new locations for the same purpose. (3)

Rijnhart invokes Paul throughout her journey, particularly at the end of her book, where she uses the example set by Paul to justify her own foray into Tibet:

Though he [Paul] knew bonds and imprisonments awaited him in every city, he pursued his great missionary journeys shrinking not from innumerable perils and even glorying in his tribulations. He was willing 'not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus' (Acts xxi 13), and although he did not court death he elected to go to the very gates of the Imperial City and face the judgment seat of a Caesar, because of his desire to preach Christ even at Rome. Instead of waiting till countries under the sway of Rome were opened, the apostle went forth in the power of God to open them. So it has ever been in the history of Christianity. (394)

Rijnhart organizes her own journey on the Pauline model to create an important source of religious authority for her own mission.³²

Within late nineteenth-century missionary enterprise in Canada, the forces of professionalism and bureaucratization actually collided with the model of a Pauline ministry. Rijnhart's mission and her text were responses to launching a Pauline-style ministry—when a missionary set out to evangelize armed only with faith and belief in God—at a time when such endeavours were favoured by the denominational mission boards of Canada only rhetorically. In this regard, a Pauline-style ministry, in fact, became an uncomfortable intrusion to the orderly, structured, and rigorous screening

³² Some missionary women, it seemed, were untroubled by the Pauline injunctions against women's participation in public ministries and used Pauline scripture with abandon to justify their missionary journeys. For instance, Sarah Stringer cites St. Paul in the *Third Annual Report of the Woman's Auxiliary* in 1910: "We love the words of St. Paul, 'Help those women who laboured with me in the Gospel' (Yukon Territory Archives). The vexed relationship between women and St. Paul is also alluded to in Lily Dougall's novel, *The Madonna of a Day*.

procedures of mission boards such as the Woman's Foreign Mission Society, Western Division (WFMS) of the Presbyterian Church. In *A Manual for the Use of Women Offering for Foreign Mission Work and for Missionaries* published by the WFMS in 1899, numerous questions regarding family background, finances, health, and character were asked of the candidates. It bluntly stated that:

The Board of the WFMS receives and considers applications for women for missionary service, but with the Foreign Missions Committee rests the power of appointment. Such applications should always be accompanied by full and explicit testimonials, as to character, health, qualifications from pastors, physicians, teachers and friends. It is not thought desirable on account of the difficulty of acquiring foreign languages that candidates over thirty years of age should receive appointment. (3)

The applications of the Woman's Missionary Society of the Methodist Church of Canada gave slightly more emphasis to the spiritual and religious history of potential candidates, but they, too, weighed other considerations and would reject a candidate with a promising religious background on socioeconomic grounds (Gagan *Sensitive* 26-64). Women of zeal, it seemed, without appropriate credentials, education, and financial resources, who were not compliant as well as courageous, and who were not of a favourable race, age, and class, need not offer themselves; they would not be invited to serve. This is contrary to the apostolic model established by Paul—and Christ himself—who demanded of witnesses only that they have faith and belief in the Gospel message and an uncompromising willingness to spread it.

Moreover, as Brouwer, Gagan, and other mission historians affirm, mission boards in Canada generally wanted their candidates to settle at established mission

stations,³³ not engaging in nomadic wanderings that would be difficult to organize, monitor, and finance. This is, again, contrary to the tenets of the Pauline model, which encouraged first and foremost the evangelization of unoccupied territories. As A. T. Pierson notes, "...practically, there is a great difference between those who have heard of Christ and those who have not; between the indifference of apathy and habitual resistance and the indifference of downright ignorance and the habitual surrender to the tyranny of superstition" (43).

As well as using the Pauline missionary model, the Bible also provided a key source of support for Rijnhart, who strategically uses New Testament scripture to defend her decisions and to create an historical and evangelical context for them. For instance, in her opening chapter, she directly quotes Matthew 28: 18, the Great Commission, which formed the ideological basis of all pioneering missionary endeavours.³⁴ She claims: "Yet our faith did not waver. In much weakness we were going to undertake a stupendous

³³ The Presbyterian Church of Canada, Eastern Division, had established mission stations in the New Hebrides, Trinidad, and Korea by 1893. The Presbyterian Church of Canada, Western Division, had mission stations in Formosa (Taiwan), Honan, South China, and India, where, by 1914, there were 13 different mission sites in the Central territory. The Methodist Church of Canada had established several mission stations in Japan, and by the early 1890s, at key strategic locations in China, including several in Szechwan region, as well as stations in Canton, Shanghai, Nanking, Hong Kong, and Hankow.

³⁴ Matthew 28: 18-20 says: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway[s], *even* unto the end of the world."

task—not in our own strength but in His who when He commanded His disciples to ‘go and make disciple of all nations,’ also promised ‘Lo, I am with you all the days, even unto the end of the world’” (20-21). With her above quoted reference to those who “seek first the Kingdom,” she is alluding to Matthew 6: 33, part of the Sermon on the Mount, when Christ advises his followers to be unconcerned about the material provisions of life and to have faith in God’s providence.³⁵ Rijnhart, therefore, represents herself as being obedient to the spirit of the ministry of Christ and a defender of righteousness. She establishes implicit opposition between herself and her critics as “Pharisees,” preoccupied with the letter, as opposed to the spirit, of Christ’s admonitions.

Rijnhart is also not afraid to situate herself amidst more recent missionary figures, such as David Livingstone, John Carey, Bishop Hannington, and David Brainerd: “Pioneer work in mission fields has from the days of the apostles down to the present entailed its martyrdoms as well as yielded its glorious results. If the opening of Africa meant the sacrifice of a Livingstone, if the Christianization of the South Sea Islands meant the cruel death of John Williams, if the triumphs of the Cross in Uganda were wrought over the body of the murdered Hannington, and if Burmah must be trod by the

³⁵ Matthew 6: 31-33 says: “Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” This is preceded by the well-known invitation by Christ to his followers to consider the “lilies of the field” (Matthew 6: 28). All Biblical quotations in this chapter are from the King James Version, unless otherwise indicated.

bleeding feet of Judson and his wife, before the great harvest of five hundred churches can be reaped, could it be possible that all Tibet should be Christianized, that witness of the Christ should be borne in the very stronghold of Buddhism without some suffering, some persecution, nay without tears and blood?" (193-94). Rijnhart aligns herself with both historic and contemporary missionaries to create a cultural framework for her own sacrifices.

3.6 Safety and Civilization: Canada's Emerging Imaginative Geography

Rijnhart's failure to address the issue of the contradictory nature of life in civilized lands may be linked to the ideological role that Canada performs in her text. Like her construction of her personal propriety, Rijnhart's construction of Canada as the civilized homeland occurs at wistful intervals throughout her journey. Rijnhart only directly references Canada less than a dozen times throughout her story, but she does so at junctures of key narrative importance. Canada is linked early in her text to safety, protection, and civilization. At the beginning of her journey, Rijnhart observes: "Our first stage up the Yangtse was made in a steamer manned by English officers and a Chinese crew. There was a sense of security, which afterwards we sadly lacked, in the feeling that the great river was but an arm of the gentle Pacific that laved our native shores, stretched far inland as if to assure us of protection" (14). Such observations stabilize her text and both presage and give relief to the alien unpredictability of travel in Tibet.

One of the most significant references to Canada occurred during her successful

itinerating trip to the sacred Lake Koko-Nor in the happy company of her husband and infant son, Charles, to distribute literature to the Tanguts. Rijnhart's descriptions of the Lake are initially conventional, as she supplies prosaic observations about altitude, circumference, and vegetation, as well as local geographical names and native mythology about its geographical formations (186-87). But at the moment of their departure, her discourse takes a dramatic shift in tone:

Standing on the mountain height as the rising sun peeped over the eastern ridges and mirrored his glowing face on the glassy surface of the lake, we inhaled once more the exhilarating breezes that swept across it, and felt in our hearts as we gazed on its placid waters how delightful it would be ever to abide by its shores. But dangers were pressing and duty called us back to Tankar. We must turn away from those beautiful shores and from the watery oasis, so bright and pure, like the lakes that wash the shores of Ontario, my native province. Thou blue inland sea, in silence lifting thy unsullied waters to the pure heavens, reflecting in thy limpid depths the pageantry of the rolling clouds;... thou sapphire of the wilderness, safely guarded in the embrace of encircling hills, and mirroring the radiances of the sunsets of ages, Aegean in thy grandeur with thy rocky Patmos, we bid thee farewell, but from our souls the apocalypse of thy beauty will never be effaced! (188-89)

This moment of rhetorical aporia demands examination from several perspectives.

Rijnhart's flight of poetic fancy, her direct apostrophe to the landscape, with its elevated language and use of the archaic pronouns "thou" and "thee," sits a little uneasily amidst the more mundane geographical observations, but gives the moment startling and deliberate narrative emphasis. Terry Goldie, in *Fear and Temptation*, sees mysticism as allowing entrance into a "completely different realm of being, in which the despairingly linear methods of civilized order are left far behind" (141). Rijnhart's ecstatic language

shows a yearning for such disordered and irrational transcendence and links her to a tradition of Christian visionaries who have endured isolation, suffering, and exile as a result of their convictions and faith. This tradition is invoked artfully through Rijnhart's references to "apocalypse" and "Patmos," a Roman penal colony, and the island where the influential visionary, John of Patmos, was exiled due to his Christianity. It was on Patmos that John had revealed to him a vision of the risen Christ and it was the place where he reportedly penned the Book of Revelations. Through such moments, she establishes divine authority for her own actions and presence in Tibet, representing herself as a figure of spiritual power, but also of spiritual suffering, invoking her exile from her homeland in keeping with the Pauline missionary model.

The scene is notable for other reasons, as well. It is notable because Rijnhart stresses not simply the beauty of the lake, but its purity and its embodiment of natural sanctuary, concepts which resonate throughout her text.³⁶ It shows a "feminine" aesthetic sensibility that Sara Mills sees as being typical of the Western woman traveller (*Discourses* 180-81). Her ardent and poetic appreciation of the scene testifies to an innate refinement that emerges as uncorrupted by her time "away" from civilization. It becomes a moving (if reconstructed) moment of elevated narrative innocence in which Rijnhart dramatizes the tensions playing out in her own life between the seduction of temporary

³⁶ See Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger*; Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap and Water*; and Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, for discussions of the relationship between gender and the rhetoric of purity and reform in the early twentieth century.

safety and the permanent call of duty, while still stressing her lack of foreknowledge regarding the tragic fate of her journey. By showing herself being tempted by the lure of safety and beauty, and then withstanding the temptation, she presents her own struggles for self-mastery and uses her own impulses to create a model of behaviour for future missionaries, while dramatizing her own struggles and doubts.

Most importantly, Rijnhart uses her power as a narrator to inculcate the mythology of Canada's civilizing agency by establishing rhetorical adjacency between Canada, the grand Mediterranean cultures of Greece and Rome, and Tibet. In *Orientalism*, Edward Said uses the phrase "imaginative geography" to describe the "poetic process" by which geographic space became endowed with often arbitrary discourses of "imaginative and figurative value" (55). Said argues that "there is no doubt that imaginative geography and history help the mind to intensify its own sense of itself by dramatizing the distance and difference between what is close to it and what is far away" (55). In terms of the global geography that Rijnhart values, Canada emerges as a vital and intact imaginative retreat against heathen tumult and instability, a convenient repository of Western values of beauty and cultural order. Rijnhart uses her ideological construction of Canada, therefore, to reinforce her cultural identity and reliability as a missionary.

One can argue, of course, that Rijnhart is occupying a conventional imperial posture; she can only see beauty in the landscape of Tibet by essentially effacing its own cultural history and replacing it with a Western version of it, as her references to "Ontario," "Aegean," and "Patmos" attest. As Sara Mills argues, this is typical of

Western travellers, where the landscape of the foreign nation becomes a “poor substitute” for the beauties of the home land (*Discourses* 181). Yet there is also something bold and optimistic about this establishment of Canada as the Civilized Other, in light of the fact that globally, Canada’s position as a civilized and civilizing nation was inchoate, a poor cousin³⁷ to America and the colonial “mother,” Great Britain, when it came to matters of cultural progress and technological and moral advancement. To missionary organizations such as the mammoth Church Missionary Society, Canada was seen as an isolated land of snow and ice, home of numerous “heathen” Red Indians who were in dire need of conversion and civilization. A writer from *The Times*, in November 1877, in response to a speech delivered by Lord Dufferin in Winnipeg, mused of Dufferin’s Canadian travels: “The succession of enormous instances and strange surprises reads more like a voyage to a newly discovered satellite than one to a region hitherto regarded...as the fag-end of America and a waste bit of the world ” (Stock 3: 240). Canada was regarded as a “mere wilderness of rivers and lakes, *in which life would be intolerable and escape impossible*” (Stock 3: 240, emphasis in original). Such comments put Rijnhart’s optimistic portrayal of Canada into a certain historical perspective, yet it was typical of the optimism felt within Canada about its transition from the “Great Lone Land,” an undefined wilderness area, to an emerging nation of civility and progress—at a time when many outside of Canada needed to be convinced that such a transition had actually begun. Her articulation

³⁷ Sara Jeannette Duncan plays with (and challenges) the idea of Canada as a “poor cousin” within the Empire in her novel, *Cousin Cinderella*.

of this position creates a subtle gesture of faith in Canadian advancement. Moreover, she can be seen to be making an argument for the redeemable potential of Tibet by espying within it qualities of beauty, purity, safety, and order that could allow for its future greatness.

Her other references to Canada occur at the end of the most dangerous aspect of the journey—her encounter with “wicked Tibetan guides” who were engaged to escort her to the lamasery at Rashi Gomba. Rijnhart genuinely seemed terrified by the men, bluntly stating: “I have never seen any other Tibetans or Chinese who approached them in wickedness of every description” (333). Whether her fears were real and imagined, she makes use of typical Victorian women’s veiled discourse to suggest that she was in sexual jeopardy, as well as physical danger. As she escapes their influence and heads toward the lamasery at Rashi Gomba, she states with palpable relief: “How beautiful was the country through which we wended our way on that bright day! Evergreen trees dotted the grassy hillsides and were welcomed as old friends, for I had seen none in many months. Was it because hope sang in my heart, that nature looked bright and inviting? Or was it that breezes whispered the same stories through the boughs as I had often listened to in far-away Canada?” (340). Rijnhart often used rhetorical questions at certain points in her narrative to emphasize matters of urgent contemplation or to reiterate her emergence into spheres of safety. As Sara Mills observes, rhetorical questions were sometimes used by female travel writers to “involve the reader in the process of the book, and to keep open the possibility of more obstacles to the progression of the narrative”

(*Discourses* 149). Rhetorical questions also undermined “the narrator’s position of strength” as it seemed to draw “on the feminine discourse of fear,” which was often structured into women’s travel writing (*Discourses* 149-50). Later on her journey, Rijnhart uses a similar syntactic structure as she approaches Kansa, another oasis of safety, and again invokes Canada: “Had I at last come upon the sight of waters that made their way to the same Pacific that washed the shores of my native land? Though the latter was still thousands of miles distant, yet civilization and safety began to feel near, and I was glad” (361). Canada again emerges as an ideological force of progress, influence, and sanctuary.

In this respect, one of the important tensions that propels her narrative is her sinuous vacillation between zones of danger and places of safety. Rijnhart always lets her reader know when she feels safe. For Susie Rijnhart, safety was primarily represented by interior space and the cultivated landscape of the picturesque tradition, both of which offered space for contemplation and restoration, and protection from the untamed energy and primitive customs that she associates with life in Tibet. Early in her visit to China, the party encounters a lantern festival which Rijnhart obviously finds disturbing. She calls the scene “weird” and “frantic,” full of “tumult and glare,” as she finds herself being “mobbed” (22). She states: “Relieved indeed we felt when we reached a miserable inn, which in our thoughts was transformed almost into a palace, as it afforded us a haven of rest and safety from that brilliantly lighted festive street” (22). The power of the imagination to provide relief and hope is a recurring device that Rijnhart uses to create

safe retreats within Tibet and to transform what could be viewed as a discouraging mission into one of hope. After the harrowing loss of her husband and her hazardous journey to a lamasery where a “friendly Chinaman” intercedes on her behalf, she observes: “I could scarcely realize the transition from such deep fear when with those guides, to the sense of peace that resulted from the care, respect and friendly interest manifested by that Chinaman and the priests” (344). She then describes a pastoral scene where “as I drank in the delight of the peaceful shepherd scenes about me, my troubled heart was lulled into a calm” (344). Rijnhart uses the power of bucolic and picturesque description to exert imaginative control over, and to locate safety within, the Tibetan landscape. Indeed, the very last chapter in her book is entitled “Safe at Last,” punctuating the conclusion of a journey in which “safety” and “civilization” emerged as important discursive concepts against the destabilizing effects of heathen violence and tribal disorder.

3.7 The Powers of Knowledge and Narration

Susie Carson Rijnhart was one of the first Western women to travel to Tibet and then write about it.³⁸ Like many Western travellers who rejoice in the achievement of

³⁸ Mrs. Hervey and Nina Mazuchelli were two of the first European women to enter Tibet. Mrs. Hervey published *The Adventures of a Lady in Tartary, Thibet, China and Kashmir, through portions of territory never before visited by a European* in 1853. Mazuchelli, on a journey with her husband, travelled through the Singaleelah chain of mountains bordering Nepal and Tibet and spent time at the Tibetan monastery in Pemionchi in 1869; in 1876, she published an account of the journey, *The Indian Alps*

primacy, Rijnhart ascribes narrative significance to being one of the first European women to gain entrance into Tibet. She emphasizes her status as a pioneer,³⁹ both as a missionary and as a white woman traveller exploring a little known and unexplored land. However, Rijnhart only gives fleeting narrative emphasis to spatial domination, in which the mere presence of the Western observer gazing into a landscape that was new to her

and How We Crossed Them. Another European woman who claimed to have travelled to Tibet was the controversial mystic Helena Blavatsky, who wrote several books on her mystic experiences. Isabella Bird Bishop, F.R.G.S., the famed and prolific English traveller, journeyed to Lesser Tibet to Leh in the region of Ladakh on the Himalayan border in 1889 and published *Among the Tibetans* in 1894; in 1896, she attempted entry from the Western China border (using the same route as the Rijnharts) and visited Chengtu and Somo; accounts of these journeys are contained in *Korea and its Neighbors* and *The Yangtse Valley and Beyond*. Annie Taylor, affiliated with Hudson Taylor's China Inland Mission, boldly attempted to penetrate Lhasa and was captured by officials and was forced to leave the country; she published *Pioneering in Tibet* (c. 1895) and accounts of her journeys in *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, *The Christian*, and *The National Review*; her diary was subsequently published by William Carey in *Travel and Adventure in Tibet* in 1900. Sir George Little was accompanied by his wife on their failed attempt to reach Lhasa in 1895; he published an account of their journey, "A Journey Across Tibet from North to South and West to Ladakh" in *Royal Geographical Society Journal*, Vol. 7, 1896. Alicia Bewicke Little published an account in *Cornhill Magazine*, Feb. 1899, "A Summer Trip to Chinese Tibet." In addition to Taylor and Rijnhart, missionary wives had visited Tibet; the Moravian missionaries, Karl Marx and Mr. Redslob, lived in lesser Tibet with their wives; as well, two missionary couples affiliated with the China Inland Mission, Mr. and Mrs. Ridley and Mr. and Mrs. Cecil Polhill Turner, while stationed in China, conducted several itinerating journeys into Tibet; these women did not, however, publish individual accounts of their experiences, although approving observers nonetheless initiated them into the pantheon of eminent missionary women. Descriptions of their work are provided in Annie Marston, *The Great Closed Land* and Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China*.

³⁹ Rijnhart states "and thus our pioneer work would be sanctified by the Word of God, which cannot return unto its Author void" (195).

gaze was seen as a symbolic reiteration of imperial possession and conquest.⁴⁰ Rather, she tends to emphasize her status as a Western observer primarily as a purveyor of its knowledge, customs, and traditions—and, of course, of its religion.

Rijnhart frames her encounters with Tibetan cultural and religious practices and technology within European notions of enlightenment and progress in which, predictably, Tibetan culture is seen to be “undeveloped” and “stagnant.” In particular, Rijnhart privileges education and knowledge. She marvels that she knows more about the geography of Tibet than its citizens. Perhaps because the lama was such an epic imaginative figure in her own culture, Rijnhart, very pointedly, demystifies the myth of wise “living Buddha”: “But nothing could be further from the truth than the belief entertained by many occidentals that the lamas are superior beings endowed with transcendent physical and intellectual gifts. On the contrary, they are mere children in knowledge, swayed by the emotions that play on the very surface of being” (125). She decries their lack of knowledge of the natural sciences and the “simple facts of nature,” calling them “ignorant, superstitious and intellectually atrophied” (125). Like many missionaries, she attributes this “mental stagnation” to the stultifying effects of Buddhism: “Ten centuries of Buddhism have brought them to their present state of moral and mental stagnation, and it is difficult to believe that any force less than the Gospel of

⁴⁰ This is, of course, the argument behind Mary Louise Pratt’s classic study, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, which traces the history and rhetoric of the Western gaze as it was reconstructed in European travel writing.

Christ can give them life and progress in the true sense" (125). She indulges in the rhetoric which values Western forms of knowledge over local knowledge, and sees lack of education purely as the result of religious tradition, as opposed to more secular political structures and social customs.

Rijnhart also charges Tibetan lamas with cultural and religious hypocrisy: "The ethereal, abstemious, vegetarian Buddhist lama is a pure figment. I have seen a lama devour several pounds of meat at one sitting" (148). Her unveiling of the hypocrisy of lama culture is framed using visual metaphors of distance and proximity: "The atmosphere of holy meditation and blissful calm with which some from afar would fill the Tibetan lamasery, with its sublime mahatmas, too exalted and pure to live among ordinary men, is only the atmosphere of an uninformed and rose-colored imagination. Distance lends enchantment, but at the first contact the mirage disappears" (132). Rijnhart therefore privileges, and wishes her reader to privilege, her own eye-witness testimony over the mystic and textual discourses which proliferated about lama culture in the nineteenth century.

With the Tibetans in Tent and Temple shares many of the generic features of women's travel narratives popularized by writers such as Mary Kingsley and Isabella Bird Bishop in the late nineteenth century. Like her contemporaries, Bird Bishop and Kingsley, Rijnhart stresses the novelty of a woman travelling ideologically—even when she is not literally—alone in a strange land to create narrative tension and allure; like them, she often presents herself—and her baby—as an object of native curiosity; like

them, she couples her insistent emphasis on her own gendered subjectivity with a reiterated emphasis of her race, her nationality, her class, and her own special type of domestic knowledge and experience in order to derive a complex form of cultural and narrative authority that allowed her femininity to be reconstituted by travel and encounters with the “uncivilized” unknown. In *Imperial Eyes*, Mary Louise Pratt identifies two primary modes of narration used by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Western travellers in their accounts of the “undeveloped” worlds of other countries: scientific and sentimental (58-67; 75-78). Rijnhart, in her text, makes use of both modes, interspersing impersonal accounts of the geographic regions, customs, manners, history, and religious practices of the Tibetan and Chinese people with dramatic accounts of her epic struggle to survive rebellion, revolution, betrayal, mystery, violation, shooting, robbery, and death.

