

MAPPING THE SELF IN THE "UTMOST PURPLE RIM":

PUBLISHED LABRADOR MEMOIRS OF

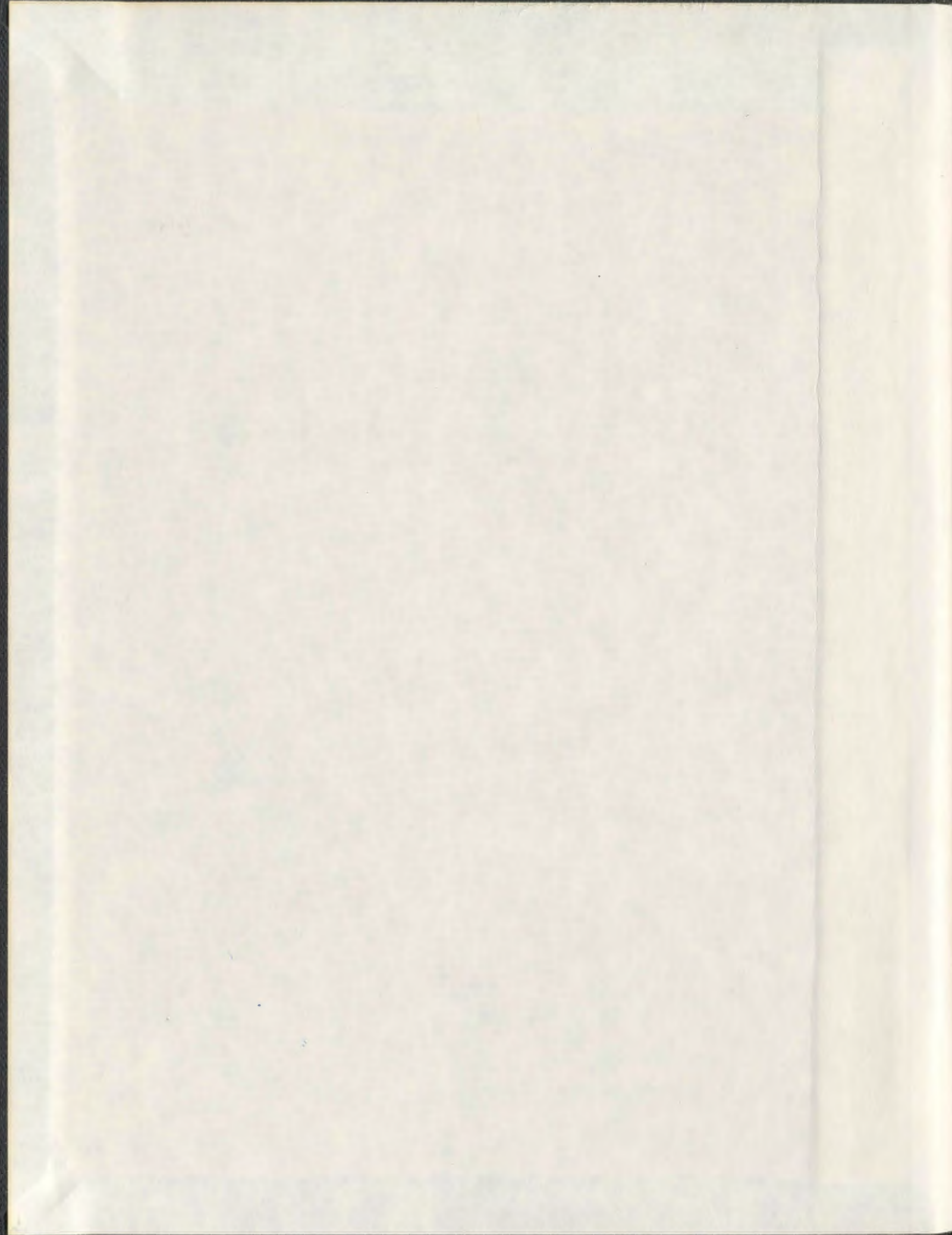
FOUR GRENFELL NURSES

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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IONA LOREEN BULGIN



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**Mapping the Self in the “Utmost Purple Rim”:
Published Labrador Memoirs of Four Grenfell Nurses**

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in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
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Abstract

This dissertation examines the published memoirs of four Grenfell nurses, Dora Burchill's *Labrador Memories* (1947), Bessie Banfill's *Labrador Nurse* (1952), Lesley Diack's *Labrador Nurse* (1963), and Dorothy Jupp's *A Journey of Wonder and Other Writings* (1971), and argues for broadening canonical boundaries to allow for their inclusion in the literary and cultural history of Newfoundland and Labrador.

From 1893, the contributions of Grenfell Mission nurses to Mission periodicals and publicity pamphlets composed an unrecognized tradition of nurses' writings. Strictly censored, this writing was used as propaganda and promoted the Mission and its ideology of service. The four memoirs discussed in this dissertation present females who step outside the approved cultural scripts for nurses. Within the Grenfell Mission, these independent, assertive voices were counter-hegemonic; collectively, they subvert the romanticized image of the Mission presented by conventional history.

Memoir, a form in which the self is shown in relation to the community, is a literary genre not given much critical attention. Memoir permits each nurse to create a version of the self—a self not permitted in official Grenfell discourse. When the surface intention of these memoirs is penetrated and subverted and they are read for autobiography, for self-inscription, these nurses are seen as complex individuals negotiating their self-inscriptions through the translation of the material of their Grenfell experiences. Although these memoirs achieved a certain readership and a modicum of

success when published, their invisibility in the history of the Grenfell Mission and in the literary culture of Newfoundland and Labrador attests to their marginalization. When read against archival material, the silences become apparent. This dissertation claims a space not just for public autobiographical writing, but for the rescue and restoration of the voices that speak from archival documents. Reclaiming the voices of these Grenfell nurses breaks the silence that has hidden these remarkable “herstories” and attempts to establish a powerful counter-narrative by inserting women’s personal narratives into the Grenfell myth.

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Grenfell Nursing Stations (*ADSF* July 1938)

Grenfell Nursing Stations (*ADSF* July 1959)

Four Grenfell Nurse-Writers

Cover of *Labrador Memories* (1947)

Cover of *Labrador Nurse* (1953)

Cover of *Labrador Nurse* (1963)

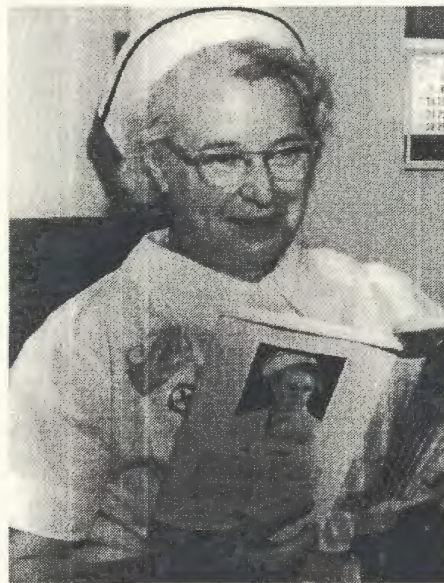
Cover of *A Journey of Wonder and Other Writings* (1971)

... [a man] said that the spirit of adventure was dying out of our race. What nonsense! It is true that we have to bow over the wheel of work & have, maybe, less time to contemplate the utmost purple rim, but when opportunity offers, how swift are so many to go to adventure & the ends of the earth. Our nurses to Labrador for instance. (Denley Clark to Betty Seabrook, 26 May 1954) [PANL, MG 63, Box 8, File: Mr. Denley Clark]

Nursing on the Labrador is in a class by itself. The nurse must be skillful and resourceful within herself and able to devise ways and means.... It is a great country in which to gain experience and grow independent.... it requires a thoroughly competent and experienced person to fill the position of nurse in the Grenfell Mission. (Annie M. Warne, "The Mission Staff Foursquare" 133-134)



Dora Elizabeth Burchill
(from *Labrador Memories*)



Bessie Jane Banfill
(Courtesy of Hugh Banfill)



Lesley Molloy Diack
(from *Among the Deep Sea Fishers*
October 1964)



Dorothy Maud Jupp
(Courtesy of Sir Wilfred Grenfell
Historical Society)

Four Grenfell Nurse-Writers

A detailed map of Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada, highlighting various locations of interest. The map includes labels for major bodies of water like the Northwest River, St. Mary's River, and Cabot Strait. It also shows numerous islands and harbors such as Miram Harbor, Seal Island, Boulter's Rock, George's Cove, Seattle Harbor, Red Bay, Blanc Sablon, Flower's Cove, St. John's, and Lewisporte. A scale bar at the top indicates distances up to 200 nautical miles. The map is oriented with North at the top, and latitude/longitude coordinates are marked along the edges.

Grenfell Nursing Stations (ADSF July 1938)



Grenfell Nursing Stations (ADSF July 1959)

Chapter 1

Looking for Signposts

1.1 Introduction

*I realize more than ever that the doctor is of very little use. It's the nurse who counts at this game. (Floretta Greeley, *Work and Play in the Grenfell Mission* 75)*

I am sure that Miss Seabrook¹ does her best to secure nurses; without the British nurses she gets, of course we couldn't run the nursing-stations. I think it is next to impossible to secure nurses from the United States unless they are missionary-minded. (In the early days—which everyone resents my mentioning—we had graduates of the best training schools in this country [United States] ... these were missionary-minded women. They came for very low salaries, went to isolated places in poorly equipped hospitals, and were real "missionaries" ...) (Dr. Charles Curtis to Dr. Gordon Thomas, 8 August 1962)²

Speaking out about women's lives, we break silence. Silence is that powerful and restrictive protection, particularly enforced by our patriarchal society, that hides so many truths, so many "herstories." (Abi Pirani, "Sources and Silences" 14)

My interest in exploring and engaging in dialogue with Grenfell nurses' memoirs—that space where the seemingly disparate disciplines of nursing and literature interface³—was initially piqued by a brief reference in an article on Newfoundland women's autobiographical writings:⁴

Second in sheer drama [to the autobiographies of the Labrador women: Campbell, Baikie, and Goudie] are the autobiographies of nurses, most of them located in Labrador: Bessie Jane Banfill, Dora Burchill, Lesley Diack, Dorothy Jupp.... Nurse's tales are of life and death, the birthing of babies, hair-raising accounts of difficult journeys through snow and storm to visit sick patients. (Buchanan 16)

Prior to pursuing an undergraduate degree in literature, I worked for many years in a field

generally considered the polar opposite of the arts.⁵ Even though I had done an internship (as a medical laboratory technologist) with the International Grenfell Association (IGA, see Appendix I) in St. Anthony for three months in the summer of 1969 and had met nurses from all over the world, until I read Roberta Buchanan's article I was unaware that any Grenfell nurse had written about (and published) her experience(s). Although Burchill, Banfill, and Diack worked with the Grenfell Mission long before my brief association with this organization, Jupp still worked with the Mission in Nain. Buchanan's reference to Grenfell nurses' memoirs; my past brief, albeit tenuous, association with the IGA; and my keenness to help fill the lacuna in scholarly work on (Newfoundland) women writers and their neglected texts, coalesced to solidify my interest in further exploration of the four nurse-writers mentioned in her paper. With subsequent research other voices emerged, nurses who had in their writing "mapped the coast" of Newfoundland and Labrador—each with her own story. My own bibliographic mapping of this wealth of material, collated for the first time in Appendix II, offers a guideline for exploration. Are there more nurses' accounts buried in attics and archives, doomed to silence? Who will bring them to light? These questions remain the task of others and are beyond the scope of this dissertation, which focuses on the memoirs outlined below.

Dora Burchill's *Labrador Memories* (1947), ostensibly an account of the summer of 1938 when she was nurse in charge of the Indian Harbour nursing station, is just one path that Burchill took in an adventure-seeking life, both in and beyond her native

Australia. In this memoir, Burchill carefully positions herself and her adventure within the framework of the patriarchal Grenfell Mission. Although she praises Grenfell, Burchill ultimately valorizes herself as heroine of her own adventure-narrative. *Labrador Nurse* (1952), by the Canadian-born Bessie Banfill, presents a realistic, sometimes graphic picture of Grenfell nursing, one that is incongruent with the romanticized, official Mission version. The philosophy of this missionary-nurse—humour balances the tragedies inherent in everyday life—is woven into her narrative of two one-year terms (1928 and 1942) at the Mutton Bay nursing station. British nurse Lesley Diack’s memoir of her first three Labrador years, also entitled *Labrador Nurse* (1963), reveals an empowering spiritual “dark night of the soul” during her Forteau tenure in the early 1950s. The teachings of mystics and spiritual guides—in particular, the integration of the practical and the contemplative—permeate Diack’s memoir and possibly influenced her post-Labrador commitment, that of becoming a Benedictine nun. The complex Dorothy Jupp, another British nurse, whose Labrador commitment spans thirty-six years (from 1938 to 1974) and several employers, gives in *A Journey of Wonder and Other Writings* (1971) a glimpse of three significant journeys: her original journey to Labrador, a journey around the world, and a later epiphanic journey to the Holy Land. In her life as a nurse, as well as in her memoir, Jupp stepped outside the approved image available to a Grenfell nurse.

Much has been written by and about Sir Wilfred Grenfell, the founder of the Grenfell Mission (discussed in chapter 2), whose ice pan adventure and subsequent short

autobiographical piece, *Adrift on an Ice-Pan* (1909), “turned a remote missionary doctor into a Christian folk hero” (Rompkey, “Spiritual Autobiography” 18). By 1920, *Adrift on an Ice-Pan* had gone through eighteen editions, and three years later the publishers had to make a new set of plates. An enormous publishing success, the ice pan adventure, later anthologized in school textbooks, made Grenfell visible to a new generation. In 1992, it was reissued for Grenfell’s centenary. According to Ronald Rompkey,⁶ after the ice pan adventure Grenfell began to think about his autobiography, and in 1919 *A Labrador Doctor: The Autobiography of Wilfred Thomason Grenfell, M.D.* was published. The literature of the Grenfell Mission promoted a heroic image of its founder—an image created and promulgated by Grenfell himself⁷—and there are also plenty of heroic biographies of Grenfell.⁸ Grenfell’s own writings as well as a plethora of hagiographical biographies and children’s books with Grenfell as a popular hero kept Grenfell in the popular discourse. These books were all promoted in the IGA quarterly *Among the Deep Sea Fishers* and in Grenfell’s fund-raising talks, and reviewed by the popular press.

From the original hero-founder to the male doctors who succeeded him—in particular Charles S. Curtis, Gordon W. Thomas, and W. Anthony Paddon—the Grenfell Mission was a patriarchal organization. Thomas’s memoir *From Sled to Satellite: My Years with the Grenfell Mission* (1987) and Paddon’s *Labrador Doctor: My Life With the Grenfell Mission* (1990) were both published after the memoirs of the nurses in whose lives they wielded such authority. The Harvard-educated Curtis came to Labrador in 1915 after hearing Grenfell lecture about the need for doctors in Labrador and northern

Newfoundland, and in 1917 he became the medical officer in charge of the St. Anthony hospital. According to Rompkey, Curtis “genuinely enjoyed the philanthropic side of the Mission’s work, even though he manifested no exceptional missionary leanings himself” (*Grenfell of Labrador* 185). In 1953 Curtis was succeeded as medical superintendent (his position since 1934), by Thomas; he remained in active practice until 1959 and was chairman of the IGA’s board of directors from 1953 until his death in 1963. The Canadian-born McGill-trained Thomas joined the Mission as a medical officer and surgeon at the St. Anthony Hospital in 1946, and became surgeon-in-charge in 1950. He was the IGA’s executive director from 1959 until 1978. Born in Indian Harbour, Labrador, Paddon, who received his medical training in the United States, followed his parents, Harry and Mina Paddon, and was in charge of the Northwest River, Labrador, hospital. Paddon was the IGA’s director of Northern Medical Services from 1960 to 1978.

Although Grenfell was originally financially backed from the Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen (MDSF), the Newfoundland and Labrador project became independent of MDSF in 1914 with the incorporation of the International Grenfell Association, a governing body for the five supporting associations: the Grenfell Medical Mission of Canada (Ottawa), the New England Grenfell Association (Boston), the Grenfell Association of America (New York), the Grenfell Association of Newfoundland (St. John’s) and the Royal National Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen (RNMDSF)⁹ (London). The fact that the Mission was named after Grenfell is evidence of his self-magnification:

it revolved around his name and his image. In 1926 Grenfell formed a new organization to collect funds in the United Kingdom. This organization, called the Grenfell Association of Great Britain and Ireland (GAGBI), had Katie Spalding as its first secretary. Prior to this, Grenfell had collected money under the auspices of the RNMDSF and, after the incorporation of GAGBI, those contributions diminished further. As Rompkey explains, “[a]n important link with the origins of the Labrador mission had now disappeared,” and in 1934 the RNMDSF ended its official connection with the Labrador work (*Grenfell of Labrador* 233). Despite the complexity of administrative and nomenclature changes, it was generally known as the “Grenfell Mission” and, for the most part, I retain this throughout the dissertation. There are no heroine-writers traditionally associated with the Grenfell Mission, but as this dissertation demonstrates, there have been nurses whose memoirs, by being published, were disseminated to a particular reading public. Where their voices were once heard, now exists only silence. Were they a threat to the patriarchal order? In addition to Grenfell, doctors Curtis, Thomas, and Paddon are household names in Newfoundland and Labrador, but who has heard of Burchill, Banfill, Diack, and Jupp? The research required to locate even bare biographical details was a challenge: these nurse-writers have been erased within a masculinist historiography.

Why do I undertake to rescue these Grenfell nurse-writers and their “lost” texts? I use “lost” in the sense that they have been lost from the cluster of Grenfell-related writings; to quote Lynne Spender, “*someone has lost them*” (108). Although there may be

some question about the inclusion of these four Grenfell nurses—none of whom were Newfoundlanders—under the aegis of Newfoundland literature, I do so on the basis of their portrayal of Newfoundland experiences as well as on their association with the Grenfell Mission (see Appendix I). This project of examining the published memoirs of Grenfell nurse-writers attempts to reclaim women's stories and texts from the invisibility of history. When I first read about those nurses, and subsequently read their memoirs, I felt keenly about “gathering together their voices from the silent pages of literary and cultural history” (Harris 68); I wanted to break the silence and fill the void with these voices.

1.2 The Silences of Women's Experiences

In her introduction to *Pursuing Equality: Historical Perspectives on Women in Newfoundland and Labrador*, Linda Kealey writes: “Reading the history of Newfoundland and Labrador, one is struck by the ‘silences’ on women's experiences” (1). Researching and writing a masters thesis on Anastasia English, Newfoundland's first woman novelist,¹⁰ had acquainted me with those silences. In an attempt to rescue that literary foremother I became aware of “the multiple marginalization” of Atlantic women writers (Gerson 65). Although Carole Gerson focuses on the fiction and poetry, not autobiography,¹¹ of prominent Atlantic literary women of the inter-war period, her concluding statement provides an appropriate starting point for my examination of the marginalization and silencing of nurse-writers in a patriarchal Mission:

By engaging in literary archaeology we can de-center the prevailing narrative of Canadian literary history, and attend to those who have been marginalized by their gender and their regional affiliation. (Gerson 70)

What about marginalization by genre? Is autobiography literature? Is the memoir a valid literary form? Is it a subcategory of autobiography? As Helen M. Buss points out, autobiography has been denigrated as “amateurish literature and bad history” (*Canadian Women's Autobiography* 20). Although long considered outside the mainstream of canonical literature, autobiography is now a respectable genre for study. Memoirs,¹² diaries, journals, reminiscences, and letters—all forms of personal narrative generally favoured by women and traditionally ignored in the study of autobiography—are now being studied by literary scholars such as Elizabeth Meese, Cynthia Huff, and Helen M. Buss, to name a few. The fate of Grenfell nurse-writers is part of a general story about women writers now being uncovered by literary and social historians, writers who are now being brought out from “the shadows of literary half-life” (MacMillan, McMullen and Waterson 5-6). As Tillie Olsen makes clear in her book, *Silences*, “Literary history and the present are dark with silences: some the silences for years by our acknowledged great; some silences hidden; some the ceasing to publish after one work appears; some the never coming to book form at all” (6). Silences take many forms.

1.2.1 *Censorship within the Grenfell Mission*

From its early MDSF beginnings, Grenfell nurses were expected and encouraged to promote the Mission through the pages of *Toilers of the Deep* (*Toilers*), the official

monthly journal of the MDSF (later RNMDSF). Their letters, reports, anecdotes, literary sketches, and occasional writing filled the pages of *Among the Deep Sea Fishers* (ADSF),¹³ the Grenfell quarterly paper of the Toronto component of MDSF, after its inception in 1903. But such writing had to conform within strict parameters, and all writing by Grenfell staff had to be thoroughly vetted before publication. Stories were either shaped by Katie Spalding and Betty Seabrook (GAGBI secretaries) into appropriate fund-raising propaganda (brochures, pamphlets, etc.) in the United Kingdom, or by periodical editors into vehicles to disseminate the Mission's ideology. The Grenfell Mission was well aware of the propaganda value of its nurses: not only were nurses encouraged to write fictional and factual stories about their experiences, but also to give lectures and fund-raising talks when they were on leave. Whatever the medium, the Mission was presented as a benevolent saviour, bringing "civilization" to foreign, remote Labrador.

Le Petit Nord or Annals of a Labrador Harbour (1920) was not written by a nurse, nor does it consider nurses, but it does attest to the propaganda potential of Mission literature. *Le Petit Nord* by Anne Grenfell and Katie Spalding is, as Patricia O'Brien points out, "a collection of pseudo-letters ostensibly written by the incoming superintendent of the St. Anthony [called St. Antoine] orphanage for the purpose of raising funds for a new orphanage building" (*Grenfell Obsession* 82). For its publication, the Mission "mustered its considerable array of propaganda tools" (*Grenfell Obsession* 82), including twenty-four illustrations by Grenfell himself. This book, with Grenfell's

wife as co-author, was, like Grenfell's own, promoted in *ADSF*. The Grenfell name guaranteed promotion. In addition to co-authorship of *Le Petit Nord*, Anne Grenfell played a significant role in the creation of her husband's image and the composition of his autobiography, *A Labrador Doctor*. While transforming the handwritten first draft of his autobiography into typed text, she "eliminat[ed] anecdotes, soften[ed] judgements, and curb[ed] Grenfell's dilations on religious subjects" (Rompkey, "Spiritual Autobiography" 20). *Forty Years for Labrador* (1932), a new autobiography for the fortieth anniversary of Grenfell's arrival in the north, was "almost exclusively the work of Lady Grenfell" (Rompkey, "Spiritual Autobiography" 26). Although Anne Grenfell "assumed [Grenfell's] literary voice" (Rompkey, "Spiritual Autobiography" 20) in his later years, the glory remained his. Traditionally women were expected to be adjuncts to "great men" and to occupy supportive, background not public, foreground roles.

The nurses' early periodical writing in *Toilers* and *ADSF* reflected and contributed to the official discourse of the Mission. It also reflected the limitations of this discourse: there were two available scripts or textual representations—nurse-as-angel-of-mercy or nurse-as-mother. Strict censorship ensured the maintenance of this discourse. In essence, nurses' periodical writing was subsumed into the story of the Grenfell Mission: the benevolent Mission and its hero-founder. This dissertation demonstrates the anomaly of this official image: in reality nurses were exploited financially; they were overworked, permitted few holidays, and were arbitrarily moved from place to place without consultation. Even though nurses were encouraged to write articles and touching stories

for propaganda, and even though this was evidence of their writing, was there silencing later when their memoirs were published?

1.2.2 *Self-Censorship*

An examination of archival material (particularly letters of these nurses) reveals the discrepancy between the official image and reality, particularly the considerable conflicts between the nurses and the various authoritarian and authoritative male doctors who administered the Grenfell Mission; for example, Diack's conflict with Thomas will be examined in chapter 5, and the tensions between Jupp and Curtis and Paddon in chapter 6. These conflicts are absent from Diack's and Jupp's memoir accounts. Although Jupp details her conflict with a British teacher in her memoir, she does not name this woman. For the most part, Jupp identifies people by their profession—for example, the Doctor, the Nurse, and the Teacher. The male-dominated *Labrador Memories* has hints of a sexual subtext. A later memoir reveals more explicit details about an event from *Labrador Memories*; this will be discussed in chapter 3. When read intertextually with their other works (in the case of Burchill), and intertextually with letters (in the case of the other three nurses), a different picture emerges.

1.2.3 *Post-Publication: Silenced by the Dominant Culture*

Burchill, Banfill, Diack, and Jupp were not professional writers, and they experienced difficulty getting their books published. Banfill's and Diack's memoirs were

published by established publishing houses, but Jupp's was self-published by an American subsidy publishing house. Burchill's was the first full-length book printed by the Australian newspaper, *Shepparton News*. Once published, these books did not become part of the discourse of the dominant culture, and they did not attract the cult following of Grenfell. The Mission acknowledged these memoirs in only a cursory way (generally as a brief mention in its alumni news pages) and did not use the nurses' books for fund raising.

Burchill's *Labrador Memories* had a print run of 1000 copies when it was printed by *Shepparton News* in July 1947, and in October of the same year it went into a second printing. Banfill's *Labrador Nurse*, published by Ryerson Press in 1952, Macrae Smith Company, Philadelphia in 1953, and Robert Hale, London in 1954, was a success in Canada. *ADSF* ran a publisher's ad of Banfill's memoir in one issue, and a brief "review" in another. Diack's *Labrador Nurse* was published by Victor Gollancz in Britain; it had two impressions in 1963, and a third in 1964. It, too, received a "review" in *ADSF*, and was widely reviewed in Britain. Although her manuscript was rejected by several publishers, Jupp was determined to get her book published; Jupp not only paid for its publication with Vantage Press, but marketing and sales were also her responsibility. Jupp's book was mentioned in *ADSF*'s alumni news page, but it was not "reviewed." I have been unable to find a single printed reaction to Jupp's book.

As my research shows, although the Grenfell Mission encouraged its nurses to write for its publications, this writing was to promote the Mission and its ideology.

Although the Mission encouraged them to write articles, when these nurses published their memoirs, the Mission did not promote them as they did Grenfell's own. Unlike periodical articles, the more public form of books, particularly autobiography, a genre traditionally appropriated by men (in this case, Grenfell), "claim" heroine status for the nurse-writer. Writing about the self implies self-assertion and self-display, and women (in this case, nurses) "are not supposed to be assertive or to blow their own trumpets, like their male counterparts" (Buchanan 16). This display of the self in print was reserved for the "Great Man" himself. While his books were promoted, theirs were allowed to fall into silence.

1.2.4 *The Nurses in Newfoundland Literary Culture: A Chronological Review*

An extract from Jupp's memoir (1971) was included in Kevin Major's *Doryloads: Newfoundland Writings and Art Selected and Edited for Young People* (1974), a text designed for the study of literature in Newfoundland's schools, and one Major hoped would "bring to view some writing and art of our province, to share some Newfoundland experiences" (ix). Major included this extract, which he entitled "A Long Winter," because it "illustrates in very real terms the dedication and courage of all the Grenfell personnel who have worked over the years to bring medical service to this land, often under the worst of conditions" (89).¹⁴ This particular extract, while demonstrating the nurse's dedication and courage, also accentuated the "great work" (Major 89) of Grenfell and the Grenfell Mission. An overworked, sleep-deprived Jupp travels from her nursing

station in an open boat over heavy seas—the winter journey is long and dangerous, with strong winds, thick snow, frozen spray, slob ice—to attend to a patient. The nurse, “protected” from the brutal elements by only a piece of canvas, then accompanies the patient back to the Grenfell station for treatment and eventual recovery. It is the first anthologized piece of writing by a Grenfell nurse. Grenfell is not included in Major’s anthology.

In the 1970s these nurse-writers were forgotten even by the women’s movement searching for heroines. *Remarkable Women of Newfoundland and Labrador* (1976), a collection of biographical sketches by the Saint John’s Local Council of Women, was one such project to “honour women who have contributed to the quality of Newfoundland, in order to recognize their accomplishments and to inspire other women to participate more fully in all aspects of life” ([i]). Mina (Gilchrist) Paddon, wife of Harry L. Paddon, mother of W. Anthony Paddon, and a nurse, is the only “Grenfell” inclusion. Mina Paddon began nursing with the Grenfell Mission at St. Anthony in 1911, and was subsequently posted to Indian Harbour, Mud Lake, and North West River. With her marriage to Paddon in 1915, she became the “Doctor’s Wife”: she was no longer employed as a nurse by the Mission, but, when needed, assisted her husband as nurse and anesthetist. When he died, she returned to North West River and served as hospital administrator during World War II (“Paddon, Mina”). The hospital at Happy Valley bears his name, but she lies under “a simple slab of labradorite” which “marks the resting place of a truly noble lady” (*Remarkable Women* 49). Male doctors have missions and hospitals

named after them, but women, true to stereotype, are praised for their simplicity and nobility and awarded less visible displays of honour.

Burchill, Banfill, Diack, and Jupp are also conspicuously absent from *From This Place: A Selection of Writing by Women of Newfoundland and Labrador*, edited by Bernice Morgan, Helen Porter, and Geraldine Rubia (1977). This book, however, includes excerpts from Elizabeth Goudie's *Woman of Labrador* and Lydia Campbell's *Sketches of Labrador Life*.

Grenfell nurses are mentioned in Joyce Nevitt's general narrative history *White Caps and Black Bands: Nursing in Newfoundland to 1934*, published in 1978. While now considerably dated, it remains the only work on Newfoundland nurses and provides a valuable though limited source. Nevitt, the founder of the School of Nursing at Memorial University of Newfoundland, provides biographical material on the early Grenfell nurses, and footnotes Banfill's *Labrador Nurse* as "a sensitive and perceptive report of Miss Banfill's personal experiences at Mutton Bay during the twenties and forties when she served two terms with the IGA" (192). Other than this brief mention, Nevitt does not consider writings by any nurses, Grenfell or otherwise; Jupp falls outside Nevitt's timeline.

Jupp and Banfill do occupy a place in the history of Newfoundland and Labrador: as Grenfell nurses they are included in the *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador* (Banfill in Volume I [1981] and Jupp in Volume III [1991]), and the writings of both nurses are acknowledged. However, only Jupp—Jupp-the-nurse, not Jupp-the-writer—is

included in the *Dictionary of Newfoundland and Labrador Biography (DNLB)* (1990).

Jupp is the only one of this quartet of nurse-writers mentioned in both Thomas's and Paddon's memoirs, but despite their references to Jupp, there is no acknowledgment of either her memoir or her periodical writing. Thomas "develop[ed] a tremendous respect for her medical judgement and especially her good sense in obstetrics" (*Sled to Satellite* 28). He refers to her as a "memorable character" who had "spent her lifetime serving the people of Labrador," and as "one of our pioneers in nursing in an Inuit community" who had "set up our first nursing station in northern Labrador, in the largest and most northerly Inuit settlement, Nain" (*Sled to Satellite* 35). Paddon also had much to say about Jupp:

... the imperturbable nurse, Dorothy Jupp, presided [over Nain station]. She was the only nurse, often had a dozen patients in hospital, and discussed her patients daily with North West River by radio-telephone. Highly experienced, she was also a first-class obstetrical nurse who could, in emergency, perform a forceps delivery, remove a tooth, or sew up a considerable wound. She could treat many common illnesses, and spared many patients a long trip to North West River and back. She also spoke good Inuktitut.... (*Labrador Doctor* 238-239)

A nurse like Dorothy Jupp, who worked nearly forty years with us, had no family except the people of Labrador, and particularly the Inuit. Extremely competent, utterly tireless, she never stopped, and was one of the happiest and most contented people I can recall. She preferred to work in an isolated setting, and it usually took two or more people to replace her if she changed to another station. (*Labrador Doctor* 276)

When read against the conflicts between Jupp and Paddon (discussed in chapter 6), Paddon's public praise takes on a different dimension.

Although the seminal collection *Pursuing Equality: Historical Perspectives on*

Women in Newfoundland and Labrador (ed. Linda Kealey, 1993) breaks the silence of the political and legal history of women of Newfoundland and Labrador during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, nursing is relegated to an introductory paragraph and an accompanying footnote:

Nursing and midwifery have also provided the raw material for several autobiographical accounts and studies. Margaret Giovannini's brief reminiscence in *Outport Nurse* recalls her experiences between 1939-41 in several outport communities where she was often doctor, dentist, nurse and midwife rolled into one....* (6) [*Footnote lists autobiographies by nurses Burchill, Banfill, Diack, Jupp]

The footnoted “autobiographical accounts and studies” to which Kealey refers—the literary output of these nurses—have not been studied by historians or literary scholars.