It was not only in gathering and displaying knowledge that Western missionaries and travellers exercised cultural power. In his postcolonial work on missionary narratives, Gareth Griffiths sees many missionary texts as enacting an important type of “textual control” (“Trained” 171). Indeed, as narrator of her own story, Rijnhart is able to wield a vestige of cultural and interpretative power and control that was not available to her whilst she was living as a missionary within Tibet, constrained by gender, intention, disguise, her lack of local knowledge, missing documentation, “wicked” escorts, and by her limited knowledge of native languages. Rijnhart can be seen to be firmly embracing the privileges and powers of narration in that she crafts a linear story in which she and her

husband are centrally positioned as agents of Western expertise, who witness and who attempt to order and contain—albeit with little success—Chinese and Tibetan tumult and instability. Late in her book, Rijnhart makes this revealing comment, as she pays tribute to Ishinima, their Tibetan friend: “Dear old Ishinima! On this page, which will forever to him be sealed and unknown, I cannot refrain from making some slight acknowledgment of his services” (392). With her veiled allusion to the “sealed” book of the Book of Revelation (Rev. 5: 2-4), Rijnhart presents narrative itself as an asymmetrical power that she views as weighted in her favour. As narrator, she advertises her power to acknowledge and to disregard the characters, and to shape and interpret the events, that form the basis for her story.

This awareness of the power of narration can be seen in the different rhetorical styles that she utilizes. Despite Rijnhart’s perfunctory claim in her Preface that her work is without “literary finish,” she, in fact, uses a shifting range of narrative strategies throughout her narrative both to reinforce and to veil her emotional losses (n. pag.). She creates affective dramas of fear, jeopardy, uncertainty, and inconsolable loss and grief, particularly at the unexpected loss of her son, whereby, in Rijnhart’s narration of the account, the entire Tibetan landscape both confirms the death of young Charles Rijnhart and participates in mourning his passing: “We tried to think of it euphemistically, we lifted our hearts in prayer, we tried to be submissive, but it was all so real—the one fact stared us in the face; it was written on the rocks; it reverberated through the mountain silence: Little Charlie was dead” (249). The emotional impact of Charles’s death is

projected outward, where the exterior bleakness and desolation of the Tibetan landscape reinforces and harmonizes with the bleakness and desolation within Rijnhart's interior landscape, and within the deepest and most private regions of her heart.

Rijnhart also shares her struggles with her reader through emphasizing the emotional difficulties and spiritual trials of missionary work in what is perhaps the most confessional chapter in the book, "Lost and Alone," in which she is forced to confront starkly the loss of her husband and her own abandonment in Tibet. She creates a modality of faith by sharing her inward fears and doubts with the reader. Rijnhart uses rhetorical questions to emphasize both her vulnerability and the nature of her struggles with her faith: "What else supported me through the leaden hours of that day but the thought that I was in God's hands?... But I must admit it was a faith amidst a darkness so thick and black that I could not enjoy the sunshine" (315-16). The discourse of light and darkness that Rijnhart uses with such confidence throughout the book becomes destabilized, as Rijnhart's own faltering faith merges with the darkness that she sees everywhere in Tibet. In closing that chapter in her book, Rijnhart figuratively closes the chapter on sharing her own inward darkness with the reader: "Leaving the place where my baby was buried, and setting out alone with these Tibetans from the locality where I had lost my husband, stand out prominently as the two events in my life that have called forth the greatest effort, accompanied by sorrow too deep for expression" (324). With this confession, Rijnhart ceases any sustained narrative expression of her loss and grief, as a veil descends upon them, and they, too, become "sealed and unknown." Instead, she

relies on the formal properties of the adventure narrative to propel herself out of Tibet, where the drama and tensions of the missionary journey are primarily located externally as opposed to internally.

Patricia Grimshaw and Peter Sherlock observe that the growing body of literature on "missionary heroines" in the late nineteenth century "portrayed the white woman as an adventurous and brave soul who overstepped the boundaries of home and hearth, sacrificing family life to bring the light of the gospel to the unenlightened" (179). As Rijnhart ceases to share her doubts and grief with her reader, she begins to present herself more forcefully and actively. Rijnhart projects this adventurous spirit in her encounters with a range of Tibetans natives: "One of his companions was the man who had brought me across the river, and though he ate raw meat with such keen enjoyment as to remind me of cannibalism, and killed a small animal his dog had driven from its shelter, by battering its head against a stone, I did not fear him" (325-26). During this part of her journey, Rijnhart negotiates; she interprets; she is menacingly witty; she demonstrates initiative, vigilance, and courage. This temerity occurs most forcefully in her sustained struggle with the "wicked Tibetan guides," who embody all of Tibet's transgressive and violent energy. Emphasizing that her femininity was constantly being insulted, and that her virtue was under incessant assault, provided Rijnhart with a narrative motive for presenting herself heroically in terms that were socially acceptable for her era. Underlying this sustained drama was the titillating narrative interest created by the possibility of peril and assault on the type of white Christian womanhood that Rijnhart

represented. Kristi Siegel has identified the “rhetoric of peril” that operated in many late nineteenth-century women’s travel texts, in which middle- and upper-class women were viewed as “a more valuable commodity” than other women, “which made their safety and purity of critical concern” (60). The odd appeal of the seeming frailty of Christian womanhood under unpredictable assault, yet defying that assault, becomes part of the allure of Rijnhart’s story. Within her narrative, she demonstrates vigilance and courage to protect her virtue, yet she counters this by emphasizing her child-like, feminine nature that creates a decorous Christian framework for her spirited heroism, such as when she claims, “This to me was proof that the loving Father was caring for His lonely little child that the very day that my passport was refused recognition, two Chinamen had agreed to travel with me down to Ta-chien-lu” (371). Rijnhart rhetorically shifts between strength and servitude in narrating her pilgrimage of survival out of Tibet.

Nowhere is Rijnhart’s cultural and narrative power more evident than in her studied and consistent use of situating her own journey using the narrative devices of Providence and of salvation history. In *Open Fields*, Gillian Beer notes that “[t]he travel narrative, published or recounted, is a record of survival: the narrator is here to tell it in retrospect even as the reader sets out on the journey” (55). Rijnhart often writes as one who is not yet privy to the meaning of the suffering which she has undergone. In many respects, she writes from a position of blindness; but, as Beer’s comment reminds us, all travel accounts, indeed all autobiographical testaments, are narrative reconstructions. Rijnhart’s junctures of ostensible narrative blindness, her inability to read and project into

the future, are positions that have to be deliberately reconstructed and inserted at certain strategic points in her narrative. In order to give authority to her presence while minimizing its intrusive nature, Rijnhart uses a common narrative device of reinterpreting the events that occurred during her journey as being providential. Throughout her text, Rijnhart expresses an emphatic yearning for divine intervention and narrates the conviction that it had occurred; and she uses the accidental, coincidental, and inevitable course of the events that punctuated her journey as a means of demonstrating the providential nature of her mission. One of the most fascinating aspects of Rijnhart's narrative is her eye-witness account of the Mohammedan rebellion in China in 1896 and she locates her presence there as being foreordained: "But amid the gloomy forebodings that for the moment filled our minds, there was a tremor of joy at the thought of our good fortune in returning to Lushan when we did. The Divine Providence had indeed overshadowed us and directed our movements" (48-49). Later she observes: "[B]ut we felt that we had not unprovidentially arrived in Kumbum at that especial time, and in order that we might not thwart the plans of Him whose work we were doing..." (59-60). As she justifies their decision to move into the unknown and dangerous territory of inner Tibet, which proved to be so tragically disastrous, she maintains: "Had we not under the providence of God overcome all the preliminary difficulties of establishing a foothold?" (137).

By claiming God as an active force in the unfolding of her story, Rijnhart does more than establish authority for the actions of herself and her husband. She attempts to

create cultural and spiritual significance for the deaths of her husband and child, and for her own grief and suffering, by situating the narrative into a discourse of *Heilsgeschichte*, of salvation history, as well as an apostolic tradition of suffering and sacrifice. Norman C. Perrin and Dennis Duling define salvation history as “the term used to designate the concept in which God is active in history as he reveals himself and saves his people” (195). Salvation history is distinct from and exists outside of secular history, and yet, at times, intersects with it as God makes use of secular history to work out His salvation plan (195). This makes salvation history, as Graham Ward summarizes, “a theatre of redemption” (43). Paul, as well as the gospel writers, Matthew and Luke, used the concept of salvation history in order to explain such theological difficulties as the delayed parousia and the place of the Jewish people in God’s salvation plan,⁴¹ as well as to allow for the ongoing work of the Great Commission. In practical terms for Rijnhart, her reliance on salvation history within her narrative allows her to record and historicize her pain and suffering without having to predict the outcome of it. The narrative suspense

⁴¹ The parousia is the theological term for the second coming of Christ. Early Christians, including the writer of the Gospel of Mark, the earliest gospel, assumed Christ’s second coming was eminent. By the time the other synoptic Gospels were written, the parousia was assumed to be located much further in the future. One of the difficulties for early Christians was reconciling the belief that the Jewish race was God’s chosen people with Christ’s teaching that anyone, including Gentiles, could be saved individually based on their faith. In Romans 9:1 to 11:36, Paul argues that Israel’s “hardening” to the message of Christ as saviour is actually part of God’s larger plan, which remains a “mystery” to human comprehension, in order to allow the Gospel to be preached to the Gentile nations and that, once this work has been completed, Israel will embrace the Gospel message.

that Rijnhart carefully cultivates in structuring her story works in tandem with her claims that the execution and outcome of her journey is part of God's greater salvation plan, which is unknowable to human understanding. Rijnhart reminds her readers of the limitations of the human perspective when she declares on her decision to proceed to Lhasa: "From a *human* standpoint there was absolutely nothing inviting in such an undertaking" (195, my emphasis). Rijnhart uses the explicatory powers of narration to establish the limits of what is inexplicable about her journey and God's plans for her.

Moreover, it allows her to argue the relevance of God to her readers by presenting salvation as an contemporary, ongoing force instead of an ancient, historical event. Rijnhart does this most powerfully in a sub-chapter entitled "Deliverance." As drunken Tibetan robbers terrorize the party, an intoxicated man holds a "naked sword" over Rijnhart as he orders her from her horse. Rijnhart then recounts:

As a child would call to his father, I called aloud, "Oh God! Oh God!" and in Tibetan said, "*Mari, mari*" which means "no, no." A strange expression crossed the man's face, and he put his sword away, turned and joined his companions, and in a moment all had galloped down the river, and not only was my life spared, but I had not lost anything....

As we sat on the grass I was almost overpowered with thankfulness and joy that my life and the things needful had thus been saved, nor can I doubt that my deliverance was due to the care of the Heavenly Father, who neither slumbers nor sleeps. (375-76)

Rijnhart narrates this whole incident as a climactic event in her own quest for safety, even though her journey is not over and there are still dangers left to encounter. The rhetorical questions that punctuate many of Rijnhart's narrow escapes from danger are noticeably absent here, which imparts confidence to her narrative description of the event. The

construction of this moment as “deliverance” puts the incident in the realm of the divine and miraculous, and Rijnhart wisely does not over-narrate the sequence, choosing instead to emphasize its mystery. Like her missionary forbears, Paul and Peter, who received similar moments of intercession, she presents herself as an object of divine care, with God actively interceding on her own behalf to secure her safety and deliverance, which grants a compelling authority to her mission.

There is also an interesting ambivalence as to who has been delivered. By her own account, Rijnhart has been delivered by God to tell us her story and the story of her husband and child. Yet, the “strange expression” on the Tibetan man’s face suggests that he, too, has been delivered from executing a heinous crime. Rijnhart, therefore, dramatically, enacts the Tibetan potential for redemption that emerges with deliberate Christian prayer and intervention. Moreover, in choosing God as the *deus ex machina* in her drama of deliverance, Rijnhart willingly relinquishes an opportunity to display the qualities of wit, wariness, and self-reliance that have been instrumental in her survival in order to present herself as a special witness whose survival—and whose subsequent narrative—has been divinely ordained. Rijnhart’s cultural roles as a heroic missionary and as a woman of propriety ingeniously merge. Deferring to God allows Rijnhart to downplay her role as a personal protagonist in her own story, and, hence, becomes an important narrative means of presenting herself as deferential, even as it gives her journey the illusion of “individual destiny” that created for her an important form of religious authority. In relying on the premise that her presence in Tibet is divinely sanctioned, she

creates an irresistibly reflexive argument for her own cultural innocence. And it is noteworthy that she chooses to do so by presenting herself as an obedient “child,” who is defended by a protective father, as opposed to a resourceful and vigilant woman who has orchestrated her own emergence into safety. At these moments, Rijnhart—unselfconsciously, it appears—writes as if she is unaware that her own narrative very often reveals those elements of courage, shrewdness, and self-reliance that contradict her attempts to represent herself more passively.

Rijnhart also uses careful narrative control as she describes her re-entry into “civilization” at the end of her journey. Throughout her story, she maintains that there is something essential in her speech and bearing that identifies her as a Westerner and that makes her disguise penetrable. The friendly China man and many of the natives she encounters throughout her journey are instantly able to “pierce” her identity as a *peiling*, a foreigner (342-43). Yet, at the very end of her journey, she claims: “As we went on we attracted very little attention even in the crowded, narrow streets, for Ta-chien-lu has a motley population, and no one suspected that I was other than a Tibetan” (387). That she is “accepted” as a Tibetan just as she is about to re-enter “civilization” gives drama and energy to her symbolic re-entry, a drama that Rijnhart further emphasizes as the other missionaries become “dumbfounded to hear the voice of an Englishwoman” coming “from such a Tibetanized person” (388).⁴² Such moments let her reassure her reader that

⁴² This borders on being a narrative trope in women’s travel literature. Mary T. S. Schäffer in *Old Indian Trails of the Canadian Rockies* and Mina Hubbard in *A Woman’s*

it is possible to immerse oneself completely into a heathen landscape without compromising one's essential refinement—and one's Christianity—creating the narrative illusion that Rijnhart herself has not been transformed by the journey. This refinement is reinforced by Rijnhart's awareness of her own "dirty" person as she stands in the missionary home and worries that "she is too dirty to go into such a clean room" (388). Moreover, the fact that, after four years in China and Tibet, one of Rijnhart's first questions at the supper table is about whether Queen Victoria is still ruling the Empire encapsulates the imbrication between imperialism, nationalism, and missionary work and shows the extent to which her respect for the forces of imperial hierarchy and Western civility have remained apparently unaltered by her lengthy immersion in a foreign culture (389).

Because Rijnhart cannot summarize the outcome of her mission to Tibet in the language of firm victory—her first Tibetan mission yielded no converts and no permanent mission station or itinerant missions were established in the Tibetan interior—she locates it temporally in the future, deploying a lyrical and speculative discourse of hope. The Christian redemption of Tibet will come, Rijnhart determines, but it is deferred to the future. Using spectacular imagery of Biblical redemption, Rijnhart prophesies: "The seed sown is springing up with bright promise. The trumpets are being blown about the walls of the great closed land. Soon they will fall that the heralds of the Cross may enter in. I

Way Through Unknown Labrador use similar narrative strategies in narrating their re-entries into "civilization."

see them coming and I exclaim—How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of them that preach in Tibet the Gospel of Peace!” (395). Brett Christophers has identified the cultural importance of the idea of *waiting* within missionary discourse (6). Christophers maintains that this “idea of anticipation implied that the Christianization of non-European space was not only possible but incumbent; to colonize heathen lands was to realize their latent potential and to set an inevitable history in motion” (6). Describing preparation as essential work allowed Rijnhart, and all missionaries, to situate their efforts in a framework of hope that did not have to yield firm numbers of converts and the “visible” results that missionary societies and the public who financed them were pressuring them to deliver in order to consider pioneering missionary work as successful work.

Rijnhart, in her last formal act as narrator, makes a final attempt to formulate the history of Tibet in a manner which affirms its openness to Christian influence, to remap, literally and figuratively, its cultural terrain so that the deaths of her husband and child are invested with cultural meaning: “And whoever responds will find many who know something of Christianity, who have copies of the Scriptures, and remember with affection the White Teacher who, while he was with them, labored for their good, and who left them never to return. And many will have heard of the lone little grave under the huge boulder at the base of the Dang La” (396-97). Rijnhart creates a speculative version of the missionary journey, where its traces remain both indelible and mobile. She creates a suppositional, but ultimately fictive, narrative of hope, where her husband’s and child’s memory and story emerge as intact and circulating cultural narratives amongst the

Tibetan people, the vibrant oral counterpoint to her own written and published account. This narrative reiteration is reinforced by the fact that *With the Tibetans in Tent and Temple* was published with its own map that shows, not only the Rijnharts' travel routes, but the Christian burial plot of their beloved infant son, Charles, which is clearly delineated in red with a special marker in the map's legend. The book ends with a strategically edited quotation from J. R. Lowell's lengthy poem, "Columbus." Columbus was a favourite icon of many missionary writers, whose voyages of discovery combined the adventurous spirit of the explorer with a devout sense of Christian purpose. The poem, with its references to shadows and darkness, pioneering and endurance, reinforces many of the themes that Rijnhart developed throughout her narrative.

3.8 "A genius as a missionary"?: The Legacy of Susie Carson Rijnhart

With the Tibetans in Tent and Temple was a publishing success. Published in Canada and Britain by the evangelical publishing house of Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier in May 1901, the book went into a second printing within six months. Fleming H. Revell, the American publishers of the book, who were also the American publishers of Ralph Connor's tales of missionary heroism and tribulation, had similarly brisk sales, and they announced in November 1901 that the book was going into a second printing. By September 1904, the book went into a fourth edition and a new edition was reissued by Fleming H. Revell in 1911. In 1904, no doubt due in part to the strong Moravian interest in Tibetan missions, the book was translated into German and printed under the title

Wanderungen in Tibet by the German publishing house, *Vereinsbuchhandlung*, located in Stuttgart.

The book received strong reviews both in missionary and religious periodicals and newspapers, such as *The Christian Guardian*, *The Methodist Magazine and Review*, *Open Court*, *The Expository Times*, and *The Methodist Quarterly*, and more mainstream publications such as *The Globe*, *The New York Times*, *The Brooklyn Eagle*, *The Bookman*, *London Quarterly and Holburn Review*, *The Nation*, and *South Asia Review*. Rijnhart was praised by many reviewers for her accurate descriptions of Tibetan life.⁴³ By 1911, within ten years of its publication, *With the Tibetans in Tent and Temple* was listed in the bibliography of the entry on Tibet in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* and Susie Carson Rijnhart became a cited authority on Tibetan life and customs.

The writing and publication of *With the Tibetans in Tent and Temple* by no means ended Rijnhart's missionary career. She spent two years travelling throughout the United States and Canada as she prepared the manuscript, publishing an abbreviated account of

⁴³ For instance in *The Open Court* (Feb. 1902) the reviewer declared: "Her report is a valuable addition to the information given by Huc and Gabet, partly confirming their statements, partly correcting and adding to them" (110). *The Christian Guardian* (June 12, 1901) states: "We believe that the book is, and will be for years, a standard authority on the customs and conditions prevailing in that little known but deeply interesting country" (14). The reviewer in *The New York Times* (June 1, 1901) enthused: "We cannot commend this work too highly, and express the wish that it will be generally read. 'With the Tibetans' gives a more accurate account of a lamasery than any other book we know of, then again" (396). The *Expository Times* praised: "Mrs. Rijnhart...is a genius as a missionary, and the picturesque simplicity of the language, by the very clearness and truthfulness of its information, does not dispel but deepens the religious mystery of the strange land of Thibet [sic]" (112).

her journey in *The Globe* in March 1899. In her many speaking engagements, she continued her passionate plea for Tibetan missions. In Reuben Butchart's *The History of the Disciples of Christ in Canada since 1830*, Rijnhart was thus praised: "And speaking of Dr. Susie Rijnhart (our Chatham-born missionary) who that has ever read her book *With Tibetans in Tent and Temple* [sic], or heard her speak can forget the impression she made on her return after escaping the Tibetan bandits, under the stress of sleepless nights and the bereavement of a baby buried in a mountain pass, and a missing husband who never returned to her. Surely she showed what a woman can do for her Lord" (255).

One of the most influential speeches Rijnhart would ever make would be at the Iowa State Convention of the Disciples of Christ at Des Moines in 1902, at which she raised six hundred dollars for medical equipment for use in Tibet (Shelton *Sunshine* 16). Rijnhart, once more, shared her story to a captive audience, concluding: "The first work of the Disciples of Christ is to give the Gospel to a lost world.... Our societies have both the opportunity and fidelity, but they must have the support of a great people to do their work.... This will be my last appeal to a large body of Disciples. A year from now, if not in less time, I hope to be among the nomads of Tibet. Both opportunity and fidelity are my possessions through Him whose work I do. Yours is the opportunity also. The fidelity, is it yours, too?" (qtd. in Wissing 42). A young American missionary, listened, enraptured, to Rijnhart's speech and vowed to dedicate his medical career to missions in Tibet. That man was Dr. Albert Shelton, later dubbed the "American David Livingstone," whose dynamic career as a medical missionary ended when he was brutally

murdered by natives in 1922. Shelton and his wife, Flora Beal Shelton, accompanied Rijnhart to Ta-chien-lu, where they established a mission station in 1903. There, Rijnhart, in the cycle of life and death to which she was so often subject, helped deliver the first child of the Sheltons, their daughter Dorris Evangeline, in a cottage on a hillside in Ta-chien-lu (Shelton *Shelton* 39-40). Rijnhart planned an ambitious programme which replicated the type of work performed by the Canadian missionary societies she had, in some measure, rejected earlier in her career; there were plans to open a school and a hospital. In October 1905, in Chentu, she married the British missionary, James Moyes, the man who first greeted her as she entered the China Inland Mission in Tien-chien-lu at the end of *With the Tibetans in Tent and Temple*. A year later, in December 1906, as her health deteriorated, Rijnhart resigned from the mission and returned to Canada. A few months later, Rijnhart was pregnant with her second child, but, as with her first son, she was not granted the opportunity to see the baby live. A mere three weeks after her second child was born, Susie Rijnhart died from presumed complications due to childbirth on February 7, 1908. An account of her life was published within one year of her death, in Isabel Robson's *Two Lady Missionaries of Tibet*, which framed Rijnhart's mission in hagiographic terms. Rijnhart would be subsequently praised as a figure of influence within the Disciples of Christ missionary movement.⁴⁴ The narrative of inspired

⁴⁴ See Reuben Butchart, *The Disciples of Christ in Canada Since 1830*; C. T. Paul, "Susie Rijnhart" in John Brown, ed., *Churches of Christ*; Douglas Wissing, *Pioneer in Tibet*; Flora Beal Shelton, *Shelton of Tibet*.

continuity that had been established by observers of mission culture between Rijnhart and Annie Taylor became extended to Rijnhart and Albert Shelton.⁴⁵

Despite this, Rijnhart continues to be less known and established as a “missionary heroine” than comparable figures such as Annie Taylor, as well as other “heroic” Canadian medical missionaries such as George Leslie Mackay, Norman Bethune, and Leonora Howard King. For instance, a book published in 1907 by John C. Lambert, *The Romance of Missionary Heroism*, features chapters on three prominent Canadian missionaries—George Leslie Mackay, John Horden, and James Evans—and has a chapter on “A Heroine of Tibet” that features Annie Taylor, but the book makes no mention of Rijnhart. Rijnhart was similarly omitted from Canon E. C. Dawson’s 1909 popular publication, *Heroines of Missionary Adventure*. It is especially interesting to observe the Tibetan pioneer to whom Dawson does pay tribute. Mrs. Cecil Polhill Turner, the genteel missionary, who offered Rijnhart such “thoughtful, beautiful care” in the form of cookies and “tea in a dainty cup,” and who stalwartly let Susie Rijnhart ooze mud on her clean rug at the end of *With the Tibetans in Tent and Temple*, is celebrated as a “missionary heroine” and pioneer for Tibetan missions by Dawson while Rijnhart is not (Rijnhart 388; Dawson 101-04). Peter Bishop’s *The Myth of Shang-ri-La*, a comprehensive account of

⁴⁵ In the Appendices of *Shelton of Tibet*, for instance, Secretary for the Foreign Missions Committee of the Churches of Christ in South Australia, F. Collins, wrote to Flora Beal Shelton on May 26th, 1922: “Even since Dr. Rijnhart told us her story in the book, “Tibetans in Tent and Temple,” [sic] we have been watching and praying. What her great suffering and devotion did for Tibet in inspiring Dr. Shelton and yourself to go out, we are sure your husband’s death will do in greater measure...” (311).