The centenary volume, *The Grenfell Obsession: An Anthology* (1992), compiled and edited by Patricia O'Brien, was created “to tell the story of what to its participants seemed like a remarkable adventure—the Grenfell Mission” (x). Of the seventy-three extracts “selected from the enormous literature spawned by the mission” (Hiller, “Grenfell” 128), only seventeen are by women and of these, eight are by nurses. In his review article “Grenfell and his Successors,” J.K. Hiller praises O'Brien's anthology as having “a critical edge” (“documentary history might be a better description,” he suggests) “which sets it apart from the usual centenary volume,” conveying well “the mission's hearty ethos of service and adventure, and does indeed recognize the work of the doctors and nurses who actually lived and worked in mission territory, often isolated for long periods in difficult conditions, a few of them eventually making it their home”

(128-129). Although this anthology brings neglected writers to the attention of the mainstream reading public, it, like the Grenfell Mission, is male-dominated.

O'Brien includes one extract from B.J. Banfill's *Labrador Nurse* (entitled "The Dentist"); two selections from Dorothy M. Jupp's *A Journey of Wonder and Other Writings* ("They Came From Everywhere" tells of a day in the life of a nursing station nurse, and "It Never Entered My Head" is Jupp's version of the Confederation issue); and one from Lesley M. Diack's *Labrador Nurse* ("A Summer's Work at Spotted Islands"). Although O'Brien includes extracts from Banfill's, Diack's and Jupp's memoirs, Burchill's is not included. Even though this is a centenary volume, O'Brien does not include any writings by the Mission's first nurses. The absence of Cecilia Williams's journal extract, which was published in *Toilers*, is particularly notable (Williams, with Ada Carwardine, came out with Grenfell on his second trip to Newfoundland and Labrador in 1893). Maud Bussell's literary sketches (discussed in chapter 2; see also appendices III and IV), published in *Toilers* and *ADSF* (including its première issue) are also absent from this anthology.

With the exception of Major's and O'Brien's anthologies, the published evidence of Grenfell nurses' "dedication and courage" is absent from (male) writings about the Grenfell tradition, from Newfoundland literary history, and from nursing history. Before 1992, there were no *critical* maps of nursing history in Newfoundland and Labrador. Two theses in the last decade are examples of a new historiography. Linda White's 1992 thesis, "The General Hospital School of Nursing 1903-1930," considers the development

of Newfoundland's first school of nursing. White exposes the power struggle between Mary Southcott, the hospital's matron, and the administrator, Lawrence Keegan, which resulted in Southcott's dismissal and a more compliant nurse installed in her place. More recently, Jill Samfya Perry's 1997 thesis, "Nursing for the Grenfell Mission: Maternalism and Moral Reform in Northern Newfoundland and Labrador, 1894-1938," examines a less than benevolent image of the Grenfell Mission and exposes the gap between official Grenfell discourse and the reality of these nurses' experiences. Perry quotes extensively from Banfill's *Labrador Nurse* and Burchill's *Labrador Memories*: they are part of the history as Perry sees it.¹⁵

1.3 Re-vision and Re-definition

Adrienne Rich calls for "[r]e-vision—the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction," which for women is "more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival" (*On Lies* 35). She insists that we need to know the writing of the past, but "know it differently than we have ever known it; not to pass on a tradition but to break its hold over us" (*On Lies* 35). Helen M. Buss also claims that we need "to go outside 're-vision' of an already established tradition" and actively search for "an alternate, unrealized tradition": "to have a knowledge of women we must go outside male history and psychology" (Buss, *Canadian Women's Autobiography* 20, 19). We need to dig deeper, like archaeologists, for "a careful gathering of evidence. often evidence located close to the personal lives and daily living

of people in the past, and the patient assembly of that ‘bricolage’ or ‘métissage’ of the past to construct a reality which may be quite different than the one offered by conventional history” (Buss, *Canadian Women's Autobiography* 20). The conventional history of Grenfell nurses is the idealized and romanticized picture offered, for example, by Art Cockerill: the benevolent mission and the “dedicated band” of (volunteer) followers who have joined Grenfell’s “crusade” to serve the hero-founder:

Many nurses are among the dedicated band of people (doctors, secretaries and social workers; both men and women) who follow the path first trod by Sir Wilfred Grenfell more than 80 years ago ... The story of his crusade has been told many times ... (23)

This picture is also the one promulgated by Paddon and Thomas in their memoirs. It is the approved image, the one the Mission was determined to maintain. The evidence gathered in my archaeological exploration subverts this image and offers an alternative picture.

Elizabeth A. Meese calls for a broad (re)definition of literature to contain “all instances of creative verbal expression—especially those devalued and nonpreferred forms in which women have tended to excel, such as short stories, oral narratives, letters, journals, autobiographies, and diaries” (“The Whole Truth” 16). Meese argues for genre inclusion, while Meryn Stuart, a nurse and a literary scholar, argues for inclusion on the basis of gender and profession. Stuart contends that “[t]he history of nursing and nurses—almost exclusively female—has been invisible and ignored by historians and even feminists, overshadowed by the history of medicine and the stories of the ‘great doctors’” (61). Like Grenfell doctors, Grenfell nurses were also “agents of social change”

and “active players” (Stuart 61)¹⁶ in the history of the Grenfell Mission, and their writings should be part of the Grenfell tradition and the literary culture of Newfoundland.

In chapter 2, I provide a contextualization for my examination and re-definition of these nurses’ writings. Since I use unpublished archival material in my contextual reading, I quote at length from these sources in order to represent them in all their complexity and richness. A variety of documents—archival material, other books and writings by these authors, and newspaper reports/articles—provide a contextual as well as an intertextual reading. Such a reading brings me back to the text with new insight and results in “a fuller appreciation of the literary achievement of these women” (Buss, “Dear Domestic” 17). Such an active reading requires more than traditional generic comparison. The published memoirs of these four nurses are themselves a collage of narratives—Burchill’s and Jupp’s include a travelogue component, and Jupp also incorporates material from her diary and earlier periodical articles. In order to realize the full richness of such hybrid texts, a composite of reading strategies and theoretical perspectives is needed. For example, in her study, Leonore Hoffmann suggests “[f]eminist criticism, reader-response theory, and the ‘new historicism’ [which] all view literary creation as a complex interaction between writer or speaker and audience, each embedded in the specifics of culture, including the specifics of gender, race, and class” (1-2). Similarly, Buss suggests a composite method by which

generic comparison becomes only a first step which must be followed by a broad, extratextual investigation that will answer such questions as: who were these women writing to and for? what kind of self-image did they

wish to present to their readers? what were their class and educational backgrounds? what factors of family and group politics might effect their revelations? what literary consideration would have been consciously part of their stylistics? what historical facts inform their journeys, their observations, and their sense of their own place in the world? ... what concept of themselves *as women* informs their portrayal of the narrated "I" in their written accounts? (Buss, "Dear Domestic" 7-8)

My reading of Grenfell nurses' memoirs has also been influenced by critical discourses in the memoir, diary, and travel writing.

It is time to rescue Grenfell nurses' memoirs from the "silence" into which they have fallen, and to reassess them using new critical modes. It is time to take them out from under the shadow of the "great" men of the Grenfell Mission, starting with Grenfell himself. These memoirs should be a valued part of the Grenfell tradition and the Newfoundland literary tradition. The Grenfell obsession, with its traditional emphasis on men and the deeds of the "great" (male) doctors, should be subverted to include a feminist perspective. This dissertation, which involves original research on non-canonical texts, hopes to fill this lacuna, and to contribute to the tradition as well as to broaden canonical boundaries. I wish not only to rekindle interest in these neglected texts, but to map these nurses' contribution to the literature of Newfoundland and Labrador. In my archaeological excavation there are no clear maps or signposts. Jo Gates's poem, "Without Maps," is especially appropriate:

[...]

And we want to recover
our foremothers'
navigations.

But where are the signposts,
 the keys, the legends,
 the scales for reading their experience;—
 Where do we find the markers of their efforts?
 Without maps,
 We stumble,
 Or ask—
 Stop someone along the way, and say:
 “Can you help me to find—?—”

And sometimes in the stumbling,
 we fall upon their signs—
 almost buried in the dust
 of people hurrying
 We stumble onto the maps
 that they have more than drawn,
 onto what they have woven,
 kneaded,
 caressed,
 sculpted,—

A three-dimensional plan—
 illuminating the counties of their souls.
 signaling
 the roads blocked,
 exploring
 the interiors
 of a world that's never taught. (qtd. in Hoffmann & Rosenfelt 12-13)

1.4 Critical Contexts

To write is to come out of the wings, and to appear, however briefly, center stage. (Nancy K. Miller, “Writing Fictions” 54)

Let any woman imagine for a moment a biography of herself based upon those records she has left, those memories fresh in the minds of surviving friends, those letters that chanced to be kept, those impressions made ... What secrets, what virtues, what passions, what discipline, what quarrels would, on the subject's death, be lost forever? How much would have

vanished or been distorted or changed, even in our memories? We tell ourselves stories of our past, make fictions or stories of it, and these narrations become the past, the only part of our lives that is not submerged. (Carolyn Heilbrun, *Writing a Woman's Life* 51)

1.4.1 *The Missionary Cluster*

In *Canadian Women's Autobiography in English: An Introductory Guide for Researchers and Teachers*, Helen M. Buss suggests several “clusters” of Canadian materials which might be explored by researchers, “departure points” for explorations rather than “maps of a known territory” (*Canadian Women's Autobiography* 1-2). These include autobiographical works by pioneer women, feminists and other “achievers,” as well as twentieth-century creative writers and artists. Nurses and missionaries, however, are absent from Buss’s categorization.

The word “cluster” is also used by Terrence L. Craig, who maps the literary territory of missionary lives and writings. Missionaries have played an important role in colonial history in general, and particularly in Canadian history, and although they have received academic treatment in history and religious studies departments, literary efforts by them and on their behalf have largely been ignored. Except for “a few incidental remarks,” *The Literary History of Canada* overlooks their writings (Craig 132). Craig sees the “recent critical slump of thematic studies” as contributing to the neglect of missionaries as a group, and because of “this lack of recognition as a *literary* group, individuals have been neglected as well” (132). Viewed as “mired in pre-Modern archaisms both of form and content,” single missionary lives have rarely drawn critical

comment in the standard studies of literature (Craig 132). Craig's pioneering study, *The Missionary Lives: A Study in Canadian Missionary Biography and Autobiography* (1997), attempts to redress this lacuna. Craig argues specifically for "the recognition in the canon of Canadian Literature of writing associated with missions and missionaries both in Canada and abroad" (viii). Although Craig focuses on biographies and autobiographies, he clarifies that mission-related writings also form a vast body of material and deserve recognition: the writings examined in this dissertation fit this rubric. Craig identifies ten clusters of literary activity (distinct from historical activity) within the large-scale missionary enterprise within Canada, one of which was "Dr. Grenfell's coastal mission in Labrador and Newfoundland from 1892 into the 1950's" (14).¹⁷ In most of these cases, Craig suggests,

less than half a dozen lives constitute each cluster, combining to celebrate larger-than-life collective achievements: these achievements and the individuals exist together in a literary production that feeds on itself, publicity validating their work while heroizing them in a complementary manner. Each cluster is denominationally discrete ... The clusters are defined not just by the junction of a number of texts, but by the perceived reader response that the texts were written to fit into—in each case a wave of public enthusiasm and support, indicated both by cues in the lives and by ancillary propaganda. (16)

The Moravian and Grenfell missions played significant roles in the history of Newfoundland and Labrador.¹⁸ The Moravian Mission will be examined in more detail in chapter 6. Although the Moravians had "the longest-standing Protestant missionary presence in what is now Canada," except for some recent scholarly studies of their work, they remain "little represented *in English*, and certainly in written lives. They are, in fact,

practically invisible in literary terms” (Craig 13). As a result, they do not constitute a literary cluster. The Grenfell Mission, on the other hand, does, and this literary cluster is dependent on its “outstanding individual[]” (14), Wilfred Grenfell. This literature, “first provided by Grenfell himself and then by his successors, lasts well into the 1950’s, and made Grenfell a household name at least in Canada and New England” (Craig 15-16).

Craig positions his study of missionary biography and autobiography within the intersection of the literary theory of life-writing, contemporary literary criticism, and “missiology, the scientific study of mission activity” (82). Missionary lives, he explains, “oppose many of the theoretical points thrown up by the concentration on other types of lives” (82): they are not “poetic,” which “disengages them from the frequent comparison with contemporary literary trends”; nor are they “dramatic,” “inviting admiration of poses”; they are “oratorical, or ideological,” “sharing a ‘common motive: to carve public monuments out of their private lives’” (89). Missionary lives are “broad statements of ideology that transcend specific religious dogma to embrace philosophy, social amelioration, and even imperial politics” (Craig 89)—and as such do not fit easily into critical discussions about life-writing. Just as “the complexity and humanity” of individual missionary lives have been neglected and their literature “ignored by the canonical interest groups” (Craig xiii), so, too, the writings of nurses who spent time with the Grenfell Mission and their literary efforts have been ignored and silenced within the monolithic mission, except when they could be used to further its propaganda or image.

Nurses were encouraged and asked to write for the periodicals, but a book was

perhaps too independent and too assertive. It is noteworthy that two of the nurses in this study considered themselves missionaries or missionary nurses. Jupp had missionary training, and considered herself a missionary (*Journey of Wonder* 9). Banfill also trained as a missionary: “I had for a long time treasured the ambition of becoming a missionary nurse” (*Nurse of the Islands* 7). After her first term with the Grenfell Mission, Banfill went with the United Church’s Women’s Missionary Society (WMS), “a place where women could go with their idealism and sense of service,” an organization which “harnessed young women’s ideals and fired them with a vision of servanthood” (Sinclair 81). The Grenfell nurses of this study were also familiar with, and some influenced by, Grenfell’s writings. Jupp had read Grenfell’s *Forty Years for Labrador* (*Journey of Wonder* 11); Diack had read Grenfell’s book before she applied to the Grenfell Mission: in a letter to Seabrook, she extends thanks for lending her *A Labrador Doctor* and informs her that “I *did* enjoy reading it.”¹⁹ Grenfell was Burchill’s “hero of childhood days,” and “his thrilling books [were] favorite reading” (*Labrador Memories* 18). When Burchill was in the inland of Australia, a friend sent her “his little gem, *What Christ Means to Me*, a book that awakened [in her] a new admiration for the great Labrador crusader” (*Labrador Memories* 18). In writing about themselves and their Labrador experiences they, in effect, followed in his footsteps. Does the fact that their writings have been omitted from the Grenfell literary cluster reflect a gender or a vocational bias, or both?

Craig pays brief attention to only one Grenfell nurse, the Canadian Bessie

Banfill.²⁰ He categorizes her text, *Labrador Nurse*, as one of two set in Labrador that demonstrates a shift of focus from person to place. More attention is given to James Lumsden's *The Skipper Parson* (1906), "a partial autobiography as well as a sociological, historical, and geographical survey of the Labrador coastal communities," which chronicles Lumsden's "nine years as a Methodist missionary in Newfoundland's outports ... [yet] delivers not a single fact about his life before his arrival, nor after his departure" (111). Craig explains why the reader searches in vain for Lumsden in a narrative about "his experiences in, and travelling between, the outports" (111):

The stock Newfoundland and Labrador anecdotes about accidents and getting lost on the trail, at sea in fog, or on the ice, and almost-eighteenth century character sketches of eccentrics, intermingle uneasily with real stories of the liveyers' hardships, toughness, and need for spiritual leadership. The skipper parson only seems to be the subject of the book: the target population and their various needs are the real subject.

By minimizing his own stature in his own partial autobiography, Lumsden limits the human interest in the missionary character, accepting an opaque archetypal role for the sake of building up interest in the field. The full lives do both, allowing the two efforts to complement each other. In order to achieve a neatness of chronology, perhaps, Lumsden neglects the protagonist in a narrative which seems loose without one. It becomes clear in such a work how much depends on the larger-than-life missionary figures of the full lives, and how much the romanticized nature of the worker brings out that of the field. There is no hero in Lumsden's narrative, and hence no romanticism. A quieter, less convincing book is the result. (111-112)

Craig regards Banfill's book as similar to, but more modern than Lumsden's, yet he pays less attention to it; it is, according to Craig, a story of

two winters spent with the Grenfell Mission on Labrador's south coast ... While Banfill allows her engaging personality to surface in her narrative, her concentration is still on the place and the service of the mission to the

place. She is slightly more forthcoming about filling in the gaps between and just before her periods in Labrador, but essentially this Labrador nurse submerges herself within the larger textual purpose. It is interesting to see how a life with unity is necessary for a text with unity, and how an autobiography which lacks both seems loose and disabled. (112)

Craig categorizes Lumsden's and Banfill's accounts as ineffective "partial biographies"²¹ which lack "the human spark that the fuller romanticism was able to give," and lack "the depth of character description and relationships that gives a level of fascination to the full lives" (112). He suggests that these accounts also lack "a sense of completeness, and usually give no rationale for that lack" (112). As a result of this lack, "[i]n being partial lives, they seem to be partial books" which "display the texture of place to a greater extent, and are more likely to provide considerable analysis of the social circumstances, in simple economic terms. They are not failed lives, as their aim clearly was more limited, and they do fulfil their mission. Neither are they uninteresting books, if one accepts the limits of time and character, and values the emphasis instead on the text as travel and fund-raising literature" (112). In one sense, Craig's point about "partial" as opposed to "full" lives is important. Did the nurses think themselves not interesting as individuals (the "whole" life), but only as missionaries/nurses? None of them writes about childhood experiences, for example. Craig's view of autobiography fits David J. Winslow's definition that autobiography is "[t]he writing of one's own history; the story of one's life written by himself" (Winslow 2). For Craig, the missionary (and autobiography) is gendered male. Craig does not use the term "memoir"; he measures Banfill's account by standards of autobiography, and finds it deficient.

1.4.2 *The Memoir as a Literary Genre*

Memoirs have been faulted by literary critics as “incomplete, superficial autobiographies” and by historiographers as “inaccurate, overly personal histories” (Billson 259). Although Marcus Billson rebuts the negative views of memoir and its (lack of) stature as a deficient autobiography, his definition reflects his androcentric bias:

The memoir recounts a story of the author’s witnessing a real past which he considers to be of extraordinary interest and importance. Written after the events to preserve for posterity the personalities of men and the experience of the events they created, the memoir attempts to convey the special, unique, never to be repeated character of the past. (261)

According to Billson, the memoir-writer’s personal identity is derived “not from a sense of himself as a developing emotional, intellectual, or spiritual being, but rather from his posture among men, his role in society,” and the memoir, then, “narrates the process of being-in-the-world rather than becoming-in-the-world” (261). The memoir

projects a moral vision of the past. The values of the memorialist are mirrored in his imaginative descriptions of the actions and characters of men. The memoir expresses the memorialist’s strong sense of loss for a past which he reveres and misses: as narrative, it presents the process for the memorialist’s reconfronting and reappraising his memories—and, just as importantly, the memoir hypostasizes the very act of bearing witness to them, affirming their significance and meaning for the future. (Billson 261)

Critics who define the memoir in terms of autobiography claim that the autobiography, with its narration of becoming-in-the-world, has a strong component of self-analysis. On the other hand, they claim that the memoir focuses on the external world of people and events rather than the inner world. In a later article, Billson, with Sidonie A. Smith,

insists that the memoir-writer's glimpse of the outer world is "as much a projection and refraction of the self as the autobiographer's," and they propose that the "manifest content" of the memoir may be different, but the "latent content is likewise self-revelation" (163). Whether or not a memoir is literature as opposed to history is not a matter of style, but, according to Billson, "an evaluation of the structure and depth of the memoir's represented world," and "the cogency of the memorialist's moral vision" (262). Moral vision does not imply "a code of morality superimposed on the life," but "a vision of how life can be fully lived, a vision which the writer gains through living and through the autobiographical act" (Buss, "Pioneer Women's Memoirs" 45). The memoir-writer desires "to preserve the thisness, i.e., the historicity, of past historical life," because he is anxious "to regain, relive, and transmit" the lost time of the past in order to preserve it "in all of its depth and wonder" (Billson 268). The memoir, then, is "the product, the synthesis of a confrontation" between the memoir-writer's "experienced past" and imagination (Billson 263), and gives personal meaning to historical events.

Buss considers Billson's androcentric views in her studies of women's personal narratives, and she proposes that the memoir, a form given less critical attention than other forms of self-literature,²² does not have prescriptive gender boundaries, but is "a serviceable genre for *women's* self-inscription" (*Mapping* 18, my emphasis). One important characteristic of the memoir is that it can choose "a significant but short period of time that acts as a kind of crucible of the whole life and explore that time in great detail" (Buss. "Pioneer Women's Memoirs" 54). In the case of the Grenfell nurse-writers,

Burchill spent three months at Indian Harbour; Banfill, two one-year terms at Mutton Bay, over a decade apart; Diack, three years, at several nursing stations; and Jupp's memoir covers the first ten years of a life of service with various employers. Billson's assertion that the self "*can* change within a memoir, provided the time period narrated is a very limited one," and that the memoir-writer "never integrates this period into the context of an entire life" (267) is evident in Diack's narrative of transformation. The extraordinary sense of history in a memoir, which comes from the writer's realization of "himself as a man in the flow of history, self-consciously perceiving the transitoriness of his own life and of his own view of man's story" (Billson 268-269), is not, as this dissertation demonstrates, gender-dependent. In a memoir, the narrator has a tripartite role, a combination of three rhetorical stances: "the eyewitness, the participant, and the *histor*" (Billson 271). These will be examined in more detail in chapter 3. Billson's three roles, terms drawn from the vernacular of the historian, are equivalent to the triad Elizabeth W. Bruss explicates in *Autobiographical Acts*, where "the writer of autobiography presents a self that is simultaneously the main character of the life-story, the narrator in the work, and the writer outside the work" (Buss, "Pioneer Women's Memoirs" 46).

Although virtually invisible in the history of the Grenfell Mission, the memoirs of Burchill, Banfill, Diack, and Jupp permit these nurse-writers to create a version of the self. As women find it easier to tell their own stories through telling the lives of a significant other, the memoir, with its emphasis on others rather than on the self, becomes

an autobiographical act. In her own study of individual memoirs written by early Canadian settler women, Buss observes each writer “embarking on a rescue mission,” and “[w]hat is to be rescued varies” (“Pioneer Women’s Memoirs” 46). Buss sees this act of rescuing the past for the purpose of “reconfronting and reappraising” as “a means of creating a version of the self that the writer can accept as her own” (“Pioneer Women’s Memoirs” 46). The memoir is a form in which the self is shown always in relation to the community, and for the Grenfell nurse this is her association with the Grenfell Mission: they are *Grenfell* nurses. Buss advocates that we “subvert the surface intention [of women’s diaries and memoirs] and read for female self-inscription, for ‘autobiography’” (*Canadian Women’s Autobiography* 11). In reading for self-inscription, we do not need “to seek the unity of the narrative” of these texts, nor even “a novelistic hierarchy of characters” (Buss, *Canadian Women’s Autobiography* 12-13). But, by reading these memoirs “against the grain of previous reading strategies, by seeking their autobiographical inscription of femaleness, we can find this alternative ‘social subject’” (Buss, *Canadian Women’s Autobiography* 13).

The content of the biographies and autobiographies in Craig’s study “derives its strengths from the very considerable strength of character of their subjects” (25). Craig suggests that “[m]issionary service has not attracted cowards; it has attracted people with unusually strong wills as well as faith, and with the determination, discipline, and intelligence to impose both their will and faith upon peoples they were prepared to love in advance of meeting them” (25). Nurses who ran (“manned”) the isolated coastal nursing

stations of the Grenfell Mission showed “considerable strength of character”: they were not “cowards,” and they had “strong wills.” Such qualities, however, are not intrinsically male, as Perry outlines in a glimpse of the range of roles of the Grenfell nurse:

Though their official capacity was described as “nurse,” the term obscures the variety of roles they [Grenfell nurses] played. In reality, these women acted not only as nurses, but also as doctors, dentists, preachers, teachers, social workers, industrial workers, accountants, and carpenters. Such diverse capabilities were essential for nurses who singlehandedly staffed remote Mission stations, hundreds of miles from any other Mission staff. In fact, nurses were often left in charge of Mission hospitals or nursing stations, either indefinitely or temporarily, while the doctors were away on distant medical trips. As the sole medical personnel responsible for large districts, nurses made medical rounds and emergency house calls by foot, boat, snowshoe, or dogsled. In sum, Grenfell nurses assumed a range of responsibilities which greatly exceeded their profession’s usual sharp boundaries. They also encountered high levels of female authority and outdoor adventure—experiences which were certainly not the norm for most early twentieth-century Western women. (Perry 15-16)

From the early days of the Grenfell Mission, writings by its nurses, in particular periodical writings, were significant in the dissemination of the Mission’s image and concomitant ideology. An examination of the literature associated with the Grenfell Mission requires a consideration of the centrality of discourse. Discourse has been used to denote “any coherent body of statements that produces a self-confirming account of reality by defining an object of attention and generating concepts with which to analyse it” (Baldick 59). Discourse differs from language in that while language “connotes a certain neutrality, unity, and fixity of meaning,” discourse, on the other hand, “refers to the more open-ended, cultural, and ‘ideological work’ of language” (Loo 7). Official Mission publications provide a source of information to the researcher, but they are also

reflective of the ideological perspective of the Mission. My use of “official Grenfell discourse” is borrowed from Jill Perry, who uses this term to refer not just to “the language of the abundant Grenfell promotional material, but also to the ideological perspective and normative world view which that language sought to enforce” (24). The power of discourse, as Tina Loo points out, lies in “its coherence and self-referentiality; its ability to explain the world in terms and through ideas of its own making” (7).

Scattered through the pages of *Toilers* and *ADSF* is a plethora of writing by nurses, ranging from letters, reports, anecdotes, moralistic sketches, poems, articles, and diary extracts—a considerable body of writing that composes an unrecognized literary tradition that was firmly in place when Burchill, Banfill, Diack, and Jupp arrived to work with the Mission. This will be examined at greater length in chapter 2, but one example will suffice here: a portion of Cecilia Williams’s journal was published in an early issue of *Toilers*. In addition to periodical writings (and *Le Petit Nord*), the Mission was the focus of one early book: *Work and Play in the Grenfell Mission* (1920) by Americans Floretta Elmore Greeley and her husband Hugh Payne Greeley. Although this book consisted mostly of extracts from her diary and letters (and some extracts from his correspondence relating to their time on Pilley’s Island where Hugh Greeley was a doctor with the Mission), his name appears first on the title page.

The public picture of Grenfell, the man (heroic image) and the concomitant Grenfell enterprise, was tirelessly created and promoted by Grenfell and his wife,²³ but was also promulgated by those early nurses’ periodical writings (discussed in chapter 2)

But, more than simply mission propaganda, what do the four memoirs of these later nurses reveal of the nurses themselves? How do these nurses inscribe themselves in their texts? Although the exceptional nature of the Grenfell nursing experience gave nurses “high levels of independence, authority, and adventure,” female independence, however, was “circumscribed by a male-dominated Mission hierarchy” (Perry ii). And although they filled a multiplicity of roles and were apportioned a modicum of autonomy within the individual nursing station where they were left in charge, nurses were virtually powerless within the patriarchal Grenfell hierarchy; as nurses and as nurse-writers they were eclipsed particularly by the Mission’s powerful male figures of Curtis, Thomas, and Paddon.

Reading these nurses’ memoirs (their public autobiographical production) against their letters, diaries (private), and other archival documents provides an intertextual reading and a more sensitive apparatus for deciphering a female self. Such a reading also foregrounds the gaps and silences that have been left out or edited out of the narratives, what Richard Lentz refers to as “strategic silences” (11). Although archival material provides an intertextual reading, the reading of such material, as I offer in this dissertation, involves “an ethical dimension, for unlike reading published texts in established genre contracts, we are reading documents that may have been written and collected for reasons far different from the uses they are put to by present readers” (Buss, “Settling the Score” 168). In their foreword to *Working Women’s Archives: Researching Women’s Private Literature and Archival Documents*. Helen M. Buss and Marlene Kadar

call for claiming authority for “the rescue and reconstruction of the voices that speak to us from unsanctioned private and archival documents”:

... we must become the means, however abbreviated, by which other voices are written. We therefore must practice an “autobiographics” which seeks the widest possible purview of research materials, an autobiographics that works at developing a broader interdisciplinary discourse which is not race, gender or sex-blind, and which is tireless in its attempts to bring a self-reflexive critical inquiry to bear on academic research. (iv)

For women to speak and to write publicly was viewed as a threat to the patriarchal order. Patricia Meyer Spacks comments on how autobiographies “make the private public”:

Even men and women who live much of their lives before the public eye undertake, when they set down stories of those lives, to account for what the world sees at least partly by revealing what the world has not previously known. The writer who displays himself or herself in print claims the authority of individual personal experience, asserting unique knowledge of that unique subject, the self. The act of autobiography, the dynamic process of recorded choice, necessarily although sometimes inadvertently uncovers at least some aspects of personality and experience which normally remain hidden. (“Selves in Hiding” 112)

And, as Spacks carefully adds, “[t]he housewife seldom offers her life to public view” (“Selves in Hiding” 112). Autobiography is a genre that implies self-assertion and self-display; some autobiographers “find indirect means of declaring personal power and effectiveness, they do so, as it were, in disguise” (Spacks, “Selves in Hiding” 114). In my examination of these four Grenfell nurse-writers, I consider this element of “disguise” in addition to the following questions: Whose voice is speaking in the memoir? How do these nurses situate themselves in the Grenfell discourse? How have they written of their

lives? How have they constructed themselves to capture their personal, classist, social and historical circumstances? What traces of this construction of identity in historical, social, cultural and gendered place can be read in the text? What is their concept of self?

I propose that the memoirs of these four Grenfell nurses be approached as one literary cluster, as “one departure point for exploration,” to quote Buss, and accorded their proper place in the celebration of and contribution to the larger-than-life collective Grenfell achievement (cluster), to paraphrase Craig. In addition to living unconventional lives at isolated nursing stations, Burchill, Banfill, Diack, and Jupp distinguished themselves from other Grenfell nurses by writing and publishing memoirs about their Labrador/Grenfell Mission experiences, memoirs which, although published, have long disappeared from sight. All that remain are out-of-print books, an occasional encyclopedia entry, one anthologized extract and traces of their presence in archival materials. Craig concluded that “mission writing deserves acknowledgement, which it has not had” (134). The same is true of nurses’ writings in general and Grenfell nurses’ writings in particular. Although Burchill, Banfill, Diack and Jupp were Grenfell nurses, they came from different origins and educational backgrounds, and exhibit different writing styles. Their writing deserves a place in the literary and cultural history of Newfoundland and Labrador.

1.5 Methodology

The methodology in my approach is two-fold: I construct a biographical sketch of

each of these four nurses, followed by a textual analysis of each memoir. Gathering facts and details, and recreating the objective conditions of these nurses's lives connect them with human subjectivity—the self: “Subjectivity, the necessary but insufficient condition of women's biography, also requires historical context—that dimension which makes it possible to reveal the acting subject in movement over time” (Barry 28). Where biography assists feminist (and nursing) scholarship, Meryn Stuart suggests, is in “the very *individualizing* it permits. Many things only make sense as exemplified in the life of one person. Biographies provide us with the vivid, adventurous lives of women who coped in a particular society, at a particular time, and made choices in the face of that society's assumptions about proper female behavior” (Stuart 59). Biography should be viewed as “a kaleidoscope: ‘each time you look you see something rather different,’” where “[l]ayers of understanding and complexity are accumulated, according to the interpretive consciousness of the writer” (Stuart 64, 65). Elspeth Cameron also calls for feminist biographies of “the ordinary as well as the extraordinary”:

Biographies informed by a biographer conscious of feminist issues and committed to feminist methodology offer one avenue among many in the social sciences for refocusing attention on what has been hidden from history, and do so in a way that is in line with the spirit of feminist social history since the seventies. If such methods are pursued to their logical conclusions, we may expect to see biographies of the ordinary as well as the extraordinary. (81)

The paucity of details discovered in my own literary archaeology—those extensive archival searches for information that would illuminate these writers and their times—reinforces that for researchers the mosaic of these writers' lives is far from

complete. Many pieces are still missing, and my biographies are sketchy.

Second, I look at the text of the memoirs themselves. Although autobiography has gained respectability as a genre for critical study, memoirs, especially those of women, continue to be marginalized. Buss has suggested three frameworks for examining women's personal narratives: "the identification of the generic influences on the account; the discovery of the 'context' of each account, that is of its literary, cultural, and personal imperatives dictated by the writer's milieu (especially as they effect the kind of 'metaphor of self' the writer is consciously or unconsciously constructing); and an awareness of the possibility of influence from other non-public texts, such as private letters, reports, and journals" ("Dear Domestic" 2). I have adopted these three frameworks as the foundation of my approach.

But after all the literary detective work and archaeological excavation have been done, we are left ultimately with the text. As Joanne Ritchie has noted, Adrienne Rich's poem "Cartographies of Silence" is especially appropriate in the reading of such texts as I examine in this dissertation: silence must not be confused with absence:

The technology of silence
The rituals, etiquette

the blurring of terms
silence not absence

of words or music or even
raw sounds

Silence can be a plan
rigorously executed

the blueprint to a life

It is a presence
it has a history a form

Do not confuse it
with any kind of absence (17)

As Ritchie carefully points out, “[w]e must acknowledge the experience of these women; we must find (not create) meaning in their texts, and communicate that to others. Without communication, there is no continuum, and the cycle of silencing is perpetuated” (23).

Notes

1. Betty Seabrook served for many years as secretary with the Grenfell Association of Great Britain and Ireland (GAGBI) London office. As Gordon Thomas writes:

She started with the Association in March 1935 as Deputation Secretary. When World War II started she took a leave of absence and joined the women's division of the R.A.F. and served with distinction until demobilized in October 1945. She then rejoined the G.A.G.B.I. heading up the London office as General Secretary. She remained in that position until she retired on December 31, 1970. Miss Seabrook was an important member of the Staff Selection Committee. She kept a constant flow of dedicated people coming to the Coast ... ("In Memoriam" 8)

Seabrook succeeded Katie Spalding. When the Grenfell Association of Great Britain and Ireland was formed in 1926, its London office was managed by Spalding. Prior to that, Spalding served as head of the orphanage in St. Anthony from 1916 to 1926.

2. Provincial Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador (PANL), MG 372, Box 4, File: Dr. C. Curtis, 1962.

3. I am taking liberties with Helen M. Buss's statement that "Autobiography stands at the place where literature and history interface" (*Canadian Women's Autobiography* 20).

4. Buchanan also refers to Millicent Blake Loder, the first Labrador-born nurse to work for the Grenfell Mission. Loder worked at the hospital at Cartwright and St. Anthony as well as at several nursing stations. Although the Mission is significant in Loder's life, her memoir, *Daughter of Labrador*, encompasses her life, not just her nursing experiences.

Buchanan was the first scholar to explore the area of Newfoundland and Labrador women's autobiographical writings. Her published papers have focused on the Labrador women—Lydia Campbell, Margaret Baikie, and Elizabeth Goudie. See "'Country Ways and Fashions': Lydia Campbell's *Sketches of Labrador Life*—A Study in Folklore and Literature," in *Studies in Newfoundland Folklore: Community and Process*, ed. Gerald Thomas and J.D.A. Widdowson (St. John's, NF: Breakwater, 1991) 289-308; "Autobiography as History: The Autobiographies of Three Labrador Women—Lydia Campbell, Margaret Baikie, and Elizabeth Goudie," in *Their Lives and Times: Women in Newfoundland and Labrador, A Collage*, ed. Carmelita McGrath, Barbara Neis, Marilyn Porter (St. John's, NF: Killick, 1995) 67-74 (originally published in *Proceedings of the First Newfoundland Historical Society Conference*, ed. Shannon Ryan, 1986).

See also Anne Hart's work on Lydia Campbell and Mina Hubbard; Dale Blake's essay "Women of Labrador: Realigning North from the Site(s) of *Métissage*," in *Essays*

on *Canadian Writing* 59 (Fall 1996): 164-179; Ronald Rompkey's edition, *Jessie Luther at the Grenfell Mission* (McGill-Queen's UP, 2001).

5. In incorporating my own biographical details, I follow Helen Buss, Liz Stanley and other scholars who use their autobiography in their scholarly works on autobiography.

6. With the exception of Rompkey's considerable work on Grenfell (a biography, introduction to *Adrift on an Ice Pan* [Creative, 1992], and several articles), little critical attention has been paid to Grenfell's autobiographical writings.

7. See Rompkey, "Elements of Spiritual Autobiography in Sir Wilfred Grenfell's *A Labrador Doctor*," *Newfoundland Studies* 1.1 (1985): 17-28. Rompkey discusses how Grenfell and his wife, Anne, "contrived an 'autobiography' that would reinforce the popular conception of the missionary doctor without revealing too much about him personally" (19).

8. The following books give a glimpse of the heroic Grenfell: Norman Duncan, *Dr. Grenfell's Parish* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1905); Fullerton L. Waldo, *With Grenfell on the Labrador* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1920); Fullerton Waldo, *Grenfell: Knight Errant of the North* (Philadelphia: Macrae Smith Company, 1924); Basil Mathews, *Wilfred Grenfell: The Master-Mariner* (1924; London: Partridge Publishers, 1929); Earnest H. Hayes, *Forty Years on the Labrador: The Life-Story of Sir Wilfred Grenfell, K.C.M.G.* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1930); *Sir Wilfred Grenfell* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1942).

Grenfell as a wholesome example for children: William Byron Forbush, *Pomiuk: A Waif of Labrador: A Brave Boy's Life for Brave Boys* (Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1903; also published as *Pomiuk: A Prince of Labrador: A Brave Boy's Life for Brave Boys* [London: Marshall Brothers, 1903]); Mary Lane Dwight, *Children of Labrador* (Edinburgh and London: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1913); Dillon Wallace, *The Story of Grenfell of the Labrador: A Boy's Life of Wilfred T. Grenfell* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, Limited, 1922; later issued as *Grenfell of Labrador: A Story of His Life for Boys*, 1946); W.M. Comber, *Wilfred Grenfell: The Labrador Doctor* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1950); George H. Pumphrey, *Grenfell of Labrador* (London: George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd., 1958); R.G. Martin, *Knight of the Snows: The Story of Wilfred Grenfell* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1966).

Chapters of books: Edward Gilliat, *Heroes of Modern Crusades: True Stories of the Undaunted Chivalry of Champions of the Down-Trodden in Many Lands* (London: Seeley and Co. Limited, 1920); Basil Mathews and Arthur E. Souther, *Yarns on Heroes of the Deep* (London: United Council for Missionary Education, 1922); T.C. Bridges and H. Hessel Tiltman, *Heroes of Modern Adventure* (London: George G. Harrap & Company Ltd., 1927); G.F. Lamb, *Six Good Samaritans* (1947; London: Oxford UP, 1953); Phyllis

Garlick, *Six Great Missionaries* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1955); J.W.C. Ward, *True Lights: Talks on Saints and Leaders of the Christian Church* (London: A.R.Mowbray & Co. Limited, 1958).

Rompkey's *Grenfell of Labrador* (1991), however, has a more critical edge than the foregoing hagiographical presentations. See also Rompkey, "The Making of Newfoundland's Hero," *Literary Review of Canada* 1 (1991): 7-8; and "Heroic Biography and the Life of Sir Wilfred Grenfell," *Prose Studies* 12.2 (September 1989): 159-173.

9. "In February 1896, as Grenfell was finding support in Toronto, it [MDSF] added the word 'National' to its name; by the end of the year, Queen Victoria recognized its growing importance by granting it the use of the prefix 'Royal' during the Diamond Jubilee" (Rompkey, *Grenfell of Labrador* 87-88).

10. Iona Bulgin, "'Trials and Triumphs': The Heroine in Selected Novels of Anastasia English," MA thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1994.

11. Gerson does, however, mention Evelyn Richardson's *We Keep a Light*, which won the Governor General's Award for non-fiction in 1945. It "[d]ocument[s] domestic life in isolation during the inter-war period" and is a "classic Canadian survival narrative[]" (69-70).

12. A variety of terms have been coined by critics and theorists working with women's accounts in order "to overcome the weight of male-centered meaning the word 'autobiography' carries," and "to avoid the insult that has often been given to women's writings, that it is too 'autobiographical'" (Buss, *Canadian Women's Autobiography* 21, n.26)—these include "life-writing," "autograph," "autogynography," "life-narratives," "self-writing," "personal narratives," and even a less generic use of "autobiography" as in "autobiographical" writing or in "women's autobiography." I use the traditional term "memoir."

13. Julia Sheridan Greenshields was its first editor until 1914 when the public office became New York, and the next editor was Emma Demarest. After Demarest's death, Frederick Shnyder became editor, and when he left the Grenfell Association, Anna Kivimaki assumed editorship from 1938 to 1940. After that the editorship went to various secretaries of the Grenfell Association. The paper ceased publication in 1981.

14. The extract was accompanied by a picture of Jupp with a patient and a doctor.

15. See Perry p.2 n2. Here Perry lists, but does not comment on, published biographies/memoirs by Grenfell nurses: Burchill, Banfill, and Jupp, as well as Hugh Payne Greeley and Floretta Elmore Greeley, *Work and Play in the Grenfell Mission* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1920) [this memoir, however, does not verify Perry's

claim that Floretta Greeley was a nurse]; Millicent Blake Loder, *Daughter of Labrador* (St. John's: Harry Cuff Publications, 1989); and Judith Power, *Hazel Compton-Hart: Angel from the North* (St. John's: Jespersen, 1995). Diack is absent from this list. Perry does not quote from Jupp.

16. Perry concludes that nurses were important in the Grenfell Mission's moral reform agenda: "As the feminine embodiment of middle-class decency, nurses were deemed ideally suited to 'improving' the residents of northern Newfoundland and Labrador" (175).

17. The others include: "Catholics in Lower and Upper Canada in the 17th century; Methodists in Newfoundland, Labrador, and the Maritimes from the 18th century; Methodists among the Indians in Upper Canada, in the mid 19th century; Methodists among the Indians of the Prairies and the foothills from the 1850's; Church of England in the Arctic; Catholics in the Arctic (particularly the Oblates); Catholics in the interior of British Columbia, in the late 19th century (again the Oblates); Presbyterian work with the 'alien' immigrants in Northern Ontario and the prairies, 1895-1939; Fundamentalist Protestant missions into Northern Canada after 1945" (Craig 14).

18. See, for example, John Kennedy, "The Impact of the Grenfell Mission on Southeastern Labrador Communities," *Polar Record* 24.150 (July 1988): 199-206.

19. PANL, MG 63, Lesley Diack personnel file, Diack to Seabrook, 19 April 1949.

20. Banfill's *Pioneer Nurse* (1967) might, according to Craig's "cluster" nomenclature, fit the category of "Presbyterian work with the 'alien' immigrants in Northern Ontario and the prairies, 1895-1939" (14).

21. This echoes the *OED*'s definition of "memoir."

22. There have been critical studies in the diary—for example, *Inscribing the Daily: Critical Essays on Women's Diaries*, ed. Suzanne L. Bunkers and Cynthia A. Huff (Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1996). See also, Joanne Ritchie, "*Cartographies of Silence*": *An Annotated Bibliography of English Language Diaries and Reminiscences of New Brunswick Women 1783-1980* (CRIA W 1997).

23. In *Grenfell of Labrador*, Rompkey lists 33 books and a selection of 74 of Grenfell's journal articles, but he does not list Grenfell's writings in *ADSF* and *Toilers*. Although *A Labrador Doctor* (1919) is not read today as "a faithful record" of Grenfell's life, it does show "how the problems of autobiographical composition must be faced by a man of great reputation.... the life of a physician conscious of the world's attention and accustomed to viewing his actions in spiritual terms" (*Grenfell of Labrador* 198). A

commercial success, it was “the kind of ‘wholesome’ and ‘instructive’ missionary literature marketed by missionary societies throughout the world: the Bible commentaries, devotional tracts, and biographies of great and noble personages that might serve as an inspiration to believer and non-believer alike. Indeed, in his preface Grenfell offered his autobiography as a work of practical benefit, as unadulterated Christian experience that could be helpful to others” (200). Rompkey sees *A Labrador Doctor* as “a kind of Protestant manual, a case history of cultural intervention in a remote society far removed from the reader. It was this practical feature of the book, its catalogue of benevolent accomplishment, that readers responded to as well as the familiar motifs of spiritual regeneration” (202-3).

Chapter 2

Early Grenfell Nurses and Writings: A Contextualization

[The nurse] ... mixes the functions of Dorcas, Grace Darling, Miss Nightingale, and others. If ever there were an office of "Pooh Bah" occupied by a woman ... it must be that of hospital nurse to the Labrador Medical Mission. (Toilers September 1903, 182)¹

2.1 Introduction

On 27 June 1893, the Allan Line steamer *Corean* arrived in St. John's from Liverpool carrying a steam launch and two nurses for the Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen (MDSF)² expedition to Labrador. British nurses Ada Carwardine and Cecilia Williams were "the first fully qualified nurses to visit St. John's" and were "considered much more approvingly than the launch" by the people of St. John's (Kerr 83). As Eliot Curwen, one of the MDSF doctors, elaborated, many "speculat[ed] on the chance of keeping our nurses in St. John's when they return[ed] from Labrador; Dr. Shea want[ed] one as matron of the hospital, and Lady O'Brien want[ed] the other to start private nursing" (Curwen 25). Nursing in the colony was, according to Curwen, in a lamentable state. Carwardine and Williams, however, were headed for Battle Harbour and Indian Harbour respectively, and their presence in the colony fulfilled part of an agreement made between Wilfred Grenfell and Newfoundland's governor, Sir Terence O'Brien, at the end of the first MDSF expedition (1892) to Labrador, that the Newfoundland government would "erect and furnish two small hospitals and make a direct grant for their upkeep," and that the MDSF would supply "a steamer, a launch, a nurse for each of the hospitals, and the equipment" (Rompkey, *Grenfell of Labrador* 55).

In 1893 there were no qualified nurses on the staff of the St. John's hospital. Nursing was in the early stages of change in Britain and North America at the time of the first MDSF expedition to Labrador. The Nightingale School for Nurses at St. Thomas's Hospital, London, had opened in 1860,³ just thirty-three years before Carwardine and Williams arrived in Newfoundland. Yet Britain's oldest colony desperately needed trained nurses:

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Newfoundland nursing was rarely viewed as a career to be pursued from choice. Nursing care was seen as a logical extension of a woman's domestic role, and was normally provided in the home. Any help beyond that came from women in the community who were recognized as having a special talent in tending the sick. They seldom were paid. In rare instances when nursing provided women with a means of support—Mary Whelan, for example, was listed as a nurse in the St. John's census of 1794-95—it was usually because widowhood or some other misfortune had forced them to take up the work. Most ... had little education or training beyond their experience, though sometimes they received instructions from attending doctors....

The St. John's Hospital at Riverhead had opened in 1814 as a charitable institution for the sick poor. At the beginning both males and females composed its nursing staff. The attendants had little education, came from working class backgrounds, and very frequently began their hospital careers simply because as recovered patients they had been asked to stay on. They were nurses as well as domestics, resembling domestics in outlook, expectations and pay. In 1869 medical superintendent Dr. Charles Crowdy deplored his inability to enforce the hospital's policy of employing as nurses only women who could read and write, for the majority of applicants could do neither. He started night classes to teach these skills so that when the nurses gave medicines they could at least read the directions on the bottle.... [...]

In 1893 matron Agnes Cowan died (... of tuberculosis) at the General Hospital in St. John's. She was replaced by the seamstress, Lizzie Morgan, and thus the question of introducing trained nurses to the hospital first arose. Visiting surgeon Herbert Rendell conceded in an 1894 report that no matter how kind and willing the hospital's present untrained nurses were, they probably did "as much harm as good." He recommended that

the hospital employ a qualified nurse from abroad and initiate a training program.... (O'Brien, "Nursing" 129-131)

Curwen's journal for 30 June 1893 recorded praise and criticism for the St. John's hospital: it was "clean, [and] airy, but from a London point of view badly nursed. The matron died 7 mo. ago, & *no* effort has been made by the government to obtain another!" (20).⁴ By contrast, at the end of the 1893 MDSF expedition the Battle Harbour hospital—the first in Newfoundland and Labrador outside St. John's—had "those characteristics of warmth, cleanliness and brightness that a hospital should have, and much good work seems to have been done in it" (Curwen 175). The presence of trained British nurses had effected this difference. It was little wonder, then, that the MDSF nurses were of such high currency.

Carwardine and Williams were the first in a long line of British nurses⁵ to serve with the Grenfell Mission. Irrespective of nationality, those nurses who came to work with the Mission were seeking a different kind of nursing—was it a chance for adventure, to serve God, or job independence? It was unlikely that a routine nursing job in England could provide the adventure inherent in nursing for the Grenfell Mission, regardless of the autonomy offered. In the official discourse of the Mission, as evident for example in *Toilers* and later in *ADSF*, the Grenfell nurse was portrayed either as a mother figure or an angel-of-mercy figure. Both images were grounded in what Jill Perry calls a "maternalist discourse," that women, particularly nurses, intrinsically possessed "expressive, maternal, caring qualities especially appropriate to the care of the sick ... [a]s

a 1905 edition of *Hospital* expressed it: ‘Ability to care for the helpless is women’s distinctive nature. Nursing is mothering ...’” (Versluyen 182). The conceptualization of “natural” difference as a binary opposition rather than a hierarchically ordered range of similarities so permeated mid-Victorian culture that it produced the norm: women were self-sacrificing and tender, and the maternal “instinct” was the reason for the power of woman’s moral influence.

Mary Poovey challenges the common nineteenth-century assertion that women’s qualities of caring were unique to their sex and derived from the biological capacity for motherhood. In a revisionist reading of Florence Nightingale, Poovey points out that the mythic figure of Nightingale—the iconic lady with the lamp—had two faces: an “image of the English Sister of Charity, the self-denying caretaker—a mother, a saint, or even a female Christ”; and “the tough-minded administrator who ‘encountered opposition’ but persevered” (168). These two images consolidated two narratives available at that time: “a domestic narrative of maternal nurturing and self-sacrifice,” and “a military narrative of individual assertion and will” (Poovey 169). The heroine of the first was “typically self-effacing, gentle, and kind; her contribution was to fit others to serve; her territory was the home”; by contrast, the hero of the second was “characteristically resolute, fearless, and strong-willed; his service often entailed excursions into alien territory, the endurance of great physical hardships, and the accomplishment of hitherto unimagined deeds” (Poovey 169). The image of the nurse in the official Grenfell discourse is grounded in these fundamental Victorian narratives of gender. The nurse-as-mother fits the heroine

narrative, while the nurse-as-angel-of-mercy, when mixed with a strong emphasis on heroic deeds in isolated coastal Labrador settings, self-sacrifice and bravery without the concomitant unpleasant details of reality, contains elements of the hero narrative. In its use of the angel-of-mercy/hero as a publicity tool, the official Grenfell discourse “walked a fine line between emphasizing the dangerous side of Grenfell nursing and assuring readers of women’s safety” (Perry 56). The non-traditional nature of nursing for the Grenfell Mission was rationalized (and portrayed) by a conservative gender ideology: a maternalist discourse.

For nurses facing harsh winters in northern Newfoundland and Labrador, housed in isolated and rudimentary hospitals and/or nursing stations, perhaps as the only medical personnel for hundreds of miles, a traditionally-gendered rationale for their presence often mattered very little. In confronting the extreme demands of their unusual work environment, Grenfell nurses were required (and often thrilled) to prove themselves in capacities not normally considered appropriate for women. (Perry 174)

Just at the time when the trained nurse became portrayed as the “bringer of a new order of nursing and a pioneer for civilisation itself” (Maggs 138), these early MDSF nurses similarly aided Grenfell in bringing “civilization” to Labrador, a “civilizing” that, in effect, denigrated the local culture of Newfoundland and Labrador:

The true nurse, knowing her work and loving it, has an individual force and attraction for everybody which directly inspires confidence and indirectly carries with it a moral influence for good upon all whom her life may touch. This influence in the course of her nursing career, though unknown to herself, sheds blessings which frequently endure throughout the lifetime of the majority of those who come within the spheres of her influence. (qtd. in Maggs 39)⁶

One physician, hostile to the professionalization of nursing, commented in 1906 that “nurses ought to forego scientific study and return to the ‘gentle touch’” (Prentice 137). In their introduction to *Caring and Curing: Historical Perspectives on Women and Healing in Canada* (1994), Dianne Dodd and Deborah Gorham point out that although their “self-identity may have challenged mainstream medicine,” in reality nurses remained “subordinate to physicians” and their leaders’ efforts “to professionalize were thwarted by a gender ideology that stressed women’s subordinate role in society” (4-5). This complex issue of gender ideology is clearly evident in the situation of nurses and the powerful patriarchal Grenfell Mission. Carwardine and Williams were appointed by the MDSF’s hospital committee “to act as matrons and nurses *under* the doctors” (Grenfell, *Vikings* 100, my emphasis). Despite its unique opportunities for women, this missionary organization was male-dominated and imposed strict limits on female independence. The historical Grenfell tradition was dominated by the heroics of one man.

2.2 Wilfred Grenfell and the Grenfell Mission

Wilfred Thomason Grenfell (1865-1940) entered the London Hospital Medical College in February 1883. Impressed with the American evangelist Dwight Moody’s “unvarnished, practical approach to living a Christian life,” Grenfell decided, after hearing Moody preach, to devote his energies to what “Christ would do in his place if he had been a doctor”⁷ (Rompkey, *Grenfell of Labrador* 22). By 1888, Grenfell, now a doctor, planned to go to Oxford. Frederick Treves, senior surgeon at the London Hospital

and medical adviser to the MDSF, suggested that in the interim Grenfell work as a physician with this charity. MDSF, which operated principally in the North Sea, “saw itself primarily as an evangelical organization in search of souls, and only secondarily as a philanthropic agency” (Rompkey, *Grenfell of Labrador* 33). Grenfell was first signed on for two months, and in December 1889 was appointed to work with the North Sea Fleet.

In September 1891, the MDSF sent Francis Hopwood, one of its councillors, to investigate complaints about working conditions in the bank fishery. Hopwood’s findings focused on Labrador and the annual migration of fishermen to that area. The people of Labrador were not a homogeneous group, but consisted of migratory fishing people (men, women, and children) who came from Newfoundland each summer, and lived in temporary huts on the shore; permanent settlers or “livyers,”⁸ who had descended from the British, Irish, Scottish, and Newfoundland traders and sailors, who had intermarried with native peoples; native Innu, who kept largely to the interior of Labrador; as well as coastal Inuit. Medical care was largely non-existent in Labrador, and the colonial government only infrequently sent a doctor there. As a result of Hopwood’s recommendations, the MDSF’s hospital vessel, *Albert*, with Wilfred Grenfell, arrived in St. John’s 23 July 1892 to conduct medical work and prayer meetings, and to distribute clothing along the Labrador coast. In that “inhospitable region” (*Toilers* June 1895, 169), Grenfell encountered a plethora of illnesses; this region, however, provided “the great missionary opportunity” for Grenfell (Rompkey, *Grenfell of Labrador* 52). As a review article⁹ of Grenfell’s book *Vikings of To-day* (1895) states, “language fails to paint its

awful desolation” (*Toilers* July 1895, 196). The anonymous reviewer’s pronouncement throws Grenfell’s own cultural superiority and “civilizing” intentions into sharp relief. The review article (and Grenfell’s book) cast aspersions on the inhabitants’ dubious heritage. The local people whom Grenfell wishes to “civilize,” the reviewer points out, although white, are the dregs of society—“descended from wrecked sailors, convicts, and some who fled the old country in press-gang days”—a combination which heightens Grenfell’s own sense of cultural superiority. The reviewer extracts the essence of the most dramatic events from *Vikings of To-day* and foregrounds them in a narrative collage. He/she further sensationalizes this by setting off a particularly dramatic line of text set in uppercase type on a separate line; in this way the reviewer creates a powerful visual picture, one that leaves a jarring effect on the reader.

The condition in which some of the patients were when first admitted was simply horrible. A good wash, clean clothes, wholesome food, and good nursing often worked marvels, even in apparently hopeless cases....

Much might be said of the needs and destitution of the people—women lying in bed for lack of clothes, of children whose sole garment was one trouser leg,

FATHERS KILLING THEIR CHILDREN,
and shooting themselves in the desperation of famine, people frozen to death ... (*Toilers* July 1895, 196)

This embellishment has a greater effect than the sum of the narrative examples in the book.¹⁰ The distinction between Labrador and England is overt: “In England absolute want is the exception, there it is the rule” (196). Labrador, viewed as the “other,” is radically different. The morally depraved and culturally inferior Labrador people need “civilizing,” and Grenfell, another reviewer insists, is eager to carry “civilization” to this

“dark and neglected corner of the British Empire” (*Toilers* September 1895, 236).

Articles filled with similar descriptions of poverty and concomitant moral collapse were a common feature of early *Toilers*. Such carefully crafted descriptions of privation and heroism valorized Grenfell’s missionary endeavours, while raising the awareness of potential donors.

From these early MDSF beginnings, Grenfell provided much more than a system of medical care for Newfoundland’s migratory fishermen. Over time, the early focus on saving souls changed to a campaign of cultural improvement as Grenfell was influenced by various social and religious movements in Britain and the United States.¹¹ By 1934, the Grenfell organization was “a self-recruiting, self-disciplining, and self-financing principality with its own figurehead, prime minister, governing body, financial interests, folklore, and grateful public. In short, an establishment” (Rompkey, *Grenfell of Labrador* 273). Grenfell is, as Rompkey contends, “most fruitfully understood not as a doctor or even as a missionary or as a hero, but as a social reformer whose instruments were political and cultural. Once established in Newfoundland, he saw himself not simply as a classical missionary bent on saving souls and healing bodies but as an agent of change seeking broader improvements in cultural institutions” (*Grenfell of Labrador* xiv).

But to view the Grenfell Mission as the story of one man is, as Charles Curtis suggested, a distorted view. Curtis said of J. Lennox Kerr’s biography of Grenfell, that “It is my opinion that this is a picture of one man, whereas a great deal more and a great many more people have contributed to the building of this organization.”¹² Curtis does

not specify nurses, but, as Perry points out, Grenfell nurses were integral to the Mission.

2.3 Four Pioneer Nurses

While a considerable number of heroic biographies have been written of Grenfell, scant attention has been paid to the nurses who were the backbone of this Mission. Jill Perry's recent thesis begins to address this lacuna; however, specific nurses have not been studied, nor have nurse-writers been considered. Perry uses periodical articles and reports written by the nurses as well as quotations from their memoirs to corroborate her arguments, but there is no sustained attention to their memoirs and sketches.¹³ Her thesis is historical in focus, not literary. In general, Grenfell nurses' writings have either been ignored, considered for their potential social and historical content, or accepted as propaganda; they have not been studied as literary texts.

I want first to trace the beginning of nursing for the Grenfell Mission through what was written about and by four early British nurses—Ada Carwardine, Cecilia Williams, Maud Bussell, and Florence Bailey—in Mission literature, particularly in *Toilers*, and then establish a chronological timeline as well as provide a contextualization for a subsequent analysis of Burchill's, Banfill's, Diack's and Jupp's memoirs. *Toilers* aimed at a British readership; after its inception in April 1903, *ADSF* reached a North American audience, and "published Grenfell's high-minded preachments, articles reprinted from *Toilers of the Deep*, and lists of donors" (Rompkey, *Grenfell of Labrador* 115). Both *Toilers* and *ADSF* published writings by nurses, and when Burchill, Banfill,

Diack and Jupp arrived, this tradition of periodical writing had been established by the early nurses discussed below.

2.3.1 *Ada Carwardine and Cecilia Williams*

When Grenfell returned to Labrador in 1893, he was accompanied by physicians Eliot Curwen and Alfred Bobardt. The hospital-trained nurses, Cecilia Williams and Ada Carwardine, left Liverpool 20 June 1893 on the Allan Line steamer *Corean*, and arrived in St. John's 27 June 1893.¹⁴ Curwen, Carwardine, and Williams left for Labrador on 6 July 1893 on the *Albert*, while Grenfell and Bobardt left St. John's for Labrador 7 July 1893 in the *Princess May*. Carwardine and Bobardt took charge of the Battle Harbour hospital, and as the hospital at Indian Harbour could not be opened that season because of construction difficulties, Williams and Curwen first stayed on the *Albert*. On 19 August 1893 Williams left for Battle Harbour to help Carwardine. A little more than two months later, Williams and Curwen arrived in St. John's (23 October 1893) after a rough trip on the *Albert* (the main boom snapped in heavy swells). Such arduous ordeals would become a recurrent feature of Williams and her successors' missionary experiences; they also provide the adventure component of the Mission's propaganda campaign to attract nurses seeking adventure and new experiences. Carwardine and Bobardt arrived in St. John's 2 November 1893. Carwardine, Williams, and Curwen left St. John's 27 November 1893 and crossed the Atlantic in the *Albert* (Curwen 211).¹⁵ During the 1893 expedition, the three doctors and two nurses spent approximately 109 days on the coast and treated 2493

outpatients and thirty-seven inpatients (Grenfell, *Vikings* 213).

Carwardine and Williams, who were committed to the Labrador mission work and who were the “mainstays of Grenfell’s enterprise in the early years,” became “more accustomed to Labrador life than Grenfell himself” (Rompkey, *Labrador Odyssey* xxx). These pioneer nurses, however, left few traces of themselves in Mission writings: the personal is subsumed in and sacrificed to the professional (the Mission). At best we can attempt a sketchy reconstruction from the varied items printed in *Toilers*—from their own reports, letters and various articles; editorial comments; Grenfell’s reports on MDSF activities¹⁶ and other writings; MDSF conference reports; and reports/articles by the other male doctors who went to the Coast with the MDSF.¹⁷ Mission periodical writings reflected the ideological perspective of the Mission, and, as such, the official Mission discourse needs to be approached with an awareness of its use as a propaganda tool. The following brief descriptions, accompanied by frontispiece portraits, announced their appointments:

Miss Williams. Trained at the London Hospital; has been since then sister in charge of a small provincial hospital; has done Mission work. She is a good nurse, patient, sympathetic, fearless, feminine. She will be with Dr. Curwen in the northernmost station.

Miss Carwardine. Trained at the London Hospital, where she greatly distinguished herself, has been one of Mr. Treves’ [senior surgeon at London Hospital] own special nurses. She has been described to us as of “great surgical capacities, with no nervous system.” She has excellent tact and judgment, energy, strength, and determination. She will be with Dr. Bobardt. (“The M.D.S.F. Labrador Staff” 212)

These sketches portray Williams and Carwardine as paragons of efficiency, blessed with

the essential qualities of a missionary nurse preparing to go to foreign, remote Labrador. The description of Williams as “fearless, feminine” combines characteristics of both sexes; the descriptor “feminine” appears appended as an afterthought as if the writer feared that Williams would be considered too masculine if “fearless.” With “no nervous system,” Carwardine, on the other hand, seems an efficient automaton. Although Curwen sailed with Carwardine and Williams from St. John’s to Labrador, he does not often name either nurse in his journal; he notes that “they” (collectively) were not particularly good sailors. For example, on the first day out (“lovely day”), “The breeze was very light, but the nurses are not good sailors” (27); [July 7] “One nurse has not left her bunk all day, though it has been so calm; the other is better” (30); [July 8] “of the nurses one kept to her bunk, the other was up but asleep most of the day” (30). It is curious that Curwen did not detail more, as he spent part of the summer with Williams. Williams and Carwardine faced a more difficult voyage the following year, but such perils did not deter them from returning each year to serve the Mission.

Cecilia Williams entered the London Hospital Training School for Nurses, a school patterned after Nightingale’s school, in 1885 (Nevitt 31). Williams, “a paying probationer,”¹⁸ accepted a one-year position as staff nurse at the London Hospital after completing her training in 1887. She was appointed as matron of a small hospital at Newton Abbott, and in February 1892 she became a Sister at the City of London Hospital for Diseases of the Chest, a position she held until January 1893 (Nevitt 31). Ada Carwardine, on the other hand, spent four years as a governess before meeting the age

requirement to enter nurses' training. She entered the London Hospital Training School in 1889, completed her training in 1891, and remained there until she left for Labrador in 1893 (Nevitt 33). Although Grenfell considered Carwardine's work "excellent" (Curwen 85), he questioned her spiritual commitment: "I fear greatly nurse Carwardine is not a Christian. Oh it will be a pity. We must make it a matter of earnest prayer that she may become one or she will be a terrible hindrance" (Rompkey, *Grenfell of Labrador* 63). Bobardt also praised Carwardine, who worked "like a Trojan," for her "most valuable assistance," and credited her with saving the life of a phthisis patient¹⁹ (Curwen 94, 142). Williams does not receive the same superlatives. According to Grenfell, she "work[ed] well" (*Toilers* October 1893, 307); Dr. Willway noted that she worked "with a cheerful zeal and readiness" (*Toilers* November 1894, 322). Ultimately, Williams devoted more time to the Labrador Mission than Carwardine. Yet despite their personal and professional differences, both nurses were essential to the success of the MDSF endeavour. Bobardt's understated comment—"I think the person who proposed the sending of a nurse deserves praise, as she can do much good here" (Curwen 54)—belies the nurses' actual contribution to the Mission.