Western travel writing about Tibet, omits Rijnhart's text from his bibliography, although he does refer briefly to her and her journey within the text of his book. Canadian missionary scholar John Webster Grant alludes to Rijnhart's mission in *A Profusion of Spires*. In admonishing language, Grant scolds Rijnhart for her "irresistible sense of vocation" and for acting "contrary to all advice," calling Rijnhart's mission "reckless" and "ill-prepared"—all while spelling her name incorrectly (187). Even Terrence L. Craig's comprehensive *The Missionary Lives* does not include Rijnhart's book in its vast bibliography.

These questions regarding the politics of commemoration and inclusion—as to which Canadian "heroes" and "heroines" get remembered and celebrated and why—are arresting and complex, and they deserve further critical consideration with respect to Susie Carson Rijnhart's missionary career and legacy, as her text and her accomplishments begin slowly to be recuperated. Like many of the women saluted and celebrated as Canadian heroines in the early twentieth century, Rijnhart defined herself as a pioneer; and, like them, she sought to define and stabilize Canadian identity through her writing, her causes, and her actions, with her incessant praise and celebration of the "civilized" customs and practices of her "homeland." However, she did so from such an uncharacteristic, unstable, and distant cultural space that her efforts, in many respects, went unheeded. Perhaps it mattered that Rijnhart's missionary career was affiliated with a proportionately small religion in Canada, the Disciples of Christ, and, later, with the Foreign Christian Missionary Society, as opposed to the more mainstream women's

missionary organizations within Canada. Perhaps suggestions that the mission was reckless and foolhardy diluted its heroic emphasis. Perhaps missionary culture did not know how to circulate the story, with its bewildering mixture of bravado and heartbreak, once Rijnhart herself was no longer available to tell and promote it. Perhaps Rijnhart's missionary experience functioned better as a cautionary parable than as a source of romantic inspiration or as a professional template for potential female missionaries within missionary culture. Perhaps Susie Rijnhart was, after all, too unsuitably heroic.

It was one of the limitations, and even ironies, of late nineteenth-century missionary literature that, while missionaries dedicated their lives to transforming and converting both individuals and cultures, that their narratives and letters often never satisfactorily reveal how they themselves were transformed by their exposure to a "heathen" culture in a foreign land. Missionaries often represented encounters with the unknown as opportunities to indulge in a discourse of cultural and moral improvement, to exaggerate the superiority of Western culture, or to present themselves as objects of native curiosity, a feature of imperial writing that is equally shared by missionary writing. Retta Kilborn confirms the extent to which Rijnhart's Tibetan journey had irreversibly changed her. Kilborn, who attended the Women's Medical College with Rijnhart, and who also became a missionary, stationed at the Methodist Women's Mission in China, said that Susie Rijnhart had changed from "a bright dark-haired girl into a quiet, white-haired woman, by her heart-breaking experiences in Tibet" (Robson 159). Yet, Rijnhart's elegant and formal prose, with its preference for Latinate words, her focus on the

maintenance of an exemplary cultural propriety in the face of violence, rebellion, resistance, grief, and mystery, and her careful—although by no means seamless—narrative and interpretative control keep that transformation oddly at bay, veiled in a rhetoric of passionate hope about her own relevance and her narrative struggle to construct cultural meaning for her own losses and suffering that is still awaiting deliverance.

Chapter Four

Bearing Witness to the Nation: Canadian Nationalism, Cultural Parables, and the

Missionary as Saviour in Janey Canuck's *Seeds of Pine*

Belief is great, life-giving. The history of a Nation becomes fruitful, soul-elevating, great, so soon as it believes. (66)

Thomas Carlyle
"The Hero as Prophet. Mahomet:
Islam" (1841)

...there is something Hebraic about the Canadian tendency to read its conquest of a promised land, its Maccabean victories of 1812, its struggle for the central fortress on the hill at Quebec, as oracles of a future. It is doubtless only an accident that the theme of one of the most passionate and intense of all Canadian novels, A. M. Klein's *The Second Scroll*, is Zionism. (226)

Northrop Frye
"Conclusion to a *Literary History of Canada*" (1965)

One of the most distinctive features of the imperialist mind was the tendency to infuse religious emotion into secular purposes. (217)

Carl Berger
The Sense of Power (1969)

[T]here is no myth without motivated form. (126)

Roland Barthes
Mythologies (1957)

For a select number of early twentieth-century writers in Canada, the figures of missionaries, both historical and contemporary, and the discourses of heroism and

sacrifice that surrounded them, offered a range of rhetorical and imaginative possibilities for regenerating Canadian society. Some of these possibilities were articulated in Ralph Connor's 1919 novel, *The Sky Pilot in No Man's Land*, a novel where the idealism and ordering moral authority of the missionary is set in what proves to be futile opposition to the disorderly atrocities and violence of life in the trenches during World War I. In its opening chapter, the naïve and passionate young missionary, Barry Dunbar, has been introduced to the worldly and skeptical American girl, Paula Howland, who expresses visible disappointment that the handsome and luminous Dunbar is "[o]nly a missionary."

Dunbar replies:

Only a missionary! Ah, if I could only be one. A missionary! With a mission and a message to my people! If only I had the gift of tongues, of flaming, burning, illuminating speech, of heart-compelling speech! To tell my people how to make this country truly great and truly free, how to keep it free from the sordid things, the cruel things, the unjust, the unclean, the loathsome things that have debased and degraded the older nations, that are debasing and degrading even your young great nation. Ah, to be missionary with a tongue of fire, with a message of light! A missionary to my people to help them to high and worthy living, to help them to God! Only a missionary! What would you have me? A money-maker? (22, emphasis in original)

Using the rapturous imagery of the Pentecost, Connor invests the missionary with an elevated cultural, as well as a religious, calling, commissioned with the task of guiding, uplifting, improving, and renewing the nation. In Dunbar's speech, Connor situates the urgency of this cultural work within prevailing frameworks of moral cleanliness and social improvement and reform, setting missionary culture in firm opposition to the forces of materialism and secularism that were influencing Canadian and American

society and development. Missionaries, as Connor envisioned them, were nothing less than Canada's ecstatic social housekeepers. In *The New North*, Agnes Deans Cameron similarly saw the missionary as essential to the advancement of the nation, as she observes: "Are we not as a people too prone to minimise the great nation-building work performed by the scattered missionaries in the lone lands beyond the railway? Ostensibly engaged in the work of saving souls, Canadian missionaries, both Roman and English, have opened the gates of commerce, prosecuted geographical discovery, tried to correct social evils, and added materially to our store of exact science" (185). For Cameron, therefore, the missionary was a compiler of cultural knowledge, an emissary and creator of the social frameworks upon which great nationhood could be built.

Ralph Connor and Agnes Deans Cameron were not the only early twentieth-century Canadian writers who saw the figure of the missionary as a powerful social and moral force. Connor's emotional definition and impassioned defence of the potential role of the missionary in nation-building, and Cameron's imbrication between missionary culture and an emerging Canadian nationhood, were also themes that occupied their powerful contemporary, Emily Murphy, who wrote most commonly under the pseudonym, Janey Canuck. Her important travel book, *Seeds of Pine* (1914), is organized around a series of journeys—by railway, motor car, and steamer ship—to the northern community of Grouard, located in Lesser Slave Lake, to honour the jubilee anniversary of the man after whom it was named, Bishop Émile Jean Baptiste Marie Grouard, the Roman Catholic missionary from the order of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. Murphy

constructs Bishop Grouard as a figure whose radius of tangible ingenuity and spiritual influence transformed northern Canada.

Throughout her writing career, Murphy demonstrated a lively interest in missionary culture and composed many sympathetic accounts of missionaries and their accomplishments. In *The Impressions of Janey Canuck Abroad*, for instance, she pays rhapsodic tribute to David Livingstone while visiting a pulpit dedicated to him (78). Later, during her journey, she attends a ceremony commemorating the hundredth anniversary of the founding of the Church Missionary Society with her husband, which becomes a fruitful opportunity to celebrate Anglican missionary endeavour. Tellingly, she uses the metaphors of seeds and harvesting to celebrate the establishment of the Church Missionary Society as “a balm in Gilead,” a “tree” planted from seeds, whose growth “has been for the healing of the Nations” (107). Celebrating John and Henry Venn, the founders of the CMS, she admiringly notes: “Who then could prophecy how God should use their grain of mustard-seed” (106). Murphy also wrote several articles about the missionary figures of North-West Canada throughout her writing career, including Anglican Bishops Isaac O. Stringer and William Carpenter Bompas; and she published a biography of Bompas for the Ryerson Canadian History Readers¹ in 1929. In

¹ The *Edmonton Journal* in June 1926 promoted the book thus: “This life of Bishop Bompas will be part of a new patriotic series for Canadian schools, a series conceived by Dr. Pierce of the Ryerson Press in appeal to the romantic instincts of the young. The stories, therefore, will not deal so much with dry fact and figures but will be written to stir the imagination of and around the fires of patriotism for our Canadian...life.” MS 2 Scrapbook 1, 17, Emily Murphy Papers, City of Edmonton

these writings, she articulated the importance of missionaries to the process of nation building and in defining the “Canadian soul.”² For Murphy, as for Connor and Cameron, the male missionaries who settled, and who sought to transform, the Canadian homeland were not simply religious figures who represented abstract social forces and tenuous Christian communities. For writers such as Murphy, Cameron, and Connor—privileged, professional writers who were white, middle-class, and Protestant—missionaries functioned, in Clara Thomas’s phrase, as “pilgrim[s] of the imagination,” upon whom a measure of symbolic, figurative, and literary power could be built (322). This, then, becomes the starting point for this chapter and for the articulation of the missionary as an imaginative category, one elusively grounded within the material and ideological components of life in early twentieth-century Canada, as it was produced in the writings of Emily Murphy, particularly *Seeds of Pine*. This imaginative positioning of the work and rhetoric of missionary and religious culture became imbricated with broader cultural themes and debates that occupied Murphy and that were transpiring at large in Canadian society. These issues included debates about Canadian nationalism and destiny, Canadian expansionism, the vitality of Christianity in an era of unprecedented immigration, the role of home missions in Canadian society, and the proliferation of the social gospel

Archives.

² “Does Canada Have A Soul?” MS 2 Box 1, File 41, Emily Murphy Papers, City of Edmonton Archives.

movement. They also became imbricated with the development of Murphy's own literary voice and personality, extending her views on the roles of the writer and the reader in a responsible, civil society, as well as her desire to create a more mythic and spiritual Canadian literature and history.

Murphy's vision of Canada was one that was restless and complex, wildly imaginative and thoughtfully pragmatic. In *Seeds of Pine*, as throughout many of Murphy's shorter writings, discourses of imperialism, progress, and nationalism and tributes to Canada's pioneers intertwine with cultural parables, allusions to prophecy, and articulations of latent anxiety to create a vibrant tension between Murphy's fervent belief in Canada's ability to create a glorious national destiny and her awareness of known lapses and ruptures in the deliverance of social equality and justice and the fulfilment of that destiny, particularly with respect to the legislative well-being of women and children. Canada emerges as a place of heroic productivity and destiny with limitless resource potential, but it simultaneously emerges as a place of unease and unrest, replete with traces of pagan energies and ominous marks of violence, which often undercut Murphy's fervent nationalism and Christian perspective. Murphy's chatty and irrepressible tone embodied what Jennifer Henderson has called the narrative persona of "live narration," with an easy immediacy that belies the degree to which it is textually constructed (176-77). Her irreverent interactions with engineers and surveyors, farmers and labourers, journalists and frocked fathers, missionaries and entrepreneurs, are punctuated with lamentations, stories, and myths that destabilize the conception of Canada as a country

founded on a predictable adventurous heroism. Her range of cultural references and unexpected social encounters, therefore, creates an unpredictable, skeptical, and unstable framework around which the activity of nation-building can be enacted and assessed. In *Seeds of Pine*, Murphy has a chapter dedicated "To The Builders" in which she celebrates the contributions of the pioneers—the discoverers, surveyors, engineers—whose determination and labour have helped realize Canada's potential. But Murphy also presents herself as a builder: a builder of narrative and a builder of cultural meaning. She uses narrative forms, such as the parable, to draw attention to the creation of narrative as an act parallel to the act of nation building, one best represented by unpredictable meandering and undetermined meaning as opposed to structured linearity and a predetermined denouement. If Susie Rijnhart, whose book was examined in the last chapter, used her power as narrator to inflect and organize narrative events in order to create the specific narrative outcome of cultural redemption, Murphy, in her writings, used her power as narrator to emphasize that cultural meanings could be multiple, and even deferred. Her passionate eloquence as a gendered witness of imperial endeavour and a chronicler of contemporary social concerns is counterpointed by the moments when she willingly confronts the limits of her authorial omniscience. She makes use of such narrative paradoxes as silence, and the power of the unutterable, and she exploits the possibilities for communication created by ambivalence, misinterpretation, and misunderstanding, to fashion a blueprint for what she wants her readers to understand—and ultimately to create—about and within Canada.

Within Murphy's poetics, therefore, Canada emerges as a country of contradiction, as both a sacred and a sordid community, one that replicated and reproduced the "immoral" problems of the foreign mission field and that was permeated with what Murphy calls "the odour of paganism" (*Bishop* 18), while still embodying the mythic potential of the "Peaceable Kingdom,"³ the New Jerusalem. Within this range of contradiction and capacity for misinterpretation, Canadian women, such as Emily Murphy, and "the hero priests of the North" whom she extolled, were particularly poised to claim a responsible and influential role in shaping the Canadian nation and in articulating Canadian destiny.

4.1 "White Peril," "Strangers," "Pagans," and "Half-Heathens" at Home: The Cultural Work of Home Missions and the Social Gospel

Before I examine the particularities of Murphy's representation of Canada, her use of literary form to cultivate the qualities of Canadian citizenship she wished to inculcate in her readers, and her dextrous deployment of a range of religious and secular imagery to structure this imaginative potential, consideration must be given to the cultural work of

³ This is, of course, Northrop's Frye's phrase from the "Conclusion to a *Literary History of Canada*." See Frye: "The moment that the peaceable kingdom has been completely obliterated by its rival is the moment when it comes into the foreground again, as the eternal frontier, the first thing that the writer's imagination must deal with" (252). Robert Lecker deconstructs Frye's "Conclusion" in his essay, "'A Quest for the Peaceable Kingdom': The Narrative in Northrop Frye's Conclusion to the *Literary History of Canada*" in *Making It Real*.

home missions in Canadian society in the early twentieth century. Originally organized primarily by the Church of England and the Methodist and Presbyterian religions in Canada to evangelize the Aboriginal populations living in northern and western Canada, home missions expanded their focus to service and reform both the resident white and immigrant populations that were dispersed throughout, and that flooded into, Canada in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

David Marshall confirms that the early twentieth century was a complex period in Canadian mission activity, one which saw the “passing of the heroic or evangelical age in Canadian missions” in that “preaching the saving gospel and reciting biblical stories were no longer sufficient” to “create Christian community” (124). Increasingly, in order to “win converts,” the missionary “was forced to be involved with social projects” (124). Home missions of the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches particularly focussed on what John Crawford Cochrane dubiously dubbed the “white peril”—white, Anglo-Saxon, male labourers, isolated in the North, well removed from the established bastions of civilized influence: organized religious services and the men of God who administered them (11). These male-dominated communities, bereft of “the refining presence of good women” and “the cleansing laughter and appealing innocence of childhood,” were seen to pose a moral danger to those who lived in them, and to Canadian society at large (Cochrane 3). Such labourers and communities were described in articles such as “The Canadian Lumberman and His Social Betterment,” published in the *Methodist Magazine and Review* in 1903, which, while celebrating the life work of these “knight[s] of the broad

axe,” deplored the idleness, lounging, and lack of physical and social purity and structured Christian influence generated by the isolated camp life, and which applauded those who sought “to strengthen the fibre of our nation by lighting the lamp of knowledge for the minds of its citizens” (13-14; 20). The mission station, in order to be effective in such communities, became more of a “social centre offering intellectual interest and physical recreation,” in order to create a “clean and wholesome atmosphere” in which body and mind could prosper;⁴ the missionary himself became more of a social instructor than an evangelical messenger (Marshall 124). Ralph Connor fictionalizes this cultural problem in *Black Rock*, which features a missionary, Mr. Craig, who attempts to revitalize life in the isolated camp town of Black Rock in social and secular, as well as religious terms, by embodying a social influence that was both “motherly” and masculine, “gentle” and rigorous, in order to reconstitute the men “fighting out that eternal fight for manhood, strong, clean, God-centred” (114; iii).⁵

Supporters of home missions, such as John Cochrane, Superintendent of Northern

⁴ This era, of course, saw the rise of the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA), which merged physical and social training of the body and mind with an inculcation of wholesome Christian values.

⁵ For a superb cultural analysis of how discourses of gender and race intersected in the formation of these communities, see Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*, which examines the colonial “homosocial” communities in British Columbia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Perry argues that “[j]ournalists, politicians and missionaries as well as other reformers” participated in implementing “a series of social transformations, labouring to make rough backwoods men into temperate and responsible patriarchs” (3-4).

Missions for the United Church of Canada, saw the lapsed morality and unsettled purity in the mining and lumber camps as a national and cultural, as well as a religious, problem. Cochrane, in *Trails and Tales of the North Land*, posed the anguished question: "Had a country any justification in calling itself Christian if religious privileges were not available for those who bore the brunt of its colonization and development?" (3). As builders of nation, Cochrane asserts, miners and loggers were entitled to the moral sustenance provided by Christian influence. Cochrane argues:

We must preach the Gospel to those adventurous spirits who are pushing forward the boundaries of our settled territory and peopling the wilderness.... If Canada is to be Christian its homes must be Christian, not only those that stand side by side on the streets of our cities and towns, but the fisherman's hut on the Pacific coast, the lonely homesteader's cabin on the wide prairie, and the settler's shack on the northern frontiers. We can no more have a Christian country which is Christian only in sections than we can have a Christian world in which nations are still pagan, or a Christian individual with unsundered areas in his life. (12)

Home missionary organizations saw themselves, therefore, as participating not simply in projects of moral and social regeneration, but in executing the "responsibilities of Canadian citizenship" (Cochrane 16).

As Mariana Valverde establishes, home missions also directed their energies toward both "cleaning up" and Christianizing the influx of immigrants who arrived in Canada in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and who came to be ubiquitously identified as "strangers" in Canadian society (*Age* 116). Alarmed not only by the range of religious beliefs represented by immigrants, but also by their seeming lack of physical cleanliness, home missionary organizations such as the Methodist Missionary

Society began the implementation of programmes of sanitation and hygiene to complement their evangelical and proselytizing work (*Age* 116). British Anglican missionary Eva Hasell gives voice to this cultural apprehension in *Canyons, Cans and Caravans*, where resistance to the Protestant missionary project is located, not with Canada's Aboriginal peoples—who, according to Hasell, are promisingly docile and receptive to the gospel message—but with the Russellites, Bolsheviks, Doukhors, and “Communist Finns” who settled the prairies in the early twentieth century. Hasell mourns that the textual purity of Anglican scripture has been assaulted with a “terrible garbled version of Holy Writ” (187). The new immigrants are also charged with a lack of patriotism as Hasell encounters a child who refuses to lower the British flag and sing the National Anthem (116). Hasell warns: “Many of these young people had never seen a Church, not even the little wooden one at the end of the valley. Though religious influences are lacking, irreligious are not. In places like this, evil propaganda has a clear field. There is nothing to counteract it” (156). Hasell argues, “If we are going to help Canada we must keep clearly before us the difficulties of Church and State which that vast new country has to face” (317). Hasell's intractable merging of political and religious work supports Mariana Valverde's claim that, in early twentieth-century Canada, “[p]atriotic religiosity characterized not only the racist right wing but also the benevolent current of the missionary movement” (*Age* 118).

Valentine Cunningham has astutely observed of nineteenth-century Britain that “as the great nineteenth-century missionary ventures became a more and more prominent

feature of British religious and social life, so the sense grew that Britain too was a mission-field in ways that simply mirrored the overseas ones" (100-01). A similar claim can be made of early twentieth-century Canada. As home and foreign missions became increasingly professionalized and organized, the boundary between "home" and "foreign" also seemed to become more permeable. This cultural unease was expressed in a surprising but specific vocabulary. Observers of Canadian culture began to adopt the rhetoric of the foreign missionary field to describe the moral climate of Canada in certain worrying locales. John Cochrane, at the beginning of *Tales and Trails of the North Land*, recounts an anguished exchange with a "splendid specimen of physical manhood, dressed in sheepskin coat, corduroy breeks and high boots" (1). The Canadian camp worker confides that, in the northern camp in which he works,

Sunday is just another day in the week and we work that day just the same as any other, for there is nothing else to do. I thought while I was in town that I would like to call and ask you if it is possible for the Church to do anything for men who are so completely cut off from all contact with religious things as we are. I am no saint myself...but I hate to see men living month after month like pagans. Sometimes I have wondered if there is any spot in the world more pagan than where I have lived during the past year, and yet Canada is supposed to be a Christian country. (1-2)

Nor was this rhetoric reserved exclusively for the isolated outposts of rural Canada.

Canadian historian and literary writer, Agnes Maule Machar, in *Marjorie's Canadian Winter*, devised the cultural category of the "half-heathen" to describe the moral malaise she saw infecting prosperous urban families, who neglected their social and charitable responsibilities to those less fortunate living in the cities (14). As Mr. Fleming declares

such people “half-heathen,” Marjorie, his daughter, ponders about how she “had heard a great deal about the heathen in foreign countries,” and she wonders how there could “be heathen, or even half-heathen people in a city like New York, and especially among the rich and educated portion of it” (14). As Marjorie later moves to Montreal for an extended winter visit, she similarly encounters “half-heathens” in Canada to add to this moral confusion. Therefore, it was not only distant foreign countries that were home to “pagans” and “heathens”—they were also becoming an integral dimension of the Canadian homeland itself. This imaginative merging of vocabularies and structures destabilized the artificial divide between home and foreign missions that structured the organization of Canadian missionary work.