The December 1893 *Toilers* printed "a few notes of their work," contributed by one of the nurses (probably Williams) to the British journal *The Hospital* (382). Basically a composite summary of the season's work at Battle and Indian harbours, it is the first piece of writing by a Grenfell nurse printed in *Toilers*. Visiting patients by boat and on foot, the author is astonished by the abject poverty of the Labrador people. On one trip,

she sees one household with “eight half-bred Eskimos living in one room”; another is “terribly dirty”; another lives in “a very wretched hut ... [where] the bedding consisted of rags ... For food they had only a little broken bread—*i.e.*, hard biscuits.” On this trip, the nurse sleeps “on the floor of a loft on some of the clothes [they] had brought with [them]. [Her] ulster rolled up served as a pillow, and a rug represented bedclothes.” The distribution of clothing and medicine is an important part of the visit [in one harbour after gleaning information, Curwen “made some excuse to draw their men out of the house while nurse enquired into the condition of the women’s clothing. In this way we got a very great deal of useful information and discovered an extraordinary state of affairs” (Curwen 35-36)]. The final sentence of the nurse’s article leaves *Toilers* readers with an awareness of the “incalculable” value of the Mission’s medical work, where “many more workers could find ample employment.” The piece is a clarion call to donors and potential recruits: nurses are needed to ease the plight of the less fortunate “other.”

Curwen notes in his journal that one of the sisters (presumably Williams) held afternoon services for the women during the summer: [23 July] “25 women in afternoon at Sister’s meeting” (53); [30 July] “a service for women” (67); [17 August] “Our Sunday meetings have been crowded, morning and evening, for all comers, and in the afternoon Sister has always taken a service for women only” (91). The plethora of roles so evident in Banfill’s and Jupp’s later accounts, as well as the blurring of boundaries between nursing and missionary work, had its origins with the nurses’ first (1893) season. Although the doctors are credited with treating the patients, this brief article attests to the role of these

trained nurses in achieving this.

On 7 June 1894, the *Albert*, this time carrying Carwardine and Williams and doctors Willway and Bennett, departed from Swansea, bound direct for Battle Harbour, Labrador, where they arrived 5 July 1894. Willway and Williams were to go to Indian Harbour to open the hospital there, and Carwardine and Bennett to Battle Harbour. The trip, which had taken twenty-eight days, was a gruelling experience. Although Willway later recalled that he “was ‘hardened to it’ by [his] recent North Sea experiences,” the nurses had “a sorry time of it,” and “spent most of their time in bed during the entire passage” (Willway 36). The traditional gender stereotypes are embedded in Willway’s remark: the doctor is “fearless” (the descriptor for Williams), while the nurses succumb to seasickness. In his biography of Grenfell, *Wilfred Grenfell: His Life and Work*, J. Lennox Kerr highlights this difficult passage across the Atlantic:

The nurses had been hard tested, first by the rough time they suffered as the small vessel was tossed and swamped by heavy seas, and then while hemmed in by the ice. Both had been seasick most of the voyage. Sister Williams had needed to “possess no nervous system,” for she had been very ill. She had been taken from the stuffy cabin and sat on a chair on deck, the chair lashed to an anchor to prevent it being flung overboard by the ship’s violent rolling. She had sat and watched the pans grind and crash against each other, rearing up over their neighbours, to fall and be shattered with a sound like a giant’s roar, threatening the ship’s safety as they closed against her sides. It had been a fearsome experience for two young women unused to the sea and to such places as this.... (Kerr 102)

Although Williams had been portrayed as “fearless” in the *Toilers* introductory biographical sketch, Kerr’s depiction conforms to traditional gender stereotypes, and reveals more of Kerr than the nurses. The turbulent, storm-tossed Atlantic is, according to

Kerr's description, no place for women. Kerr even transfers one of Carwardine's virtues ("no nervous system") onto Williams.²⁰ The reports of the MDSF's 1893 expedition published in *Toilers* (with the exception of the already-noted article which originally appeared in the *Hospital*) were written by Grenfell, the two (male) doctors, and the ship's master. The nurses remained shadowy background presences. However, *Toilers* (September 1894) printed extracts of Williams's diary—a total of eleven entries, from 30 June to 13 July 1893, as "Notes by Sister Williams"—which reveal not only Williams's stoicism during the long difficult journey across the Atlantic, but also her eye for detail. If Williams experienced fear, there is no textual indication of it. With her chair lashed to the anchor, and her body lashed to the chair, she views "a very big sea" (30 June entry) from this position. Williams's imprisoned position reflects the nurse's position within the Mission hierarchy: she is nurse (female)²¹ under the hegemonic doctor (male). After the storm abates, the ship encounters ice; Williams, who had been ill for twenty-two days, describes icebergs, the colour of which surpassed any that she had seen the previous year, and one entry (July 4) details being jammed in ice (Williams, "Notes" 244). In Grenfell's description of the same (1893) voyage, praise is reserved for the ship's "magnificent sea qualities and rapid movements," not the nurses' stoicism (*Vikings* 207).

When Williams greeted Grenfell at Indian Harbour, he noted that she "looked somewhat tired," and that she "attributed it to the long and rough voyage coming out," as well as "the fact that she had been up all night with a poor woman [patient]" (*Toilers* November 1894, 315). The verb "attributed" combined with his comment that Williams

“had been experiencing what it means to be matron, and sole nurse and housekeeper, and organist, and general visitor, &c.” suggests that Grenfell may have perceived Williams as unsuitable for the exigencies of a Labrador season (*Toilers* November 1894, 315).

Despite this inauspicious beginning, Williams’s three-month season in Labrador, during which 587 out-patients and twenty in-patients were treated, appeared to be a healthy if not a happy one (*Toilers* December 1894, 344). Back in England, Williams delivered, according to the conference report, “in quiet simple tones” to the MDSF conference “a story of work, behind which it was easy to see lay a host of personal hardships all unmentioned” (*Toilers* January 1895, 17). This subtext of self-sacrifice is fostered by and permeates Mission discourse. The report emphasized that “it was noteworthy how doctors and nurses alike agreed in laying no stress whatever on the toils and privations they themselves must have undergone in this brave and resolute missionary expedition into the far regions of the North” (17). To some extent this reflects what Susan M. Reverby sees as an expression of nurses’ “altruism without any thought for autonomy”: “altruism, sacrifice, and submission were expected, encouraged, indeed demanded” (Reverby 67, 72). But with “altruism, sacrifice, and submission” comes the potential for exploitation. The discourse promulgated in the Mission’s periodical literature strongly emphasizes self-sacrifice. When read against the letters of other nurses (archival material), the concomitant exploitation is evident in the gaps and silences of the nurses’s own memoirs. This is not to insist that the nurse had no autonomy; being left alone at the hospital while the doctor was away on his winter trip afforded the nurse a modicum of autonomy, but it

was a controlled autonomy.

Grenfell nurses did, however, encounter a variety of experiences. “Nursing on the Labrador,”²² by Cecilia Williams, is ostensibly a thumbnail sketch of the Indian Harbour hospital life where, the author reports, the nurse’s work consisted of “a curious variety of duties”—that of nurse, maid, organist, matron, cook, etc. (21). Such an unusual nursing experience involved more than traditional patient care. This article is replete with Williams’s sense of her own cultural/racial superiority, echoed several years later in Floretta Greeley’s criticism of her new maid as “very stupid” (Greeley 98). Such critical comments are scattered through *Toilers* and *ADSF*,²³ and often focus on young female domestics who worked for the Grenfell Mission in the hospitals and nursing stations. Here Williams is frustrated and annoyed by the domestics’ “inability to comply with middle-class codes of etiquette” (Perry 145), and her tirade, as well as her use of quotation marks to signal her condescension, exposes her classist attitude:

... our “helps” are most helpless young women. In spite of repeated lessons in “setting the table,” our brightest girl still puts knives to the left and forks to the right hand; and if we waited for breakfast till either of them prepared it we should have a long fast. So that getting breakfast for the whole party (not only the patients) is left necessarily to nurse; then she makes beds, and in the meantime the girls peel potatoes and wash up.... Remembering the amount of work an ordinary English ward-maid accomplishes as a matter of course, the slowness of the women here is almost insupportable, but yet assistance in the rough work is too essential a comfort for us to do otherwise than accept gratefully such “helps” as we obtain. (Williams, “Nursing” 21)

Williams’s disgust also extends to the local’s lack of hygiene: “The washing of sick folk is not an enviable duty when they don’t change their stockings during the whole season!”

(21). While back in England Williams and Carwardine solicited liberal gifts of clothing for Labrador's needy, Williams's letter to *Toilers* assured its readers of their judicious "giving only to those who absolutely needed them" such as "[t]o one poor man, with advanced consumption, wretchedly clad, we gave two shirts" (February 1895, 41). The perceived despicable state of education, manners and hygiene foregrounded in Williams's report makes serving and "civilizing" not simply desirable but crucial.

In her introduction to *Women and Social Action in Victorian and Edwardian England*, Jane Lewis notes that "women's call to serve others was inspired by their perception of 'duty' and was perceived to constitute their main obligation as citizens.... the injunction to serve was substantially reinforced by ideas of Christian obligation" (11). Carwardine's and Williams's desire to return to the Coast after their first experience evoked surprise in the MDSF chairman (unidentified), who thought that "one season's experience would have been sufficient to damp their ardour" (*Toilers* June 1895, 169). Was this a desire for more adventure or because of a sense of Christian duty and self-sacrifice? To what extent are these nurses conforming to or resisting stereotypes? Did they get "a distinct thrill from pushing the boundaries of what was considered suitable behaviour for women" (a behaviour that was contrary to official discourse which saw nurses' "outdoor exploits as the extreme fulfilment of some feminine inner calling") (Perry 91)? Obviously committed to service in the Labrador Mission, but also possibly desiring the concomitant adventure, Carwardine and Williams returned to Labrador for the 1895 season. This time, Carwardine remained at Battle Harbour Hospital over the

winter (1895/96), “showing in no uncertain manner the reality of Christian love and unselfishness” (*Toilers* August 1896, 215). The fact that Carwardine “bravely spen[t] the winter by herself in Battle Harbour,” while Dr. Robinson travelled the coast (Willway, “Christmas Day” 11), was promoted by the Mission as an ultimate demonstration of her Christian duty. In reality, while Robinson was away, Carwardine, the first nurse to cope with the hardships of a Labrador winter, occupied a position of influence and power within the community, possibly a challenge that she enjoyed. One patient testified to her “kind treatment and loving care” and labelled her “a true Christian woman” (Sidey 74). Mission periodicals frequently published testimonials from local people full of gratitude to the benevolent Mission and its staff to reinforce that their presence in Labrador was welcome and necessary. Appointed as relieving officer in the absence of the doctor, Carwardine’s “splendid work” and “resources” kept the people from imminent starvation (*Toilers* September 1896, 243), and Robinson’s letter-report carefully portrays the Mission (the Sister) as a resourceful saviour:

[April 25] Things have been in a bad way here this winter, and but for the fact of our hospital remaining open, fifteen families must have absolutely starved to death.

Sister Carwardine has acted most admirably under the most trying circumstances, and but for her careful and discreet management the people would have suffered greatly ... (*Toilers* November 1896, 300)

Carwardine’s winter work, consisting of “day school every afternoon for the children ... three nights a week adult classes, two nights singing and prayers, and the remaining evening ... taken up by a mothers’ meeting” (*Toilers* May 1896, 113), is a precursor of the

Mission's later foray into reform work. The blurring of professional boundaries is also evident: "To-day I tried extracting a tooth—horrid! But it had to be done" (*Toilers* May 1896, 113). Carwardine returned to England in November with "a much lighter heart" because "so many during the season had given their hearts to Christ" (*Toilers* February 1897, 51). Grenfell's earlier fear that the un-Christian Carwardine would be a hindrance was either premature, or a Christian Carwardine attested to the efficacy of his prayers. The emphasis of the Mission, however, was on saving souls, not the sick.

Before Williams returned to open up Indian Harbour hospital on 16 June 1896, she travelled to several Canadian cities and met with ladies' committees, and gave talks to churches, women's groups, and missionary societies as part of a fund-raising venture, a task which no doubt gave her a sense of importance. It is unlikely that such an adventure would have been encountered in a routine hospital job in England. After a summer in Indian Harbour, Williams wintered alone at Battle Harbour from November to January while Dr. Willway travelled the coast. This time Williams faced her nemesis, the sea, in several guises. She exhibited incredible bravery and fortitude in what Willway described as "[t]he worst dressing down" of the season, on a visit to a nearby settlement: "we rolled until at times it seemed we must roll over ... Sister Williams behaved splendidly. From the outset she had to have a lashing round her to help her keep her balance, whilst at the last, when we were rolling so badly, she had to hold on to me as well, whilst I clung to the wheel" (*Toilers* November 1896, 308-09). In this account all personal feelings are effaced. Williams is once more in a "lash[ed]" position; it is her duty to serve and that

means facing the elements whenever necessary: “On Saturday last, notwithstanding her previous rough treatment, Sister started off with me on a more extended visit up the bay” (*Toilers* November 1896, 309).

The constructed bravery of the nurse clearly fits the hero narrative outlined by Poovey. According to Willway, Williams was “well and ... happy in her isolation” (*Toilers* April 1897, 104). Dr. Aspland also noted on his arrival at Battle Harbour in June 1897 that Williams looked “remarkably well, [and] enormously fat” (*Toilers* October 1897, 307).²⁴ A letter from Williams herself informed *Toilers* readers that she was “perfectly well and happy in [her] work out here” (*Toilers* May 1897, 132). No matter how convincing these published protestations of well-being might be, it had been an exceptionally difficult winter, and Williams faced the merciless physical elements inside and outside. She wrote, “No one living here remembers such a cold winter ... Some warm water froze solid in three hours 5 ft. 5 in. away from the stove, in which was a good fire” (*Toilers* May 1897, 132). Her letter to Grenfell provided more details:

In my bedroom this morning there was a drift of snow, nails in ceiling covered with frost, mats frozen to floor, and everything in room frozen. I removed into sister’s [Carwardine’s] room that night [it had a stove], and since then I don’t go to bed or get up until there is a good fire burning.
(*Toilers* June 1897, 174)

Called out in a -22° F. temperature (with strong northwest winds) to a haemorrhaging patient on a little island close to Battle Harbour, Williams survived another gruelling experience: “I hardly know how I got to the island, for sometimes I had to stand with my back to the wind to get breath to go on again. *It was cold*” (*Toilers* May 1897, 132). Later

when she returned to her patient, she observed a transformation in the landscape:

... they [the men who fetched her] were afraid to wait till morning, for fear the ice broke from their island. It was so dark, and it was not particularly pleasant walking on the ice; we could see the big cracks, and it seemed to scream and moan, then deeply groan, as if we were treading on some huge monster in pain. I did not stay many minutes on the island, for I did not want to be left there after hearing stories of big seas coming and breaking it all up, and carrying the ice away in a moment. It [the ice] all broke up that night! (*Toilers* May 1897, 132)

As if rolling seas, extreme cold and breaking ice were insufficient trials, Williams endured another nasty and near-fatal ordeal:

17th [December]. Yesterday I went to visit a sick girl. When passing a house some six or seven dogs were standing outside, with their master sawing wood close beside them; one of them came towards me. I stooped to pick up a stone, or rather pretended to (as all were covered with snow and ice), to send this one away, when in a moment, without a bark or sound of any kind, three of the others were on me. I fell, and was immediately surrounded by all the other dogs. I could feel them biting away at my clothes, and making such a fearful noise, just like they do when a number of them attack another dog. The master ran with an axe, and had some difficulty in getting them off. My coat, being thick, prevented them from biting me, but had I fallen in the opposite direction they must have attacked my head, and it was a great mercy that the owner of the dogs was near, and that I escaped with a bruise or two. (*Toilers* June 1897, 175)

There was plenty of danger in the nurses' line of duty. Was Williams's purported happiness evidence of her adherence to discourse, or did she enjoy the adventure offered by this type of nursing? Perry claims that "[n]o matter what the hardship, nurses were always painted as smilingly acceptant of their heavy workload," whatever "the challenge at hand" (53), that "[i]t was, after all, a spiritual calling which guided nurses, a calling which made both extreme danger and daily drudgery a satisfying experience" (54).

Williams's comments fit this claim. In addition to treating patients, Williams, like Carwardine, conducted "a service in the kitchen on Sunday evenings ... classes in the week to teach some women to read and write ... a mothers' meeting, and one evening for singing practice" (*Toilers* May 1897, 132). Both nurses had the persistence of saints and fulfilled Bobardt's claim of working like Trojans.

Williams remained at the Indian Harbour hospital until it closed 19 October 1897. Grenfell announced that her work had "taxed her endurance and physical powers, as well as her capacities both for medical and Mission work" (*Toilers* May 1898, 137), and "owing to the strain upon her," she was retiring for the present (*Toilers* June 1898, 171). The strain of two summers and one winter had been too much. Although she left the Labrador coast, Williams remained connected to the Mission, albeit in a new capacity: honorary secretary to the Labrador RNMDSF Letter-Writing Association, an association which Grenfell had asked her to organize. Neither the actual workings of this association nor the duration of Williams's connection with it are clear, but it appears to have been an epistolary support to mission workers, "telling of His power to save, His power to keep, and His wonderful, loving, tender care of His own, should be made known by friends in England and in Canada to our brethren in that lonely country" (*Toilers* March 1899, 69).

It is evident that, starting with Carwardine and Williams, nurses were the backbone of Grenfell's mission to the Labrador. Yet Grenfell's autobiographies—*A Labrador Doctor* (1919) and *Forty Years for Labrador* (1932)—do not credit pioneer nurses with any of the success of the Mission.²⁵ History, as Margaret Connor Versluyen

points out, is dominated by “an heroic ‘great men of medicine’ theory of medical development and social change” (177). The inclusion of Carwardine and Williams in Grenfell’s own success narrative(s) not only would have destroyed this sexual exclusivity, but, more importantly, it would have undermined his own heroic stance as the ‘Great Man’ of the Mission. The only sustained reference to nurses in *A Labrador Doctor* consists of two paragraphs²⁶ (repeated verbatim in *Forty Years*) couched in vague generalities which are placed after a discussion of nursing stations. Its inclusion affords yet another occasion to recruit nurses, nurses who are necessary to the success and growth of his Mission—“The best testimonial I have to offer has been my recurrent appeals to them to come and help”—by issuing a verbal challenge to come to a place outside civilization:

Go and stay in one of these nursing stations at Christmas time ... You may not find central heating or running water or modern plumbing, and few indeed of the physical frills of life which our civilization has made necessities for us. But you will find a quality which the materialism of to-day may still call negligible, but which goes on “turning water into wine, and the wooden cup to gold.” (287-88)

Perry argues that “the relentless Grenfell propaganda fostered an official discourse whose aims included recruiting nurses and attracting financial support with the romantic vision of nursing it espoused. Mission literature emphasized the challenge of nursing in northern Newfoundland and Labrador ...” (29). The “relentless Grenfell propaganda” of Mission literature is also the foundation of Grenfell’s autobiographies. He begins this two-paragraph musing on nurses with the declaration: “This is no place for a panegyric on

nurses.” Why not? Grenfell excuses this inappropriate focus on the lack of a poetic voice: “I wish I had the pen of a Tennyson to portray efficiently all we owe them ... It requires poetry ... adequately to describe that spiritual element in healing and in bringing comfort which these highly trained nurses, with a vision of the Christ, carry with them” (*Labrador Doctor* 287). By affecting a lack of skill, Grenfell avoids eulogy of the nurses, while at the same time effectively loses them. Speaking in generalities in an overcharged rhetoric, Grenfell conflates spirituality with nursing. Women’s (nurses’) hands, not the “crude” hands of men, he insists, take “sacrificial love” to its limit. In detailing nurses’ “feminine” nature, Grenfell follows the traditional view (maternalist discourse) that women are biologically qualified to care. Grenfell indulges in a strong analogy: nurses resemble Christ, who alone had the power to cause devils to cry out. To insist that nurses are invested with such power elevates them to iconic proportions. In summation, Grenfell’s portrait of nurses has an ineffable, lifeless quality; occupying background rather than foreground positions, Grenfell nurses are idealized abstractions rather than flesh-and-blood nurses. By presenting this ineffectual portrait, the focus remains firmly on Grenfell the Great Man of the Mission, while paying token acknowledgment to the “ladies” (*Labrador Doctor* 287).

In an article entitled “Modern Mission Work,” Grenfell repeats this idealized picture when he labels Carwardine and Williams as “ladies” who “share[d] the dangers and difficulties of an Arctic climate” (137).²⁷ In a traditionally gendered narrative, ladies and dangers are incompatible. By using the appellation “ladies,” Grenfell lifts the nurse

and nursing out of the realm of the prosaic, and paints instead an unrealistic, almost surreal, picture of a life of adventure tinged with an illusive veneer of hardship and gentility. Grenfell writes, “Nurse Carwardine remained all winter alone at the little Mission hospital at Battle Harbour, now driving with a dog-sleigh²⁸ to visit someone too ill to reach the kindly shelter of that outpost of Christian love, now tramping on snow shoes to some humble cottage to cheer those in trouble and carry the presence of the Master into the lonely settler’s home. Much work had also to be done by her for the hungry and naked ...” (137). This winter, Nurse Williams, “formerly matron in a comfortable English hospital, is wintering at the same little hospital, the doors of which, on that bleak and inhospitable coast, have not been closed for over three years. She writes cheerily by the only winter mail carried by dogs 800 miles to Quebec” (137). Speaking from outside the frame (to employ a cinematic metaphor), Grenfell employs a rhetoric of diminutives (“little” Mission hospital) and evocative goodwill (“kindly,” “cheerily”) to depict a picture guaranteed to tug at readers’ heartstrings, one that contains all the elements of the official discourse. The polarities of mission / “hungry and naked” local people, bleak coast / nurses exuding Christian love and cheer carrying the presence of her Master, mixed with a dash of local “foreign” culture (“dog-sleigh,” “snow shoes”) to titillate those seeking adventure is a rhetoric aimed to recruit. The article ends with a request for readers to “specially remember those brave men working for God amidst dangers and privations” (137). Has Grenfell so quickly forgotten the brave women of a few paragraphs previous, who battled the vicissitudes of the weather, attacks by dogs, and

assorted deprivations; have they been subsumed under the generic “man”; or have they been effectively “lost” as they have in *A Labrador Doctor*? In either case, their personal contribution, individuality, and femininity are effaced. Since only one paragraph in a eight-paragraph article praising men is devoted to these “ladies,” maybe it is easy for him to lose them. One wonders who is actually doing the “work” named in the title?

Although Grenfell himself was against having a married doctor-nurse team at a nursing station,²⁹ Carwardine left England in April 1897, went to New York, where she met and married Dr. Graham Aspland, who had been in charge of the Battle Harbour hospital the previous summer. They returned to Battle Harbour 27 June 1897. For most of the winter Carwardine was alone at Battle Harbour while Dr. Aspland travelled the coast. A testimonial which praised “Mrs. Aspland’s energies” suggests that she had adjusted to Labrador life, even becoming adept with snowshoes: “You show me the American that can travel on snow shoes in winter with Sister Aspland or Sister Williams. I’ve seen them ... going round the corner of the harbour (opposite his door) when it warn’t fit for a dog to stir, and that just for visiting someone who was sick” (*Toilers* September 1900, 244). In a letter to Grenfell, Aspland relates Carwardine’s difficult winter: “Two deaths in hospital. Night duty for six weeks on end, and a severe epidemic of dysentery around, with five or six very seriously ill and one death.... Night school, singing classes, sewing classes, confirmation classes, &c., go on, besides the Sunday-school and Sunday services, but all has fallen on Mrs. Aspland until [Dr. Aspland] arrived ...” (*Toilers* June 1898, 155-56). As Williams had done the previous winter after detailing horrific experiences,

Aspland appends the comment, “We are both really exceedingly well, and enjoying the life and the work immensely” (156). Is he insisting on glory in servitude for both of them, or are protestations of well-being an indication of conformity to discourse? The picture presented must conform to discourse. Most descriptions of nurses’ heavy workloads and hardships were accompanied by a concomitant reassurance of their welfare. On returning from his winter trip, Aspland proposed taking Carwardine on a trip northward for a change of scenery, but they got as far as Francis Harbour when a heavy snow and poor dogs truncated the proposed trip, and Carwardine returned to Battle Harbour. Shortly after, hearing of a diphtheria outbreak in St. Paul’s River (100 miles along the coast from the hospital), she headed there and spent seven weeks singlehandedly coping with this epidemic (*Toilers* September 1898, 231). Grenfell, however, glosses over Carwardine’s exhaustion:

The hospital work at Battle [Harbour] was the heaviest last season since it was established, and poor Mrs. Aspland ... has been fairly overworked. She was obliged to leave early to get rest at the house of the Rev. Mr. Chamberlain at Herring Neck, in Newfoundland ... (*Toilers* February 1899, 51)

The Asplands returned to England at the end of the 1898 season. They came back to Battle Harbour for the following summer, and returned to England for the winter. Carwardine, like Williams, had become exhausted while over-wintering. Although the rigors of the responsibilities had taken their toll, this is downplayed in the official discourse. According to Nevitt, the Asplands went to Edinburgh after leaving the coast, where Aspland obtained his FRCS. The following year they returned to Newfoundland,

where they spent one year at Carbonear, and one year at Harbour Grace where Aspland was medical officer (1904) (Nevitt 34).³⁰ In 1905 they went with the Church of England Mission to Peking, China, and devoted the rest of their lives to that mission field. Ada (Carwardine) Aspland died in the British Embassy Compound in Peking 6 May 1945 from congestion of the lungs and heart failure, and was buried in China (Spalding 24).

Williams returned to Battle Harbour for the 1903/04 winter season, but returned to England at the end of that season. She complained that the summer work was too heavy for one nurse.³¹ For the first time since 1895, Battle Harbour hospital was closed for the winter. Willway assured *Toilers* readers that Williams had not retired, but would return to Battle Harbour the following season (*Toilers* May 1905, 113). Back in England, Williams spoke at one MDSF meeting of how when she first arrived in Labrador, “the people were very badly clothed,” many “with only one garment just pinned on, not even fastened with buttons at all (they had none), and others were clothed in sacks with just a hole for the head, and holes for the arms” (*Toilers* June 1905, 140). But, the benevolent Mission, with its philosophy of not pauperizing the people, irrevocably changed the Labrador people’s lives. To effect this change, Williams herself endures a heavy workload and apologizes for a lack of time to write about everyday duties: “We have had a great rush of work this summer. I hardly know how I got through the worst of it. The strain tells upon one” (*Toilers* November 1904, 225). In light of the official discourse of cheerfulness in the face of adversity and stoicism, the last two sentences are particularly telling.

Despite her heavy workload, Williams found time to write. Between 1904 and

1908 several of Williams's sketches and articles appeared in *Toilers, ADSF*, as well as *The Canadian Nurse* (see Appendix IV). A brief sketch, "A Labrador Funeral," was the first (*Toilers* November 1904). Her second, "A Labrador Dog Story—Told By Herself" (*Toilers* February 1905), a didactic tale for children, appropriates the voice of a retriever and uses the dog's misbehaviour to teach children not to be led into temptation. It also reveals a compassionate, sensitive and lonely nursing sister. The first paragraph casts Grenfell in typical heroic proportions:

My name is Jill, my master's is Grenfell ... I spent the winter at St. Anthony with him last year, where he was building a hospital, healing sick people, going many a long journey to see them, just like his own Master, who went about doing good. Writing books, articles, and letters ... so many things he did that they are too bewildering for me to think of.... (42)

In this article, the nursing sister goes up the bay with Grenfell to get "some rafts of wood." Two sentences buried in the middle of the narrative reveal an isolated and lonely Sister: "She was glad to get away ... if it was only to see some trees, as she had lived on a little island for eight or nine months.... She was so delighted to see the flowers ..." (43). Another, "Sick and Ye Visited Me: A Labrador Sketch," which appeared in July 1907 *Toilers*,³² is set in the northern Newfoundland community of Griquet. Williams employs dialect, inserts two stanzas of a hymn, and reveals how the Mission resorts to subterfuge to get the people to take nutritional supplements: "A bottle of Bovril was to be included, but knowing the people do not like it, it was made up as a medicine, and labelled, 'strengthening medicine,' with directions; this they will take quite readily" (58).

Later in 1905 Williams was back in Labrador. and she spent the next year between

Indian Harbour and St. Anthony. Although it had been over ten years since her first trip to the Labrador coast, Williams's desire to serve had not diminished. After a difficult trip to visit one patient, she still "experience[d] deeply the joy of service" (*Toilers* September 1907, 184). After travelling 100 miles by dogs and komatik,³³ Williams "rejoice[d] in the opportunity given to do something for these sick ones" (*Toilers* September 1907, 184). What happened to this zealous missionary nurse from this point is unclear. There is a suggestion that Grenfell did not want Williams to return to the coast.³⁴ After leaving the coast, Williams lived quietly at her home in Lamarsh, Suffolk. She attended the 1935 reunion of Grenfell workers where Grenfell referred to her as "the first nurse"³⁵ and expressed his delight that both Williams and Curwen were present (*ADSF* April 1935, 37). Williams died February 1946 (Spalding 24).

2.3.2 Maud Bussell (later Simpson)

Another pair who followed Aspland and Carwardine matrimonially were Maud A. Bussell and George H. Simpson, who were stationed at Indian Harbour for the summer of 1900. According to Nevitt, Bussell was nursing at a woman's settlement in the East End of London when she read an advertisement in *The Lancet* for a trained nurse to go to Labrador.³⁶ Although we have little conclusive evidence about Bussell's life, the pages of *Toilers* attest to her Mission placements and her literary efforts. Her sketches and articles were published in *ADSF*, including the première issue (1903). Bussell's first contribution to *Toilers*, "Christmas in Labrador," a detailed account of Christmas festivities, was

introduced by the editor as a “cheery little paper” (May 1901, 121). Perry has pointed out that, “As substitute mothers in the Mission setting, nurses annually wrote ‘cheery little papers’ telling of the Christmas joys they were able to bring to the lonely lives of local children ... [t]he generosity of the nurse at Christmas was an ongoing theme throughout the first four decades of the century” (49). In her letter accompanying this sketch, Bussell informs readers that her winter was a “very happy” one; she had “plenty to do, and endless variety of scenery” and “exhilarating and novel” experiences such as travelling “on racquets, and with komatic and dogs” (*Toilers* May 1901, 121). In another letter Bussell details a frenetic existence, which she prettily terms “a little of the every day of life”: in an exhausting list of activities, nursing falls, like an afterthought, at the end, as if to reassure that the nurse actually did some nursing (*Toilers* July 1901, 182). Its placement at the end suggests its hierarchical position—the “civilizing” of the local people comes before actual nursing. This had been evident from Williams’s and Carwardine’s letters to *Toilers*, but Bussell’s is a more eloquent, convincingly written proof. Bussell’s depiction, skillfully devoid of any and all hardships, rivals Grenfell’s own. A veneer of good cheer punctuated with a refrain of happiness is superb propaganda. Not a hint of the harsh reality of Labrador life mars the romanticized domestic scene. The picture of the missionary, imposing British culture on an eager, receptive mission field (Labrador), is a cloying one:

Sunday school is a very happy weekly gathering, and here we have adopted the acrostic or alphabet searching for texts....

On Tuesday afternoon the women gather for their usual sewing

class, an institution, I believe, ever since the hospital was built ... During the two hours of work a book is read, and much appreciated, and a social cup of tea brings the pleasant afternoon to a close.

On Wednesday evening the children gather to a singing practice ...

On Thursday evening is our best meeting—a Bible reading ... I have endeavoured, as far as possible, to make it a conversational Bible class, and this has made it more homely and solved many difficulties ...