The home missions movement was, in many senses, an extension of the social gospel movement,⁶ the broad name given to a social reform movement which flourished in Canada from the 1890s to the 1930s (Allen *Social* 3). According to Richard Allen, the social gospel movement “developed under influences which encouraged a social concept of man and underlined the social dimensions of the Gospel” (Introduction 3-4). In contrast to schools of thought that felt that social problems could be addressed by “individual energies and wills,” the social gospel movement was concerned with “institutions and institutional relationships in society” (Introduction 4). As a result, Allen

⁶ Janet F. Fishburn establishes the connection between missionary work and the social gospel, albeit in an American context, in “The Social Gospel as Missionary Ideology.”

maintains, the social gospel “became deeply involved in virtually every promising reform at the time” in early twentieth-century Canada (Introduction 4). Literary writers, such as Agnes Maule Machar, Ralph Connor, and Nellie McClung, who emphasized and argued for the importance of institutional reform in the structures of both Church and State, became affiliated with the concerns of the social gospel movement. In particular, as numerous critics differing demonstrate, the tenets of the social gospel movement merged with the rhetoric of maternal feminism and the civilizing mission in the writings of both Machar and McClung to create an idiom that would permit the articulation of the social, political, and intellectual reforms that would help advance the social interests of early Canadian women.⁷

The concerns of Murphy’s life work and writings certainly seem to demand some consideration within this social tradition. Yet it is interesting that Murphy’s literary writings are less commonly allied with the social gospel movement than the writings of Nellie McClung. More so than Murphy, McClung embraced the social utility of her

⁷ For these critical considerations of Machar and McClung, see Misao Dean, *Practising Femininity*; Ramsay Cook, *The Regenerators*; Cecily Devereaux, *Growing A Race*; Janice Fiamengo, *The Woman’s Page*, “A Legacy of Ambivalence: Responses to Nellie McClung,” and “Rediscovering our Foremothers Again: Racial Ideas of Canada’s Early Feminists, 1885-1945”; Daniel Coleman, *White Civility*; Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water*; Randi R. Warne, *Literature as Pulpit* and “Land of the Second Chance: Nellie McClung’s Vision of the Prairie West as Promised Land.” For more on Ralph Connor and his relationship to religious culture, see Daniel Coleman, *White Civility*; David B. Marshall, *Secularizing the Faith*; Clarence Karr, *Authors and Audiences*; Terrence L. Craig, *The Missionary Lives*; Richard Allen, *The Social Passion*.

literary works. McClung, in her autobiography, *The Stream Runs Fast*, declared of her own literary writing: "I have never worried about my art. I have written as clearly as I could, never idly and dishonestly, and if some of my stories are...sermons in disguise, my earnest hope is that the disguise did not obscure the sermon" (67). In contrast, the determined literary character of Murphy's writings, her play with paradox and contradiction, her unconventional descriptions, her relentless allusiveness, her restless ambivalence regarding the social institutions that appeared to require social reform, and her conception of nationhood itself, make her cultural positions, at times, elusive and more difficult to determine. Because her writings sometimes lacked a straightforward moral or argument, and because they sometimes relied on the reader to determine and create their meaning, Murphy's literary work is more challenging to situate within the frameworks invited by the social gospel movement. For Murphy, however, this may have been the point. Literary "disguise," rhetoric, and performance were ultimately important to the type of cultural poetics and social reforms she wished to cultivate.

4.2 "Cultural Missionary" and "Peter Pan's Twin Sister": Defining Emily Murphy

Emily Ferguson was born in Cookstown, Ontario in 1868, the same year in which Susie Rijnhart was born. Raised in Ontario and educated at the prestigious Bishop Strachan School for Girls in Toronto, her political and social legacy is well documented.⁸

⁸ See Jennifer Henderson, *Settler Feminism and Race Making in Canada*; Nancy Millar, *The Famous Five: A Pivotal Moment in Canadian Women's History*; Robert J.

A tireless political activist and reformer, she was instrumental in securing the Dower Act of 1911 in the Alberta legislature which granted women property rights. She also formulated the Child's Protection Act and the Juvenile Delinquent's Act, and was an aggressive proponent in helping secure the passage of the Sifton Bill, which gave women political equality and the right to vote in Alberta. The first female magistrate in the British Empire, she is today best remembered for helping, along with Nellie McClung, Irene Parlby, Louise McKinney, and Henrietta Muir Edwards, successfully to challenge Section 41 of the British North America Act. Their successful challenge allowed women to be considered "persons" under the Canadian Constitution and hence eligible to appointment to the Senate due to a Privy Council decision in 1929. In 1887, she married the Reverend Arthur Murphy and assumed many of the duties of a clergyman's wife, including serving as president of the Woman's Missionary Society (James 13). Murphy was also a journalist and a book reviewer, a frequent contributor to many publications, including *The Canadian Magazine*, *National Monthly*, *Winnipeg Telegram*, *Winnipeg Tribune*, *Colliers*, *Scarlet and Black*, and *Maclean's*, and she served as the first National

Sharpe and Patricia I. McMahon, *The Person's Case: The Origins and Legacy of the Fight for Legal Personhood*; Donna James, *Emily Murphy*; Christine Mander, *Emily Murphy, Rebel: First Female Magistrate in the British Empire*; Byrne Hope Sanders, *Emily Murphy, Crusader ("Janey Canuck") and Famous Women*; Tracy Kulba, "New Woman, New Nation: Emily Murphy, the Famous Five Foundation, and the Production of a Female Citizen," (Diss. U of Alberta), for biographical and critical considerations of Emily Murphy's life and political legacy.

President of the Canadian Women's Press Club from 1913 to 1920.⁹

What may be less familiar to modern readers is her literary legacy, particularly three books published between 1910 and 1914 about her impressions of Canada on her travels through its western and northern territories: *Janey Canuck in the West* (1910); *Open Trails* (1912); and *Seeds of Pine* (1914).¹⁰ These books solidified Murphy's identity as a notable Canadian writer in early twentieth-century Canada. Her writings were compared by the reviewers of her day to those of John Bunyan, Charles Lamb, Fiona Macleod, Walt Whitman, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, John Burroughs, Charles Dickens, Mark Twain, Elizabeth von Arnim, and J. M. Barrie.¹¹ One reviewer even called her "Peter Pan's twin sister."¹² A review of *Open Trails* in *Dominion Magazine* declared: "No Canadian writer, certainly no woman writer has done more to spread Western Canada's fame through the English speaking world than Janey Canuck."¹³ Critics saluted her "literary grace," not only in her earlier, more buoyant works, but also

⁹ For a full list of Emily Murphy's professional and organizational designations and affiliations, see Byrne Hope Sanders, *Emily Murphy Crusader*, pp. 345-48.

¹⁰ Other books by "Janey Canuck" include *Impressions of Janey Canuck Abroad* (1902), *The Black Candle* (1922), *Our Little Canadian Cousin of the Great North West* (1923), and *Bishop Bompas* (1929).

¹¹ MS 2 Scrapbook 4, 244; MS 2 File 60; Emily Murphy Papers, City of Edmonton Archives

¹² MS 2 Scrapbook 4, 72, Emily Murphy Papers, City of Edmonton Archives.

¹³ MS 2 Scrapbook 4, 244, Emily Murphy Papers, City of Edmonton Archives.

in her eminently more serious social document, *The Black Candle* (1922).¹⁴ These comments establish that Murphy was celebrated as a literary figure both within and outside of Canada in the early twentieth century, even though Murphy's literary career has tended to be disregarded by today's critics, who are more interested in claiming Murphy as a feminist pioneer and in examining the social legacy of her judicial work.¹⁵

The story of the birth of the pseudonym 'Janey Canuck' has been documented by both Byrne Hope Sanders and Christine Mander, as well as Murphy herself.¹⁶ On route to England aboard the S. S. *Gallia* in 1898, Murphy heard several tourists discuss the "fourth-rate, half-educated" demeanour of Canadians (Sanders 52). After spiritedly defending herself against these insults, Murphy decided to adopt an unambiguously Canadian pen name under which she could write her observations and opinion pieces from a female Canadian point of view. 'Johnny Canuck' was a well-known nickname for Canadians at this time; Murphy adopted a feminine variant of it. The story, and the actual

¹⁴ MS 2 File 60, Emily Murphy Papers, City of Edmonton Archives.

¹⁵ See, for instance, Lilian Whiting's rhapsodic tribute to Murphy in *Canada the Spellbinder* and the article, "The Joyousness of Janey Canuck," by Don Munday in the *Westminster Hall Magazine and Farthest West Review* for representative celebrations of Murphy as a literary figure. Surprisingly, Murphy is not mentioned in many contemporary literary histories and studies that examine the literature of early Canada, including W. H. New, *A History of Canadian Literature*, *The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature*, Misao Dean, *Practising Femininity*, Eva-Marie Kröller, *Canadian Travellers to Europe, 1851-1900*.

¹⁶ See Byrne Hope Sanders, *Emily Murphy: Crusader*, p. 52 and Christine Mander, *Emily Murphy: Rebel*, p. 40 for complete details of this episode. Murphy herself retells the story in part in her 1902 publication, *The Impressions of Janey Canuck Abroad*.

moniker itself, suggest that 'Janey Canuck' is a kind of Canadian Everywoman, who represents the typical views of working and middle-class Canadian women.¹⁷ But this, in fact, is a misleading conclusion to make in light of the narrative voice that emerges in the 'Janey Canuck' books. For there is little that is typical about her allusive style and what Jennifer Henderson has wittily called her "citational enthusiasm" (178), her arresting cultural observations, and her intellectual range manifested through obscure references to ancient cultures and religious practices, as well as an impressive array of poets and writers.

In the course of her professional career, therefore, Emily Murphy had many cultural identities: literary pioneer, social activist, legislative magistrate and innovator, moral reformer, conservative feminist. Her role as the wife of the itinerant Anglican clergyman, the Reverend Arthur Murphy, who performed mission work for the Anglican Church of Canada, is yet another role that intersects with all of the above cultural identities. In the 1890s, Arthur Murphy was invited by Bishop Baldwin to serve as a mission preacher for the Huron Diocese for the Anglican Church of Canada (Sanders 45-46). Emily Murphy, hence, assumed many of the responsibilities, as well as the nomadic life, of a missionary's wife (Sanders 47-50). Given the level of rhetorical and cultural play and ambiguity that characterize Murphy's writings, it is fitting that she did not

¹⁷ Indeed, Veronica Strong-Boag suggests as much when she entitled her book documenting the social history of Canadian women between the World Wars, "*Janey Canuck*": *Women in Canada, 1919-1939*.

comfortably occupy the traditional role of “helpmeet,” a cultural role that she gently satirized by straying well outside of its boundaries. Both Jennifer Henderson and Daniel Coleman have analyzed Murphy’s unconventional treatment of her husband in her writings. Henderson observes that Murphy’s “playful disobedience” establishes the social nature of her mission and identity, granting her “access to the inner reaches of communities,” while distancing Arthur Murphy “from the space of intimacy with the reader” (182-83;174). Coleman maintains that, with her “regular subversions of her husband’s authority,” Murphy “undermines the paternalist assumption...of the Canadian version of muscular Christianity” (*White* 146). Her irreverent treatment of, and playful repartee with, her husband, whom she amusingly calls “the Padre,” also resulted in Murphy destabilizing the terrain of the clergy and the missionary wife. Murphy demonstrates a degree of joyous personal licence in her textual depictions of her relationship with her husband that would have been unimaginable to the deferential Charlotte Bompas or to the heroic widow, Susie Rijnhart.

Murphy also inhabited the role of missionary in a broader sense in that she laid claim to being a “cultural missionary,” a term used by Barbara N. Ramusack to describe the civilizing missions of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century women who travelled to foreign lands intent on reforming their populations, particularly their women (119-20; 132-33). According to Ramusack, cultural missionaries preached a more secular gospel of “women’s uplift” (120). Indeed, Jennifer Henderson has specifically argued that Murphy was greatly concerned with “cultural ‘influence’” (164). Henderson sees

Murphy's literary work as part of the "discursive figurations" that laid the foundation for her later legislative work and, hence, sees an important cultural extension between Murphy's later legislative career and her early literary career (164). She asserts that Murphy's "feisty and progressive female narrator *personified* the agency of an apparatus for administering the formation and correction of cultural attributes in an increasingly heterogenous West" (177, emphasis in original). Henderson sees Murphy's writing as representing a form of "*social work*" which utilizes a "'humanizing' pedagogy," as it "attempts to evacuate the book from the scene and to engage the reader by means of 'humanized' material and the charming presence of the narrator" (176, emphasis in original).¹⁸ Indeed, Henderson claims that the Janey Canuck books echo the structure of the Zenana work undertaken by women's missionary groups such as the Woman's Missionary Society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in which the "'pioneer work' of removing 'prejudices and false notions' in Eastern women...would thus come to be institutionalized in 'home missions' concerned with the reclamation and conservation of Canadian women" (182-88; 184). Henderson maintains that the structure of the "transplanted zenana" became an important tool in constructing a "textual mediation of exemplarity" necessary for gendered social reform (186; 187). If Henderson

¹⁸ I think it is less the case that the book "disappears" or is "bypassed" in Murphy's work, as Henderson argues, than that the book occupies a paradoxical position in Murphy's cultural poetics. By drawing attention to the process of narration, utilizing elevated rhetoric, and literary forms such as the parable, Murphy is inculcating literary, as well as social, characteristics in her writing, creating literary work as well as "social work," and arguing for the importance of the literary book in Canadian society.

is right, this means that writers such as Murphy actually used the organized structures of foreign missionary societies textually to offer progressive improvements in the reconfiguration of Canadian society. As I will argue, not only to build on Henderson's argument, but to expand the range of its implications, Murphy did not simply use the content of her writing to model "exemplarity"; she actually used the dynamics of literary production, and the possibilities encoded within literary form itself, to create and model the reforms she wished to see in Canadian society in order to help create an ideal model of Canadian citizenship.¹⁹

4.3 "God's Crops": Seeds, Pines, Parables, and Prophecies

Seeds of Pine is a work filled with contradiction. Janey Canuck depicts herself as a figure of curiosity, but not nobility. While, at times, thoughtful, she does not engage in the kind of contemplative nobility in which adventure writers like William Butler often engaged, who, in his classic narrative, *The Great Lone Land*, portrayed himself as the Great Lone Man, a figure self-consciously heroic and detached from civilization

¹⁹ Henderson argues that many of the sketches in *Janey Canuck in the West* model the characteristics that Emily Murphy would utilize and attempt to inculcate in her judicial treatment of female prisoners in her courtroom during her magisterial career. For instance, Janey's visit with Doukhobor women invites the "use of their gendered powers of moral suasion" in a space of "feminine intimacy" (184). Her humorous dealings with her Swedish cook show how "recreational reading" can be "enlisted within a preventative strategy of character reformation" (187-88). Henderson maintains that, through her encounters with such women, "Janey Canuck demonstrates the brand of judicious 'tolerance' required by a professional diffuser of norms" (180). See Henderson, pp. 180-88, for her detailed explorations of these important points.

absorbing the grandeur of the landscape. While the moralizing intent behind her writing is indisputable, there is a sense of play that rescues it from rigid didacticism and pedantry. She is playful, not only in her narrative voice, but in her interactions with those she meets; she steals and then repents; she plays jokes; she stumbles and falls; she is ironic and self-ironic; she is verbally argumentative, while still openly acknowledging the power and advisability of strategic silence; she self-consciously contradicts herself and, in so doing, she shows herself constantly being shaped by her encounters with the unknown and the unexpected. While condemning pursuits like gambling, for instance, she also shows herself being seduced by its pageantry and allure when, in "A Country Woman at the Races," she explores her own dalliance with horse betting. She is also a narrator who recognizes and plays with her own power to withhold information. Part of the route of her journey is similar to that undertaken by Agnes Deans Cameron in 1908, when Cameron and her niece, Jessie Cameron Brown, took the HBC steamer *Athabasca* to the Arctic Circle to promote immigration to Canada's relatively unsettled northern territories.²⁰ Like Cameron, Murphy was an enthusiastic promoter of northern development and settlement. But Murphy offers more insight and ambivalence with

²⁰ Murphy appeared to have been a great admirer of Agnes Deans Cameron. Murphy alluded to Cameron several times in her own writings, including her mock-review of her own novel, *Janey Canuck in the West* (MS 2 File 60, Emily Murphy Papers, City of Edmonton Archives); in her unpublished account, "The World's Record Patrol" (MS 2 Box 2, File 57, Emily Murphy Papers, City of Edmonton Archives); in the article, "Travellers' Tales," published in *Canada Weekly* in 1918, which includes a picture of Cameron with her niece, Jessie Cameron Brown (MS 2 Scrapbook 4, 62 Emily Murphy Papers, City of Edmonton Archives); and in her 1929 publication, *Bishop Bompas*.

respect to the consequences of such development and articulates a greater measure of anxiety about its long-term prospects on Canada's future. If Cameron in *The New North* presents herself as a narrator of voluminous and speculative knowledge who ultimately can withhold nothing from her reader—not even her unintended contradictory impulses—then Janey Canuck presents herself as a narrator who is not afraid to have secrets.

Jennifer Henderson sees *Seeds of Pine* as a work that defies easy generic classification. Blending the genres of “diary, field notes, and guidebook,” Henderson views all three Janey Canuck books as a type of exploration literature that were “read for what they *modelled* and praised for their healthful *effects*” (177-78, emphasis in original). *Seeds of Pine* can also be characterized as a home travel book, but it is one that offers the reader very different fare from many of the travel publications of this era. With her unconventional approach, Murphy implicitly argues for a different kind of narrative about Canada apart from official accounts that focus on statistics and geography, or what she calls “private car” journalism (53). These accounts were commissioned by such official agencies as the Canadian Pacific Railway, in which journalists were paid to write predictable and favourable reports on the Canadian landscape and economy, primarily to secure immigrants to the regions that needed population and development. This must have been a contentious issue for journalists of this time. In her spirited travel book, *A Woman in Canada* (1910), Marion Cran tackles the issue directly when she deals with apparent charges that the accuracy and veracity of her travel account may have been compromised by the fact that her journey and travels throughout Canada were financed by

the government of Canada, whose motives in so doing were notably less lyrical and obtuse than Cran's: to attract middle-class British women immigrants to the Canadian West in order to secure for it a morally conservative, fiscally stable, and racially "pure" work force. Georgina Binnie-Clarke also deals with the issue, albeit humorously, in her 1910 travel and settler account, *A Summer on the Canadian Prairie*, in which the amusing thread that underlies much of the book is the discrepancy between the romanticized versions of progress and prosperity presented to unsuspecting British immigrants in promotional literature and the primitive conditions of hardship and labour that they actually were forced to endure upon arrival.

In this respect, Murphy was a powerful proponent for "literary truth," a truth not found in facts, statistics, and literal experience, but in that kind of insight that is only framed and revealed through literature and imaginative and creative endeavour. In *Open Trails*, she maintains: "That writer, then...who sees more than he is shown...who senses the life of the people rather than photographs it, he is the writer who most benefits his country and all countries" (111). She continues: "Which statistician can tell the number of men who have followed to India because of the writings of Kipling, to Alaska because of Jack London, to America by reason of Fenimore Cooper, Washington Irving and Bret Harte?" (111). It is interesting that Canada is not on her list. Doubtless, it disturbed Murphy that there was no comparable writer, Canadian or otherwise, that she could add to this list that could be said to inspire immigration to Canada. From this perspective, therefore, there is something very pragmatic, as well as philosophical, about her desire to

nurse and inspire an indigenous literature. As Canada's literary, as well as historical, legacy is being negotiated and built, Murphy seems to be aware of her own role as a metaphorical literary trail blazer as she winnows and hews her way through the developing literary wilderness to create a legacy that she hopes will bear the scrutiny of future generations.

The title, *Seeds of Pine*, is, in part, inspired by a quotation from Fiona Macleod which appears on the title page of the book: "A handful of pine-seeds will cover mountains with the green majesty of the forest, and I, too, will set my face to the wind and throw my handful of seed on high" (n. pag.). "Fiona Macleod" was actually the pseudonym used by William Sharp (1855-1905), a visionary and controversial Scottish poet, dramatist, scholar, and editor, who was vividly influenced by Gaelic folklore, mythology, and religion, and whose fanciful essays and poems contain a startling mixture of pagan and traditional Christian elements. The quotation that prefaces *Seeds of Pine* is from the Dedication to Macleod's book of essays and stories, *The Winged Destiny: Studies in the Spiritual History of the Gael*, which is addressed to J. A. G., Dr. John A. Goodchild. According to Sharp's wife and biographer, Elizabeth A. Sharp, Goodchild was a "poet, mystic and archaeologist" with whom Fiona Macleod enjoyed an intense correspondence (Sharp 316). In the Dedication, Macleod aspires to be one of the "horizon-makers" who wants to "extend the horizons" (*Writings* 5: viii). He directly addresses Goodchild, claiming he is "of the little clan, for whom this book is written," those of rarefied and privileged perception. In more general terms, Macleod's intricate

exploration of the mythology and folklore of Ireland and Scotland was motivated by his anguished recognition that the spiritual dimensions of contemporary Irish identity and life, as was Ireland's grand Celtic Destiny, were waning in light of the influence of English religious models and an increased emphasis on materialism. For instance, Macleod deplored the influence of Calvinism on indigenous Gaelic religion (*Writings* 5: 237) and the "selfish landlordism" that was affecting the distribution and development of traditional Highland property (*Writings* 4: 413).

According to Terry L. Meyers, Fiona Macleod was also "instrumental in the rebirth of interest in Gaelic myth and folklore associated with the Celtic Renaissance" (2). Macleod's poetry was admired by writers such as William Butler Yeats, who would declare that she had "in her hands the keys of the gates of the primeval world, which shut behind more successful races, when they plunged into material progress" (qtd. in Meyers 2). In light of the book's preoccupation with developing and recording an indigenous mythology and countering of materialist ideologies with more spiritual and intangible considerations, Murphy's invocation of Fiona Macleod seems strategic and purposeful. For Emily Murphy, too, was concerned about those aspects of Canadian life and identity that were being overlooked in light of a cultural preoccupation with the quantifiable, of interminable statistics on wheat and resources, and she seems to view it as part of her cultural mission to record and to celebrate what is spiritual and intangible about the Northern landscape. In the Dedication of *Winged Destiny*, Macleod claims, "The South is beautiful but has not the secrets of the North" (*Writings* 5: vii). Murphy has a similar

fascination with the mystery and the opacity of the North, the unseen energy that characterizes it and its inability to be penetrated: "Here, there are eyes that watch you all the time, but they are hidden.... There is a new song that can never be told, else I would tell it to you. Only it may be heard" (54).²¹ Like Fiona Macleod, Murphy also vacillates with artless ease between Christian and pagan references, which gives her work unique revelatory power and literary body to her claim that "the only true history of a country is to be found in its fairy tales" (160). Where she differs with Macleod is that Murphy is trying to create and define an emergent nationalism, as opposed to recapturing a nationalist essence seen to be in decline.

Seeds are also significant from the Biblical and Christian traditions that heavily influenced Emily Murphy and permeate the content and the structure of *Seeds of Pine*. The word 'seeds' recalls the New Testament parables of Jesus Christ, particularly Matthew 13: 1-9, the parable of the sower, and Matthew 13: 31-32, the parable of the mustard seed. The Biblical parabolic tradition was essentially a didactic one that made use of numerous metaphors, often agrarian in nature. In these parables, seeds function as metaphors for the Word and the message of Christ, while the different environments in which they fall and either die or thrive represent the degree to which the Word is received, understood, and ultimately lived; in an ideal environment, seeds that fall on good soil will bear fruit and resources for future generations. As well as being "a means

²¹ All quotations from *Seeds of Pine* in this chapter are from the 1922 edition of the book published by Musson Press of Toronto.

of instruction,” parables were also, according to religious scholars Norman Perrin and Dennis C. Duling, “a form of proclamation” (416). They were characterized both by obliqueness and esotericism²² in which the process of attempting to understand the parables was as much an aspect of their pedagogical effectiveness as was their content (Perrin and Duling 417-18). The metaphor of sowing was a favourite one of missionaries, and throughout her text, Murphy subtly invokes the didactic tradition of the parables with all its esoteric privileges. She establishes herself as a “sower” of her own words in her role as cultural missionary, as she confronts the raw and elemental Canadian landscape with her anxieties about the present and her prophecies of hope for the future.