We end a happy week with a prayer meeting from seven to eight on Saturday evening, to seek blessing on the Sunday's work....

This very brief summary will give you some idea of how happily our weeks are going out here. [...]

As to nursing, in-patients are doing exceedingly well ... I have nursed one phthisical, and one old woman here, both of whom testified so brightly towards the end ... (*Toilers* July 1901, 182)

Grenfell notes how Bussell had been “very busy” with “her cripples, patients, and her many classes and services” (*Toilers* October 1901, 251-52). As surrogate mother, Bussell led a busy life, one that also included considerable writing. Although Bussell spent only four years with the Grenfell Mission, those experiences provided the substrate for her stories over the next twenty years.

From 1901 to 1929, *Toilers* printed Bussell's fictional sketches based on her Labrador experiences (see Appendix III). The fact that Bussell's first sketch appeared several years before Cecilia Williams's first sketch (both in *Toilers*) might suggest that Williams was aware of Bussell's work, but this does not qualify as evidence that Bussell influenced Williams. Both of them, however, used the sketch form. A forerunner of the modern short story, the sketch, according to Carole Gerson and Kathy Mezei, was a significant genre in Canada in the nineteenth century, where it was commonly used as a “catch-all term for descriptive prose pieces of varying lengths” (2). As a genre, it is “an

apparently personal anecdote or memoir which focusses on one particular place, person, or experience,” rather than on plot or character as in the short story (Gerson and Mezei 2). It is colloquial in tone and informal in structure, and is more episodic than the essay. Because “fiction was regarded as frivolous unless moral and instructive, the sketch provided light yet informative reading without being labelled as fanciful or corrupting, and without being intrusively didactic,” and was a popular feature of early magazines (Gerson and Mezei 3). Bussell’s sketches, based on her real-life Labrador experiences blurred the line between fiction and non-fiction, and provided what Gerson and Mezei term “an appropriate medium for recording and shaping noteworthy Canadian experiences” (1-2), in Bussell’s case, for describing remote Labrador to British readers. Despite the potential for their appropriation as propaganda and their use of traditional gender ideology, many of Bussell’s sketches valorize the trained nurse.

The editor’s note announcing Bussell’s “pen-and-ink sketch” of “Father Christmas in a Trunk!—A Story of How He Visited St. Anthony Hospital, Newfoundland” quotes from her letter: it is “a little sketch illustrating how we entertained the children here at Christmas—thought it would interest our many friends at home who so generously enable us to furnish the tree” (*Toilers* July 1905, 130). This is clearly another cheery piece that attests to the change wrought in the lives of the Labrador people by the hospital (not specified as the Grenfell Mission) and is aimed at a British readership and potential donors. In Bussell’s early stories, the doctor and nurse are not named, but by 1910, the identity of Sister Margaret and Dr. Denric have been established (likely based

on Bussell and Simpson), and remain until her last printed sketch. Bussell's first sketch, "A Hospital Story" (*Toilers* October 1901), is about a day in a hospital (all characters unnamed), and how a sick man who has been admitted to the hospital dies at the end of the day. Considerably melodramatic, it plays on readers' sympathies, and is a commentary on the good works of the Mission. Although it is placed in the children's page, the diction of her next story, "The Man of a Thousand Promises" (*Toilers* January 1903),³⁷ belies its placement there; it relates how a terribly scalded sixty-three-year-old man walked nearly four miles to see a doctor, "And a four miles equal to double the distance on an even road, for there were no roads there, no footpaths of any description. A journey by foot meant clambering over rugged rocks, toiling uphill and downhill, scarcely, if ever, enjoying an even foothold" (25). To such a one, the Grenfell Mission provided a doctor: "What the hospital had meant to him he could never tell, for with such an accident on a lonely shore what would he have done without medical aid?" (25). The story ends with a repetition of the introductory reference to "a quaint little old-world settlement" (24), that same sense of Labrador being outside civilization apparent in Grenfell's challenge to nurses in *A Labrador Doctor*: "It was an old-world settlement, and an old-world coast, with very old-world ideas," to which civilization in the form of the Grenfell Mission had come, "but many a fisherman relates how his life was saved by the timely help from that little hospital, nestling among the rocks of Labrador" (25). The propaganda element cannot be missed.

Being stationed at St. Anthony with Simpson for the 1902/03 winter season gave

Bussell the distinction of being “the first nurse stationed on this northern extremity of Newfoundland”; it was “the first time in the history of Newfoundland that a qualified nurse has wintered on the French Shore” (*Toilers* January 1903, 23, 21). *Toilers* printed an extract from Bussell’s March letter, one which expresses her aesthetic appreciation of the Newfoundland landscape, yet it also qualifies as an enticing sales pitch, sufficient to recruit hoards of weary urban nurses:

I wish I could more vividly sketch the beauty of the dazzling earth and the blue canopy of the heavens, the clear air, the brilliant sunshine that are ours, away from the maddening crowd. The weather is delightful, travelling excellent, climate invigorating. What more could we wish? Only that we might transport a bit of London and give it an airing! (*Toilers* June 1903, 130)

Gerald L. Pocius has noted how the Reid Newfoundland Co.’s sales pitch to the American tourist in 1910 portrayed Newfoundland as “a kind of giant health sanatorium, where people weary from the hustle and bustle of major American cities could come” (55). Grenfell nurses’ printed responses to the invigorating northern climate of Newfoundland as a possible antidote to the crowded industrial cities of Britain is a similar portrayal, and was propaganda of a different sort. (Jupp’s later word-pictures of the seasons in Labrador are also celebratory: “This is how God made it, Nature undisturbed by man, silent, strong, majestic and beautiful, a living miracle every day” [“Labrador Winter” 99].) While the St. Anthony hospital was under construction, Simpson and Bussell “camped alongside it in a small house” and received patients (*Toilers* November 1903, 252), yet Bussell “looked no worse for the severe winter”

(*Toilers* December 1903, 265). Grenfell was pleased that “[t]he growth of this method of preaching the Gospel by splints and bandages is shown by the statistics this year” (*Toilers* November 1903, 252).

But it was not just a gospel of splints and bandages. The Grenfell nurse’s role included being surrogate mother to the women of Labrador. When Bussell spoke to the 1904 May MDSF meeting³⁸ in England, she spoke from the position of “one who has been among the women of Labrador” (*Toilers* June 1904, 143); her remarks are an eloquent example of the maternalist discourse Perry discusses:

Our Mission is to deep sea fishermen, but what would the deep sea fishermen do when their wives were ill or their little children were ill, if it were not that part of our Hospital is reserved for the use of the sick women and the sick little children? ... What is the shortest way to a woman’s heart? We all know: to win a true woman, you have but to speak of her little children, and if you can win the children’s love, you have won the mother’s heart to a great extent.... (*Toilers* June 1904, 143-44)

In her stress on the sadness of “a woman’s life in Labrador,” one which is “very different from the woman’s life at home [England],” Bussell carefully distances the two, almost alien, cultures. The specifics provided for her audience are calculated to provoke sympathy and action: “When quite young, sometimes 15 or 16, they are shipped on to a schooner of 30 to 60 tons as ‘girls,’ that is all they are called—‘The ship’s girl,’ and to be a ship’s girl they must understand everything about washing and cooking, and doing all sorts of things for the eight or ten, or twenty men on board” (144). The “ship’s girl” of Bussell’s description contrasts sharply with the slow, useless maids of Williams’s earlier article. Although Bussell urges her audience to imagine what it would be like “to cook

and darn for and look after 12 to 16 men,” it is obvious that such sympathetic identification is, like Labrador itself, outside their cultural frame (144). Even though the former is impossible, an empathy for the sick is within their grasp. But when “the poor girl in the stress of her work is laid aside by sickness ... [t]here is not another woman near her to give her the touch of a woman’s hand, there is not another woman near her who understands her womanly heart, and there she may lie for weeks at a time in her bunk, and a narrow, miserable, little bunk it is, and no womanly hand is stretched out to her” (144). Bussell’s rhetoric is rooted in a traditional gender ideology—women’s intrinsic maternal qualities made them suitable for nursing. It is through the Mission’s (female) nurse that this “great need” is met (144). Mission nurses provide the healing touch of a woman’s hand and the absent female presence. The “warm and comfortable and cheery hospital” provided by the Mission is “like coming into Heaven,” as Bussell portrays it; these girls never had “such warm blankets,” never had “such love shown [them]” (144). Bringing a bit of heaven to these poor destitute Labrador girls is the nurses’ reward. Bussell’s final comments are official Grenfell discourse at its best:

We want to win the love of these women and these girls; and when they are sick, and sad, and lonely, and away from motherly hearts, and motherly touches, and tender woman’s love, it is then we want to bring them into hospital and give them not only the best that skill can give, but the best that one’s heart can give. We want to give them love. (*Toilers* June 1904, 144)

Regardless of the gender of the speaker (or writer, in the case of Grenfell) the discourse is the same: the nurse is either a mother figure or angel-of-mercy figure. Bussell asks the

audience for their prayers: “Don’t think we dread it; don’t think we dread the winter; don’t think we dread the isolation; don’t think that we dread anything ...” (144). The repetition of “don’t think we dread” acts as a refrain, a refrain that suggests a different subtext, one that sounds hollow. In this rhetorical buildup, the object(s) of the verb “dread” moves from the non-specific (“it”), through the specific (“the winter,” “the isolation”) of the second and third clauses, to a final all-encompassing (“anything”). Like the protestations of well-being in the published reports of Williams’s 1896/7 winter, the tacked on “We are quite looking forward to it” (144) sounds curiously suspicious. The Simpsons returned to Indian Harbour in 1904, but moved to St. Anthony for the winter. They returned to England in the fall, from where Bussell wrote in a letter:

Although we are not now connected with the Mission, it will be many years before we shall forget the happy time we have spent in its work—and probably never. As long as we have memory we shall value the personal contact with the loneliness of suffering on the Labrador. It is a priceless experience, this touching of the lives of men and women, and if sometimes they slip from our grasp into the shadow, we rejoice to know that many and many a time the Mission has stretched out a skilful, loving hand, and returned victorious from the very brink of the grave. (*Toilers* May 1906, 106)

Although Bussell continued to contribute sketches to both *Toilers* and *ADSF* after the Simpsons’ return to England, it is not clear from *Toilers* what happened to the couple.

2.3.3 *Florence Bailey*

When Cecilia Williams returned to Labrador in 1905, she travelled with Florence Bailey to Battle Harbour. Bailey’s name is synonymous with the advent of the isolated

nursing station. Hundreds of miles from other Mission workers, nursing station nurses, who were solely responsible for large districts, provided the link between the pioneer nurse (of the early hospitals) and the later Mission nursing station nurses (Burchill, Banfill, Diack, and Jupp). The nurse, often the station's sole medical person, was responsible for emergency as well as routine work. Boat, snowshoe, dogsled, and her own feet were the usual methods of transportation. Determined to be enthusiastic about this "out of the world" place—an adjective which echoes Bussell's use of "old-world" adjectival labels in "The Man of a Thousand Promises"—after only six months on the coast and "remembering that it was part of the wonderful handiwork of God," Bailey, in a letter to *Toilers*, promised "to give [herself] cheerfully for the cause of Christ and to go where He would send [her]" (*Toilers* December 1905, 263). Bailey was a determined missionary, and like her predecessors, she plunged into "winter classes and meetings" (263). Bailey's zeal and cultural values and expectations were superimposed on the people: she writes of how the people of Labrador looked forward "with keen interest" to her many classes and meetings. She portrays them as eager to receive the "civilizing," educating and healing agenda of the Grenfell Mission. Bailey, who was praised in a St. John's newspaper as "highly competent for the noble and self-sacrificing work which she has voluntarily undertaken" (qtd. in *Toilers* November 1906, 244), is best remembered for having pioneered Labrador's Forteau nursing station in 1908.

In a letter to *Toilers*, Bailey, like the other nurses, criticized the local people, in particular blaming their ill-health on their ignorance: "It would be so different if these

people would make an effort to secure the conditions which promote good health: we should at least find well-ventilated houses, instead of the close, dark rooms where we find our patients living. In our work we have been brought into close touch with ignorance and superstition, and the long train of sorrows that go with them" (*Toilers* October 1907, 210).³⁹ In another letter Bailey records how a woman "had fallen a victim to consumption," and efforts to save her were futile, "for dirt, ignorance, and misery had long reigned in her home" (*Toilers* May 1908, 134). Bailey's words echo the cultural superiority of Williams's earlier reports. Bailey left Battle Harbour on 26 November 1907 for Forteau, and en route had a potential life-threatening experience, one to rival Williams's own ordeals:

... my box was turned over, with my head nearly over the edge of the "Ballacata,"⁴⁰ which was about eight feet high. The driver told me that if I had not held on to the box, I should have fallen into the water, and it would have been impossible to reach me, as there was a rough sea and very deep. As it was, I escaped with a grazed arm, tearing my skin coat and dress.... (*Toilers* May 1908, 134)

It was an adventure laced with danger, but she endured the great physical dangers and emerged heroic. Bailey treated 170 patients in the few months after her arrival at Forteau; she wrote, "as far as my scanty knowledge of medicine would allow, and realising to the fullest extent that I am 'only a nurse,' and feeling my inability to relieve them as a doctor would do" (134). Despite some self-doubt, Bailey's letter to *Toilers* informed readers that she was able "to visit every house from Red Bay to Blanc Sablon, stopping at every harbour, so that nobody has been neglected" (134), a gargantuan task regardless of

gender. Bailey's many letters to *Toilers* and *ADSF* detail her duties as well as her ordeals. Giving the New Year's Eve address at the church and being a frequent speaker at Sunday evening services assured *Toilers* readers of her conviction that "we are here not only for the purposes of treating the bodies of men and women, but also with the object of making that service a door of approach to get to the souls of these people" (*Toilers* July 1909, 174). Bailey covered 325 miles by dogsled her first winter at Forteau, and on one occasion, "After walking through bogs, pools, and in some places snow knee deep," she arrived at her destination with her skin boots cut with the sharp rocks, and "the water ooz[ing] in and out" (*Toilers* November 1909, 278). Bailey's missionary spirit consisted of "sympathy ... for the suffering poor here": "The Master Himself was moved with compassion when He healed the sick and said to His disciples, 'Give ye them to eat.' It is in such a spirit that His followers should minister to these poor souls who are not as well favoured as those in the homeland" (278). Bailey saw herself as a missionary to the poor and needy of Labrador, and her missionary zeal was strongly flavoured with evangelical Christianity.

In 1911 Bailey was responsible for fifteen settlements; by 1912 this had extended to twenty-two settlements, and in the winter she covered 500 miles by dog-team. This does not spell total autonomy, but there was plenty of adventure. In addition to preaching the gospel through her church addresses, she did house-to-house visitation, conducted Bible study classes, girls' club, first-aid classes, started a soup kitchen, and distributed clothing. This heavy work load combined with the sheer geographical span of her

territory, demanded a strong spirit; Bailey, however, merely states that she had “as much as [she] can manage” (*Toilers* December 1912, 311). Had she reached her limit, as had Williams when she stated, “The strain tells upon one”? In the winter of 1912 Bailey also coped with an epidemic of measles and tonsillitis, along with a community on the brink of starvation and “the people reduced to a diet of flour.” It was a situation that needed “courage and resource” (*Toilers* April 1913, 72), and is similar to a situation faced by Dorothy Jupp years later (discussed in chapter 6). Grenfell conceded that Bailey had “a hard winter,” that she “is ‘played out,’ and must go to England this winter for rest” (*Toilers* October 1913, 249). Exhaustion had claimed another nurse.

Apart from basic nursing duties, nurses spent more and more time engaged in reform projects, combined with a plethora of other roles. As if Bailey’s list of activities was not sufficient, Grenfell asked her to learn artificial flower making (as Mrs. Grenfell had), in order to help “our poor women with an industry that will enable them to earn small necessities, such as milk and food for their children and nourishment for themselves” (*Toilers* June 1914, 131). Bailey also kept a garden, one that was considered a good example, as “there are now gardens attached to all the settlers’ houses in her neighbourhood” (Demarest 21). At the beginning, as is evident from the discussion of Carwardine and Williams, the evangelical component of the Mission was the guiding principle, but with the beginning of the twentieth century, and Grenfell’s absorption with various philanthropical schemes, social gospel, social hygiene and other reforms found their way into the Grenfell discourse, and were reflected in the duties of the nurse. As

with the “civilizing” agenda of the the early nurses, these reform projects—a different label, but ostensibly the same intent—continued to denigrate the local culture of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Bailey singlehandedly handled the Forteau nursing station for fifteen years, often going without a furlough for long periods, and according to one testimonial filled the role of “mother, sister, friend, doctor, adviser, and last though not least, hospital-builder and designer” (Freitag 175). Speaking on behalf of the people of Forteau on the occasion of Bailey’s leaving that community, L.G. Freitag elevates Bailey to the position of “an institution” as much as the whole Mission itself; she is the “mainstay in times of sickness and trouble” (175). Having “forfeited her enjoyment of life, and sacrificed her health and strength in our service,” Bailey, the quintessential Grenfell nurse, is remembered for her untiring devotion. The author uses his own son as an example: “I saw her with a sick baby in her arms, whose life was like a shilling standing on edge—five hours without a move she sat, five long dreadful hours” (176). Freitag praises Bailey for her endurance, particularly of the difficult Labrador weather:

... it means hunger and cold winds and being shook and bumped about with an occasional turnover of the komatik, of driving snow which almost cuts your eyes out, of weary jogging along, tired, weary and almost played out, until Sister reaches her destination, and then instead of rest it means attending to the sick for whom the trip is made. Fifty miles on either side of Forteau is the distance to be covered for sick calls, and weary, heart-breaking miles they often prove themselves to be; or travel by motor-boat in the spring and summer, with drift ice and fog about; to Lanse-au-Clair to attend to twenty odd cases of 'flu, then back to Forteau, and without rest into another boat and over to Point Amour, some more 'flu with pneumonia there. then home again. twenty-five miles in boat, without

counting time to do the work!... (Freitag 176)⁴¹

This “good mother” deserves praise for her “great service” and “splendid sacrifice” (176). Although Freitag’s testimonial qualifies as propaganda, it also provides another view of the Grenfell nursing experience. When Bailey retired, she returned to England to face a serious operation, from which she never fully recovered her strength. From naming her house “Forteau” to speaking at meetings about the Labrador work, Bailey’s devotion to the Mission was unfaltering. After suffering poor health for many years and practically blind in her last few years, Bailey died 11 January 1952. Curtis praised Bailey as one “who carried on her work without complaint and with great courage”; unlike Grenfell, Curtis acknowledged this nurse as “one of the pioneer nurses on this Mission who did so much to establish it firmly” (*ADSF* April 1952, 30).

2.4 Depiction of Nurses in Early Mission Literature

How were these pioneer nurses portrayed by other writers of Mission literature?

Cecilia Williams is the prototype of the “brave nurse” of Labrador in a *Toilers* article entitled “Seal Fishing in the Straits of Belle Isle.” Williams had spent a day with the author while in Montreal on her Canadian fund-raising mission and had charmed her hostess with her stereotypical “gentle, quiet manner, so delightful in a nurse” (Fleet 110). One paragraph contains all the components of the discourse: bravery, adventure, cheerfulness, foreign culture:

And what about the brave nurse who had kept the hospital all winter? In spite of the cold and the isolation, and the hard work, she was in good health, and declared that she had passed the happiest winter in her life. She had spent her time in looking after the three little patients in the hospital, in visiting the sick all around, and in holding services. Scarcely a day passed without Sister being sent for. If the distance were short, she would walk on snowshoes; if long, she would be driven in a comatic, drawn sometimes by men.... (Fleet 108)

Perry notes that “[a]ngel-of-mercy status was depicted as an inevitable accolade of Grenfell nursing. Selfless (and thankless) devotion to difficult work was the theme uniting the abundant images of nurses as angels-of-mercy” (53). In “Nurses in the Frozen North,”⁴² an early example of this, the unnamed author concludes with an acknowledgment of these two brave nurses who step outside civilization to a place beyond the “outside world”:

... who are giving of their lives, their skill, and patient devotion in far-away Labrador, where so few can know of their work, where communication after November 10, with the outside world, is shut off until January, and possibly later—where wearing hospital work is relieved only by long sledge trips, clad in furs, behind dog-teams, in an Arctic atmosphere, to visit and relieve sufferers remote from the most northern hospital on the American continent, except one in Alaska. (221)

Mission literature foregrounded the limitless quality of Grenfell nurses’ devotion; however, despite its placement in the title, nurses received brief mention in this article. Nursing also occupies a prominent place in the title of a later recruitment appeal article, “Nursing in Labrador.”⁴³ This one-page article demonstrates that official Grenfell discourse remained virtually unchanged a decade later:

Nurses in Great Britain accustomed to the smooth working of a well-arranged hospital would find their ingenuity sorely taxed if they had a

sudden influx of fifty-five patients at a hospital of thirty beds, many of which were already occupied. This is the sort of occurrence which may happen any day the mail boat arrives at a hospital station on the coast of Labrador ... Tuberculosis and rheumatism are rife, rickets and scurvy are common among the children ... the condition, therefore, of the people must have been most pitiable before the Royal National Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen began its splendid medical and social work there....

The work is not only medical, but religious and social, and purely undenominational, and the nurses attached to the various hospitals take their share in the wider duties. They are often left in complete charge of a hospital when the doctor is away on his prolonged rounds with Komatik and dogs; the outside work besides visiting and nursing includes mothers' meetings, Bible classes, and also teaching the young girls and boys trades, such as blanket-weaving and spinning and basket-making ... (83)

The "best all-round women" are needed to continue the "civilizing" of bleak coastal Labrador, the mission field delineated in the concluding paragraph:

It does us good to pause sometimes in the midst of our ultra-civilized conditions, and through the window of our imagination to see our sisters working on the lonely shores of Labrador, nursing and teaching the hard-working fisher-folk, and making life a little easier and a little happier for those who but for this Mission would be wretched and uncared for. It forms one link in the great chain of nursing round the world; and the bond of sisterhood is strong, even between the nurse in her wooden hospital in snowy Labrador and the nurse in the operating theatre of London's famous hospitals. In Labrador operations may have to be done, as Dr. Grenfell described recently in a lecture, by the light of a lantern held by an Eskimo, with the engineer giving the anaesthetic! (83)

There is a certain incongruity in the last sentence, with its mixture of cultures and professions, that suggests the potentially attractive foreign nature of Grenfell nursing. This tribute to "our sisters working on the lonely shores of Labrador" captures the traditionally gendered portrayal of Grenfell nursing that was so central to the official discourse: the Grenfell nurse mixes the heroic and the maternal. But this discourse

glosses over the harsh realities of life and presents a distorted view. In reality Grenfell nurses were not smiling angels of mercy living in a romantic landscape.

In addition to the writing for Mission periodicals, later nursing station nurses were also a potential source for “stories” to be used as propaganda, “stories” actively solicited by Katie Spalding and Betty Seabrook, the secretaries of GAGBI. Anything was grist for the propaganda mill; nurses were cajoled and bombarded with every means of coercion into writing stories, as a typical letter from Spalding demonstrates:

I should be so grateful if one or both of you will write me some story or a report of the work that I can use for propaganda purposes. This is a very important part of our work from this side as it is so impossible to sustain the interest, especially the interest of the children, unless we do have news to tell them. I expect you will not bless me for making this request for I am only too well aware of how busy you must both be and little time you have for writing. You know there is a cot in your hospital which was endowed by the boys and girls of Great Britain and I badly want news of some of your child patients. I do not think it matters at all whether the news actually concerns the one in that particular cot but some news we do want. One of the former nurses, Miss Austin [sic], now Mrs. Merrick, of whom you may have heard used to send me such delightful stories and I have been able to use them over and over again. Once we had a slide made with an explanatory paragraph and this has gone up and down the country. Mrs. Wenyon kindly sent me some extracts which she received and the one about the little girls' club I have incorporated in a leaflet we are just bringing out for use this winter. But like *Oliver Twist* I want more!! So will you please see what you can do? Also any accounts of journeys to patients etc. are all good and I do not print names so I think no one could mind.⁴⁴

Seabrook was equally relentless in her demands:⁴⁵

If, in your spare time (!) you can think of any stories with a touch of adventure in them that would be suitable for children of all ages it would be a tremendous help if you could jot them down and send them to me. As you know, a great many Sunday Schools contribute, and we usually like to

send the young children a simple story about the other children and the Grenfell Mission; and then we send a more grown-up one for the girls, and an exciting one for the boys.⁴⁶

Regardless of the form or genre, the literature of the Grenfell Mission served propaganda purposes. It unreservedly attempted to elicit sympathy for the poor folks of the Labrador, as well as to glorify the noble efforts of the Mission. That is not to say that all articles were written *as* propaganda, but were used *for* propaganda purposes. As Perry is careful to point out, “categorizing them as ‘unofficial’ or ‘independent’ underestimates the Grenfell Mission’s attention to public image” (28). Indeed, it was Mission policy that no staff member was to publish any piece dealing with Mission activities without official Mission approval. Anything written for potential publication had to be thoroughly vetted by the censorial eye of the Mission office and the Mission’s image carefully guarded.

Perry concludes that the “official” Grenfell discourse rooted an extraordinary female work opportunity in a traditional gender ideology. This discourse did not portray its nurses in progressive terms, but the extraordinary aspects of Grenfell nursing were rationalized by a conservative gender ideology where women figured as the “natural” guardians of the private sphere. The nurse-as-mother figure stands at the centre of the official discourse: “In their symbolic roles as substitute mothers for northern Newfoundland and Labrador, nurses were the ideal staff members to write emotional appeals on behalf of local children ...” (Perry 50). Awareness of the Mission and funds were the desired result. Dramatic tales of the extreme hardships (i.e., risky winter travel) endured by brave nurses substantiated fund-raising appeals. The official discourse

focused on their limitless self-sacrifice, their noble efforts to relieve suffering in northern Newfoundland and Labrador. Perry suggests that these two images at the heart of official discourse are “not mutually exclusive”:

... nurse-as-angel-of-mercy was merely the supreme embodiment of nurse-as-mother figure, wherein “angel” symbolized a level of maternal devotion surpassing that of mere mortals. Like the image of nurse-as-mother-figure, the image of nurse as angel-of-mercy was based in a maternalist discourse which rationalized nurses’ participation by arguing that as women, they possessed certain virtues which predisposed them for this role. (Perry 51)

On one hand, Grenfell nursing was promoted as a unique and challenging female work experience, but “[t]he discourse which proclaimed the novelty of this work experience however, was the same discourse which reinforced a not-so-novel gender ideology” (Perry 58). Perry sees Grenfell nursing as rooted in “the social reform agenda of a foreign Mission that viewed itself, from its inception and throughout the first four decades of the twentieth century, as a culturally-superior ‘civilizing force’”: “the Grenfell nursing opportunity was derived from a maternalist official discourse which argued that as women, nurses were ideally suited to the ‘civilizing’ task. The strategic significance of nurses’ womanly virtues was suggested through the portrayal of nurses as feminine beacons of hope in a dark corner of the British empire” (Perry 58-59). As might be expected, there was a wide gap between discourse and reality.

In its portrayal of nurses as smiling angels of mercy, dutifully devoted to glorious and rewarding work, the discourse glossed over the harsher side of nursing for the Mission. In reality, they were overworked women,⁴⁷ who struggled to cope with

exhaustion, professional anxiety, loneliness, and co-worker tension. For this nursing job, average nursing skills were woefully inadequate. In reality, nurses filled a plethora of roles, all outside the territory of nursing, running the gamut from training maids to dentistry. In isolated regions, nurses needed to be independent, resourceful and adaptable. But contained within this blurring of roles is the recipe for exhaustion, a primary problem and complaint. This is supported by Carwardine's, Williams's, and Bailey's references to exhaustion (albeit glossed over) in their periodical writings.

2.5 "Dorcas, Grace Darling, Miss Nightingale": A Triptych of Antecedents

Nothing in the poem "The Spirit of Nursing" [by J.B.] connects it with the Grenfell Mission, yet its publication in *ADSF* suggests its ideological fit:

I am a servant.
 I obey the call of suffering humanity.
 Be it on Third Avenue or Fifth,
 The sickroom is my destination.
 The sickbed is my worktable.
 To the suffering I bring
 Attributes bestowed on me by nature,
 And aptitude acquired by training
 And increased by years of practice;
 A love of all weak, ailing things,
 A watchful intuition,
 A gentle word and touch,
 A cheerful smile,
 Painstaking skill in things both great and small,
 Learned by patient care and concentration.
 Working, side by side, in hospital and home,
 With the noblest of the medical profession.
 Good captains, they, directing us—lieutenants—
 But also kindly teaching and explaining.

Shoulder to shoulder we fight disease and death,
 Whomever they may threaten.
 I am a servant,
 I glory in my servitude! (63)⁴⁸

This poem epitomizes the official Grenfell discourse—that, as women, nurses were ideally suited to minister to the sick. The 23-line poem is framed within the declaration “I am a servant,” but the closing frame is modulated by an additional exclamatory statement, “I am a servant, / I glory in my servitude!” Such glorification elevates the condition of servitude. In its depiction of the noble nurse, the poem paints a self-effacing, self-immolating, self-sacrificing woman who “obey[s] the call of suffering humanity.” She comes with attributes bestowed “by nature,” “A love of all, weak ailing things, / A watchful intuition”—these are all feminine virtues, because that is the design of “nature,” what Perry refers to as the maternalist discourse of the Grenfell Mission.

One *Toilers* editorial quotes Grenfell’s declaration that nurses must mix “the functions of Dorcas, Grace Darling,⁴⁹ Miss Nightingale, and others” (September 1903, 182); these exemplars provide the design for the iconic Grenfell nurse. By appropriating these symbols, Grenfell mixes the secular and the sacred, and spans several thousands of years. Placed at the head of this list is the Biblical character Dorcas (Tabitha) who gave generously of herself. The motivating principle of Dorcas’s life is contained in six words: “full of good works and almsdeeds” (Acts 9:36). Dorcas spent her days in the service of others, and almost 2000 years later her name is synonymous with acts of charities (Dorcas Societies). Service is a word that reverberates through Mission literature. Secondly, the

name of Grace Horsley Darling (1816-1842), the heroine renowned for her fearless courage and intrepid character, became synonymous with everything that is brave and noble in women. Grace Darling rowed out in a tempestuous storm with her father, a lighthouse keeper, to rescue survivors of the shipwrecked *Forfarshire*.⁵⁰ She received a medal for her bravery, and even today is considered unexampled in the feats of female fortitude. She is the quintessential hero(ine). And thirdly, Nightingale is generally regarded as the compassionate “lady of the lamp” as well as being associated with the pioneering of nursing. To return to Poovey’s two narratives, Grenfell mixes the heroine (Tabitha) with the hero (Grace Darling), and adds Florence Nightingale, who herself combines the two narratives (heroine and hero). Grenfell’s exemplars reinforce the conflation of the two narratives in the image of the Grenfell nurse. In using these three symbols Grenfell not only spans time, but creates auspicious company in which to place his idealized iconic Grenfell nurse. Without nurses, Grenfell could not promulgate his “Gospel by splints and bandages.”

But not only does Grenfell appropriate the symbols of Dorcas, Grace Darling and Florence Nightingale, in the next sentence he introduces the figure of Pooh Bah. After the praise implicit in the former three symbols, Pooh Bah, The Lord High Everything Else in Gilbert and Sullivan’s opera *The Mikado* (1885), introduces an ambivalent note into this equation. Pooh-Bah, a male symbol, refers to a pompous, exceptionally self-important person and one who holds many jobs at the same time. Grenfell appears to be tempering the praise implicit in his previous statement, as if he fears that it might be read as

containing too much praise (the “panegyric” missing from his musing on nurses in *A Labrador Doctor*?). By using Pooh Bah, Grenfell appears to be suggesting that the nurse considered herself too important, and hence an indication that she was stepping outside her prescribed gender role and supplanting the Great Man? As the official Grenfell discourse makes clear, in the Grenfell Mission women need to be contained within their traditionally prescribed gender roles. The published memoirs of Grenfell nurses, however, while in some aspects conforming to and promoting Mission ideology, present women who were unafraid to challenge gender norms.