The parable enjoyed importance as a cultural form in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century writing beyond the Biblical application. Gillian Beer has identified the parable as an important form of representation in Victorian literary and scientific discourse, which permitted the invocation of a “range of meanings” that linked social inquiry, literary allusion, and Biblical authority, while challenging the “habitual self-image” of both listeners and their communities (196-97). Beer maintains that a parable’s “unlocked meaning...is never quite commensurate with the suggestiveness of the story” (197). Beer’s identification of the parable’s “playfulness,” and its capacity to cultivate “enigma,” neatly correlates with Janey Canuck’s playful and enigmatic narrative persona

²² The parables had to be explained and interpreted to their listeners (Matthew 13: 18-23). Christ confirms, “The knowledge of the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven has been given to you, but not to them.... The reason I use parables in talking to you is that they look but do not see, and they listen but do not understand” (Matthew 13: 11-14).

(197). Peter Slater has maintained that parables as a form of story encourage a “reversal of values and expectations,” which make them useful vehicles for re-evaluating and challenging “orthodox” cultural positions (306-07). Parables, as Paul Ricoeur suggests, are both “narrative and symbolic at the same time” (159). The form itself, therefore, to some degree, inculcates the potential for misunderstanding in the attempt to determine meaning. As a result, there is a form of cultural daring in a writer relying on the parable form to communicate ideas because, in not making meaning explicit, in allowing for the possibility of multiple meanings, the writer runs the risk of misinterpretation or of complete incomprehension. Yet such audacity is consistent with Murphy’s narrative persona. Murphy, it seems, found within this space—the space that permitted misinterpretation and the possibilities of unstated meaning, as well as the redirection of surface meaning—a cultural form that captured the ambiguity and complexity of Canadian culture.

The parable’s compressed and economic structure also worked well and interchangeably with the sketch form favoured by Murphy, as well as other early twentieth-century writers such as Stephen Leacock. Murphy reveals her acute awareness of the nature of the parabolic tradition in a conversation she shares with Clausen Otto, an experienced Rocky Mountain guide. Otto tells Murphy a story of a lengthy climb he once performed, chasing a bear up a particularly high summit in the hopes of being rewarded with a particularly spectacular view. After expressing disappointment at simply seeing nothing but further peaks, Murphy succinctly notes: “Perhaps, the literary critics will help

me decide if Otto meant this for the parable of the climber or whether he was only singularly adept in the art of suggestion" (59-60). At another point in the text, she tells of her meeting with a pretty "breed" girl, Justine, whom she asks to tell her a story. Justine tells her the story of a blackbird and mallard who marry and have three sons but then tire of one another and go their separate ways. Murphy then declares: "It was a story I craved of Justine, and lo! she has told me a parable" (98).

Similarly structured incidents occur throughout the book, where a story teller tells an enigmatic story, the point of which is not immediately apparent to the listener and is left open to interpretation. Such an incident occurs when a group of engineers with whom Murphy is spiritedly conversing presents her with a caged squirrel, Punch. Pontificating on the "inutility" and fate of the trapped animal whose "job is to go round and round on a wheel but never to make progress" (37), Murphy offers some enigmatic and pithy advice to the man who owns it:

"Let him go when you get to the woods," says I, "it will be kinder. You have heard of those Eastern folk, who, when they wish to praise Allah, buy birds and set them free."

"No! I have not heard," he replies; "tell me about them."

"There is no more to the story, that is all." (37)

The dogged exchange that follows reveals a clash of values, with the owner representing more materialistic views of property and ownership and claims to natural dominance and Murphy espousing contrasting views of humility, tolerance, and sacrifice. Having proffered her advice, Murphy does not offer any kind of an extended explanation—to the squirrel's owner or to the reader. After considering the matter, the owner decides that he

will not release the squirrel. Murphy's "seed" of advice has fallen on barren soil and withers accordingly. This episode is particularly interesting because it demonstrates the limits of Murphy's moral influence and transformative powers as a woman. It also emphasizes the reciprocal nature of the parabolic tradition. Murphy engages her readers without feeling any narrative responsibility for having to explain what these events may mean or assuming responsibility for the final outcome. Chapters such as "Bitter Waters," "The Baboushka," and "In the Shadow of the Scaffold" function as parables in the greater story that Murphy is engaged in telling—the story of Canada—and she leaves it to her readers to draw their own conclusions as to what these episodes reveal about Canada's legislative responsibilities to the vulnerable in society such as young Aboriginal women and prisoners. Murphy uses the oblique nature of parables themselves to suggest the greater purpose of her book: she uses them to create a literary experience and process in which the reader has to assume some of the responsibility for its final meaning and message.

This perhaps explains her use of direct address throughout *Seeds of Pine*. From the very first paragraph, Murphy addresses the reader directly—an unconventional rhetorical technique in travel and settler writing. She invites the reader: "Come you with me and let us travel down the ways through the heart of the summer! We shall have breeze and sun in our eyes, and breeze and sun in our hearts. If you like not the prospect, pray, come no further, for we be contrary the one to the other and no way-fellows" (1). The implications of this invitation are intriguing in that she gives the reader the choice of

following her or abandoning her.²³ Murphy's esoteric nature also becomes apparent as she admits that the journey she is about to undertake, and the "prospect" of Canada she is about to reveal, may not have meaning for everyone. Paul Ricoeur sees parables, with their use of "enigma expressions," as engaged in a process of sorting their listeners (160). Murphy's text, therefore, enacts the process of "sorting" that parables, such as the parable of the sower, thematically demonstrate. Murphy also frames many of her interactions with the reader as if she is engaged in conversation with them as opposed to communicating through the written word: "Do you waggle your head at me? Do you? Then I care not a straw. It only means you do not comprehend the ways of men at our frontier posts" (16). This also serves as a powerful reminder of the oral nature of the parabolic tradition. The parables were preached to gathered listeners and often Christ advised his followers: "Listen, then, if you have ears" (Matthew 13: 43). Murphy similarly commands her reader: "Now listen to the story" (98).

In *The Sense of Power*, it is also revealed that "seeds" were identified with the rhetoric of race, nationhood, and liberty²⁴ of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, an identification that Murphy herself makes when she claims: "We are the wide-ruling seed of the Saxons and ever shall we answer to the rally of the race" (297).

²³ This echoes Christ's admonition to his apostles, "If the people in that house welcome you, let your greeting of peace remain; but if they do not welcome you, then take back your greeting" (Matthew 10: 13).

²⁴ See Berger, *The Sense of Power*, p. 118 for an explanation of Edward Freeman's theory and p. 130 to see how it was adapted to the Canadian context.

Encapsulated in the metaphor is a degree of distasteful privilege—naturalized by the nature of the metaphor itself—that assumes significance in light of the book's concern with matters of assimilation and immigration. More innocuously, the identification of the pine with the Canadian landscape—embodied, for instance, by Tom Thomson's *The Jack Pine* (1916)—also situates the phrase "seeds of pine" in an unambiguous Canadian context.²⁵ Murphy herself would say of the pine in *Janey Canuck in the West*: "The pine were a fitter emblem to represent Canada than the maple. The maple is indigenous only to the southern provinces, the pine to all. Its characteristics spell out endurance, constancy, health, longevity" (111).²⁶ Murphy also personally imbues the pine with the religious symbolism of salvation. After praising the pine's eternal nature, she notes, "Pippa,"²⁷ the

²⁵ Seeds were used as a literary image to describe, sometimes ironically, Canada's expansive potential in early and mid twentieth-century poetry. For instance, F. R. Scott in "Flying to Fort Smith," writes: "Underground/In the coins of rock/Cities sleep like seeds" (*Milton Poets* 101). More recent Canadian writers, such as Michael Ondaatje, have also played with the metaphor of seeds. In *In the Skin of a Lion* (1987), Ondaatje exuberantly and lyrically exploits the dual symbolism and ambivalence of seeds as agents of destruction as well as growth. Robert Kroetsch, too, in *Seed Catalogue* uses the materiality of seeds and the seed catalogue to argue the "archaeological" nature of contemporary Western Canadian literature.

²⁶ For an incidental but fascinating examination of the political implications of botanical classification and symbolism in Canada, see Suzanne Zeller, *Inventing Canada*. Zeller argues that, by the mid 1800s in Canada, "botany had joined the vanguard of inventory sciences which supported the idea of a transcontinental nation" (240). Zeller observes that "[c]ertain plants, their geographical distribution and Canada's potential for cultivation were adopted as symbols and pressed into service as portents of this expansive destiny," including plants such as the maple (240).

²⁷ A reference to Robert Browning's poem, *Pippa Passes*.

little maid who sang for the world's hurt, came out of the woods, as likewise the Nazarene who died for it" (62). She also calls the pine a "religious" tree with the power to "drive out the devil" (268). The pine is also cited in Isaiah 41:19 as a sign of the generative power of God's love and constancy to his chosen people: "I will make cedars grow in the desert, and acacias and myrtles and olive trees. Forests will grow in barren land, forests of pine and juniper and cypress." In *The Impressions of Janey Canuck Abroad*, Murphy refers to pines as "God's crops" (154). This assumes significance in light of Murphy's bold, if not always consistent, invocation of Canada as a chosen nation with a triumphant destiny.

The epigraph to *Seeds of Pine* is also significant in that it invokes not just the present but the future and, indeed, connects the two. This was typical of the literature of this era. Stevie Bezencet has observed that New World literature and art tended to focus on the grandeur and scale of nature in part because the landscape lacked the rich historical resonances associated with European culture; as a result, "geography stood in for history and scenery replaced culture, referencing future actions" rather than those of an "unidentifiable past" (57). This concern about the future extends to Murphy's consideration of writing as she displays, throughout *Seeds of Pine*, an anxiety regarding its reception that demonstrates that she is as concerned with her own literary future and how her writings will be judged by future generations as she is with Canada's future. The epigraph for *Open Trails*, for instance, contains a lengthy quotation from Horace's *Epistle XX* that explores the potential fates that a book may experience once an author releases it

from the safe confines of “home,” from being a celebrated “novelty” to becoming fodder for “bookworms.” Such concerns are not new to English literature, of course; from Shakespeare to Wordsworth, writers have often explored the fleeting nature of life and fame, the possibilities of literature to restore and transcend the passage of time, the seeming finality of death, and their preoccupation about whether they and their writing will be remembered and read in future generations. But Murphy’s concerns achieve a more pointed resonance when situated within the general discourse regarding the status of a burgeoning Canadian literature that preoccupied writers and academics in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as well as the particular issues with which she had to contend as a woman writer attempting to establish her literary reputation in a society that did not necessarily always encourage or respect female literary efforts. Sara Jeannette Duncan’s emphatic pronouncement in *The Week* in 1886 that Canadians “are still an eminently unliterary people” haunted writers and critics alike (qtd. in Ballstadt *Search* 31).

One of the telling encounters that resonates throughout the book, to which Murphy both silently and defiantly replies, is her encounter with a British tourist who is dismissive of Canadian literary efforts in light of their “sordid practicality” and fear of anything “fanciful” and “impressionistic” (13). He concludes: “A coarse man cannot take impressions except from a closed fist” (14). The attitudes of British travellers to Canadians in general echo the sentiments of many middle-class Canadian settlers and tourists towards Aboriginals, who privileged their own aesthetic abilities both to create

culture and appreciate nature over that of Aboriginal and lower-class immigrant populations. Murphy foregrounds that attitude to dismantle it, not only with her own “fanciful” and “impressionistic” writing, but also with her pointed observations regarding the literary contributions of native and immigrant Canadians. She quotes a poem from Michael Gowda, a Ruthenian from Edmonton, who celebrates his Canadian heritage. She also praises an engineer she meets on the trail who is also a writer, claiming: “It augurs well for a country when its workers love it and want to write about it” (144).

The reference to “seeds” can also be interpreted as an indirect literary homage to *Sowing Seeds in Danny* (1908), written by Murphy’s good friend, Nellie McClung. The story of the two women’s professional association and personal friendship is well documented in the many accounts that exist of their famous legal battle to have women acknowledged as “Persons” under the British North American Act.²⁸ But they forged a literary relationship as well. Murphy humorously pays tribute to her friend when, in the course of her travels, she is confused with McClung by one of her well-meaning northern hosts, who praises her as the author of *Sowing Seeds in Danny* (138). A Canadian bestseller, *Sowing Seeds in Danny* is a work of sentimental domestic fiction, a genre which, as Nina Baym observes, sets domesticity forth “as a value scheme for ordering all of life, in competition with the ethos of money and exploitation” that was seen to prevail

²⁸ See Nancy Millar, *The Famous Five: A Pivotal Moment in Canadian Women’s History*; Mary E. Hallet, *Firing the Heather: The Life and Times of Nellie McClung*; Catherine L. Cleverdon, *The Woman Suffrage Movement in Canada*; M. A. Macpherson, *Nellie McClung: A Voice for the Voiceless*, for some of these accounts.

in much of society (27). Undoubtedly, the genre allowed McClung to present a moral vision of rural Canada in which she could celebrate the transformations generated by the desire for reform, in which the affective powers of sentiment, humour, and good will combined with the institutional strength and structure of Protestantism to keep at bay more degenerative social forces such as materialism and alcoholism. As Randi R. Warne documents, McClung was a passionate advocate for the power of literature to create social change. She saw writers as similar to “prophets” with a moral responsibility to nation and to audience to “write words that will strengthen the weak” and “shed light where darkness reigns” (qtd. in Warne *Literature* 14). Murphy shared many of McClung’s views on social reform and the role of the writer in society, and she explores many of the same themes, albeit in a different generic context.

As the book’s title suggests, McClung also exploits and intertwines the imagery and metaphors of seeds and prophecy, although, unlike Murphy, she situates her imagery and characters in an unambiguously Christian framework. The dubious visionary, Mrs. Francis, kind-hearted but lacking practical insight, and reaching humorously erroneous conclusions into her own social experiments with the Watson children, claims of Danny, the adorable and impish youngest Watson: “I would like to speak to his young mind and endeavour to plant the seeds of virtue and honesty in that fertile soil” (20). Mrs. Francis ascribes a purity and innocence to Danny that he lacks as he deftly manipulates her and her household staff into attaining what he wants. McClung uses the metaphor of seeds, the rhythms and sequence of the agricultural harvest, as a model for ordering an ideal

social and moral world for Canada, both for its present and its future. While human intention and repentance are instrumental in effecting social change, there is no doubt that she also subscribes to the higher power of Providence; as the Reverend Grantley claims: "The Lord sends you seed-time and harvest" (75). The musings of Mrs. Burton Francis begin and end the novel and ultimately present her as a failed prophetic figure—one who "see[s]—things—sometimes" (313)—which is interesting in light of how Murphy both constructs and deconstructs herself throughout *Seeds of Pine* as a social prophet. The most intriguing aspect of Mrs. Francis's misguided prophetic sense is in the fact that she sees the future as resting with Danny—whose name, of course, recalls the important Biblical prophet Daniel—while McClung's overarching plot and narrative structure ultimately make it clear that Canada's future resides in the spirit and the "fertile soil" of the character of Pearlie, a figure whom Mrs. Francis either tends to ignore or misunderstand.

As a discourse for describing an emerging nation with an uncertain future, prophetic eschatology is apt because of the dualism inherent to it: despair at the present course of uncertainty in which the nation is currently engaged; hope for a more optimistic future. Murphy makes many oracular pronouncements on Canada's future: "It requires no fore-vision to know that the land has a future above anxiety" (17); "Surely this is a country of vast horizons, both mentally and visually" (118); "I tell you that some secret presage lies upon this land, and one who has sensed it must come back again and again to its intangible allurements" (128); and "I am southron [sic] born and cannot construe

aright" (129). Her pronouncements vacillate between moments of certainty and uncertainty, showing not simply the limits of her prophetic vision, but also suggesting the undetermined nature of Canada's future. Murphy's willingness to place limits on her ability to see Canada's future draws her readers' attention firmly to the present. Perhaps its most powerful rhetorical reiteration occurs late in *Seeds of Pine*, as Murphy climbs a hill and views the Canadian landscape: "There are other compensations on the heights. You may shut your eyes and have a vision of the land that lies beneath you . . . let us say a vision of Mother Canada and her nine daughters, and of the part they are destined to play in history. You may open your eyes again to ponder how they will grapple with the problems of race assimilation; of arbitration and war; of morals and politics; and of labour and capital" (272). The play between visionary and physical prospects that Murphy invokes in this scene is crucial, as she invites her readers to turn inward as well as outward, to close their eyes as well as open them. In so doing, she rewrites the cultural trope of spatial ascendancy and domination in which privileged observers and travellers both ideologically contained and evaluated unknown landscapes with established rhetorical patterns, a trope that Mary Louise Pratt calls "the monarch-of-all-I-survey" (201-08). Murphy turns this moment of ascendancy into one of inward contemplation and reflection. By using the pronoun "you," Murphy substitutes her readers for herself, placing her readers at the top of the mountain with her in order to visualize and evaluate their own prospects.

Of her three home travel books, it is also with *Seeds of Pine* that Murphy fully

exploits her power as a narrator to control the manner in which events are explored and brought before the reader. The reader is made vitally aware of Murphy as a controlling narrative presence, one who is methodically, albeit playfully, guiding the unfolding of her narrative. At the beginning of Chapter 2, she asks, "Have I told you about Edson and its prospects? No! ah, well, never mind, I shall do so by and by, when I have talked to the citizens" (15). In "Northern Vistas," she begins by claiming: "The reader will excuse my chronicling the Jubilee before telling about Grouard. I have no other excuse other than caprice, nor any precedent other than the fact that Chinese authors write their stories backward" (178). The deliberateness of the inclusion of this playful passage is heightened by the fact that it is missing from the version of "Northern Vistas" published in *The Canadian Magazine* in 1913. In Chapter 22, "Hero Priests of the North," she proffers a lengthy preamble: "If I had realized at the start this was to be a chapter on the outstanding personalities among the missionary priests, I would have begun differently" (232). After a full page of digressive commentary on what she "would have said," she then spiritedly uses John 19: 22 to defend her meandering approach: "It is to be regretted I did not begin this way, but, to quote the Roman governor who gave judgement concerning the Nazarene: 'What I have written, I have written'" (232). By drawing such elaborate attention to the process of narration, and herself as narrator, Murphy self-consciously transforms *Seeds of Pine* into a literary work, as opposed to a non-fiction work that merely offers factual information and insights. Her narrative strategies, with their emphasis on false starts, deferrals, and digressions, have the net effect of engaging

and courting the reader's tolerance and patience. Murphy's narrative provides her readers with opportunities textually to cultivate in microcosm the social and cultural qualities she wishes them to carry into society at large.

Murphy's narrative voice has also developed independence in *Seeds of Pine*. In her earlier travel books, *Janey Canuck in the West* and *Open Trails*, she is very much her husband's companion and helpmate, the Padre's loyal, if spirited, consort. However, in *Seeds of Pine*, Murphy travels without her husband. Indeed, when asked by a stranger about her husband, Murphy coyly replies: "Oh yes! I have a husband up here, somewhere—a big, fair man—I wonder if you have seen him" (8). Murphy prefers to emphasize that she is travelling as a professional writer situated within a greater literary community. Like many women writers, Murphy often used humour and irony to represent how she was received and perceived by others and there are many self-conscious references to herself as a writer: "Honour to Alexander MacKenzie, Esq., of Inverness, say I! Some day, when Messrs. the Publishers give me fuller royalties, I shall surely build a cairn to him..." (30). In a moving observation, especially in light of the critical obscurity in which *Seeds of Pine* is currently shrouded, she envisions her book "a century from now" being rescued from "an attic rubbish-heap" by a "curious boy" whom she parenthetically embraces: "(I love you, boy! you must know this.)" (32). She refers to herself as a book reviewer who reviews books without finishing them (48); yet later delivers an imploring request for other reviewers not to refer to her writing as "breezy" (132). By drawing attention to writing as a profession, Murphy demonstrates that

creating a narrative, like building a railroad, is a form of cultural labour, a fact that she celebrates as much as she celebrates the brute strength and the visionary prowess of Canada's workers and explorers. Murphy is the explorer, engineer, surveyor, as she constructs her own labyrinthine literary trail through the narrative muskegs of not simply the unknown, but through the expected clichés—of both narrative form and content—that had been established about Canadian travel writing.

4.4 "What went ye out into the wilderness to see?"

One of the initial thematic devices Murphy employs in *Seeds of Pine* is establishing an opposition between country and city life, which is, as critics such as Raymond Williams remind us, an enduring tendency in Western literature.²⁹ The constructed dichotomy between country and city was notable for its capacity to critique and/or maintain contemporary social and cultural values. It often did so by presenting an idealized contrasting moral and social order, in which city life embodied vice and excess, while country life was extolled for its simplicity, virtue, and restorative benefits. This opposition is signalled by the presence of an oblique quotation from William F. Butler, the Irish explorer and soldier, who visited the Canadian Northwest throughout the 1870s—traversing some of the same areas as Murphy—and who wrote the adventure

²⁹ Williams's classic study, *The Country and the City*, is primarily concerned with the British literary tradition but traces this tendency back to Virgil's *Eclogues* and *Georgics*.

classics *The Great Lone Land* (1872) and *The Wild North Land* (1873): “‘What went ye out into the wilderness to see?’ They answered thus, ‘So that we might not see the city.’” The source and the structure of this quotation are significant. Butler represents the heroic and masculine spirit of the North’s explorers that writers like Murphy and Agnes Deans Cameron respect, celebrate, and attempt to recuperate with a heroic and mock-heroic rhetoric. The use of the word “wilderness” in the quotation not only creates contrast with the urban, but achieves significance in light of the themes of retribution and salvation that play out in the text. In Christian iconography, wilderness is associated with exile and deprivation, but also with spiritual fortitude and renewal. The structure of the quotation itself, which makes use of the rhetorical device of antipophora, allows Murphy deftly to signal in the northern landscape that she will be revealing to her reader, there will be no easy questions with transparent and predictable answers.

“What went ye out into the wilderness to see” is also a quotation from the Gospel of Matthew. Matthew 11: 7 declares: “And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, ‘What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken in the wind?’” The reference is to the prophet, John the Baptist, whom Jesus accuses the gathered crowd of misunderstanding. The double meaning of the quotation links *Seeds of Pine* to a prophetic tradition that is itself rooted in misunderstanding. This signals an awareness of textual play that foreshadows the unpredictable play with ideas that will occur throughout Murphy’s own text.

Murphy invokes the contrast between the country and the city, not to celebrate the

wilderness, but to establish it as a site of questionable morality. This becomes apparent very early in the text. At the book's beginning, she warns of the dangers of city life, of the electric devices that appear like "wicked eyes that burn their commercial message into my very soul" and suggests that the journey beyond the city's confines will offer an escape from such dangers (1). But it soon becomes clear that the society and the wilderness to which she is escorting her reader is neither untouched nor innocent. In this respect, Murphy differs from many of her female contemporaries, such as Mary T. S. Schäffer and Mina Hubbard, who tended to construct the northern wilderness and rural Canada as an insulated—albeit threatened—world that functions ideologically as a retreat from civilization's corrupt, confining, and degenerative influences. Murphy's northern Canada is emphatically post-lapsarian, a world where bootlegging, sexual promiscuity, commercialism, and frantic speculation are rampant. Very often, Murphy uses understatement, shrewd innuendo, and irony to levy her charges of moral and legal misdoings. As she spars with a RNWMP officer on the presence of contraband alcohol in the North, she says: "It is very foolish to ask the officer in command if his men ever drink themselves, for he will say 'Pooh! Pooh [''] and use other argumentative exclamations that will fright you out of your wits. You would almost think the subject was loaded, and it takes a soft look and a wondrously soft answer to turn away his wrath" (137). As she encounters a northern mother whose children all have different fathers, she wryly observes: "In most cases the children look to their mother as head of the family.... It can be readily seen how several masculine heads to the family would complicate matters and

that it is wholly desirable the girls should look to their mother for their lineage. In the north, as yet, it has not been necessary to cover vices with cloaks" (167-68). As she consults a corrupt doctor, she claims (ironically) that "there is an undercurrent of good fellowship which understands that the stranger who talks to you is not necessarily a scalawag" (19). Conversation soon reveals that the doctor emphatically is a "scalawag" who peddles his own brews for profit to unsuspecting patients and is heavily involved in real estate speculation. Through this encounter, she creates an oblique parable for her reader not to take any words—including, as it turns out, her own—at face value.