Notes

1. Extract from *The American Journal of Nursing*.
2. Formed in 1881, the Mission to the Deep Sea Fishermen was a non-denominational London charity, and will hereafter be referred to as MDSF.
3. Although the Nightingale School was not the only nursing school, it is traditionally regarded as such. The first training schools in North America were founded in 1873-74. "Florence Nightingale's campaign to make nursing respectable began to have an impact in Canada by the latter part of the century, and with the opening of the first training school in St. Catharines in 1874, nursing began a new era" (Prentice 136). For more on Canadian beginnings see Kathryn McPherson, *Bedside Matters: The Transformation of Canadian Nursing, 1900-1990* (Don Mills, ON: Oxford UP, 1996); McPherson, however, does not mention Grenfell nursing.
4. Although an abortive attempt had been made in 1893 to employ the American-trained nurse, Annie C. Zost, it was not until two years after the arrival of the MDSF nurses that the St. John's General Hospital finally received its own trained (British) nurse, Miss Collings, to fill the position of matron (Nevitt 24, 35).
5. Perry calculates that between 1894 and 1938—the period of her study—roughly 350 nurses were employed by the Grenfell Mission, mostly from Canada, the British Isles and the United States (2). The period from 1894 to 1913 was "ultimately dominated by an American majority of 40.5%" (Perry 10).
6. L. Dock, "The Status of the Nurse in the Working World," *British Journal of Nursing* 3 January 1914, p.5.
7. In his article, "The Impact of the Grenfell Mission on Southeastern Labrador Communities," John C. Kennedy offers this assessment: "if Grenfell's actions over the Mission indicate his priorities, he was first an evangelical Christian, second a phenomenal and often charismatic fund-raiser, and finally—as required—an impetuous and impatient physician" (201).
8. According to the *Dictionary of Newfoundland English*, a livyer is a permanent settler of coastal Newfoundland (as opposed to migratory fisherman from England); a settler on the coast of Labrador (as opposed to migratory summer fisherman from Newfoundland). Variant spellings include liveyer and liveyere.
9. "What Others Are Saying: Vikings of To-day" [from *The Life of Faith* (June 19)], pp. 196-97.

10. This editorial practice is seen throughout *Toilers of the Deep*, and appears to be common practice for this period in this particular periodical.

11. See introduction, Rompkey, *Grenfell of Labrador*.

12. PANL, MG 63 Business Office, Box 8, File: Dr. Curtis 1959, Curtis to IGA Executive Committee 2 November 1959.

13. While it is clear that Perry is limited by the time frame of her study, she does quote Burchill and Banfill. See chapter 1, n.20.

14. Perry notes that "Though Cawardine [sic] and Williams both arrived in Newfoundland for the first time on Grenfell's first voyage in 1892, it was not until the second voyage in 1894 that they took up semi-permanent residence" (70, n.23).

15. Grenfell reported: "The *Albert* sailed for home, having on board Dr. Curwen and the two nurses, on Tuesday, December 28th, and after a wonderful passage, entered Great Yarmouth Harbour on the thirteenth day, having accomplished the long run at an average pace of nine English miles at 7.5 knots per hour" (*Vikings* 142). A discrepancy!

16. While serving the North Sea fleets, Grenfell made regular contributions to *Toilers*, which "dramatized the spiritual and medical work of the Mission vessels and maintained a brief on the state of the fishing industry": "relat[ing] from first-hand experience 'tales of sorrow,' details of collisions and drownings ... stories of heroism" (Rompkey, *Grenfell of Labrador* 35).

17. As most of the material I quote from *Toilers* and *ADSF* is in the form of monthly reports, letter-reports, extracts from reports and letters, editorial commentary, etc., to avoid confusion I cite these by periodical, month and page number. If the material has a specific title or author listed, then I cite by author or short title and list in "Works Cited" as a separate author/title entry.

18. "Probationers received a two year period of training. Some were paid a small stipend for which they were expected to give an additional year of service to the hospital before being granted the certificate of the school, while others paid for their training and were not under contract to the hospital. At the conclusion of the two years of training they received the certificate of the school and were free to seek employment" (Nevitt 31).

19. Phthisis (archaic term) is the general term applied to the progressive enfeeblement and loss of weight that occurs in all forms of tuberculosis disease, especially the lungs.

20. J. Lennox Kerr notes: "Cecilia Williams, whom Treves described as 'possessing no nervous system'" (80); "Sister Williams had needed to 'possess no nervous system'" (101). Both comments contradict the introductory word-portrait of Williams in *Toilers* (July 1893, 12). Joyce Nevitt repeats Kerr's error—the notion of Williams's lack of a nervous system—and she conflates Williams and Carwardine's characteristics: "Sir Frederick Treves of The London Hospital, who had recommended Sister Williams, reported that she was 'tactful, determined, and she possessed no nervous system.' She was also described as being 'patient, sympathetic, fearless, feminine,' and her writings reveal a deeply religious and dedicated nurse" (31, 33).

21. Grenfell Mission records do not indicate any male nurses.

22. Originally printed in *The Hospital* (1 December 1894).

23. This cultural superiority is particularly obvious in Dr. Bennett's conference remark: "As to the spiritual work, it is difficult to imagine how densely ignorant many of these fisherfolk are, though the light has dawned on not a few" (*Toilers* January 1895, 17).

This is not limited to Grenfell Mission doctors and nurses, however. Reverend Selby Jefferson had longed to make the acquaintance with "the junky [thick, chunky] little folk" of the Labrador ("Mission Worker's Life [pt. I]" 56). Jefferson later described an Esquimaux woman: "Wrapped in part of an *old sail and other rags*, I never saw in any drunkard's house a picture of more abject misery than her repulsive Esquimaux face, glazed eyes, and bristling dirty hair presented" ("Mission Worker's Life [pt. II]" 77).

24. "Sister Williams arrived duly from Rigolette, having had a time of much happiness there. She has recruited a good deal from the hard work since she left England, and has, she tells me, in that short time gained ten pounds in weight" (*Toilers* December 1894, 344).

25. They do, however, make brief appearances in *Vikings of To-day* (1895).

26. The second (brief) reference occurs a few pages later, and consists of the following statement: "When I had finished recounting this story [of a Grenfell nurse], half the nurses in the hospital [American hospital where he was speaking] wanted to go to Labrador on the next boat!" (317).

27. This article appeared in *The Christian*, April 8.

Captain Blandford (a Newfoundlander), who acknowledges the good work done by the MDSF, thanks the doctors, naming them, and tacks on (collectively) the nurses, as somewhat of an afterthought: "I must also congratulate and thank the Mission for sending such men as Drs. Grenfell, Willway, Aspland, McPherson, Simpson, and others; at the same time not forgetting the lady nurses who have come to this country" (*Toilers* April

1901, 100).

28. It is not clear whether Carwardine would have had a driver, but the intention here is to suggest that she is the driver of her own dog-team. According to Perry, "Upon arriving, nurses were outfitted with a personal dog team, a box-like sled called a *komatic*, and a local man to act as their driver ..." (75).

29. Centre for Newfoundland Studies Archives (CNSA), Joyce Nevitt Collection (JNC) #177, 12.05.001, "IGA, 1868[sic]-1975." J.K. Hiller to Joyce Nevitt re Minutes of the Council of the Royal Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen, 29 September 1895, which reports that Grenfell "[t]hought tendency to give first consideration to the nurse; patients may be discharged too soon; might not be admitted in certain cases. Difficult for superintendent to criticise either one."

30. *A Year Book and Almanac of Newfoundland*. 1902, 1903, 1904.

31. CNSA, JNC #177, 12.05.001, "IGA, 1868[sic]-1975." J.K. Hiller to Joyce Nevitt re Minutes of the Council of the RNMDSF, letter from Dr. MacPherson and Cecilia Williams to RNMDSF.

32. As well as July 1907 *ADSF*, and *The Canadian Nurse* 4.1 (January 1908): 1-5.

33. According to the *Dictionary of Newfoundland English*, a komatik is a long sled, adopted in northern Newfoundland and especially Labrador for winter and hauled by dogs or sometimes men; sledge for hauling wood. Variant spellings include: comatic, comatick, kometik.

34. CNSA, JNC #177, 12.05.001, "IGA, 1868[sic]-1975." J.K. Hiller to Joyce Nevitt re Minutes of 8 May 1908 of MDSF, Finance Committee, which indicated that Grenfell did not want Williams to return to Labrador. No reasons were given.

35. At the first Grenfell Alumni Meeting, held 15 April 1932 in England, Grenfell spoke of Williams's "early work as his first nurse" (Blackburn 77).

36. According to Nevitt, Bussell's "nursing experiences amply demonstrated her tenacity as well as her ingenuity in dealing with the unexpected" (67).

Nevitt notes that "In 1905, Sister Williams, who was working with Dr. Cluny MacPherson at Battle [H]arbour, was transferred to St. Anthony to work with Grenfell and Sister Bussell, while the Simpsons were sent to Battle Harbour" (Nevitt 70). But Sister Bussell is Mrs. Simpson.

37. This story was reprinted in the première issue of *ADSF* with the title “A Hospital Story.”

38. Both Simpsons spoke at the 1904 May meeting. It is not clear when they were married. In *Toilers* before May 1904 they are referred to as Bussell and Simpson.

39. Grenfell issued “A Catechism: instruction to be learned by every person,” for circulation throughout Labrador and Newfoundland. Here is the “sunshine” catechism:

(1) Must I let in the sunshine? Yes—every bit I can let in.

(2) Why must I let in the sunshine? Because nothing else cleans the room so well.

(3) How does sunshine clean a room? It kills all the poison germs it falls upon.

(4) Ought I to sit in the sunshine? Yes, I must always keep in it when I can.

(5) Why must I do this? Because it will kill the poison germs it falls upon.

(*Toilers* August 1907, 160)

40. According to the *Dictionary of Newfoundland English*, “ballacata” or “ballacater” is ice formed by the action in winter of spray and waves along the shore-line, making a fringe or band on the landward side; a narrow band of ice formed in the salt water along the foreshore or ‘landwash,’ large slab, chunks and fragments of this ice after breakup; a floating ice-pan.

41. This tribute also appeared as “A Merited Tribute,” *ADSF* (October 1923): 89-90.

42. From the *American Trained Nurse and Hospital Review*, author anonymous.

43. Reprinted from *The Nursing Times*.

44. PANL, MG 63, Gwendoline Bloomfield personnel file, Spalding to Bloomfield and Wenyon, 1 August 1941.

45. Not only were nurses approached to provide this propaganda, but also doctor’s wives; for example, Seabrook wrote to Fiona Gray, wife of Dr. John Gray: “We have always sent a true story of the Coast with our letter of thanks as it helps to spread the interest and bring the Coast a little nearer to those who have subscribed. Sunday School teachers often tell us that it is these stories that keep the children interested in the I.G.A.” PANL, MG 63 John Gray personnel file, Seabrook to Fiona Gray, 22 January 1969.

46. PANL, MG 63, Joan Stedman personnel file, Seabrook to Stedman, 19 January 1956.

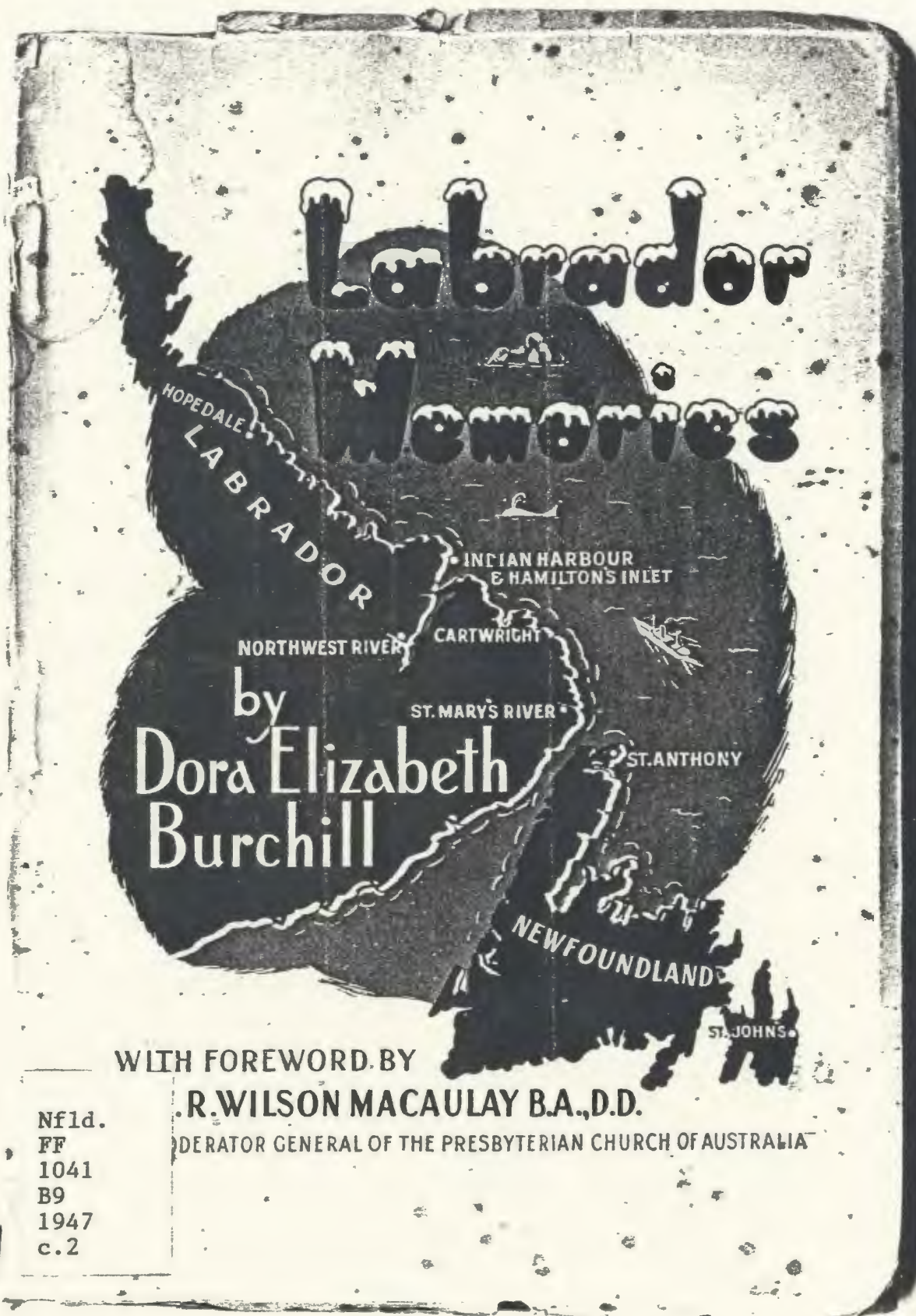
47. Nurses were overworked women, but the maids employed by the Mission were also overworked. Elizabeth Goudie, for example, worked from 5 a.m. to 7 p.m. (16). The nurses regarded themselves as members of the upper classes, and class distinctions were enforced. Millicent Blake Loder points out that the nurse ate alone, which did not make sense to her. She calls this “keeping up appearances” and “preferential treatment” (84). Loder worked as a servant girl in North West River hospital for fifty cents a month, and Dr. Harry Paddon often asked the maids to give up that for the Mission (40-41). Doctors, nurses, teachers and other outsiders did not eat the same food as the locals; and their butter had to be made into special fancy forms (41-42). When Loder became nurse at St. Mary’s Harbour she had a staff of “a cook, a laundress, an aide, a chore boy and a maintenance man” (87).

Hard as the life and work was, it was probably a step up for most nurses: as nursing station nurses they were the elite, provided with their own dog team and driver, and servants and staff. If a nurse was a servant “of suffering humanity” ([J.B.], “The Spirit of Nursing” 63), as a Grenfell nurse she was a servant with servants.

48. Reprinted from *The Trained Nurse and Hospital Review*.

49. Grenfell also uses this symbol in *Vikings of To-day*: “They [women] can handle an oar and sail a small boat with the best, and among them are ‘Grace Darlings’ only wanting an opportunity” (55).

50. See () Vernon of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, *Grace Darling: The Maid of the Isles* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: W. & T. Fordyce, 1839).



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WITH FOREWORD BY

R. WILSON MACAULAY B.A., D.D.

MODERATOR GENERAL OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA

Cover of *Labrador Memories* (1947)

Chapter 3

Dora Elizabeth Burchill: Labrador: A Call to Adventure

Not death, but life, marked those Innamincka days, awakening a call to adventure that cannot be stilled! (Burchill, Labrador Memories 18)

My paths have led to Central Australia, where I have eaten kangaroo-tail, wild turkey, emu eggs and damper.¹ I have seen the vivid red Sturt's Desert Pea blossoming after rain, and smelt the intoxicating night-scent of gum leaves by the banks of Cooper's Creek. In tropical Northern Australia, I have enjoyed the beauty of the frangipanni blossoms, and eaten Oysters-off-the-Rocks at Friday Island (near Thursday Island, in Torres Strait). I've sampled the local foods of Spain, Mexico, Labrador, Austria and other distant places where an adventurous career in nursing has led me for varying periods. (Burchill, Australian Nurses 215)

3.1 Introduction

In 1937, “12,000 miles from home, with practically no money, no friends, [and] no job” (*Labrador Memories* 18), Dora Elizabeth Burchill stood alone with her luggage at St. Pancras Station, London. Writing about this incident in *Labrador Memories* (1947), Burchill recalled that “the stage was set for a series of adventures” (18). One term with the Australian Inland Mission (A.I.M.) at Innamincka had been the catalyst that awakened “a call to adventure that [could] not be stilled” (*Labrador Memories* 18), and prompted Burchill to set off for London. After working for a short period in London, Burchill perceived a new “call to adventure”—the Grenfell Mission—and consequently spent the summer of 1938 as nurse in charge of the Mission’s northernmost nursing station at Indian Harbour, Labrador. Burchill’s memories of these Labrador experiences found form as *Labrador Memories*, her first published book.

3.2 Biography of a Heroine

Born in 1909 in Hawthorn, Melbourne, Australia, Burchill graduated as a triple certificate nurse² in 1929. She had originally planned a career in business, but a compelling description of the life of a missionary-nurse changed her direction and her life. From the beginning, Burchill envisioned nursing as a purposeful life, one dedicated to service. As a nurse in training, she eschewed thoughts of romance and aspired instead to greatness, “pray[ing] only to earn the nurse’s coveted white veil, be addressed as ‘Sister,’ and qualify to follow in the footsteps of the illustrious men and women who had dedicated their lives and skills to the task of healing the suffering” (*Paths I’ve Trod* 5). Learning of the nurses’ “dramatic struggle for the lives of outback settlers” (*Innamincka* 16) from a nurse who had just returned from the inland of Australia challenged Burchill to become a frontier nurse. Her appointment to the A.I.M. outpost at Innamincka was the beginning of a life of adventurous nursing. Located at the junction of South Australia, Queensland and New South Wales, Innamincka was more than 300 miles from the nearest railway and 200 miles from the nearest doctor over rough “gibber”³ tracks: it was the “worst place to reach” and “the hardest to get away from” (*Paths I’ve Trod* 23). As an A.I.M. nurse, Burchill filled a variety of roles, including doctor, dentist, nurse, preacher and teacher. Inland Australia was harsh country, often pushing the limits of a nurse’s strength: although Burchill was not an accomplished horsewoman, one urgent mission required her to ride 60 miles on horseback. A.I.M. policy dictated that nurses be sent to the field in pairs, and when Burchill’s companion developed tuberculosis, her term was

abruptly curtailed. Burchill, however, stayed on alone at Innamincka for four months until the arrival of replacement nurses.

Assured that “nursing is the best passport for travel,” Burchill set off in 1936 for England and more nursing adventures (*Paths I’ve Trod* 37). After a five-week sea voyage, Burchill reached England; she was on her own in London, where, on the strength of letters of introduction, she landed temporary nursing positions. From England, Burchill went to Spain as a volunteer for six weeks with the Southern Spanish Relief Committee during the Spanish Civil War where she was posted at Almeria, thirty miles from the Front.⁴ Here life was severely restricted, especially for women, who were not allowed in the streets after dark. After leaving Spain, Burchill postponed her return to Australia because a letter from a friend aware of her interest in nursing in remote places suggested that she “try Labrador” (*Labrador Memories* 18). From this fortuitous introduction to the Grenfell Mission, Burchill was subsequently posted as nurse in charge of the Mission’s Indian Harbour nursing station where she handled dental cases, maternity cases and held church services. To Burchill, Indian Harbour, like Innamincka, epitomized “the unknown of indefinable vastness and isolation” (*Paths I’ve Trod* 92).

Getting from London to Indian Harbour was an adventure in itself. Burchill arrived in St. John’s after a six-day sea voyage, then travelled by train to Corner Brook, and from there to St. Anthony by government boat where another six-day voyage awaited her, before reaching Indian Harbour. Chosen in 1892 by Grenfell as the location for one of the two original MDSF hospitals, by 1938 the Indian Harbour nursing station operated

as a summer station only, with fortnightly visits from the Mission's hospital ship and its doctor, Harry Paddon. Although she was anxious to return to Australia before war broke out, Burchill was determined to see Grenfell: she first sailed to New York, and from there travelled to Vermont and met Grenfell, before returning to England. While waiting to depart from England for Australia, Burchill, acting on the suggestion of a friend, contacted the producer of the "popular Saturday night Empire-wide" BBC program "In Town To-night," and did an on-air interview on the comparisons between inland Australia and Labrador (*Labrador Memories* 121). The prerequisite for a spot on the program was to have done unusual things or lived in unusual places: an Australian who had nursed on the Labrador Coast fulfilled this requirement.

Burchill's next adventure was with the Army. One of the first forty nurses chosen to serve overseas, Burchill set out 14 April 1940 on the "Great Adventure" (*Paths I've Trod* 125), and served in Palestine and Egypt. She was promoted to the rank of Captain in 1941, but the rank of Major eluded her—it was an act for which she herself was responsible. As she writes in *Paths I've Trod*, "I had come into the Army with the responsibilities of a senior Sister, but I was an individualist, perhaps not gifted with the consistent ability to conform completely to Army rules and regulations as was required, and I sensed disapproval with authority" (179). Whether or how Burchill flouted authority is not clear, but there is a sense that Burchill made her own rules: to be an "individualist" was clearly her signature. Although she truncated her active service abroad, Burchill received honourable discharge from the Army in 1946.

Without any preparatory training, Burchill next entered public broadcasting, as the chief female announcer at a radio station in Shepparton, Victoria, Australia. Caught up with this new challenge, Burchill was “too busy to feel a sense of betrayal of dedication to the care of the sick in forsaking a nurse’s uniform. The new path I had chosen provided rich opportunity for creative developments ...” (*Paths I’ve Trod* 188). After a brief marriage, Burchill felt compelled to return to adventures in nursing. This time she chose Darwin, a frontier town with an unsavoury reputation in the Northern Territory at the top of Australia, and in 1950 she established its first full-time Infant Welfare Clinic. After five years in Darwin, Burchill’s next adventure was further north to Thursday Island in the Torres Straits, where she spent two years. Thursday Island did not appeal to the average nurse: “To more academic, professionally minded nurses, such remote places as Indian Harbour and Thursday Island might not appeal as a field of service,” but for her Thursday Island was “a path leading to an uncomplicated way of life; yet another new experience to become woven into the fabric of the mind” (*Paths I’ve Trod* 214). At Thursday Island, Burchill “revelled in the freedom of a ‘one woman show’” (*Thursday Island Nurse* 21), and her choice of such places foregrounds her difference from other nurses. Burchill next nursed at Maprik, New Guinea, where she was “the only single woman and European nurse” (*Paths I’ve Trod* 222). This encounter with the Stone Age of New Guinea was the culmination of her nursing adventures:

History seemed to be repeating itself ... Innamincka, far north outpost of the Australian Inland, Indian Harbour, the most northerly Nursing Station on the Labrador Coast, tropical Darwin and Thursday Island at the top of

Australia and now, unknown Maprik in outback New Guinea ... This was nursing with a difference! (*New Guinea Nurse* 3)

After retiring from nursing, Burchill found plenty of scope for travel and adventure. The 1960s, a decade of intense activity, brought the publication of two of her books, *Innamincka* and *New Guinea Nurse*; presentation to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II at an annual Buckingham Palace garden party; lecturing to British school children in her role as a member of the Commonwealth Institute's lecturing panel; attending International Nurses' congresses in Germany and Montreal; travelling to Central Africa to visit the Schweitzer hospital; relief nursing at Capetown; visiting Iron Curtain countries, Jamaica, and Scandinavia; as well as nursing in Texas and New Mexico. Burchill's last adventures and challenges, however, were of the more cerebral kind: the pursuit of higher education. She graduated from Monash University in 1981 at the age of 72 with a Bachelor of Arts, and was awarded the degree of Bachelor of Letters from Melbourne University in 1986. But nursing, the main source of challenges and adventures, was the path that led Burchill to writing:

I gained rich experiences over many travelling years that took me to unusual places that I might otherwise not have reached, and I developed a creativity through the practice and magic of words. The unknown is always exciting, one path leading to another in gaining experiences....
(*Paths I've Trod* 239-240)

3.3 An Adventure Story

Adventure figured prominently in the Grenfell Mission's official discourse. The

challenge and adventure of nursing in the north was a much-used recruitment tool. In the depiction of the nurse as an angel-of-mercy figure, emphasis was placed on heroic deeds in isolated settings, self-sacrifice and bravery (without the concomitant unpleasant details of reality). Such carefully created pictures filled the pages of *Toilers* and *ADSF* and appealed to nurses in search of adventure. The Grenfell Association's secretaries repeatedly requested stories with a "touch of adventure," either based on the nurses' own experiences or fictional re-creations; these stories would then be tailored for promotional/propaganda needs.

Although the word "adventure" occurs frequently in Burchill's memoirs, it is absent from her own introduction to *Labrador Memories*. Instead, her introduction, which provides the reason ("authority") for the Labrador adventure and establishes her credentials (association with Grenfell), focuses on Grenfell, the Mission's founder, and, in essence, becomes a paean to him, complete with a laudatory quotation from the *New York Times*.⁵ This tribute to Grenfell allows Burchill to position herself with such a figure, and authorizes her adventure. The day that Burchill received her letter of appointment to Indian Harbour was recorded as a "red letter day," one that evoked a "glorious feeling," one that was significantly accompanied by "[t]he thrill of the unknown, vast distances of uninhabited country, the fear of tackling medical problems without the aid of a doctor, this was adventure!" (*Labrador Memories* 19, 19-20). Thrill, fear, adventure—all emotive nouns—were what Indian Harbour represented from the beginning. Not only does Burchill align herself with the "Great Adventurer," Grenfell, in

her memoir, but she intertextually links her appointment to Indian Harbour with glory and adventure:

“There are glorious years lying ahead if you choose to make them glorious. To what adventures I cannot tell, but I know that your God is waiting to see if you are adventurous. Courage—then forward!” inspired words of J.M. Barrie. (*Labrador Memories* 20)

The introduction to *Labrador Memories* claims that the book was written at the suggestion of the Presbyterian Bookroom, where “requests for ‘Grenfell’s books’ cannot be fulfilled these days” (ix). It is unclear if Burchill means books written by Grenfell, or books with Grenfell as the subject. Despite this vague disclaimer, Burchill’s connection with Grenfell suffers from no such ambiguity. Her book is intended for the august company of Sir Wilfred Grenfell. By syntactically connecting herself with Grenfell, Burchill not only proposes to fill this lacuna, but feels deserving of this position. On one hand, the suggestion that her book was commissioned acts as a disclaimer, yet this is contradicted by her appropriation of Grenfell. Writing about her own Labrador memories indeed promotes the peripatetic Burchill, the first Grenfell nurse to publish a memoir.⁶ Only twelve of *Labrador Memories*’s twenty-two chapters focus specifically on her Labrador experiences, the remainder depict Burchill remembering, planning and executing yet more adventures, as well as providing background information on the Mission. Two statements comprise the third paragraph of the introduction: “I hope this story will help keep alive a great man’s memory. Labrador is inseparable from the name of Sir Wilfred Grenfell, founder and superintendent for nearly fifty years of one of the

greatest enterprises of this century” (*Labrador Memories* ix). Is Burchill’s intent merely concerned with the “great man’s memory,” or is benefit by reverse association a clever manipulation of Grenfell to market her own book? Her reference to the unfilled requests for Grenfell’s books indicates that there was a market for books about the exotic locale of the north. Even though Burchill consistently praises Grenfell in the introduction and throughout the book, *Labrador Memories* ultimately portrays an ambitious, strong-willed and determined adventure-seeking woman, never a self-effacing, compliant one. In a later book, Burchill’s statement that she had worked on *Labrador Memories* “at odd times towards the end of the war” because she wanted “to record events and places experienced by few Australian nurses” (*Paths I’ve Trod* 192) provides a *raison d’être* that totally excludes Grenfell. Despite her purported desire to valorize Grenfell’s memory, Burchill validates her own memoir by carefully positioning it in the framework of the Great Man and his Mission.

Labrador Memories not only receives validation by its placement within the Grenfell Mission, but additional validation is provided by a Great Man of the Church, Rev. R. Wilson Macaulay, B.A., D.D. Most of Burchill’s books have forewords by great men; for example, the Rt. Hon. R.G. Menzies, Prime Minister of Australia, provided the foreword to *Innaminka*. Macaulay’s name, credentials, and position—ex-Moderator General of the Presbyterian Church of Australia—are prominently displayed, occupying the bottom one-fifth of the cover of *Labrador Memories*, where its red letters make it clearly visible in the surrounding white space. By contrast, Burchill’s name, in white

letters, is superimposed on, and fades into, the red map of Labrador. The last three paragraphs of Macaulay's foreword unaccompanied by any explanatory text comprise the entire text of the jacket flap, a vehicle for promotional copy intended to help sell the book. Burchill's own introduction to *Labrador Memories* makes it clear that she is aiming for a Presbyterian market, and her association with Macaulay ensures such a readership. Macaulay notes that, "[g]ood as the book is, and worth reading, nothing in it is more worth reading than the story of the authoress herself" (v). But the story of Burchill, "a girl who started with no advantages of money or opportunity and who has carved for herself a career of unusual adventure and service by sheer willingness to 'do the next thing'" (Macaulay vii), is not in the book. Macaulay, who has watched Burchill's career "with a kind of fascinated awe" (viii), sees her "restless spirit" as "asking for more trouble!":

She must write a book. Certainly she has the material for half a dozen books. As this child of her brain and character goes out to the world of readers I would add my commendation. It is my hope that the story she tells may inspire in others something of the unselfish devotion and steadfast, moral, spiritual and physical courage in service for others of which it is an unconscious revelation. (Macaulay viii)

His comment that "There is as yet no end to her audacity!" (vii) can be read as a comment on her writing or her nursing adventures. Macaulay, who says little about the book, possibly finds Burchill more fascinating than her book.

Burchill's memoir of her own Labrador nursing adventure, *Labrador Memories*, recounts her summer at Indian Harbour, viewed through her sense of importance in the

Grenfell Mission. As Marcus Billson points out, the memoir “recounts a story of the author’s witnessing a real past” which the memoir-writer considers to be of “extraordinary interest and importance,” and she employs three rhetorical stances in order “to evoke the historicity of [her] past and to argue for the truth of [her] vision of history”—the eyewitness, the participant, and the *histor* (Billson 261, 271). In her own introduction to *Labrador Memories*, Burchill relates that as “an eye witness” and “a participant in the humanitarian work among Anglo-Saxon fishermen and their families on the bleak far-north coast of Labrador,” she “endeavor[ed] with some detail to describe the many sided activities” of the Grenfell Mission as she saw them (*Labrador Memories* ix). Burchill is eyewitness, participant and the *histor* of her own story. The eyewitness/narrator, according to Billson, is the “observing eye in the ‘I’ of the narration” and “delight[s] in recording the world [she] has experienced”; as participant, she “concentrates on [herself] and relates the course of [her] own role, however major or ancillary, in the story [she] has to tell”; and she adopts the *histor* stance when narrating “events [she] has not seen with [her] own eyes, whenever [she] tells what [she] has overheard, read about, or accumulated by research through historical records, or whenever [she] provides background material to elucidate the narration or to set the stage for [her] story” (Billson 271, 275, 278). Through the deployment of these three rhetorical stances, Burchill strikes a pose and constructs a self for public consumption, and the name of Grenfell is essential to that construction.