Murphy's landscape descriptions also deserve examination, particularly her refusal to be bound by the aesthetic constrictions of the pastoral mode, a conventional literary form in which writers, often urban poets, nostalgically constructed life in the country as one that was delightfully innocent and simplistic. It was a genre of which Murphy was very much aware, especially in her first Canadian travel book, *Janey Canuck in the West*, which is peppered with chapter titles such as "All Under the Greenwood Tree," "A May Day in the Morning," and "Paradise was Never Lost," titles which assume a gentle ironic weight in light of the book's gossipy, occasionally incisive, observations about rural Canadian life, but which, although bolstered by a hectic display of erudition and allusion, show a more conventional concern with the rhythms, products, and processes of the domesticated agricultural world. That Canada is neither a pastoral paradise nor an idyllic settled land becomes very clear in her landscape descriptions, which dramatize, in raw terms, the transition from wilderness to settlement. Murphy

personifies Nature, presenting it, for instance, as an artist who painted the mountains "the orange light of fire, and the sickening red in which Tintoretto has painted the wounds of his martyrs" (66); wheat itself, as opposed to being "inert matter," is "the thing most richly alive" and "ever resisting conquest" (6). In *A Woman in Canada*, Marion Cran, stresses the land's predictable fecundity, beauty, and suitability for farming over its prevailing primitive and elemental power. She gushes: "It is an indescribable joy, this turning of the wild into fertile plains. I am never to have enough of it" (38). In contrast, Murphy's descriptions are, at times, bleak and violent. Trails occur "like long black welts through the land" (10), littered with the "bleached bones of horses" (9); landseekers disappear into the trees "as if the land ate them up" (8). On a hill-top, "there is a spread of blue hyacinths like a torn veil that has been thrown to the earth" (101). Her language challenges the idea of scenery as a phenomenon that is orderly and passive. She claims in an early description: "On the muskegs the trees are so thin and straight they fairly scratch your eyes" (7). In another description, she observes, "At Wabamun there is a great sweep of forest, but, a year ago, a great fire raged here and large patches of burnt trees assault the eyes" (9). Aesthetic distance, and ultimately mastery, over such a landscape is difficult to achieve in an environment that refuses to deliver predictable prospects. Murphy emphasizes the land's hardness and its extremities, more so than its beauty and fertility, which was important in an era which associated the character of landscape with

national character:³⁰ “And out of the North come men of robust mood who will keep our nation’s honour, for this is a country where courage and truth are inborn; a land which sways the souls of its citizens unto high endeavour” (292).

As opposed to diminishing the power of nature with an emphasis on its eventual successful submission, Murphy amplifies that power, not only with her unpredictable descriptions and startling assertions regarding Nature’s autonomy, but in her deliberately ambivalent characterization of those engaged in taming it, particularly the virile male labourer. She celebrates their achievements, only to shoot them down:

...as I look out of my window I can see the men at work on the rival road. They are the primal ploughers of the land, these railway fellows, and can cut a valley out of a hill, like it were the rip of a brutal blade. To my way of thinking, this is an enterprise of high heart and bravery. . . . And yet, as I watch them at work, heaping up a grade, they seem small to me, and paltry, like dirty boys intent on nothing more serious than mud-pies. (41)

At another railway construction site, she observes: “The trouble is that these vastly particular officials conceive of the mountain into whose body they have slashed as a dead thing—dead as pickled pork—whereas it is splendidly alive. Because of the malapert efforts of the builders, the mountain has shaken its monstrous sides with laughter till the tears ran adown its face and washed out their puny sticks and stones” (53). These images recall Marlowe’s description in *Heart of Darkness* of the boylike/toylike man o’ war,

³⁰ See Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power*, Chapter 5, for an examination of the relationship between the Canadian landscape and Canadian character. The dry, “purified,” frosty air and climate of the Prairies were felt to promote such attributes of the Canadian character as “straight-thinking and moral purity” (129-30).

absurdly shooting its tiny arrows into the immensity of the African continent, a description which encapsulated the presumptiveness—and, ultimately, the futility—of Western aspirations of political and cultural domination (14). By deflating the heroism of Canadian labour and settlement, Murphy challenges the integrity of a nationalism that has sought to define itself by conquering Nature, even as she acknowledges all that is celebratory and attractive about it. She draws attention to the arrogance of such endeavours, which, as she constructs and describes them, deliver little in the way of cultural redemption. By characterizing them thus, she shows her own ambivalence about the impact of “civilization” upon the natural world. She also creates a space for the literary woman in the role of nation building, the shrewd, insouciant, defiantly literary, woman writer, who is willing to take rhetorical risks in her observations about the landscape.

These descriptions contrast with those in which Murphy playfully establishes herself as a translator of the landscape. She claims: “When I see a large stand of grain that is breast-high I say, ‘Well done, Good Fellows!’ and ‘Haste to the in-gathering!’ The field hears my salutation to the sowers and bows a million heads to me. And it says, *shibboleth! shibboleth!* (If you would pick up the talk of the fields you must be still and listen.)” (5). These moments when she speaks for the landscape contrast with those in which she acknowledges its opacity: “I am crushed into a wordless incompetency. I cannot speak the language of this land nor interpret its spirit. These hills of White Alberta have something to say, but they will not say it” (50). Murphy, like many women

travel writers such as Anna Jameson, Mary Kingsley, and Lady Ishbel Aberdeen, recognizes the incapacity of language at times to represent—and ultimately subdue—the beauties and the operations of the natural world. Murphy, therefore, recognizes that the land in Canada is beautiful, but one of the parables that *Seeds of Pine* teaches is that beauty in and of itself is not to be trusted. When she speaks of the inadequacy of her pen, it is not merely a self-reflexive form of female quasi-modesty. Murphy is also advertising her text's instability, emphasizing to her reader the importance of delving beyond literal meaning and seductive surfaces—including words—to penetrate the depths of "true" meaning that cannot be transmitted in language. Beautiful scenery alone cannot redeem an emerging nation; rather, redemption must come from the moral worth and integrity of its citizens and immigrants, and their ability to navigate a world of temptation and shifting social values.

In this respect, one of the most worrying forces which has invaded the Canadian North, from Murphy's perspective, is that of materialism. The engineers of the railway, whose work she admires and whom she describes with mock-Homeric similes as having "skin like the colour of well-seasoned saddles and a smell of burnt poplar in their hair" are presented as consumers of materialism: "The whole Town is a foraging pasture for the engineers on vacation. They buy everything they do not need, from gramophone records and swearing parrots to Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*" (26; 27). Even as Canada is creating before her eyes the structures—physical and mythical—that will be the foundation of its own future historical narrative, Murphy, through her strategically

placed reference to Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, raises the possibility of its destruction. As such, she suggests the temporal, cyclical, and transient nature of all civilizations and warns of the potential for Canada's future destruction at the feet of the "false gods" of materialism, decadence, moral laxity, and political apathy.

Her direct reference to Gibbon, as well as her oblique references to lesser known ancient cultures—particularly Egyptian—challenge the idea of progress generally, and the task of nation building specifically, as a process that is linear, an idea that was particularly prevalent in Murphy's time. Carl Berger confirms that much of the conception of Canadian history in the mid to late nineteenth century was "rooted in the belief in progress, in the conviction that history was a record of steady improvement in material conditions and in intellectual and moral life" (*Sense* 109). Imperialists, in particular, argued that "all Canadian history was ceaselessly moving toward one irrefragable conclusion—the acquisition of full national rights and freedom within an imperial federation" (*Sense* 109). Murphy's references to other ancient cultures—cultures that were once politically powerful but are now diminished and derelict, cultures whose meaning and relevance has been transformed into impenetrable hieroglyphs, obscure rites, and disintegrating artefacts—act as powerful reminders that national histories, the fates of nations, tend not to be statically linear; rather, they experience unpredictable cycles of birth, growth, and death. Murphy, remarkably, is able to transcend her own patriotism to see the seeds of destruction inherent in moments of glory. She is witness to the opening of a new railway, but instead of indulging in exultant

celebratory rhetoric, she introspectively muses: "To-day, this road is born. When will it die? We fall into a way of thinking it is here for eternity, but railways vanish like everything else. Even the great Appian Way,³¹ which lasted for over two thousand years, has, in these last centuries, become little more than a name" (112). It is a viewpoint she indirectly extends toward Canada in general. Many historians and pundits were unreservedly enthusiastic in their belief that Canada's vast geography and seemingly unlimited raw resources assured her future destiny.³² Murphy's writings caution that Canada's glorious destiny is in no way guaranteed and is much more fragile than many at that time believed; rather, the country was at an important ideological crossroads. Canadians still had the power to shape the course of their future, and Canada's national and international destiny, but that destiny would be favourable only if those choices were wise, judicious, and forward-thinking.

Murphy was not the only writer of her era concerned that materialism was eroding Canada's social and political potential. In his essay, "Democracy and Social Progress," Stephen Leacock reviles the role of materialism in contemporary Canadian political culture: "The nineteenth century had seen us [Canada] emerge from the tyranny of stupid

³¹ The Appian Way was the route traversed by St. Paul in his apostolic missions to Rome. In observing that it is now "just a name," Murphy appears to be acknowledging a decline in the fundamentals of religious knowledge within Canada.

³² For instance, Stephen Leacock wrote in *Greater Canada An Appeal Let Us No Longer Be a Colony* (1907): "We must realize, and the people of England must realize, the inevitable greatness of Canada. This is not a vainglorious boast. This is no rhodomontade. It is simple fact" (qtd. in Berger *Imperialism* 48).

kings and wooden governors into the sunlight of free government. Its close had witnessed the emergence of the new tyranny—the money power, the political ‘machine,’ the interests” (17-18). He later mourns, “We have gone astray in the wilderness on the false estimate that we have placed upon wealth and more pecuniary success” (32). And Lilian Whiting, a British romantic scholar, who wrote a delightfully favourable account of Canada in *Canada the Spellbinder* (1917), was not so blinded with enchantment that she was not able to caution: “Canada cannot afford to ignore Matthew Arnold’s wise warning not to mistake material achievement for civilisation” (148).

Canada’s rampant materialism was counterpointed with its seeming mythological poverty. It was a common complaint among many historical and literary commentators in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that Canada had neither any great defining historical crisis nor any compelling self-defining mythologies, comparable to the myths of American exceptionalism or Manifest Destiny, with which to inspire patriotism and unite disparate regional interests. Many argued that Government and Canadian political culture generally lacked a grandiose unifying political vision and that, without such vision, Canada’s tentative nationhood would collapse under the weight of petty parochialism and provincial dissension and self-interest. As early as 1872, in *The Great Lone Land*, William F. Butler observed of Canada: “Poor Canada!.... your own politicians, for years, too timid to grasp the limits of your possible future, parties every where in your provinces, and of every kind, except a national party; no breadth; no depth, no earnest striving to make you great amongst the nations, each one for himself and no

one for the country” (33-34). More succinctly, John Ewart, a passionate nationalist, would declare, “We need some stronger solidifying influence than three lines of railways and a national debt” (qtd. in Berger *Imperialism* 103).

If Canada lacked apparent political vision, it also lacked in its general culture an apparent defining mythology. In *The Backwoods of Canada*, Catharine Parr Traill declared: “As to ghosts or spirits they appear totally banished from Canada. This is too matter-of-fact country for such supernaturals to visit. Here there are no historical associations, no legendary tales of those that come before us” (128). Traill published those words in 1836, yet these comments continued to be echoed by many late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century critics, who agreed with Traill that Canada was devoid of the mythology and history that made for great literature.³³ Pelham Edgar in *University Magazine* in 1912 observed, while comparing Canada to the countries of Europe: “They have a mythical as well as an historic past to inspire them, and they possess vast tracts of legends still unexplored.... We are what we are as a people by virtue of the struggle for responsible government, but what poet could read a tune into such refractory material” (qtd. in Ballstadt *Search* 111). Barry Dane similarly concludes in *The Week* in 1894: “It is different with us in Canada. We have had no barbarous infancy moulded by the natural features of the land. No divinities have sanctified to us our

³³ This is an issue that has also been explored more recently by both Northrop Frye and Jonathan Kertzer. See Frye, “Haunted by a Lack of Ghosts” in *Mythologizing Canada* and Kertzer, *Worrying the Nation*, pp. 37-61.

mountains and streams. No fabled heroes have left us immortal memories" (qtd. in Ballstadt *Search* 116).

In answer to this cultural consternation, Murphy determinedly populates Canada with numerous spirits and ghostly figures to establish that Canada does have an indigenous mythology worth celebrating. In particular, she creates a catalogue, a procession of ghostly Canadian heroes—from Alexander Mackenzie to William Butler—that is reminiscent of the shades of the war heroes that Aeneas encounters in his visit to underworld before he is granted a vision of Rome's great destiny in *The Aeneid*. *The Aeneid* was Virgil's great epic poem celebrating Rome's national destiny, both its past and its future. Murphy pays tribute to the heroes of settlement, claiming, "Dead men *do* tell tales. If you may care to listen" (31, emphasis in original). Murphy uses her work not simply to introduce and record the historical achievements of these men, but the devices of epic literature actually to give that history a mythological and epic weight, which culminates in her rhetorical siren song of nationalism, "A Song of This Land." In so doing, she reinforces Salman Rushdie's assertion that "the mingling of fantasy and naturalism, is one way of...echoing in the form of our [literary] work the issues faced by all of us: how to build a new, 'modern' world out of an old, legend-haunted civilization" (19). Murphy rewrites this Canadian cultural script by seeing spirits, hearing and reciting legends, and affirming it as "legend-haunted," even as she chronicles contemporary activity to create a newer mythology.

4.5 False Gods: Tradition, Science, Immigration

Seeds of Pine is dense with religious and Christian allusions to the Old Testament Books of Law, Wisdom, and Prophecy, as well as the parables and gospels of the New Testament. These religious allusions have a cultural significance. In *The Sense of Power*, Carl Berger documents the extent to which imperialism was intertwined with religious discourse in order to give force to the idea of the emergent nation as a natural and inevitable development (217-19). W. H. New in *Land Sliding* analyzes how the “[e]vangelical underpinnings of nineteenth-century thought influenced the Anglo-Protestant political expansion” ethic and traces this tendency back to the writings of Catharine Parr Traill and Susanna Moodie (75-76). Murphy’s use of sustained religious allusions and metaphor is consistent with the discourse of moral reform and social purity—of which Murphy was a tireless proponent—that is explored by Mariana Valverde in her book, *The Age of Light, Soap and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925*. Valverde argues that the writings of moral reform often featured unusual, resonant allegorical constructions, making use of “rhetorical ‘excess’” and “complex metaphors” that helped create a “holistic image of...knowledge” that endorsed certain moral and social conservative positions and presented them as an undisputable form of “truth” (34-36). Murphy’s moral positions on issues such as public drunkenness, immigration policies, aboriginal issues, unions, and women’s legislative property rights appear throughout *Seeds of Pine*, presaging her infamous condemnation of drug abuse and the drug trade in Canada in her 1922 publication, *The Black Candle*. She voices her

disgust at drunken workers she encounters, calling them "primeval toads," and expresses dismay at the proliferation of gossip and sexual promiscuity that she encounters in the North (43).

Of significant interest is Murphy's frequent invocation of the figure of Moses and her many direct and oblique allusions to the Pentateuch, particularly the Books of Law. Moses is a rich historical, religious, legislative, and prophetic figure, best known for guiding the Israelites through the wilderness for forty years before his death. The arrival was secured by his successor, Joshua. While Moses failed to help the Israelites complete their journey, Yahweh granted him a vision allowing him a glimpse into the Promised Land. Moses is also notable because of the extent to which he was involved in formulating Jewish Law, as well as the extent to which he stressed the importance of abiding by laws once they were formulated. Biblical historians regard him as an "ideal judge and legal administrator" (Metzger and Coogan 530). As Murphy herself was a figure who was engaged in numerous legal and judicial battles to change Canadian law, and eventually came to be named a judge herself, Moses was obviously a personage with whom she has some fascinating, if coincidental, parallels.³⁴ Jewish cultural history is of particular interest because, as John H. Hayes has observed, "the wilderness period was its constitutional time" whereby "Law and the formation of the national life" occurred

³⁴ Murphy was offered and accepted the position of Police Magistrate ("Judge") in the Alberta Women's Court two years after *Seeds of Pine* was published in 1916, the first woman in the British Empire to hold such a position. She held the position until 1931.

“outside the land it occupied” (Metzger and Coogan 530). Unlike Moses, however, Murphy is living within the land she wishes to change, not outside it, and yet it, too, was still in a “wilderness” period, literally, as well as metaphorically and legislatively.

Moses was also an ambivalent figure in that he failed to secure ultimate deliverance for his people. Murphy recognizes the limitations of Moses as a practical leader when she declares: “[This country] does not need a new Moses to stand and say, ‘This is a goodly land’; it needs a new and more drastic Joshua to take them by the ear and lead them in” (151). She also lengthily quotes Josephus Flavius, citing Moses’s words to his soldiers when he dies, only to dispute them.³⁵ In so doing, she creates within her own text a historical context for both her own observations about immigration and, more importantly, for Canada’s contemporary dilemma about this difficult issue. Murphy shows her willingness to learn from the transgressions of ancient cultures. She also shows her willingness to challenge traditional points of view when necessary, indicating

³⁵ Murphy’s decision to quote Josephus Flavius’s *Antiquities* (c. 93-94) is an interesting one. Josephus Flavius was a Roman who was an ardent nationalist and powerful opponent of civil disobedience who penned an influential retelling and reinterpretation of the Bible, the *Antiquities*. However, he added and deleted passages to his paraphrase of the Bible at will in order to elevate the heroism and piety of epic figures such as Moses, whom the Pentateuch characterized more ambivalently, and he attempted to inflect Biblical narrative with such Hellenistic rhetorical elements as suspense and irony. The passage that Murphy quotes is one of Josephus’s “creative” additions; there is not an equivalent passage for it in Deuteronomy. In it, Moses exhorts his fellow Israelites to destroy and overthrow the “altars” and groves” of “enemies” in order to secure and preserve their constitution (69). Murphy concludes: “The Jewish constitution was not worth the price asked; neither is ours. This should be far from the spirit of Canada” (69).

it is a mistake to repeat slavishly, without due amendment, the patterns and narratives of the past. Murphy saw firsthand how traditional laws very often compromised the rights of women and children and hence was a strong advocate for legal reform in Canada.

Conversely, she was also not afraid to challenge the traditional values of other cultures when they threatened her own conservative morals and sense of decency. For instance, the chapter "Bitter Waters" acts as both parable and diatribe on the impact of the practice of polygamy within Aboriginal cultures. Murphy uses pathos and emotion, as opposed to reason, to create an argument for outlawing polygamy; indeed, she resorts to the literary devices of character, plot, setting, and suspense to create a narrative of suffering intended to persuade her readers that polygamy "is the tree of woman's crucifixion" and a practice that should be outlawed (76). Yet Murphy fails to give equal weight to the fact that it is Ermi's exposure to Western ideas of romance and true love, as a result of her time in the mission school, that ultimately makes the practice so tragically unacceptable to her.

Murphy uses a similar technique to challenge the practice of capital punishment through the presentation of a first-person diary, which she submits as "evidence" to her reader. The diary, ostensibly, is written by a prisoner over whom Murphy held a "death watch," and who ultimately entrusted her with it, but the narrative similarities between the prisoner's style and Murphy's own make this claim highly debatable. More than likely, the diary was written by Murphy herself. That Murphy engages in such an elaborate act of narrative subterfuge, however, is consistent with the type of play with

which she engages the reader throughout *Seeds of Pine*. It is also consistent with her insistence that her readers not take her claims at face value, that they use their own judgement and intuition to delve beyond the surface meaning that Murphy presents to them. As with the issue of polygamy, she argues her point using pathos and emotion, not reason. The literary *punctum*—to borrow a phrase from Roland Barthes's *Camera Lucida*—of this whole exercise for the reader, of course, is knowing, as we read, that this repentant, thoughtful, and educated prisoner is already dead, even if he is a fictional creation. Murphy's didactic voice cannot quite utterly retreat as she lets the reader ponder the "justice" of such a system.

Yet Murphy's attitude toward traditional views is inconsistent. While much of her text creates covert arguments for challenging outdated laws, practices, and constitutions, she is also not afraid to uphold traditions in order to defend perspectives that are threatened by new emerging values. Murphy uses the sufferings of Job from the Old Testament to counter the destabilizing effects of the discourse of geology upon traditional theological models of thought, which imposed very clear boundaries about what it was appropriate for humans to know and understand.³⁶ She observes: "Geologists say that the eastern ranges of the Rocky Mountains are of the Eocene Age, and that the western ridges are Pliocene, and eons younger. But these revelations of science are

³⁶ For examinations of the impact of scientific and geological developments upon religious thought and ideas of nationhood in early Canada, see Carl Berger, *Science, God and Nature in Victorian Canada*; Suzanne Zeller, *Inventing Canada*; A. B. McKillop, *A Disciplined Intelligence*; David B. Marshall, *Secularizing the Faith*.

almost as overwhelming [sic] as our ignorance. They tell of the immensity of time but do not sound it. It is not possible to level them to our mental capacity" (265). Discourses of religion and science deliberately collide, as the cultural tensions of modernism come to the fore. Seemingly alarmed by the attempts of scientists to demystify the opacity, not simply of Nature, but of the omniscience of God, Murphy reminds her readers that the Biblical narratives and traditions that bolster and support her conservative point of view are much older than the "new" scientific discourse that is attempting to displace them and that an attitude of humility—"Behold I am vile"—is what will best serve Canada (265). Science is, hence, established as another "false idol," whose seduction and allure must be appropriately suppressed.

The anxieties about idolatry that often erupt in Murphy's text are inextricably linked with her conservative Christian beliefs. The great lesson of the Books of Law and the Pentateuch that Murphy references again and again is that God will abandon a nation that worships false gods. Murphy's own emphasis on the importance of morality, proper legislation, and appropriate human humility can partially be ascribed to her fear regarding the fate of a nation that falls out of God's favour. Murphy's fear is both literal (because of all the new religions introduced by new immigrants) and figurative (the emphasis on land speculation, resource development and materialism). Murphy invokes Exodus 32: 21 when she claims: "Yes! it is a steel idol we worship in this country and not one of gold, and we do refuse to grind it to powder and drink thereof, no matter what any Moses or Aaron might say" (11).