In *Labrador Memories*, Burchill’s sense of personal identity is derived from her

sense of importance in the Grenfell organization. Burchill's rescue of her Indian Harbour experiences is an attempt to create a version of the self in the approved image of the Grenfell nurse—a life of service, spiced with adventure, capable, and able to deal with medical emergencies on her own. But when read intertextually with her other books, another side of Burchill emerges, one that is only hinted at in *Labrador Memories*, in an episode of cross-dressing, and an overt emphasis on the opposite sex. According to Billson and Smith, women find it easier to tell their own stories through telling the lives of a significant other, and the memoir form, with its emphasis on “the people and the historical circumstances of her past,” is particularly suited to their needs (163). Compared to traditional autobiography, the memoir allows women to live in “a world of ‘others’ who, as they come together in her memory, become significant in the articulation of her ‘self,’” an act that is accomplished through the “mirror” of history and the lives of others (Billson and Smith 163). Billson and Smith assert that the memoir-writer's “vision of the outer world is as much a projection and refraction of the self as the autobiographer's”; the latent content of the memoir, like autobiography, is “self-revelation” (163). As her introduction to *Labrador Memories* makes clear, Grenfell is significant in Burchill's articulation of self. Grenfell (and John Flynn) are the “others”—the mirrors in front of which Burchill's “self tries to create its own reality (‘presence’)” (Billson and Smith 163).

Grenfell is not the only great man who is significant in Burchill's articulation of her “self.” The other is John Flynn. A man of “vision” and “daring,” Flynn, like Grenfell, epitomizes “the highest ideals of public, humanitarian service” (*Labrador Memories* 17).

In 1912 Flynn established the Australian Inland Mission, and the Flying Doctor Service. Although he is a “[s]triking [c]ontrast[.]” (title of chapter 2 of *Labrador Memories*), Flynn is the Australian analogue of Grenfell. To Burchill, “Central Australia and Labrador are far-away places of great extremes and startling contrasts—strange, little-known countries associated with *men* of vision and daring” (*Labrador Memories* 17, my emphasis). What about women of vision and daring? “Flynn of the Inland” and “Grenfell of Labrador” are identified with the land they “served,” and Burchill considers herself “so fortunate” to have experienced the “Spell of the Inland” and the “Lure of the Labrador.” Are the “spell” and/or “lure” precipitated by the man, or the man associated with the land, or both? Both sentiments are associated with men and adventure. In the first two chapters of *Labrador Memories*, Burchill carefully situates herself with these two “great” men of “vision and daring” and throughout her narrative the juxtaposition of her Australian and Labrador experiences effectively reminds the reader of her credentials—that she has been, however tangentially, associated with these two men. Grenfell and Flynn are brought together in the act of writing (and reading).

Burchill’s association with Grenfell, the Great Man of the Grenfell Mission, provides a framework for her creation of a self. A male-dominated narrative, *Labrador Memories* writes in flattering terms of doctors Curtis and Paddon, men who have, in different ways, inherited the mantle of the Great Man. Burchill’s memoir is not just dominated by men, but most of these men, from the skipper of the boat to her male fishermen-patients, are named. The women, on the other hand, do not receive the same

attention. Burchill briefly mentions women connected with the Grenfell Mission (Mrs. Curtis and Miss Spalding, for example). On another occasion, she notes that a “special treat, remembered for days later, was to get a seat on the merchant’s launch for the purpose of boarding *Kyle* to meet the ship’s nurse” (*Labrador Memories* 64), but she does not name the nurse. Agnes and Emily—the nursing station maid and the orphan—receive first names. Although Burchill may have socialized with the merchant’s wife (who later provides her husband’s clothes for Burchill’s cross-dressing), she is unnamed, and is totally “disappeared” in a later book. Two well-to-do American female visitors are named, and the one who is useful to Burchill later when she wants to visit Grenfell, receives both first and last names.

Labrador Memories, a slim book of 129 pages, is divided into twenty-two chapters, of which only twelve focus specifically on Burchill’s own Labrador experiences. Nine photographs of Labrador⁷ and a frontispiece photograph of the “authoress” accompany the written text. Burchill’s Labrador experiences are bracketed by a travelogue of Devon and a trip to New England to meet Grenfell. With its collage of styles, Burchill’s memoir has strong connections with the genre of travel writing, “that mixed genre which combines autobiography, historical narrative, scientific prose, dramatic scene painting, and political propaganda” (Stevenson [ii]).⁸ Grenfell himself also employed a variety of rhetorical stances in his composition of *Vikings of To-day* (1895):

In *Vikings of To-day*, Grenfell set a pattern for a sequence of Labrador natural history books to follow. In placing the Mission's work in context, he described the country and its natural features, the people, the history, the birds, the fishes, and the fur-bearing animals. He explained how to handle dogs and hunt seals, how the cod fishery and the truck system worked. At the same time he interspersed these details with a full account of the Mission voyages to date, complete with medical statistics, reports from his medical officers, testimonials from local people, and offers of help. Treading a cautious path between travel and promotion, he aimed at something unexpected: bringing the Labrador work out of the missionary domain and placing it before the public at large.... (Rompkey, *Grenfell of Labrador* 84)

Burchill adopts the *histor* stance, one that Billson sees as being particularly applicable to the travelogue, in the first part of *Labrador Memories*; for the remainder the eyewitness-participant stance is the predominant mode of narration. As *histor*, Burchill gives the reader a brief history lesson of the Grenfell Mission and of Labrador, its settlers, landscape, and vegetation; traces Grenfell's conversion, his coming to Labrador, and his ice-pan adventure; offers a tour of the Grenfell organization and its network of hospitals, orphanages, garden campaigns, agriculture, industrial departments, and crafts; and provides intertextual extracts from the IGA's "Information and Instructions for Workers" and her own letter of acceptance to the Grenfell Mission. Interspersed throughout the memoir are quotations from and/or references to Kipling, J.M. Barrie, Longfellow, Tennyson, the Bible, John Flynn's *Bushman's Companion*, Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Charles Dickens's *Martin Chuzzlewit*, at least three works by Grenfell, and Sankey's hymn book, as well as a letter from Grenfell, and an uncredited poem. Burchill's final chapter contains extracts from her BBC talk and a letter from a girl

who was influenced by that program, the text of the bronze tablet commemorating Grenfell's ice-pan adventure, as well as a poem by George McLean, to name a few. Burchill's own narrative of Labrador runs through the middle section of the memoir.

Although Burchill's association with the Grenfell Mission was short, she asserted in *Australian Nurses Since Nightingale* that her "experiences were full enough to find publication as the book *Labrador Memories*" (218). Yet the fact that she needed "to refer to official [IGA] publications" to "bring this story up to date" (*Labrador Memories* ix) suggests that her own experiences and concomitant memories were not quite "full" enough. She extracted "statements from previous Annual Reports and other sources" in order "to give a picture of the work on the Coast as a whole" (Burchill to Spalding, 20 April 1944).⁹ Although this factual information tends to overwhelm "her" narrative, of which there is little, it does, however, firmly establish her association with the Grenfell Mission. In a letter to Katie Spalding, Burchill referred to *Northern Nurse*, the "dramatic and courageous" story of her fellow Australian and predecessor at Indian Harbour, Kate Austen, and emphasized how she was "thrilled and awed" by it (20 April 1944). Burchill insisted that she had "nothing like the experiences of Miss Austen," so instead she "describ[ed] the various Grenfell centres with more detail" (Burchill to Spalding, 20 April 1944). The implication is that there is a lack which needs filling. Had her purported "full" experiences been created by a "lack" (this "nothing")? Is Burchill envious of Austen's thrilling adventures? Thirteen years after the publication of *Labrador Memories*, Burchill referred to it as a "humble literary effort." one which she would like to "re-write

and enlarge” (Burchill to Seabrook, 30 July 1960). How Burchill proposed to enlarge on “nothing” (a three-month stay in Indian Harbour) is questionable.

In addition to a preponderance of factual material, Burchill adds travelogue to her memoir-collage. Her description of a pre-Labrador tour of Devon relies heavily on favourite non-specific adjectives such as “glorious,” “fascinating,” “beautiful,” and “magnificent” (*Labrador Memories* 21-22), and reads like an impersonal tourist brochure. This is also evident in a later description of New England, where the clichéd adjectives, “exhilarating,” “perfect,” “ideal,” “delightful,” “wonderful,” “unforgettable,” “inspiring,” and phrases, “romantic scenes of beauty,” “special features of inexhaustible fascination and interest” (*Labrador Memories* 114-115), are piled up, and leave an uninspiring picture. According to Karen Lawrence, travel is historically associated with “a Western, white, middle class and ... a generally male, privileged ease of movement” (xii), and by travelling, women geographically enter male territory. Throughout *Labrador Memories*, Burchill takes great pains to foreground her gender: she stresses that she is the only woman in a group of men: there are no women on the boat to Indian Harbour, she is alone with eleven men; there are only five women at Indian Harbour; she dines alone with the philanthropist, George Williams, on his yacht; and she goes fishing with the men of Indian Harbour. In the nineteenth century the woman traveller did not enjoy the same ease of movement as men, and found more worthy reasons to pursue her dreams:

Other respectable purposes which could cover a more suspect wish for self-pleasing encompass some kind of idealistic zeal, usually connected with the idea of woman as a specially civilising influence, and particularly

associated with those travellers who went into more remote areas. Sometimes there is an actual religious or social ideology behind the journeying. Missionaries ... travelled ostensibly in a spirit of service and self-sacrifice, even though an underlying urge for self-fulfilment or self-testing may have fuelled their relentless pursuit of the furthest horizons. (Foster 10)

As a female travelling in the early twentieth century, Burchill's passion for adventure and travel was still somewhat circumscribed by these gender conventions, but nursing provided Burchill with a respectable purpose—a passport to adventure and travel. Not only did Burchill enter male territory by travelling, but by writing about and publishing her own experiences, Burchill entered another male-dominated territory. As Lynne Spender points out, the institution of publishing is controlled by men; it constitutes “a male dictatorship and as in other dictatorships, the power can be used to put out propaganda that is in the interest of the rulers. Alternative—or subversive views—can readily be suppressed” (xi). Grenfell Mission nurses were reminded repeatedly that they could not write anything about the Mission unless it was endorsed by the Mission's internal censor. Jill Perry notes that “[s]pecial efforts were made to ensure that all potential publicity avenues supported the Mission's desired reputation as a benevolent and effective institution” (28).¹⁰ The Grenfell Mission with its strict control of all staff writing fits the rubric of a literary dictatorship.

Anything written for potential publication had to be vetted by the Mission's London office. Shortly after Burchill left Indian Harbour, Spalding wrote: “I notice that you are going to help in writing articles about the Mission. I am sure that all such

publicity is very helpful ... Will you please let us see your articles before publication?

This is according to Section 8 of the enclosed which you had when signing your contract”

(18 October 1938). Section 8 of “Information and Instruction for Workers” delineates how the Mission safeguarded its image:

The Mission requests that returning workers give out no interviews to the press or for publication in connection with their work or about the people or conditions on the Coast. The publicity of the Mission *must* be in the hands of the Association. Stories of hardship, tragedy, comedy and adventure are those which naturally remain in our minds and attract the attention of others. Yet they frequently, when out of their setting, give a false and misleading impression, which works harm both to those who issue them and to the subjects of them. The people of Newfoundland are hard-working and self-respecting, and when the misfortunes or misadventures of individuals are reported the impression received is that these are typical of a starving, freezing, sickly people. Naturally the Newfoundlanders are offended.... We also ask that in your private conversation you take pains to give a just presentation of the country, the people and the Mission, and not only the spectacular, the picturesque or the touching.¹¹

Although Spalding fully intended to scrutinize Burchill’s proposed articles, it is not known if these were ever written. The next extant reference to Burchill’s writing¹² occurs six years later, when she informs Spalding that “the Presbyterian Bookroom in Melbourne have asked me to write a short story of my experiences. Grenfell’s books are unattainable at present” (20 April 1944). It is possible, based on this comment, that *Labrador Memories* had its genesis in a short story. In the same letter Burchill asks for trust: “It is not [word undecipherable] to submit the M.S.S. to you. You will have to trust me.” The reason for the trust is not stated, but section 8 seems a likelihood. The facts: Burchill served as a nurse with the Grenfell Mission for one summer in 1938. Six years elapse.

Does she still feel constrained by section 8? Burchill did not submit the manuscript in any form or at any stage to Spalding, and in essence, defied the censor.

This uncensored manuscript “did not suit the critics!” (Burchill to Spalding, 1 January 1945), and Burchill experienced difficulty getting the book published. *Labrador Memories* was eventually printed by a local Australian newspaper, and it was Burchill’s responsibility to distribute the entire print run of 1000 copies¹³ printed (*Paths I’ve Trod* 192) when it became available 1 July 1947, another “red letter day” in her calendar. Although admitting feebly that the manuscript “should have been reviewed by the [Grenfell] Association,” it is not clear if Burchill means approval or a review after publication. The former seems more likely. She thought that a copy had reached the Grenfell Mission’s London office via a potential publisher, where a copy had been submitted and returned because the reader considered it to be of insufficient interest outside Australia and Labrador. The fact that Burchill was confident that “a few copies would sell in England among ‘Grenfell friends’” (Burchill to Seabrook 7 July 1947) suggests that her appropriation of Grenfell in her introduction was partly a marketing ploy. Seabrook’s non-specific, polite reply is unaccompanied by any offer to promote Burchill’s book: “We are delighted to have your book *Labrador Memories* ... It is full of interest and an honour to have it published. I hope it is selling well” (Seabrook to Burchill, 29 April 1948). The publication of *Labrador Memories* was not announced in *ADSF*.¹⁴

Over time and with subsequent books, Burchill became almost as relentless as

Grenfell in self-promotion. In her dedication to *New Guinea Nurse*, for example, Burchill notes that the book resulted from “determined ‘off duty’ activity in a tropical climate and an autobiographical urge to record life in new and strange places” ([i]). This “autobiographical urge” resulted in five more books after *Labrador Memories*. *Innamincka* (1960), *New Guinea Nurse* (1967), and *Thursday Island Nurse* (1972) were based on her experiences in each of these places. *The Paths I've Trod* (1981)¹⁵ encompasses and retells her Labrador, Spain, Innamincka, Thursday Island, and New Guinea nursing experiences, as well as her Army nursing career and her radio career. *Australian Nurses Since Nightingale 1860-1990* (1992), ostensibly a history of nursing in Australia, is another forum for self-promotion: Burchill inserts her history in each chapter, and devotes a separate chapter to her own history. As no other nurse receives this sustained treatment or a separate chapter in Burchill's nursing history, she appears to be defining herself as the prototypical Australian nurse.

Twelve years after the publication of *Labrador Memories*, Burchill contacted the Grenfell Mission to announce her new book, *Innamincka*. Reiterating and exploiting her past brief association with the Mission, her meeting with Grenfell and his interest in the A.I.M., Burchill wrote to Seabrook to solicit help with promoting her book:

Now I have written another [book] about nursing in the Inland of Australia and it is shortly being published by Hodder and Stoughton. I am very glad to say Sir Wilfred Grenfell was very interested in the work of the Australian Inland Mission and the Flying Doctor Service. When I met him at his home at Vermont he told me well wishers had sent him ... *Flynn of the Inland*.

The publishers have asked me for names of those willing to

promote sales and I wondered if your association would be willing to accept a copy of the book.

The Prime Minister of Australia has written the “Foreword” also one by Superintendent of the A.I.M. (Burchill to Seabrook, 16 February 1960)

Seabrook’s reply—“I am delighted that your book ... is being published by Hodder and Stoughton. I know how interested Sir Wilfred was in the work Dr. Flynn was doing, and we were always so pleased that you were able to work for the Grenfell Mission ...” (Seabrook to Burchill, 25 February 1960)—is hardly encouraging to Burchill. Burchill’s next letter, while expressing her keen disappointment, foregrounds her own sense of importance. Burchill does not respond well to a lack of appreciation:

I have been disappointed not to hear your [sic] you, as you expressed such interest in my book now published [*Innamincka*], and I was hoping you might promote its interest. I did ask the publishers to send you a copy, but I know they missed on several names I submitted. All reviews of *Innamincka* were excellent and though the book reached fourth place on the Best Seller list for Australian books the publishers tell me it has not done well in England. I feel it has not become well enough known there. Here, judging by letters, it has been appreciated by all sections of the community but of particular interest to nurses and Educational bodies. I would like to hear from you and to know something about English reviews; I have not seen any. (Burchill to Seabrook, 12 October 1961)

Seabrook’s reply, although calculated to placate Burchill, still does not offer to promote the book. Seabrook hoped that announcing *Innamincka* in *ADSF*, “which is read by a great number of people in Canada and the States and in this country,” would make it “known and so promote the sales.” After reading *Innamincka* (which she herself purchased from Hodder & Stoughton), Seabrook offered Burchill the opinion that it “certainly deserved to sell well in Australia” but, as before, her letter is non-specific and

impersonal:¹⁶

I did not see any reviews here, but as you know a great many books are published, and there is not space to review them all. Even our official Biography on Grenfell only had limited reviews. However, I hope you have done well out of it—you certainly deserve to.

... I can understand that you will be disappointed about the sale of your book in this country, but I think it is the kind of book that will go on selling slowly and steadily ... (Seabrook to Burchill, 27 February 1962)

Innamincka was later available in Braille and Talking Libraries and became a text in many Australian schools.

Although Burchill wrote a total of six books, as well as articles,¹⁷ she is not considered a significant literary figure or a writer of distinction in Australia.¹⁸ She is, however, listed in *The Oxford Companion to Australian Literature*,¹⁹ as well as the *Directory of Australian Authors* where she is cited as “[m]uch in demand as a speaker for Rotary and similar groups” (Lord 22). The *Australian Women Writers* lists Burchill as a winner of the Jessie Litchfield Prize (the Bread and Cheese Club) for *The Paths I’ve Trod*.²⁰ Burchill received the prestigious Order of Australia award, which “largely acknowledged her life-long service to nursing rather than her activities as a writer.”²¹

3.4 *Labrador Memories*: Striking a Pose

The first two chapters of *Labrador Memories* are, for the most part, reported in an objective, non-gendered voice. There are no explicit self-revelations, nor is the gender of the author revealed (she refers to herself and her *Innamincka* companion [Ina Currey] as “two Victorian nurses” [*Labrador Memories* 17]). For the first chapter, the *histor* stance

or that of the objective “show-er” is apparent. Marni L. Stanley notes that a travel-writer writing in the showing mode “takes great pains to establish her liberal credentials in the introduction” (53), which Burchill does in her introduction by establishing her association with Grenfell. The show-er, as Burchill is, “disguises her own observations as information and records them in the same flat, statement-of-fact style she uses for historical data and population statistics,” imparting “only facts, not intimacies” (Stanley 53, 54). Chapter one of *Labrador Memories*, with its authoritative historical overview, fits this description: “[t]he emphasis is on representation and the narrating ‘I’ does not bother to develop a persona for the narrated ‘I’” (Stanley 53). To adopt the show-er stance is to adopt “a position of authority within the text. No personality and no flaws or limitations are revealed by the narrating ‘I.’ The illusion of objectivity is partially created by this distance—this absence” (Stanley 54). Shirley Foster refers to the established conventions of travel writing at the beginning of the century:

In order to authenticate their accounts and to guarantee the accuracy of their commentary [women] had frequently to take on a masculine voice ... [to] frequently appeal to earlier authorities, they include technical data often avowedly gleaned from male sources and consciously or unconsciously ... base many of their interpretations on the assumption of their own personal and national superiority as white, British, middle-class observers. (18)

These female travel-writers were also subject to literary conventions predicated upon their sex: the traveller who employed “a masculine voice (and the very act of writing ‘factual’ material symbolised entry into male discourse) ran the risk of being regarded as unwomanly and presumptuous” (Foster 18-19).

Having stated that she has decided to try Labrador (and the Grenfell Mission) as another source of adventure before returning to Australia, Burchill needs to situate Grenfell as a hero: “Wilfred Grenfell was a hero of childhood days, his thrilling books being favorite reading.” She continued: “When in the Inland, a friend sent me his [Grenfell’s] little gem, *What Christ Means to Me*, a book that awakened a new admiration for the great Labrador crusader” (*Labrador Memories* 18). Burchill’s selected memories of Labrador are framed by the historical (pioneer) Grenfell, and the living (deified) Grenfell. The first chapter, appropriately entitled “The Labrador Doctor,” creates a picture of the hero, the Great Man, and opens with this sentence: “A young English doctor stood leaning on the rail of a ship off the Labrador Coast, famous for fogs, gales and icebergs” (*Labrador Memories* 11). Burchill establishes Grenfell’s presence in Labrador before her own arrival. She portrays Grenfell as a man of heroic proportions—a saviour and a bringer of civilization to “The Land God Gave Cain,” an impossible land and people. Grenfell-as-hero was a familiar image, one promoted by Grenfell himself in his many writings, as well as in the many hagiographical biographies of him. According to Burchill, Grenfell came to the “pitiably poor and in want” people of Labrador “[i]n the enlightened year of 1892” (*Labrador Memories* 12). By virtue of her appointment to Indian Harbour, Burchill is ideologically connected with this “tremendous Christian enterprise” (*Labrador Memories* 12). She shows no awareness of the cultural arrogance implicit in Grenfell’s civilizing intentions, but praises his “vision and will to alter a whole country!” (*Labrador Memories* 13). With his “financial, physical and moral courage, as

well as terrific driving power and a profound faith,” Grenfell created “a new civilization,” and Burchill is awed by his “sheer radiance” (*Labrador Memories* 13, 15). The Biblical cadences of “sheer radiance” hint at an incipient deification, which later become overt in the juxtaposition of Grenfell’s picture with that of the sacred pictures in the Indian Harbour church: “Two sacred framed prints and a typical picture of Sir Wilfred Grenfell, hatless, standing at the bow of the *Strathcona*, graced the bare walls” (*Labrador Memories* 71).

In chapter 4 (entitled “St. Anthony”) Burchill not only deifies Grenfell, but she mythologizes St. Anthony, the place where Grenfell established his headquarters, and textually elevates it to a Trinitarian position:

To gaze upon holy places which, before, were visible only to the eyes of faith, is the enriching experience of many a traveller through the Holy Land. Perhaps, of all other places, the Sea of Galilee provides the pinnacle of Christian emotion and experience. Its sacred associations unmistakably awaken a pervading influence and joy inseparable from the life and work of Him who went about doing good on the shores of the picturesque lake. And so with St. Anthony. In Grenfell’s books one reads of this coastal town, its close association with the “Labrador Doctor,” its awe-inspiring record of service and achievement. With the eyes of faith one sees the Headquarters of International Grenfell Association at St. Anthony as the great centre of hope and healing. [...]

Like Palestine, St. Anthony provides an enriching experience. The little coastal town of clean, white houses and hilly landscapes is permeated with the spirit of self-sacrificing love of the “Labrador Doctor,” a true follower of the Physician of Galilee. One is conscious of this deep influence—right from the start. None other can claim to have first place. (*Labrador Memories* 29)

Grenfell’s “small, unadorned room” (unoccupied since he “reluctantly retired from active work on the Coast”) in his St. Anthony residence becomes a holy of holies, a “place of

sacred memory” (*Labrador Memories* 39). To enter this sacrosanct space, for Burchill, is “a profound experience,” tantamount to being on holy ground. Burchill intertextually connects this to the Biblical story where God said to Moses “Take thy shoes from off thy feet for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground” (*Labrador Memories* 39). One week at St. Anthony generates Burchill’s effusive, culturally arrogant comment about “what wonderful things [that] have been accomplished in this outpost of the British Empire” (*Labrador Memories* 40). She concludes that “St. Anthony demonstrates that to make a new civilization you do not have to overturn governments. The Labrador Doctor has gone far to prove that you can make a land over; the world a better place to live in; within established law and order” (*Labrador Memories* 40-41). Burchill effectively invests Grenfell, the hero, with powers generally associated with divinity.

By connecting herself with divinity, Burchill can share in the glory of creating a new civilization. Nursing, with its traditional ideology of caring as an inherent feminine trait, is not typically considered to be synonymous with the (masculine) pursuit of adventures. The word “adventure,” however, makes frequent appearances in Burchill’s narrative of nursing in Indian Harbour. Four paragraphs into chapter eight, after the occasion of her first (male) patient’s visit, we read: “It was a strange feeling, being left in entire charge of the furthest north Nursing Station on the Labrador Coast. This was adventure!” (*Labrador Memories* 61). This reference to adventure is associated with a specific archetype, “Adventures of Robinson Crusoe”—a story for boys that had been one of Burchill’s favourite childhood stories. Burchill’s story, which “became alive as the

days went by,” contains a Newfoundland dog, appropriately named Friday, who accompanies Burchill around the island (*Labrador Memories* 63). Not only does Burchill have a dog Friday, she also has a “girl Friday”—Agnes, the cook, maid, and nurse’s aide, who, like Man Friday, is carefully defined as of a lower race. (Agnes, too, has her girl Friday, Emily, the little orphan, the lowest on the totem pole, who tends the garden for her.) Burchill had not only read the archetypal story, but her presence in Indian Harbour—her Labrador island—signifies that she had acted on the fantasy. The Robinson Crusoe archetype is repeated in a later book:

Indian Harbour was indeed a fairy tale island, bringing to life the adventures of that legendary figure, Robinson Crusoe. Crystal clear water trickled down the rocks, low growing, edible berries lay hidden under green leaves, and a lovable black Newfoundland dog called “Friday” (after Crusoe’s faithful companion) fitted beautifully into the incomparable setting for a fantasy story. Friday was my constant canine companion on walks over the island. (*Paths I’ve Trod* 94)

Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* portrays adventure and men. To seek after adventure, such as exploring and conquering new territories, is a masculine prerogative. The story of Robinson Crusoe has launched a thousand male adventures, and a whole subgenre called the Robinsonade:

... for at least two hundred years, almost every boy read it in his boyhood, and many girls in their girlhood, across most of northern Europe and North America. It became a literary archetype ... it was recognized as the most edifying and improving kind of adventure, the one that had the most to do with work and the least to do with war, and so was the one most recommended by teachers and preachers and incorporated into moral culture.... [...] In their *Practical Education*, Richard and Maria Edgeworth, being moralists, even said that adventure tales were especially suited to

girls because they understood better than boys that adventure tales are fantasies. (Green 2,7)

For eighteenth-century readers, according to the Edgeworths, “girls must soon perceive the impossibility of their rambling about the world in quest of adventures” (qtd. in Lawrence 52). But twentieth-century women like Burchill, who have filtered such male-centered texts through a woman’s consciousness, ultimately challenge and defy that stereotype. Burchill’s refusal to accept the gender restrictions of male-identified adventure is evident in her memoir.

Burchill creates her own narrative of an adventure-filled life, of which Labrador is only one adventure. *Labrador Memories* is permeated with Burchill’s passion for adventure; every experience is a source of adventure. A two-hour rowboat trip to attend to a patient becomes an “exhilarating experience” (*Labrador Memories* 95). Although adventure is not geographically specific—“Be the mode of transport a snarling camel, His Majesty’s mail car, or an open boat on the North Atlantic, the sense of high adventure, created by the unusual, is the same” (*Labrador Memories* 95)—the colony of Newfoundland does offer Burchill plenty of new experiences. To reach Indian Harbour Burchill has to travel on a supply schooner, a journey she looks forward to with an “eager look of anticipation” (*Labrador Memories* 41), as she would be the only woman with an eleven-man crew on a six-day, 300-mile journey. Although warned that she would have to “rough it,” this was “no new experience” (*Labrador Memories* 41) for Burchill. She is surprised, however, to find evidence of civilized amenities: a cabin with a “bed against

the wall, made up with white sheets and pillowslips—a cabin that gave no indication of ‘roughing it,’” and “[a] vase containing bright coloured flowers like crocuses” on a “small table covered with a blue linen cloth” (*Labrador Memories* 43). Burchill’s precise description suggests that she might not be as comfortable with roughing it as her earlier response indicated. Although she is on an adventure (a manly pursuit), and, unlike the male adventurer, Burchill does not rough it, she is pleased to have the comforts associated with being a lady. Her entry into the (masculine) world of adventure is circumscribed by her gender, yet six days aboard the schooner is “[f]ar more exciting than travelling on a passenger steamer ... Wouldn’t have missed this for anything. The only woman passenger! Never a trace of seasickness!” (*Labrador Memories* 43). Being the “only woman” gives her status as an object of the male gaze in this all-male world. Contrary to stereotype, Burchill does not get sick in rough waters. Her portrayal of the North Atlantic journey is a romanticized journey to adventure and uses the colorful romance topos of a sea crossing. The scented, white, pink, ribboned fairyland is, in essence, a feminization of the seascape:

There are vivid memories of lovely evenings at sea. Snug in overcoat, beret and scarf, it was fascinating to stand on deck and watch the bow of the *Cluett* cleaving the dark water into ribbons of white, while the feel of the cool, scented spray increased the feeling of exhilaration as the vessel sped along the vast ocean. The setting sun cast a pink radiance; sea and sky merged into one; while the scene became like an Inland twilight transforming the desert into a pink, shimmering fairyland, above and below an unbroken horizon. (*Labrador Memories* 44–45)

To the American crew, Burchill is the “other” who had left “sunny Australia for this bleak

land” (*Labrador Memories* 49). Being the only woman is a position that Burchill repeatedly stresses in *Labrador Memories*.

Burchill’s second marine encounter, one with a more “delightful touch of elegant civilization” (*Paths I’ve Trod* 99), was provided by George Williams, the American philanthropist “of shaving cream fame” (*Labrador Memories* 88), anchored off Indian Harbour in his yacht, *Karluk*. This encounter receives detailed attention in *Labrador Memories*. Eager to experience the civilization Williams represents, two “uneventful days” pass before “a grey envelope” containing an elegant invitation “written on pale grey notepaper embossed in purple and in striking, legible handwriting” (*Labrador Memories* 89), is delivered by Williams’s steward. The invitation to dinner (quoted in full) evokes a thrill, and Burchill excitedly poses a question to the reader, “Ever felt like a child anticipating her first party?” (*Labrador Memories* 89). In her “socially deprived life,” Burchill, Cinderella-like, “anticipated the event with the excitement of a small child receiving her first party invitation” (*Paths I’ve Trod* 99). Some discrepancy exists between having a social life and adventure. Might lamenting “a socially deprived” life be a gendered desire, and/or a variation of cultural superiority? The details Burchill includes suggest the latter. The precise social conventions are adhered to, and “the youthful steward” called at the bungalow at a quarter to one, for dinner at one. On the day of the dinner, the landscape is magically transformed: the shore edge is “washed gently by the waves”; they step “into a little white rowing boat”; they speed through “the blue, sun-drenched water” to the yacht (*Labrador Memories* 90). This romanticized landscape

resembles her description of the North Atlantic journey. The yacht, anchored a mile from shore, is spatially and metaphorically set apart. Williams, a “tall, lean figure, about seventy years of age” with “a quiet, ready smile” who “extended a friendly hand” of welcome, is “a man of vital personality with wide human sympathies, and an underlying sense of humour” (*Labrador Memories* 90). But it is the markers of Williams’s wealth and class that are embedded in her memory: “Valued at £5,000, all the fittings of *Karluk* are in pure, shining mahogany. The delights of modern conveniences, and the contents of handsome bound books are enjoyed by doctors, nurses and other Grenfell workers who acclaim the owner of the streamlined vessel a delightful host” (*Labrador Memories* 90). The nurse, a symbol of the Grenfell Mission’s presence in Indian Harbour, warrants invitation into this “elegant” environment. Her description of the meal is the most detailed account in the entire narrative:

We sat down to dinner at a tastefully appointed table. Spotless white linen and napkins embroidered *Karluk* in purple thread, provided a delightful luxury touch of civilization.²² A meal of oyster soup, cod tongues, steamed apple pie with whipped cream (it must be tinned) ended with delicious coffee, a meal served by the white-coated steward with all the finish of a waiter at Claridges.’ (*Labrador Memories* 90)

Burchill’s earlier “eager look of anticipation” of a journey that included “roughing it” is belied here by her sybaritic description. It adds weight to my supposition that this remark covered her desire to spend six days alone with an all-male crew.