Murphy's observations about immigration have a similar urgency, no doubt because the period in which she was writing witnessed the highest influx of new immigrants to Canada that it had to that date experienced. The physical hygiene and health, financial security, work ethic, moral character, and religious worship practices of these groups, particularly those immigrants from Eastern European countries such as Galicia and Russia, all became issues of public discussion. In one of the first major academic studies on the issue of immigration in Canada, W. G. Smith, in *A Study in Canadian Immigration* (1920) claims, "The history of Canada is in a large measure the history of Immigration" (37). Smith's book illuminates the issues regarding immigration with which early twentieth-century academics, bureaucrats, and community and government leaders were particularly occupied. Smith's analysis is more nuanced and comprehensive than many of the opinions of his contemporaries in that, while blatantly endorsing the need for "desirable" immigrants as opposed to "refuse," he recognizes that the Canadian government had some legislative, financial, and moral responsibilities to its immigrants. He claims that "the country had a tremendous task on its hands, not only to assimilate the perplexing variety of incoming peoples, but also gradually to clarify and strengthen the requirements which an immigrant should meet in order to make adequate and speedy assimilation possible" (82). He summarizes: "Indeed the double question of selecting the kind of immigrant desirable and what to do for the immigrant when selected has constituted the backbone of the immigration problem" (83). His study also details disturbing statistics on the death rates of young immigrant children, particularly in the

cities. Others were not conciliatory in their regard for the immigrant. The Preface of Smith's book is written by C. K. Clarke, Medical Director for Canadian National Committee for Mental Hygiene who, in particular, deplores "loading up a struggling nation with the misfits and failures of Europe" (8). Clarke claims: "Canada must have immigration, of course, her millions of acres of untilled land demand it. The craze for numbers, however, must not be allowed to interfere with the sane policy of opening the doors only to those who are likely to be of use in building up what promises to be one of greatest of the world's nations" (9). These attitudes were fueled by the sheer volume of new immigrants who were arriving each year. In the years 1907 to 1909, Smith estimates that 534,044 new immigrants came to Canada. Immigration peaked in the years just prior to World War I. The outcome of Canada balancing its need for a settlement population with appropriate controls was the new Canadian Immigration Law of 1910.

It is against this historical context that Murphy's many observations and digressions regarding both immigration, and the many immigrants she encounters on her journeys, need to be considered. Murphy's subtle and evident attitudes towards Canada's new immigrants, especially those from Eastern Europe, become apparent in the book's important chapter, "Communing with Ruthenians," which also appeared as a separate publication in the March 1913 edition of *The Canadian Magazine*. The chapter is prefaced by an epigraph from Walt Whitman's "Salut au Monde" (which, interestingly, is omitted from the version published in *The Canadian Magazine*). It reads: "I hear the tale of the divine life of the beautiful God, the Christ." Part of the greater poetic work,

Leaves of Grass, Walt Whitman's epic and sprawling body of poems envisioned to create new poetic forms and expressions to reflect the unique nature of American democracy and experience, as well as individual human character and energy, "Salut au Monde" is Whitman's expansive celebration of international diversity and cultural and religious difference, his poetic panegyric for contextualizing American nationalism and democracy within the framework of the achievements and attributes of other societies and cultures: "I have looked for equals and lovers and found them ready for me in all lands/I think some divine rapport has equalized me with them" (ll. 212-13). Murphy's decision to preface this particular chapter with a quotation from "Salut au Monde" can be seen as a tacit endorsement for adopting, if not an attitude of celebration, then certainly one of tolerance and acceptance for the different religious observances practiced by Canada's new immigrants. Yet Murphy's own ambivalence and discomfort as a witness of religious practices she does not share or understand contradicts this overt message, demonstrating the tensions of, and the complexities inherent to, the immigration issue in Canada.

This position needs to be considered in the greater context that Ruthenians, or Galicians, occupied in Canadian society in the early twentieth century. In *Strangers Within our Gates; Or Coming Canadians*, a study of the complexities of Canadian immigration that was published in 1909, J. S. Woodsworth, the politician and Methodist social reformer, reveals that Galicians, like many Eastern European immigrants, were regarded quite unfavourably and negatively by white Anglo-Protestant society. By the early twentieth century, there were some 125,000 Galicians in Western Canada, including

30,000 in Edmonton, the city in which Murphy was living when *Seeds of Pine* was published. Woodsworth claims, "In so low an estimation are they held that the word Galician is almost a term of reproach" (110). He cites their illiteracy, ignorance, involvement with crime, and their innate "animal natures" as reasons for the antipathy in which they were held (110-12). However, he is not completely negative in his assessment of them, praising their work ethic, their ambition, their willingness to be Canadianized, and their openness to religious reform as measures of their "progress" and as grounds for hope regarding their eventual assimilation into Canadian society (112-13).

In "Communing With Ruthenians," Murphy witnesses a Uniat religious ceremony. She stresses her separation from those she is observing by repeatedly emphasizing her own religion: "Know all men by these presents that, I, even I, am the poor ignorant wife of a Protestant person [sic], and understand not the meaning of these obeisances, nor of this beautiful fête..." (210). She later claims: "Will the priest permit an unhallowed woman of lean and meagre accomplishments—and she a Protestant—to sit so close to the holy of holies?" (213). By emphasizing her Protestant status, Murphy does not simply establish her cultural difference from those she is observing. She also establishes her own reliability and credentials as a witness to her white Anglo-Protestant readership, who, like herself, may be wary of the worship practices of a little known people.

That Murphy was uncomfortable in her role as witness is manifested through the sharp, bright, violent imagery that recurs through her descriptions. She claims that the

“globe of cut crystals that hang from the ceiling near the centre of the church, and the hard white lights from it strike sharply on my eyeballs like dagger points” (210). The reenactment of the tragedy of Golgatha falls like “flakes of fire on my brain” (216); the noise of the singers sounds as if they carried “naked swords” in their hands (215). Her glance is often averted as well; she cannot directly witness the elevation of the host (217); and the chalice the priest holds is “dazzling like a star, so that no woman may even look thereon” (210). Yet, as well as aversion, this can also be seen as a testament to the inherent power and mysticism of the experience, a mysticism which does not need to be seen and understood in order to be felt and respected.

These moments when she obviously respects the sacredness and beauty of the religious ceremony are undercut by her unflattering references to the Galicians’ origins and physical appearance and her use of regrettable stereotypes, which certainly make her descriptions of them uncomfortable to read today. She refers to one man as a “rude Slavic peasant” (213). In another place, she claims, “What odds about low foreheads, thick lips and necks brown like the brown earth” (217); she deems them “a sullen folk of unstable and misanthropical temper” (217). Yet that she sees them thus makes her observations about the transforming nature of devout faith more dramatic and her testament as to the transfiguring power of ceremonial religious spectacle—the contrast between outer appearance and inner moral worth—more compelling and instructive for her readers. Murphy again puts forth her moral lesson to be mistrustful of surfaces, a

lesson that her own text creates and enacts, as well as reveals.³⁷

4.6 Elucidating Canada's "Spiritual Present": Celebrating Bishop Émile Grouard

Similar to Agnes Deans Cameron's unconventional cultural encounter with the Inuit in the Arctic Circle in *The New North*, Murphy's descriptions of the celebrations commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of Bishop Émile Grouard's ordination to the priesthood function as the moral centre of *Seeds of Pine*, as well as the wistful moral center of Canada's restless and shifting moral geography. In witnessing and recording the event, Murphy eschews realism in favour of a flagrant and fanciful theatricality. She uses literary and classical allusions to orchestrate a grand drama that situates the missionary, Émile Grouard, as the central and noble figure in a stirring pageant of cultural unification:

In the city we must perforce set a stage for a drama, but here Nature has made a setting for us high on a hill overlooking a wide meadow that slopes to the bay. You have read something like this in classic myths, or maybe it was in Shakespeare, but it doesn't greatly matter; the play is the thing. For myself, I made believe that is the slope of Parnassus—for the Pythian hero was also a promoter of colonization, a founder of cities, a healer of the sick, an institutor of games, a patron of arts.

It is on this outdoor stage in its June-tide glory that we banquet; that we sing; that we play our parts. (176)

Murphy uses the artifice and the performative dimensions of theatre to capture the spirit of the cultural homage that she feels missionaries like Grouard deserve. She audaciously

³⁷ Murphy, as well, published an article in *Canada Monthly* in 1917 about Ruthenian women, entitled "Out of the Depth." MS 2 Scrapbook 4, 116, Emily Murphy Papers, City of Edmonton Archives.

celebrates, not just spectacle, but her own capacity to produce this spectacle rhetorically, with allusions to Shakespeare and Parnassus. Yet, as with the parable, the audience, in some respects, helps create the theatrical event and its cultural meaning. The positions of the actors and audience shift, as the audience witnessing the celebration also became the actors in the textual pageant that Murphy is self-consciously reconstructing. The missionary emerges as a unifying figure of extraordinary power who can yoke the disparities and grievances between Catholic and Protestant, labourers and administrators, native and white, men and women, young and old, secular and religious.

Suppressed in this self-consciously orchestrated drama are the sectarian tensions and rivalries that existed between various denominational missionary societies, as well as Native resistance and hostility to the presence of the missionaries themselves. In Murphy's account, Native populations are represented as pliant and grateful. Murphy observes: "Keenosew the Fish, chief of the Crees, with rapid rush of speech and voice of military sharpness, presents the homage of his tribe. In like manner do also the other representatives of other northerly tribes" (176). Yet the tensions that Murphy suppresses in this cultural script for the missionary and Native emerge in an unpublished manuscript, entitled "The World's Record Patrol," written approximately two years later, when Murphy was just beginning her career as a magistrate. In "The World's Record Patrol," Murphy recounts the criminal investigation of C. D. LaNaz of the RNWMP in

determining the fate of two missionary priests who disappeared in the Arctic in 1913.³⁸ The missionaries, Father Guillaume Le Roux and Father Jean-Baptiste Rouvière, were, like Émile Grouard, members of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. After a criminal investigation, it was determined that the two priests were murdered and cannibalized by two Native men, Sinnisiak and Uluksuk, at Bloody Falls, an area traversed and named by Samuel Hearne. Murphy stresses the nobility of the missionaries: "And it would seem that Messieurs, the Sacrificiers, had stalwart endowments of mind and character, and that there [sic] were princely in courtesy as in kindness. Let us therefore: 'Salute the sacred dead/Who went and return not/We rather seem the dead who stayed behind'"(5).³⁹ Murphy calls the murder of the missionary priests "a tragedy that was entire, hopeless, brutal and beyond appeal."⁴⁰ She gives little judicial or narrative weight to the Natives' accusation that it was the missionaries who first attacked them. Yet the missionary as a heroic imaginative category becomes infinitely more strained and attenuated when confronted by aggressive Native resistance and framed within the legal and institutional judgments of guilt and innocence that raise the spectre of white provocation, intolerance, and violence toward Natives.

³⁸For a recent scholarly account of this historic criminal investigation, see MacKay Jenkins, *Bloody Falls of the Coppermine: Madness, Murder and the Collusion of Cultures in the Arctic 1913*.

³⁹ MS 2 Box 2, File 57, Emily Murphy Papers, City of Edmonton Archives.

⁴⁰ MS 2 Box 2, File 57, Emily Murphy Papers, City of Edmonton Archives.

Murphy's decision to describe Grouard as a chivalrous knight⁴¹ situates him in a "paean to the eternal value of the evangelical crusade" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1: 53). She envisions Grouard's heroism in romantic terms: "Neither are we knights who sally forth to right wrongs, albeit we have the truest knights of all with us—he who has snow on his head but fire in his heart; he who has taught these tribes by doing. . . ." (177). Murphy stresses Grouard's progressive and practical actions, yet also marks him with the connotative imagery of Old World culture, which makes him a luxuriant figure of paradox who occupies both an archaic past and a progressive present. Murphy claims to ride without "review and forecast," maintaining the past and future as elliptical points of reference in her work. Suspended in time, she creates a spatial drama of Christian celebration, where there is "room to ride" (177). Yet the fact that Murphy must so assertively and artificially stage the missionary's heroism advertises a latent anxiety about its potential demise. Her need to do so insinuates that the cultural conditions that would allow such heroism to emerge "naturally" within Canada are being transformed with infrastructure development, urban expansion, and Canada's questionable moral direction. Moreover, the mixing of past and present challenges the linear nature of progress that

⁴¹ Murphy was not alone in aligning the missionary figure with a romantic and chivalrous tradition. For an excellent discussion of how the discourse of heroic biography was appropriated by Wilfred T. Grenfell and his successive biographers in the early to mid-twentieth century, and for an examination of the textual and biographical problems this created in articulating Grenfell's legacy, see Ronald Rompkey, "Heroic Biography and the Life of Sir Wilfred Grenfell" in *Literature and Identity: Essays on Newfoundland and Labrador*, pp. 36-52.

missionary work both extols and destabilizes.

In celebrating Grouard in such decisively archaic terms, emphasizing his age and wisdom, as well as his practical ingenuity, Murphy articulates misgivings, and perhaps an inherent distrust, in the muscular models of manhood and Christianity that underlay the building of the nation and the cultural construction of models of religious manhood⁴² that she similarly challenged when she referred to the men engaged in building the railway as “paltry” and “dirty boys” (41). While Murphy does not entirely reject these muscular models, she develops a model complementary to them. She locates male missionary heroism in other attributes. Murphy finds heroism in Grouard’s verbal understatement, laconic silence, sagacity, modesty, perspicacity, wisdom, ingenuity, and wry humour, qualities that, as a literary writer, she particularly appreciated and embodied and that she believed would advance the nation.⁴³

This merging of the importance of literary and missionary work to the nation-building project became articulated in a paper that Murphy wrote later in her career in

⁴² See Daniel Coleman, *White Civility*, pp. 128-51, for a sustained examination of muscular Christianity and expansionism in a Canadian context.

⁴³ In an article published in the *Grain Growers Guide* in 1925, entitled “An Apostle of the North,” Murphy would say of Grouard: “In attempting to discuss the works of Emil [sic] Grouard, one hardly knows where to begin for apart from being a catechist, a healer of the sick, a farmer, an explorer, a ruler of men, a founder of settlements, a ship carpenter, a translator, a builder, an educator, a compositor printer, book-binder and publisher, he was also a student of games, a patron of the arts and a promoter of colonization. Such a combination of mental and manual labour is something keenly akin to genius, and historians of the future are bound to appraise it as such.” MS 2 Scrapbook 4, 41-43, Emily Murphy Papers, City of Edmonton Archives.

1925. In an arresting address, entitled "Has Canada A Soul?," Emily Murphy begins to answer her own question as follows:

Everyone declares that it has but no one will tell you what it is.

There is a great paucity of material on the subject, and this is clouded by ambiguity and reticence....

When you turn to the few articles on the subject it is to find that their writers presently sheer off from Canada's spiritual or cultural aspects and confine their attention to her commercial prosperity and remarkable resources. Indeed, our speakers have a kind of magic in missing the point. In confining themselves to these more mundane matters, they are apparently in accord with Carlyle's description of the Eighteenth Century England: "Soul extinct, stomach well alive."

Of course they are not to be censured for this, in that all prominent persons—especially the politicians—find it safer to forecast a material future than to elucidate a spiritual present....

It is true that some few of our essayists refer with moderation to our aims and aspirations as distinct from our acres, but still the reader is led to the inevitable conclusion that the soul of Canada is inarticulate and, as yet, has never been documented or blue-printed—that no one has successfully read its horoscope....⁴⁴

As her argument unfolds, Murphy observes that "strange to relate, no one stated that it was to our literature that we must look for the Canadian soul."⁴⁵ Murphy also ponders:

Neither did anyone speak of the impression made upon the pioneer soul of Canada by the missionaries of all religious bodies during the past two centuries. Those of us who live in the north-western Provinces and Territories are well aware that this country has the distinction of producing a crop of missionary heroes, and that the breed never runs out—a breed of men with the dauntless spirit of the soldier, the enthusiasm of the explorer, the patriotism of the statesmen, and all with the sold [sic] object of helping humanity. These have been very special souls and no Canadian

⁴⁴ MS 2 Box 1, File 41, Emily Murphy Papers, City of Edmonton Archives.

⁴⁵ MS 2 Box 1, File 41, Emily Murphy Papers, City of Edmonton Archives.

should judge them as general.⁴⁶

Missionaries and literary writers both articulate different, but complementary, aspects of the Canadian soul in determining Canadian destiny.

By questioning the role of virility as a component of nation building, she is also creating a more distinct ideological space for women in the task of nation building. This was a cultural issue that preoccupied Murphy, as well as many of her contemporaries. In *Canadian Life in Town and Country* (1905), Henry Morgan and Lawrence Burpee declared:

One of the most powerful factors for good, in the public as well as the private life of this young country, is the influence of women. From the very beginning...the influence of her sex has been strongly felt in the development of the colony, both under French and British rule. If we could trace the inner history of many of our most vital social reforms, we should find that they were born in the heart of some true woman. (130)

Marion Cran's *A Woman in Canada* and Georgina Binnie-Clarke's *A Summer on the Canadian Prairie* use travel and settler literature respectively to argue the importance of Cran's assertion that Canada needs "the missionary spirit of women to make it a crowning success" (115). In *The New Era of Canada* (1917), Marjory MacMurchy declared: "Men and women together make the nation. National questions, such as child welfare, national health, the food supply, national economy and national unity, women's employments, and education, cannot be dealt with except through the intelligent co-operation of women" (225-26). Murphy herself passionately articulated this point in an

⁴⁶ MS 2 Box 1, File 41, Emily Murphy Papers, City of Edmonton Archives.

article entitled "Women Wanted" that was published in *Women's Century* in November 1916. Murphy, however, did not want to see women performing incidental cultural work, but rather assuming positions of leadership in Canadian society:

What we can get is a million women for secondary or auxiliary positions, but few who care to take the leadership or responsibility. Ask the average woman to take or to fit herself for one of these positions and she will tell you that she is too busy or too tired, or John won't let her. Now, above all else, here in Canada, we need rested, leisurely women with an individuality of their own, who are looking for more work and not for less; women who instead of being self-centred, or caste-centred, can be world-centred and inspired. We need them so badly that if we don't get them, we shall have to invent them.... In a word, we want women who will lead the followers, instead of following the leaders.⁴⁷

Murphy also asserts that the "woman leader must expect to be misrepresented...."⁴⁸

Murphy, in her presentation of herself as a figure requiring interpretation, with her restless shifting positions and subjectivities, with her textual verbal play and rhetorical ambiguity, can be seen to be "inventing" and articulating within writings such as *Seeds of Pine* this type of woman, as well as fashioning and presenting the grounds of misrepresentation upon which women's cultural leadership could be socially and textually constituted.

⁴⁷ MS 2 Scrapbook 4, 288, Emily Murphy Papers, City of Edmonton Archives.

⁴⁸ MS 2 Scrapbook 4, 288, Emily Murphy Papers, City of Edmonton Archives.

4.7 "Hail to thee, O Canada": Reading "A Song of This Land"

Emily Murphy's emotional patriotism and her ideological contradictions regarding Canada are perhaps best summarized in the last chapter of *Seeds of Pine*, "A Song of This Land." "A Song of This Land" was published as a separate article in *The Canadian Magazine* in 1913. Despite one or two minor editorial changes⁴⁹ and some differences in punctuation, the article that appears in *The Canadian Magazine* is almost identical to that which ends *Seeds of Pine*. However, this powerful and perplexing vision of Canada achieves considerably more significance and power when considered in the context of the themes and images explored throughout the book. The fact that Murphy refers to this final chapter as a "Song" recalls both the Biblical "Song of Songs," a lyric and sensuous composition of love and celebration, as well as Walt Whitman's repeated use of the word in the titles of his poetry. In "Democratic Vistas," Walt Whitman would declare that "the true nationality" of the United States would come not from "the written law" or "material objects," but only from the "fervid and tremendous IDEA, melting everything else with resistless heat" (762, emphasis in original). Murphy adopts this IDEA for Canada and creates a structure to give her nationalism and patriotism full emotional voice as she

⁴⁹ The phrase "ever-flowing fields" in *CM* becomes "ever-flowering fields" in *SP*; "Rivers cease their singing; the birds are silent; and all is still..." in *CM* becomes "The rivers cease their singing; the birds are silent; and all is stilled" in *SP*; "'Good morrow!' shouts back the nimble Spring as he throws a mist of green over the aspens" in *CM* becomes "'Good morrow!' shouts back the nimble Spring as he throws a mist of green over the young aspens" in *SP*; "Then it is the small knowledge you have of this Dominion and the bright fortunes of this people" in *CM* reads "Then it is small knowledge you have of this Dominion and the bright fortunes of its people" in *SP*.

structures herself as Canada's social prophet. "A Song of This Land" is not only a love song to Canada; it is a hopeful prophecy, a "blueprint" for the Canadian soul, a carefully cultivated act of rhetorical seduction, made possible only by suppressing Murphy's previously articulated anxieties about Canada.

Its title heralds its stylized use of language, rhetoric, and metaphor. It is an insular, self-consciously structured composition and this insularity, in some respects, echoes metaphorically Canada's capacity for self-management, self-government, and self-determination. The hectic allusiveness that characterizes most of Murphy's writings is noticeably absent here, as Murphy does not draw her reader outside the composition. In a methodical way, she presents and plays with paradox and contradiction to create depth and tension, while using anaphora and repetition to give her account of Canada an epic quality. As a country defined by contradiction, paradox, and tension, therefore, the self-conscious play within language itself is highly symbolic and becomes a powerful metaphor for defining Canada at this particular historical juncture.⁵⁰ She begins by deconstructing the myths that exist about the North, before launching a catalogue of

⁵⁰ Canadian writers have often seen parallels between language and the historical development of Canada and exploited the metaphoric possibilities accordingly. Consider F. R. Scott's poem "Laurentian Shield" (1954): "This land stares at the sun in huge silence/Endlessly repeating something we cannot hear"; and "Now there are pre-words,/Cabin syllables,/Nouns of settlement/Slowly forming, with steel syntax,/The long sentence of its exploitation" (Wilson *Poets* 101). Margaret Atwood uses language as a metaphor in *The Journals of Susanna Moodie* to reflect the dislocation of Moodie's immigrant experience in "Disembarking at Quebec": "I am a word /in a foreign language" (11).

Canada's geographic and fertile delights and finally a horoscope for Canadian greatness in which "a sense of safety may be preserved in our homes," and "ballot-strips fall from clean hands," while the "women of our Dominion" will "be skilled in the mother-craft, but with their house windows open to the intellectual breezes of the world" (300). She blatantly uses contradiction, therefore, and the process of deliberate deconstruction in the creation of an aesthetic that can incorporate the unique and dissonant elements of Canadian nationalism.

Most interesting is her use of language, which recalls the elevated high diction of the classical epics of Virgil and Milton and the eighteenth-century georgic form, as well as the prophetic books of the Bible. Murphy uses rhetorical devices such as metonymy and periphrasis; aboriginals are called "bowbearers" and "men have bridled Neptune, the Lord of Waters and have made his trident into one of fire" in her description of Niagara Falls (294; 297). Canada, its geography, and its political and bureaucratic structures appear almost unrecognizable under the weight and disguising effects of such elevated poetic discourse. It also exists in a heightened and ceaseless epic present; rhetorically, it is well removed from its determined past and its uncertain future; there is a timelessness and an ahistorical quality to her descriptions that deliver them from the responsibility of history; no specific names of Prime Ministers or Company Presidents appear. Her heightened language gives a sense of inevitability to Canada's glorious destiny, which contradicts Murphy's earlier uncertainty. Canada's destiny ceases to be uncertain as its fulfilment is visualized, articulated, and written. Murphy imbues herself with the

authority of the Biblical prophets, particularly Isaiah, with her repeated use of the phrase, "Listen," which also introduces many of the admonitions and forecasts in the Book of Isaiah.⁵¹ The contradictions that begin the chapter—and the book—dissolve, as does Murphy's previous rejection of the pastoral mode, into a messianic vision which sees the people of Canada living in harmony with a bountiful land while embracing principles of justice, peace, and tolerance. Canada emerges as the New Jerusalem, the Peaceable Kingdom, a place of promise and prosperity.⁵² All that is missing is the need for "singers" and "heralds" (296), literary prophets to spread the message of Canada's national greatness. Murphy repeatedly invokes the difficulty of this undertaking—"I wish my pen might tell you of our song, but this were a hard task" (299)—but finally, and boldly, answers her own clarion call by the chapter's end, when, in a self-conscious depiction of the act of representation, she lifts up her pen and raises her voice to pay tribute to Canada. By emphasizing that the task is "hard" and her "hand is heavy," Murphy frames the task of writing about Canada as a responsibility, a cultural mission, an extension of the white woman's literary burden.

One of the interesting elements of Murphy's nationalism is the link she creates

⁵¹ For instance, "Listen while I sing you this song, a song of my friend and his vineyard" (Isaiah 5:1). See also Isaiah 48, 49 for several other examples.

⁵² In an earlier chapter, Murphy also makes comparisons between Canada and Jerusalem when she claims: "And, even so, My Canada, should I forget thee, may my pen fingers become sapless and like to poplar twigs that are blasted by fire" (144). This closely echoes Psalm 137: 5-6: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth."

between nationhood, patriotism, and motherhood. Murphy presents the relationship of Canada and its citizens as being like a relationship between a mother and a child. By using motherhood as a defining metaphor for the Canadian nation, she invests both Canada, and her feelings of patriotism for it, with purity and sanctity, creating a paradigm of hope, innocence, tenderness, and reciprocal and unquestioned love. She indulges in a powerful ideological tendency, as Benedict Anderson has observed, to treat the nation as a "sacred imagined community" (44). Murphy herself was very much aware of the power of motherhood as a metaphor. In a comment on Christianity, she definitively predicts: "And having for its central symbols a mother and a baby, this cult of the Christ can never perish. Its ethics may change; its authority may wane; its history be impugned, but its symbols are eternal" (229). Yet, in so doing, she rejects the opportunity to confront her articulated anxieties and to create a denser, more ambivalent metaphor for Canada, a metaphor that her own observations seem to demand; rather, she retreats into what Julia Kristeva calls "the ultimate guarantee": the semiotic safety and the "symbolic coherence" of the image of Mother and child (238). The metaphor not only has the effect of naturalizing Confederation as a political act; it aggressively sentimentalizes Canadian political life, both its history and its development, locating it within the cult of motherhood. Yet there may be something potentially subversive, too, in the metaphor. "Motherland" was often the term used to describe the colonial relationship between Britain and Canada, with Britain being the mother and Canada the wayward child. By naming Canada as "Mother," Murphy is granting the land she loves permission to claim

nationalism as its destiny (300-01).

It is tempting to dismiss "A Song of This Land" as self-indulgent sentiment. Perhaps it is. But when situated within the framework of Murphy's ideas about nationhood and her interest in defining Canada in more spiritual and literary terms, it becomes liberated into something more enigmatic. Prophetic discourse, both Biblical and secular, is fueled by an odd cycle of both self-fulfilling referentiality and deferral that gesture toward an unknown future. As Elizabeth A. Castelli has observed, "[p]rophetic speech" is both "dangerous" and "powerful" because it is "self-authorizing, mobile and unaccountable to other forms of authority" (33). Yet, in order to be an eventuality, a prophecy and forecast must first be written and preserved for the future. "A Song of This Land" formalizes the attempts to anticipate Canada's future that occur throughout *Seeds of Pine* that Murphy herself often destabilizes. Murphy not only anticipates this future, but her future readers, as she depends on them to interpret her Song's full cultural meaning. It is these future readers who will determine whether Murphy envisioned an accurate forecast of Canada's future, or whether she has merely left a legacy of sentimental and dated poetic prose, composed by a writer who was passionate about Canada and unashamed to articulate for it a loving, as opposed to a dire, prophecy that would help define its intangible, yet material, spirit and soul.

In some respects, it is disappointing that Emily Murphy did not use her intellectual vigour and curiosity, her willingness to flout convention, to investigate and celebrate more fully the female missionaries who settled Canada, despite her belief in the

importance of female influence in the North.⁵³ The male missionary figures that Murphy celebrates in her writings were stock figures in the pantheon of religious heroes that was fashioned by missions supporters. Yet such figures and such lives offered a predictable and immediate rhetoric of sacrifice and heroism that provided a cogent body of imaginative material that could be integrated into the textual and moral project of Canadian nation building. Murphy solidifies the rhetoric of heroism surrounding male Canadian missionaries, as opposed to resisting it or challenging it, as she replicates the spirit of the hagiographic biographies that proliferated about figures such as Bishops Bompas, Grouard, and Lacombe. She fails to provide a reading of their lives into which could be integrated the forces of modernism, the tensions of cultural encounter, and the material realities and cultural resistance generated by life in the mission field, attributes that Terrence L. Craig sees as typical of missionary biography (87-90). She prefers to emphasize the mythic and imaginative significance of missionaries. By emphasizing their heroic individualism, she removes them, in some degree, from the institutional shadow and religious authority of the Church itself, an institution that Murphy was unafraid to challenge later in her career.⁵⁴

⁵³ In an address, "Romances of the North," given in 1926 in Calgary, Murphy said of the North, "It is not entirely a man's country.... There is a place in the north, a fine wide place, where every woman with the seven cardinal virtues can say, 'Here I stand with my robust soul.'" MS 2 Scrapbook 4, 79, Emily Murphy Papers, City of Edmonton Archives.

⁵⁴ See, for instance, Murphy's articles, "Is the Church Committing Suicide?" and "Women and the Priesthood." MS 2 Scrapbook 3, 41, 70, Emily Murphy Papers, City of

Ralph Connor, in his autobiography, *Postscript to Adventure* (1938), claimed, in the early stages of his writing career, to see religion as a “synonym of all that is virile, straight, honorable, and withal tender and gentle” (150). In contrast, in a syndicated article published in 1926, “My Religion,” Murphy explores the “awkward,” “confused,” and “blundering” nature of her own faith—her periods of scepticism, her study of the comparative religions and gods of Egypt, the impact of Darwinism on her ideas about the soul.⁵⁵ Her willingness to frame, not only the nature of Christian faith, but the task of nation building beyond the confines of “straightness” and “virility” into a more imaginative realm defined by unpredictable meandering, allowed her to cultivate an arresting literary voice engaged in bearing irreverent witness both against herself and the Canadian nation.

Edmonton Archives.

⁵⁵ MS 2 Scrapbook 4, 105, Emily Murphy Papers, City of Edmonton Archives.

Moravians

Hopedale Church Building est.1771

were we led all that way for
Birth or Death?

T. S. Eliot, 'Journey of the Magi'

Naked oak frame raised in a German field,
metallic hymn of hammers ringing across the valley,
grain of the blond wood splayed by
the driven circumference of nails.
At night the wind whispered among the bones
of the church like a restless congregation;
constellations fell through the ceiling rafters.

The location of every truss and cross-beam
recorded, carved in the wood,
the genealogy of fitted lumber mapped
from spire to base before it was taken down
and carried to the harbour mouth,
struts laid flat in the belly
of a ship for the three week journey.
Hard light of the North Star
ringing overhead at night,
marking the course across the Atlantic.

A handful of Moravians already living among the Eskimo
on the bald stone shores of Labrador,
awaiting the vessel's arrival and dreaming
the church resurrected, its spire clothed in spruce planks,
dreaming the disembodied voice of the bell sounding
over barren tundra and the word of the Gospel in
a new land driven home like a nail.

Michael Crummey
Hard Light

Conclusion

Michael Crummey's poem, "Moravians," published in *Hard Light* in 1998, encapsulates many of the unsettling ironies and tensions of early missionary enterprise in Canada. The Moravians were some of the earliest missionary pioneers to Newfoundland, establishing their first mission station in Labrador in 1764. The poem's crisp, spare diction works in fruitful tension with the permeability Crummey establishes between building and decay, between materiality and conviction, between imagination and action, between progress and anachronism, and between pilgrimage and settlement. The elemental intersection of wood and nails, symbolic in Christian belief simultaneously of violence and death, but also of new life and renewal; the visual tension between angles and circumference, between horizontal descent and collapse and vertical ascension and resurrection that echoes Al Purdy's similar play with architectural perspective in "Wilderness Gothic"; the counterpointing between building and deconstruction and then building again, between intangible uncontainable hope and tangible material destruction captures the dynamic interplay of optimism and arrogance, the conquering spirit and presumptions, the tensions and the cultural violence that characterized the legacy of early missionary work in Canada. Decayed and desolate, the empty mission building of which Crummey writes is still capable of invoking scholarly meaning and personal emotion, as Stephen Loring movingly establishes in his assessment of the Moravians' visual legacy in

Labrador.¹ The architectural remains are a potent metaphor for missionary experience, belying the narrative of progress with which missionary practice fortified itself. The building is partially collapsed, but still standing, its cultural meaning still emerging, awaiting new utility in the guise of reinterpretation and reassessment of missionary history's and missionary writing's complex and disconcerting legacy within Canadian culture.

The year 1914, in which Emily Murphy published *Seeds of Pine* was, in the opinion of historians such as Ruth Compton Brouwer, the beginning of a turning point in Canadian missionary history (*Modern* 3). The First World War meant the emergence of a new Western mission that also employed the emotional discourse of sacrifice in order to attract "soldiers" to fight for a Grand Cause located in a foreign land. One of the cultural effects of World War I is that it called into question the supremacy of European humanism and progress. Missionary work as a textual enterprise was also beginning to be transformed both in practical terms and with respect to the cultural narratives that underlay it. Technological advances in communication, travel, and infrastructure meant that the isolation that caused such despair for the early missionaries of Canada occurred with less frequency and the tenor of their writings changed accordingly. New technological alternatives became available and so this study ends at the cusp of this change, but with the acknowledgment that it was imminent.

¹ See Stephen Loring, "In Torngak's Realm: The Nineteenth-Century Photography of Moravian Missionaries in Labrador" in *Imaging the Arctic*.

There would be plenty more earnest textual narratives by Canadian women and men who served as missionaries both within and outside of Canada: Sarah Stringer, Jonathan and Rosalind Goforth, Eva Hassell, Archibald Fleming, W. E. Smith, Margaret O'Hara, and Wilfred T. Grenfell. The overarching cultural narrative that saw the missionary as an elevated, heroic, and confident figure, which perhaps found culmination in E. J. Pratt's *Brébeuf and his Brethren* (1940), gave way to a new one identified by James Clifford in *The Writing of Culture*, a narrative which saw the entry of the missionary into Native society as a kind of "corruption" and Fall, the harbinger of a systemic cultural degradation (118). Perhaps most pertinently articulated in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958), this emergent cultural narrative would also be reflected in a range of literary texts produced within Canada. Charges and allegations of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse of Native children by teachers, missionaries, and administrators at residential schools throughout Canada that emerged later in the twentieth century created justifiable moral and emotional outrage within these affected Native communities and in Canadian society at large. John Milloy would declare such schools a "national crime" and "the most damaging of the many elements of Canada's colonization of this land's original people" (qtd. in Kelm 206). These allegations resulted in a questioning of the roles of cultural appropriation, governmental management, and religious conversion respecting Canada's Native populations and a sustained and emotional consideration of the roles missionaries and residential schools played in degrading, damaging, and disenfranchising Native culture, as well as individual lives and

families. The cultural uncertainty generated by the advent of the missionary into Aboriginal society would be captured in the moral censure and condemnation of Harold Horwood's *White Eskimo* (1972), the raw historical naturalism and the ineptitude of missionary culture as revisioned in Brian Moore's *Black Robe* (1985), and the fractured questioning and restless ambivalence of the novels of Rudy Wiebe. Once self-depicted as harbingers of culture and civilization, missionaries were, by the mid to late twentieth century, established as insidious destroyers of them.

Yet the figure I wish briefly to acknowledge, who perhaps best summarizes at least one of the directions in which twentieth-century missionary culture was headed, was a radical, controversial, and, fittingly, a female one: the Canadian missionary, Aimee Semple McPherson. McPherson was a contemporary of Susie Rijnhart, and there are interesting parallels between the two. Like Susie Rijnhart, she married a fellow missionary, and like Rijnhart, she lost a husband in the mission field early in her marriage—to illness as opposed to murder. She, too, published an autobiographical narrative that recounted her missionary experience, *This is That*, published in 1919. But, unlike Rijnhart, who embraced the heroic tradition structured by nineteenth-century notions of female propriety, McPherson displayed a messianic confidence in the transforming powers of Christianity and in her own identity as a missionary. She transcended the limitations of narrative and sensationally deployed the cultural power of celebrity and the visual power of theatre in exaggerated spectacles of public healing. McPherson also embraced technological advancements in radio in disseminating the word

of God to the American masses. Critics of missionary activity might say that she brought to the surface what was self-serving and shameless about modern missionary culture. Postmodern critics might say that McPherson was beginning to reflect a society where multiple surfaces would replace the illusion of depth, where the medium is the message, as she placed missionary work on a different cultural trajectory than the one examined in this dissertation, one which bombastically merged secular innovation and religious conviction.

In the course of this study, I examined the emergence of female subjectivity within Canadian missionary culture, exploring the shifting cultural, textual, and imaginative conditions and the representational strategies that missionary women used in articulating their missionary identities. Certainly, these writings deserve examination alongside many of the other cultural texts currently attracting the critical attention of researchers of early Canadian literature and culture. This type of work is made easier by the fact that missionary writings and culture are starting to generate more scholarly interest in other disciplines. Arresting publications, such as *Canadian Missionaries, Indigenous Peoples: Representing Religion at Home and Abroad*, edited by Alvyn Austin and Jamie S. Scott, and *Mixed Messages: Materiality, Textuality, Missions*, edited by Jamie S. Scott and Gareth Griffiths, both of which were published in 2005, offer dynamic readings of the texts, artefacts, and material culture of missionary endeavour, as well as engaged and sceptical considerations of the discourses that characterized and defined missionary culture. These publications provide powerful and provocative

indications of the type of cultural readings that can be performed when the seemingly insular historical and religious world of the missionary is situated in a stridently secular, literary, and material context.

This interest has been extended to women's role in mission culture, and the important historical and cultural research done on Canadian female missionaries by Ruth Compton Brouwer, Rosemary Gagan, Myra Rutherdale, Adele Perry, Barbara Kelcey, and, while not confined exclusively to female missionaries, the thoughtful work of Susan Neylan and Gail Edwards. Publications of women's missionary writings, such as *Companions of the Peace* (1999), *The Life and Letters of Annie Leake Tuttle* (1999), *Good Intentions Gone Awry* (2006), and *The Letters of Margaret Butcher* (2006), provide critics with a tangible body of material in which they can more closely analyze and deconstruct the formal properties, rhetorics, and subjectivities produced within the various texts of missionary women. Yet many of the writings of early Canadian missionary women still reside in archives, in handwritten scripts, or in publications currently out of print, awaiting discovery or renewed investigation.

There are opportunities, for instance, to explore further women's contributions to home and foreign missions beyond the Protestant, Methodist, and Presbyterian models, which have, to date, generated the most scholarship. The role of women in Chinese home missions in Canada, for instance, is under-examined, despite the research of Jiwu Wong. As I have argued, the writings of religious congregations offer important sites of special, perhaps more structured, cultural tensions that need to be better situated against the

greater project of missionary work. More work needs to be done, as well, in considering the writings of female missionaries within pioneer and settler literature, which is currently dominated by considerations of Catharine Parr Traill, Susanna Moodie, and Elizabeth Simcoe.

There is also room for a more nuanced consideration of the dual roles of sentiment and emotion in women's missionary writing. Sentiment, as Laura Wexler has observed, offered a powerful means of "organizing family life" in the nineteenth century which fed and sustained definitions of "home" (65; 67). These sentimental constructions of domestic and family life particularly energized the cultural constructions of women's social role within missionary culture. As Wexler has observed, "the culture of sentiment aimed not only to establish itself as the gatekeeper of social existence but at the same time to denigrate all other people whose style or condition of domesticity did not conform to the sentimental model" (67). Sentiment created unexamined cultural tensions and effects in missionary work, particularly in missionary writing, as women claimed some of the cultural powers generated by sentiment, even as their writings often contradicted the idealized representations of themselves as religious teachers and models of domestic knowledge that sentiment helped to create. Similar claims can be made about the role of emotion in missionary texts, as has been argued by Jane Haggis and Margaret Allen. In their recent pioneering article, Haggis and Allen explore the cultural effects of "imperial emotions" in British women's missionary writing, drawing attention to how such emotions were rhetorically managed to draw homeland readers into an "emotional

community” of “Christian activists,” while simultaneously placing Native converts within an “emotional community” of “redemptive Christianity” that missionaries dually embodied (694-96). As Mary Louise Pratt has observed, “humanitarianism...is its own form of anti-conquest” (68). Often, in missionary writings, the forces of sentiment and affect coalesced with the rhetorics of benevolence and the civilizing mission to create a form of “anti-conquest,” a form of sentimental benevolence in which the reader’s attention is redirected from acts of cultural invasion and appropriation and Native resistance, to the more benign rhetorical reiteration, presented in culturally innocent language, of the missionary’s feelings about encounters, change, progress, and failure.

Terrence L. Craig has astutely observed that any reader or critic of missionary literature must “anticipate tension” as they approach each new text (94). As they struggled to create homes and communities for themselves in the “new” lands that they were attempting to settle and transform, missionary women collectively shared differing relationships with the discourses that they deployed to construct the basis of their cultural authority. All of the women examined in this study, for instance, used the relational language of what Nancy Lutkehaus has called “missionary maternalism” in creating a cultural rhetoric that could represent the emotional and social dimensions of their life work and vocation (207-08). The Presentation Sisters used the language of maternalism and kinship, as they attempted to build a new gendered community with each other in the New World, while still maintaining vital emotional relationships in the Old. Charlotte Bompas positioned herself as a mother-figure in her relationships with young Native

children in her vigilant attempts to create a cultural identity for herself in a mission where her role was secondary and ill-defined. Susie Rijnhart saw the women of Tibet as potential heathen mothers, but she also used the discourse of motherhood against them to establish her own cultural supremacy. Yet this cultural posturing never quite overshadows the affective and intimate language of maternal love and grief that Rijnhart reserves exclusively for her dead child. Emily Murphy, as did many of the women of her era, positions herself as a "mother of the race," as she crafts the metaphor of maternalism for describing her personal and patriotic relationship with Canada and as she expands and revises the discourse of maternal feminism to include space for creative, intellectual, and literary female endeavour.

The women examined in this dissertation also shared differing relationships with domesticity itself. The Presentation Sisters radically rejected the model of a married domestic life, as they embraced an enclosed, celibate religious community that celebrated women's ability to lead a pious and religious life outside of traditional domestic space. Charlotte Bompas's relationship with domesticity was more conventional, as she delighted in organizing the domestic space of the mission station to replicate the domestic space of the homeland. Yet the merging of "work" space with domestic space that characterized her mission made the creation and maintenance of such space a constant and unpredictable struggle. Susie Rijnhart shows both a yearning and a defiance for traditional domesticity, as her incessant itinerant wanderings are pitted against her idyllic remembrances of an idealized domestic existence that was spectacularly and dramatically

shattered by the events that befell her entire family in Tibet. Emily Murphy was, characteristically, ambivalent about domesticity, as she encouraged women to pursue unconventional professional paths and leadership roles, yet she still placed value on the stability and cultural effects generated by domestic values. The fact that these structuring concepts could withstand such variations of voice, and such contradictory and ambiguous positions, reveals the extent to which the discourses with which missionary culture fortified itself were heterogenous and dynamic in nature.

The women examined in this dissertation saw themselves as assuming powerful cultural, as well as personal, responsibilities. As Janice Fiamengo has observed, early twentieth-century Christian women, such as Agnes Maule Machar and Nellie McClung, often did not make formal distinctions between religious and secular perspectives, "outlining a faith and a commitment to reform in which the spiritual and the social were one" (*Woman's* 209). Christian discourse provided these women with a language in which they could execute their projects of social improvement and secular progress, as well as religious conversion. The fact that women were viewed as more innately religious than men by nineteenth-century society gave them a measure of cultural power, as they were encouraged to exercise and cultivate moral influence. Yet, as A. James Hammerton has observed, "the evangelical emphasis on domesticity elevated motherhood and the moral power of women to a point that was inconsistent with their...subordination" (*Cruelty* 71). Female missionaries still had troubled relationships with the hierarchies of missionary and religious authority that often structured their missions, as they struggled to

navigate both within—and, in the case of Susie Rijnhart, outside—the restrictions placed upon their mobility, their duties, and their ability to perform meaningful social action. Closer readings of the writings of early Canadian missionary women provide a textual framework for revealing the tensions and contradictions generated by this tentative cultural positioning that can better help determine the extent to which Christianity was both a liberating and a repressive force for them.

As I indicated in my Introduction, more work, as well, is needed on the role of religious discourse in early Canadian writing. In the 1970s, Susan Joan Wood in *The Land in Canadian Prose* posed this dilemma: “[F]rom the Protestant pioneer conquering the land for God and man and the Catholic *habitant* tilling his land with pious resignation to the Laurentian or prairie patriarch defeated by society, what is the influence of religion on the individual and on society as both react to the land, and on the literature that depicts this reaction” (34). The invitation extended by Wood has been pursued by a handful of Canadian literary and cultural critics and historians—William Closson James, Terrence L. Craig, Daniel Coleman, Gwendolyn Davies, Janice Fiamengo, Joanna Dean, Ruth Compton Brouwer—who have been interested in exploring the role of religious discourse in the writings of canonical and non-canonical nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Canadian writers. However, contained within the gaps and spaces posed by Wood’s question—gaps made larger by the kinds of critical narratives invited by postcolonialism, multiculturalism, and New Historicism—are places for the study of the textual productions of missionary women, whose writings pose cultural, social, religious, and

literary challenges that require material investigation, careful contemplation, and inspired navigation.

Within women's missionary writing, the rhetoric of mission emerged as a textual discourse that was material and spiritual, institutional and personal, performative and contemplative, restrictive and liberating. It also emerged as a gendered discourse in which women's professional and subjective experiences, positioning, and authority within mission culture and larger settler communities could be negotiated and produced, but also destabilized and questioned. The language and rhetoric of missionary and religious culture allowed women to order their experiences in certain predictable patterns that delineated their social roles. Yet it also allowed for an expansion and negotiation of those roles in the midst of material conditions and raw cultural encounters that would challenge the ideological frameworks that motivated and organized the impetus and structures for these missions. Imaginatively situated on a "ever-present frontier" (Wood 31), missionary women in their writings composed a version of the female self that was bound by conventional relationships, yet still defined by creative opportunities for professional and personal self-invention. The subjectivity that emerged from their experiences was fractured and contradictory, yet still contained vestiges of an undisputed social and cultural authority from which a more coherent public and social role could be extracted and reconstructed. Missionary texts inscribed women's relationships of power in veiled, direct, and emotional language, not only with the institution of mission culture, and with the people whom they encountered in the mission fields, but also with

themselves.

The boundaries of cultural encounter often situated women missionaries within contradictory parameters that they could not contain. Their texts, sometimes organized by the conventions and discursive demands of genre and replete with stylized articulations of their cultural roles, still offer occasional glimmers of silence and resistance to the experiences they were articulating as they textually negotiated and articulated their own cultural and personal self-identities. Identifying these silences and moments of resistance, unearthing what Michel Foucault has called the “silent sedimentation of things said” (*Archaeology* 141), as well as the things that are unsaid and unarticulated, becomes a part of the reading strategy necessary for these texts, and for unravelling their “knotted threads.”

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Yukon Territory Archives

Anglican Church, Diocese of Yukon Records

Bompas Papers (McCord Collection)