Repeated references to the “civilization” outside Indian Harbour foregrounds Burchill’s ethnocentrism. This ethnocentrism is also evident in Burchill’s description of

the aboriginals of Australia.²³ The people of Labrador strike a negative chord with the class-conscious Burchill, and she employs the tropes of imperialist discourse in her description of these people. The Eskimos—"one of the most interesting and attractive of the primitive races ... A happy people, with cheerful ways and simple friendliness" (*Labrador Memories* 52)—are homogenized into a collective entity. They live outside the pale, "beyond Indian Harbour, the white man's last fishing post on the Labrador," and are "cared for by the Moravian brethren" (*Labrador Memories* 52), a suggestion that they are beyond the jurisdiction of the Grenfell nurse. Likewise, the Red Indians, who "live alone in the Interior" are presented as classifiable specimens: "attractive folk, though dirty and ignorant. The women smoke pipes and wear funny red and black pointed hats, full plaid skirts, thick woollen stockings, and moccasins on their feet" (*Labrador Memories* 53). They, like the Eskimo, "seem surprisingly content with their lot, hard and comfortless though it must often be" (*Labrador Memories* 53). The whites of Labrador (liveyeres) are also subjected to the same imperialist "othering"—the emphasizing of details of the foreign country which "assign it an inferior or alien status"—which as Foster points out, is a characteristic of early travel writing (Foster 18):

... [they are] simple, God-fearing folk, strict in their observance of the Sabbath ... Far removed from the current of the world's thought, many liveyeres retain a limited vocabulary and the pure Devonshire language of their fathers; the strange accent and words like, "dis," "dat" and "der" reminding one of a lisping child. As there were no facilities 'before Grenfell,' the older people cannot read or write. (*Labrador Memories* 53)

These "Vikings of to-day" are typed as a "cheerful, uncomplaining, resourceful people

who work hard and play little” (*Labrador Memories* 62). Burchill’s imperialist discourse also marginalizes the “half caste” nursing station aide (girl Friday): “Like many others born on the Labrador, Agnes has black hair and a dark complexion. A strange girl, she rarely smiled ... but seems content with her simple life” (*Labrador Memories* 61).

Another, a liveyere’s boy, has a “pinched, sad face [which] revealed the dark complexion and the Mongolian appearance of the Eskimo” (*Labrador Memories* 86). Burchill makes frequent reference to “the Mongolian appearance,” seeing it as an indicator of the intermarrying between white men and Eskimos. Eskimos, she notes, have “a reputation for cheery pluck and being able to endure any amount of pain without flinching” (*Labrador Memories* 87). Burchill insists on attaching the racial marker (“Eskimo boy”), and she sees the boy’s natural stoicism as racially determined (Social Darwinism).²⁴ The boy, who is the son of a liveyere (both father and son are “quaint figures” [87]), is presumably half-Eskimo. Burchill professes a “protective instinct” which “yearned” to “keep the child for some time, feed and care for the undernourished body, and bring the laughter of childhood to the sad eyes” (*Labrador Memories* 87). She desires to bring the (maternal) benefits of “civilization” to this poor native. Burchill’s ethnocentrism is also embedded in a later description of Connecticut, where she sees “scenes reminiscent of Uncle Tom’s Cabin”: “It would not be surprising to see a negro butler open the front door, or a full-bosomed mammy, with red kerchief about her head, smile broadly as we passed!” (*Labrador Memories* 115).

Burchill’s ethnocentrism is even more apparent in her interactions with females

outside her own class and race. A “plump, grey-haired woman” speaking “broken English” (94), who is the spokesperson for a group of liveyerers who come to fetch Burchill to attend to her first midwifery patient, is the target of denigratory remarks:

Ah! The local midwife! This weatherbeaten old woman with the bright red skirt under a shabby black coat is not unlike one’s imaginary picture of a “Sairah Gamp.” Three men with strikingly Mongolian features stood nodding in agreement as the woman continued to gesticulate. The disjointed story suggested that a girl called Mary was pregnant and labour was going so badly that the midwife was unable to cope with an unparalleled situation. (*Labrador Memories* 95)

The two short separate exclamatory phrases which open this paragraph signal condescension, and raise the question of the trained versus the untrained nurse, as well as colonial/imperial versus local culture. The woman, who extends “fat, brown hands,” has to gesticulate the plight of the patient, as her “broken English” is inadequate to communicate her need (*Labrador Memories* 94). Burchill’s choice of Sairah Gamp, “the wicked mother surrogate” (Ayres 100), as a symbol of comparison is a condescending one. Gamp has become a symbol for the old-style nurse—unskilled and untrustworthy—after Dickens’s fictional representation of the slovenly, drunken nightwatcher in *Martin Chuzzlewit*. As Kathryn McPherson points out, “The story of the old-style nurses has been retold so often that it has assumed mythic proportions” (271, n.3). Burchill’s disgust for the patient’s surroundings is obvious in her compounding “dilapidated looking shanty” with a “pathetic hovel.” By sharp contrast, the nursing station’s “clean, comfortable little ward with its white beds” awaits “such as Mary” (*Labrador Memories* 96): the subtext is that it is the Grenfell nurse who brings this

benefit to primitives like Mary. As the Grenfell nurse, Burchill wields her authority to insist that the men who have accompanied her return to Indian Harbour with the patient, even though they had just spent “two hours steady pulling at the oars” (*Labrador Memories* 95). Her patient has “[s]traight black hair surround[ing] a sallow face. Dark eyes looked like narrow slits above high cheek bones” announces another Eskimo, one who exhibits “characteristic Eskimo pluck” (*Labrador Memories* 96, 97). Burchill comments on the lack of “civilized custom” (*Labrador Memories* 97) when she discovers that no baby clothes have been prepared. Is this a question of “civilization” or a lack of financial means? Appropriating Mission discourse, Burchill is quick to point out that the new mother “beamed with gratitude as each woolly garment improved the babe’s appearance and comfort” (*Labrador Memories* 99). Like Florence Bailey, who superimposed her own zeal and cultural values on the people of Forteau and portrayed them in *Toilers* and *ADSF* reports and articles as looking forward to her many classes and meetings, here Burchill, too, portrays the people as eager to receive the “civilizing” attentions of the nurse, the Mission’s representative. In her portrayal of the new baby incident, Burchill employs a slammer narrator. Her suggestion that the non-preparation of baby clothes is a lack of “civilized custom” reflects slamming and “results from an assumed position of moral, cultural and intellectual superiority” (Stanley 55). Slamming, Stanley suggests, is “the ethnocentric baggage that is most difficult for all travelers to unpack, or, better still, to leave behind at the outset of their journey” (55). It

can include both show-ers and tell-ers, but it is peculiarly related to travel

writing and the outrageous and frequently appallingly ethnocentric observations that the genre seems to license.... Slammers focus on their own sensibility; they do not contemplate, let alone try to assimilate, the native sensibility. They do not wish to feel at home and they extend judgment rather than sympathy or even interest to the places and people they encounter. (Stanley 55)

This infant of mixed ancestry “resembled many a white child at birth” (*Labrador Memories* 97), and received, as one of its names, the name “Elizabeth” (after Burchill). It is clear that Burchill does not consider this a singular honour: “Staggering thought! A half-caste child of a notorious Inland family bears the name of the nurse who brought her into the world. A Labrador mother, whose blood is mixed with that of one of the most primitive races in the world, accords the same doubtful honour!” (*Labrador Memories* 97). The honours accorded Burchill, both in Innamincka and Indian Harbour, were distasteful to her.

The presence of the “doctor’s cottage” is a visual tribute to imperialism, and her description of it presents the other side of Burchill’s ethnocentrism. This building had by Burchill’s time become “the bungalow or the place where the nurse lives” (*Labrador Memories* 56). As the gift of an anonymous Englishman, it had been shipped from England in sections and reassembled in Indian Harbour, unaltered, where it was “secured by heavy iron bolts to the solid rock”—unshakeable, unmoveable. To Burchill there is “something particularly attractive about this little white house that once graced an English countryside,” now standing “unperturbed on its lofty eminence above the North Atlantic—a symbol of British tenacity and endurance!” (*Labrador Memories* 56-57).

Burchill does not reveal any awareness of the incongruity in this imperialist gesture.

“[P]erched on the highest summit of the island” (*Paths I’ve Trod* 92), the bungalow’s spatial positioning reinforces the power dynamics and enables the nurse to look down on the liveyeres in their “two-roomed shacks” on the shore. It is a highly stratified community: “Near the water’s edge, facing the harbour, the merchant and his wife live in a larger [than the liveyeres], comfortable residence” (*Labrador Memories* 58). The nurse, however, occupies the doctor’s position of power in/from “this lofty eminence.” Perry suggests that this “style of residence ... hints at nurses’ importance in the Grenfell discourse. For if the English-style bungalow was a symbol of ‘British tenacity and endurance,’ the nurse it sheltered was a symbol of the cultural superiority which warranted British perseverance” (37). The nurse, like the bungalow, is a visual representation of the British imperial enterprise.

Burchill’s description of her first patient reveals more cultural superiority as well as her awareness of his attractiveness. A “tall, good-looking man ... not living on the island,” who spoke with “a delightful Irish brogue” (*Labrador Memories* 63), is not a typical liveyere. This patient had been reading a book on church history, and his comment that his elastoplast bandage resembled “the Presbyterian Cross of St. Andrew’s” elicits Burchill’s culturally arrogant remark: “If the Indian chief had rolled from his lofty position and slid into the green waters below, my surprise could hardly have been greater! Many Labrador folk have never heard the name of that particular church” (*Labrador Memories* 63). She uses the culture (*Indian* chief) to criticize the culture (lack of

education). The next male, with whom she spent an “interesting hour” sharing cultural stories, rates considerable description. He is “John of Labrador” (chapter’s title, yet John is from St. John’s), “a fair, sensitive lad of perhaps twenty years,” and “[s]trikingly different from the average man who wrests a living from the sea” (*Labrador Memories* 66). His “attractive personality and almost dignified bearing are embodied in gracious manner and speech” (*Labrador Memories* 66-67). Burchill, “[i]mpressed by the boy’s unusualness, and aware of his good education,” asked him “a natural question” (but is it a “natural” question?): “Have you ever wanted to be anything else but a fisherman like your father and brothers? There is so much you could do” (*Labrador Memories* 67). His reply, “Why should I want to be anything else but a fisherman, Miss?,” places her cultural superiority in sharp relief. His reminder (delivered “with repressed emotion”)—“Jesus chose even fishermen to be His disciples!”—held a “note of chiding,” and “the honest sincerity of his words, brought a feeling of shame and awe” (*Labrador Memories* 67). (Other males are merely reported, but it is significant that they are named; for example, “Bill James [who] injured his right hand”; and similarly, Brett Sinclair, “A figure enveloped in oilskins” who has his teeth pulled [*Labrador Memories* 68, 77].) Yet despite these two aberrant examples of educated men, Burchill portrays an insular Labrador frozen in a time warp, “mostly outside the orbit of political and world affairs. Neither wireless sets nor newspapers are available to tell of growing unrest in Europe” (*Labrador Memories* 75). This same sense of being outside civilization is presented by Grenfell in his musing on nurses in *A Labrador Doctor*, as well as in Bussell’s repeated use of the

adjectival phrase “old-world” to refer to her fictional Labrador. Labrador is, in Burchill’s words, a place where “[t]he fisherfolk still enjoy the same dances that their descendants learned. Modern steps have not yet invaded Labrador” (*Labrador Memories* 82), where the people believe in fairies. But it is a depiction that enhances Grenfell’s image, and consequently Burchill’s own sense of importance:

To increase the value of the white man’s hospital in a land where belief in fairies is not yet dead is a commendable achievement. Ever since the day Dr. Grenfell anchored his ship and flew the Red Ensign in Domino Run, every visitor to the Coast is expected to have some knowledge of medicine and be able to extract teeth, a feat which often gains one profound gratitude. (*Labrador Memories* 88)

Singlehandedly running the isolated nursing station of Indian Harbour, Burchill rules her own island kingdom and occupies a position of power. She visualizes herself following in the footsteps of pioneers like Flynn and Grenfell:

The nurse’s responsibilities are great. With sometimes only occasional visits from the doctor in whose district she is situated, she is often called upon to meet maternity and other emergency needs.... It is a unique privilege, an unusual responsibility, to follow in the steps of pioneers, who, loving their fellow men, “served for the sake of service.” (*Labrador Memories* 54)

Burchill spent the summer of 1938 at Indian Harbour “summer station”²⁵ dealing with everything from dental to complicated midwifery cases—alone. Enconced in her bungalow, Burchill is spatially distanced from the island people, and she makes no overt attempt at integration. Fishing with the men and introducing innovative dances—the only activities she engages in—both reinforce her position as “other.” Burchill’s admission of loneliness suggests that she does not mix with the local people:

During days and through evenings when there were no patients to treat, no letters to write, no rocks to explore, and little in the way of diversion or activity to quell the pangs of loneliness, came a longing for companionship such as filled the days at Innamincka with quiet beauty, days when one enjoyed a fellowship rare among women who live in each other's company twenty-four hours a day.... (*Labrador Memories* 70)

This loneliness is assuaged when the mailboat brings a “happiest surprise”: two American “ladies”—Mildred Wickes,²⁶ a “charming, middle aged” science teacher from New York, and her friend, Miss Johnson—who have come “in search of rare moss” (*Labrador Memories* 79). Unlike Wickes, Miss Johnson receives no first name and no descriptors, and quickly fades into the background. But an instant rapport springs up between Burchill and Wickes, and “[f]rom that moment of meeting there began a delightful companionship, destined to continue into days beyond Labrador” (*Labrador Memories* 79). How far beyond Labrador is not clear, but Burchill later responds to Wickes's invitation, and uses it as her passport to visit Grenfell. Burchill's description of these two American women evokes a pair of intrepid explorers who categorize and classify moss, not territories:

Clad in sports skirts, bright jumpers and soft felt hats, the ladies diligently searched the rocks for two days.... In the evenings, as we sat beside the log fire, each precious piece of moss collected that day was carefully pressed within the white pages of a large specimen book containing samples of wildflowers, their bright colours vivid against the white background. (*Labrador Memories* 79)

Using romanticized diction reminiscent of the magical yacht experience, Burchill describes the night when the three women go outside to see Indian Head “silhouetted against the starlit sky,” with “[t]he peaceful harbour look[ing] like a huge sheet of

shimmering silver under the northern moonlight” (*Labrador Memories* 80). They linger under the stars and walk “arm in arm towards the lighted bungalow” (*Labrador Memories* 80), and talk of Grenfell.

Although Burchill portrays herself as an independent woman who has entered the male domain of adventure, the question of propriety is never addressed. It is unlikely that the Grenfell Mission would have sanctioned a nurse’s association with local men outside of a professional (nurse-patient) one, especially an unchaperoned one; as Rompkey points out, the Grenfell Mission worker was “far removed from the lives of local people” (*Grenfell of Labrador* 244). Perry also notes that “the Grenfell Mission was careful to ensure a sharp divide between locals and staff members” (160). Section 6 of the “Instructions and Information for Workers” clarifies this:

... the standards, habits, and manners of the Mission workers make a great impression and have a real influence on these people. Remember that you represent the Mission and the great world to these simple people, and that your actions and your speech have a more far-reaching effect than you perhaps realize.²⁷

One local activity, not traditionally considered a woman’s activity, that elicited Burchill’s enthusiasm was fishing. Burchill “loved to go out with the men to help haul in the huge net laid the night before to trap a seasonal harvest” (*Labrador Memories* 74). But before she can do this, she has to engage in an act of cultural cross-dressing. The cultural apparatus she appropriates is the merchant’s clothes (loaned by his wife; neither the merchant nor his wife are named): “a pair of rubber trousers (kept up by wide shoulder straps), stout rubber boots and sou’wester” (*Labrador Memories* 74). Such cross-dressing

appears to have been more than a “one-off”: “The first day I appeared at the fishing stage in these strange clothes the fishermen looked in shy surprise at the appearance of an Australian nurse in true northern outfit” (*Labrador Memories* 74). The fishermen were shy, but she was not. Once again she foregrounds herself as the object of the male gaze. En route from St. Anthony to Indian Harbour, Burchill noted that “the air being so keen that my sensitive skin actually suffered the ravages of sunburn, an unexpected affliction that evoked many amused comments from the all-male crew” (*Labrador Memories* 44). Here the men “find[] a place for [her] to grab the net and help in the process” (*Labrador Memories* 74). She is a curiosity to these fishermen, but probably no help. Burchill, it appears, spent considerable time with the men, not just hauling nets, but hours with them “at the salting bench,” which she claims gave her the opportunity of getting to know them (*Labrador Memories* 75). (Yet she “did not fancy ‘beheading’ and ‘splitting’” the fish.) Was her interest in fishing a cover for her interest in spending time with the men? She defends her activity with the explanation that “[i]t was not enough to treat these people when sick, and to conduct church service—one needed to get alongside them in their daily tasks. There are men who have never heard of ‘Australia’ or seen an Australian nurse salting fish!” (*Labrador Memories* 75). Burchill seems to be suggesting a need for cultural exchange. There are, however, five women on the island and she could have observed their “daily tasks,” yet there is no indication that she did. Burchill’s only mention of an interaction with women is with the two educated, cultured American women, both outsiders. Burchill penetrates the man’s world, not that of the women.

A pre-dawn encounter with a group of fishermen who burst into her bungalow and into her bedroom to ensure that she is there before bringing a patient from a schooner demonstrates the male intrusion into her personal and private space—the most personal of spaces, her bedroom. It is a curious inclusion, and one with erotic undertones:

Dawn was breaking. I awoke uneasily from a dream to the ominous noise of tramping feet and the sound of voices penetrating the perfect stillness of early morning.... the heavy tread of stout boots was heard on the sitting room floor. Strangely enough, the men's next move was anticipated, but could not be prevented! It made no difference to determined early morning callers that the familiar "Enter Without Knocking" was *not* on my bedroom door! Still struggling into a dressing gown, I stood face to face with a broad shouldered fisherman, filling the doorway. Keen brown eyes with delicious disregard, looked out from beneath a shiny sou'wester. His manner was completely impersonal. (*Labrador Memories* 92)

The dressing gown-less female is exposed to the "delicious disregard" of "[k]een brown eyes." The diction of "delicious" is curious and suggestive. It is not clear if the disregard is for her, his surroundings, or the situation. Do these eyes appraise her? This passage hints of the erotic, yet with the next sentence this is dispelled by the mention of his "completely impersonal manner." Do his eyes send one message and his manner another? As the Grenfell nurse, the foreigner ("other"), she is untouchable. Burchill devotes over half a page to this encounter, and prefaces the account with the statement, "[it was] a memorable experience of Labrador, an experience that will die only when I do" (*Labrador Memories* 92). Why this incident was such a "memorable" one, or why it will be imprinted on her memory until death, is not clear. Her journey to Indian Harbour on the supply schooner with its all-male crew is adequate proof that Burchill is not immune

to the male gaze. Burchill's language, and this particular passage, reveals her awareness of her male audience and her delight in being the object of its gaze.

The matter of propriety is also a consideration in Burchill's interaction with the merchant, who is probably the most powerful man at Indian Harbour. It is one of the silences in this book, and one that becomes apparent when read intertextually with her later book, *Paths I've Trod. Labrador Memories* contains a brief mention of the merchant, who with his wife lived in "a larger, [more] comfortable residence" than the fishermen. The merchant is recalled in some detail in *Paths I've Trod*, with specific reference to his looks, and, more tellingly, there is no mention of a wife. The merchant finds Burchill an attractive woman, and it seems that the attraction is mutual (she refers to him as handsome). It is unlikely that this explicit reproduction of the sexually suggestive language of the merchant and the intimation that the merchant's amorousness was not an isolated incident would have passed the Mission's censorial eye:

The most important man on the island was their [fishermen] employer, the sole merchant. He lived in a comfortable house in comparison with the men, near the waterline, and ran an adjoining general store stocked with a variety of needy essentials. He was a middle-aged Englishman, handsome in a rugged way and was not inhibited in language like the fishermen, or shy in my presence. During my occasional visit to the store he was inclined to gaze intently at me across the counter and wont to remark in suggestive tones, "The Grenfell Mission should not send attractive young women to the coast." He confined his feelings to the meaningful comment, "A woman needs it once a week," when he was inclined to become amorous. (*Paths I've Trod* 95)

Compared to the locals, this British merchant is more Burchill's equal in terms of social class. Even though his remarks are today considered sexist and bordering on harassment,

in her “socially deprived” Indian Harbour life does she unconsciously or consciously encourage his attention? Are his remarks flattering? Burchill’s commentary would not fit Mission discourse as it presents an image of the nurse as neither a mother figure nor an angel of mercy, but a sexual object/creature. Burchill’s awareness of a (married) man’s attentions besmirches the sexless image of the nurse as mother or angel of mercy.

Although Burchill considered her summer at Indian Harbour a rewarding experience, the Grenfell Mission was not so enamored with her. Dr. Harry Paddon’s 24 September 1938 staff report raises questions about Burchill’s activities, about her conduct while on the island, and the matter of propriety (implied, not stated). Her attitude towards work is recorded as “Good: but had not enough to do.” As for her attitude towards local people, “Intentions excellent, I sincerely believe. Discretion open to doubt.” Praise is dismissed with criticism. Paddon’s general impression of Burchill is that she was “[a] capable, self-reliant woman with her service in Spain behind her: and a freedom of conduct not altogether suited to IGA work in Labrador.” The phrase “a freedom of conduct” suggests a need to curb her independent spirit. As to whether he would recommend her for reappointment, Paddon’s response: “Not at Indian Harbour or solo anywhere. Might be excellent at institution under supervision.”²⁸ Paddon’s strong disapproval of Burchill, no doubt, is influenced by her flirting—the nurse should be pure, aloof and sexless?—rather than her independence. Although nursing for the Mission was promoted as requiring independent women, an overt display of independence was ironically a recipe for criticism.

Burchill's attempts to bring "civilization" to the social life of Indian Harbour is a clear indication of cultural blindness. The "fancy dress dance," "an innovation" proposed by her, was "doubtfully received" (*Labrador Memories* 83). Burchill does not listen to the fishermen's reminders that "It's never happened before. Us fishermen only have the clothes we stand up in" (*Labrador Memories* 83). She overrides their objections, insisting that "[t]he boys will enjoy something different," and offers to "help them to 'dress up' with all sorts of things" (*Labrador Memories* 83). Burchill's concern is with the needs of "the boys." But, again, what about the women? Her blundering results in a cultural faux pas, one that she had made before in a different cultural setting:

... the men appeared wearing complete rubber fishing outfits or oilskins—more fittingly attired to perform a rescue at sea than dance the light fantastic.

Puzzled at the lack of originality and display of "natural appearance," it was explained that this is the fishermen's way of dressing up to please the nurse. A few venturesome ones coloured hands and face with brown boot polish, doing their best to appear as Indians. It didn't work at Innamincka too well, either. (*Labrador Memories* 83-84)

Burchill regarded the locals as "other" who need an injection of "civilized" customs, yet she herself occupies a marginal position in the social setting of the dance where women are outnumbered ten to one: "Strange women, such as the nurse at the Bungalow, did not fare so well, finding it necessary to ask for a dance" (*Labrador Memories* 82).

After an evening in female companionship with kindred spirits, the two American visitors, Burchill "confesse[s], softly" to Mildred Wickes (not to Miss Johnson) that it is her dream to meet Grenfell—a sentiment that Wickes shares—and the two unite in quest

of a common goal. Does Burchill single out Wickes as the more important of the two American women? Is there an attraction between them? Whatever the reason, Johnson is textually extruded, and Burchill's focus is solely on Wickes:

“It is one of the dreams of my life to meet the Labrador Doctor,[”] I confessed, softly.

We walked arm in arm towards the lighted bungalow. My new-found friend's next words thrilled with their sincerity and unexpectedness. “If you come to New York at the end of the summer we could go together to see Sir Wilfred Grenfell. I have a little car and would be happy to take you during a week-end.” (*Labrador Memories* 80)

Johnson is not included in Wickes's offer. There is a sense of the two of them, Burchill and Wickes, sharing a secret. Determined to realize her dream, Burchill sails to New York, and they drive 600 miles in Wickes's car to see Grenfell, arrive unannounced, and invade his privacy as if he were a specimen to be studied and classified. In the chapter entitled “We Meet Sir William [sic] Grenfell,” Burchill relies on exaggerated rhetoric in detailing their quest and meeting with the great missionary. Grenfell wears a distinct Christ-like radiance: “No mistaking the bronzed face, the pure white hair set well back from the forehead. An inner radiance shone from the kindest pair of grey²⁹ eyes, while an illuminating smile revealed a perfect set of teeth” (*Labrador Memories* 116-17). He presented Burchill with a parting gift of an “autographed, delicately hand-coloured photo of the Labrador Doctor wearing the winter outfit of the north, and carrying snowshoes,” which she translates as a “lovely climax to a wonderful day!” (*Labrador Memories* 117). This talismanic photo is included in *The Paths I've Trod*. Grenfell's comment to Burchill (from his letter to her which is quoted in its entirety in the text), “I hope you will continue

to keep in touch with our work when you return to Australia” (*Labrador Memories* 119), is one that Burchill often repeats in her correspondence with Spalding and Seabrook. It was probably the sentiment that prompted Burchill to stay in touch with Mission secretaries year after year.

Although Indian Harbour had indirectly been the means of her encounter with Grenfell, another of the “silences” omitted from *Labrador Memories* is the matter of Burchill’s actual appointment to Indian Harbour. In *Labrador Memories* she notes that it was “a red letter day,” a “glorious feeling!” when she received a reply to her application to the Grenfell Mission (*Labrador Memories* 19). Burchill does not allude to the vicissitudes of getting the position, but presents it as a seamless event. The complex chain of events that eventually resulted in a posting to Indian Harbour is not related in any of her books, but is documented in her correspondence with the Mission. This correspondence reveals a much different picture and raises the subject of the nurses’ independence. Nurses were recruited and selected because they were independent, but then criticized because they exhibited too much independence, as Burchill was by Paddon. On 17 June 1937 Burchill was interviewed by Katie Spalding, Secretary of the London branch of the Grenfell Mission, and made a formal application the following day. Burchill was interested in going to Labrador for six months or longer, the term to be “determined by mutual satisfaction and [her] adaptability to the climate” (Burchill to Spalding, recd. 28 June). Burchill was first offered a position as community worker under a female doctor, Dr. Hosmer at Forteau (Spalding to Burchill, 22 July 1937), but she

rejected this, preferring to wait for an appointment to a nursing station the following summer where “she could be in sole charge” of a nursing station (Spalding, memo, 29 July 1937). She wrote how “[a] deepening interest in the Grenfell Mission and the need of making a further real contribution to life have brought inspiration in this matter” (Burchill to Spalding, 1 August 1937). Her presentation of it as a call to inspiration rather than a source of adventure suggests that she appropriates the discourse to fit her own needs. Or might it be that she simply needed to be in control, or was not interested in working under a *female* doctor, but preferred a male? Seabrook and Spalding concurred that this was “the better plan,” as Burchill, “who has done so much work on her own without a doctor,” would perhaps find it difficult to work with Dr. Hosmer and as a community worker (memo, 29 July 1937). The secretaries had plans for Burchill; she would “be excellent to be in charge of Spotted Islands” nursing station the following summer, as she had received the right kind of experience in Australia—“accustomed to doing dentistry and acting without a doctor” (Spalding to Shnyder, 30 July 1937).

Burchill left London in August for six weeks of adventurous nursing in Spain with the Southern Spanish Relief Committee, after responding to an advertisement in the *British Nursing Journal*. Spalding informed Frederick Shnyder (Chairman of Staff Selection Committee, New York) (20 November 1937) of Burchill’s newly acquired credentials: “Our opinion of Miss Burchill is that she has plenty of initiative and courage, the kind of woman who was glad to go to a very dangerous post in Spain, and who could handle a nursing station alone very efficiently but we are doubtful of her ability to work

under anyone very happily." Burchill's independence/individuality was viewed as a positive characteristic by the secretaries. In February 1938, Burchill is offered and accepts Spotted Islands. Yet Burchill was not highly recommended. M.E. Craven, the matron of West London Hospital where Burchill worked for seven months, offers a faintly damning reference: "She [Burchill] came to me with a letter of introduction from Australia, and it was for this reason and the fact that she was in real need of work, that I *allowed* her to stay for several months" [my emphasis]. Burchill, she states, "was not a success as a Staff Nurse in a busy ward. She is strong and apparently healthy; her qualifications are good and she works amicably with her colleagues." But, "I cannot say that I would appoint Miss Burchill to a position of responsibility, but I would emphasise that she was working under very different conditions to those of her previous posts, and she might do well in other than Hospital work." She regrets that she is unable to give a better testimonial (Craven to Spalding, 3 March 1938). The subtext of this vague, non-committal letter raises the questions about Burchill's (un)suitability, but does not offer any explanations. Had Burchill exposed her "individuality"?

Burchill's second letter of reference is from the General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church Office, who writes (25 February 1938) that he had only known Burchill since her arrival in England the previous year, and that she had come with "warmest recommendations from the Presbyterian Authorities in Australia." But he did not claim to know anything about her professional qualifications, except that "she has held many posts in which she appears to have given every satisfaction." To the question

“Do you consider her to be a person of poise and good judgement?” he replies, “Professionally I should think that the answer is certainly yes. *Socially, the answer is that she is not dull!*” [my emphasis]. She comes across as a bit of a flirt, perhaps? He comments: “Whilst I cannot personally judge her qualifications as a nurse, I know that she has been in charge of isolated settlements in Australia and has recently undertaken similar work in Spain, and in both cases I understand she gave every satisfaction.” His final recommendation: “I think that Miss Burchill is certainly the type of nurse who should prove valuable in the kind of work upon which your Association is engaged, I can, of course, speak in the highest terms of her character.” He has no first-hand knowledge of Burchill. The only definite comment in this letter is that “she is not dull”: hardly qualification for nurse-in-charge of an isolated nursing station in Labrador.

One damning, and one vague reference. Yet it was on the strength of these written recommendations and the wishes of the secretaries that Burchill was appointed to Spotted Island. According to Jill Perry, Grenfell Mission nurses were subjected to rigorous scrutiny:

Long before arriving in Newfoundland and Labrador, prospective nurses realized that working for the Grenfell Mission could not be taken lightly. The application process was rigorous. In addition to a detailed application form, the Staff Selection Committee insisted upon four letters of reference (two personal and two professional), and at least one interview at the closest Grenfell Association office. Throughout, the Committee was concerned with ensuring that prospective nurses had “sufficient experience to stand alone.” If deemed professionally and personally suitable, candidates were then required to submit a doctor’s certificate stating that they were healthy enough to endure physically challenging work in a harsh climate. Even once approved for service, the application ordeal was far

from over. Prospective nurses waited months (or in some cases, years) for their contract details to be worked out amongst the officials at the London and New York offices, and the Mission itself. (62-63)

Why is Burchill appointed on the basis of such flimsy recommendations? Had she impressed the secretaries by her capable manner, her strong sense of presence/self-image? Or was it due to a severe shortage of nurses? The correspondence in Burchill's personnel file does not provide any answers. Without her knowledge or input, before she was due to leave England for Spotted Islands, the New York office decided that Burchill should instead go to Indian Harbour. Spalding informed her that "Sometimes these adjustments have to be made as you may have guessed from the clause with the contract" ["The Employee shall be stationed at _____ or at such a place as the Employer may determine."] (Spalding to Burchill, 26 April 1938). The employee is at the mercy of the whims of the patriarchal organization: she is powerless.

In 1981 Burchill wrote to Dr. W.A. Paddon, Harry Paddon's son,³⁰ informing him that she wanted to pay a visit to Labrador, and inquired if she could be "useful in a voluntary capacity"—the implication being that the duration of the visit would be dependent on the latter. Implicit is the idea that her services would be unreservedly welcome. In this letter Burchill foregrounds her "fond memories" of the Grenfell Mission, the organization she had spent three months with forty-three years previous, as the connection. She is careful to point to her own success: publication of her book, *Paths I've Trod*, as her most recent success, and she included a copy of a glowing article from what appears to be a local newspaper; reference is made to her portrait, painted for the

Archibald Prize in 1976, which hangs in the auditorium of the Royal Flying Doctor Service in Broken Hill, and also to her unveiling of a special plaque at Innamincka. When Burchill arrived in Labrador she expected to be treated as a visiting dignitary, with accommodations and transportation provided for her at her whim. She stayed for two weeks. Burchill did not endear herself to those who remember her visit: she is remembered as being forceful, brash, opinionated, prejudiced, with a sense of self-importance, and an air of having been a mainstay of the Grenfell Mission.

Although Burchill suppressed the vicissitudes/power dynamics of her appointment to Indian Harbour, her memoir allows her to create her own personal myth from the reality of her Grenfell Mission/Labrador experience. Although her memoir overtly praises Grenfell, Burchill ultimately subverts the Grenfell discourse and writes herself as hero(ine) of her own narrative. Her adventure narrative depicts a strong-willed, immensely capable and independent female, who refuses to accept the gender restrictions of male-identified adventure. Like her hero, Burchill strikes a pose for public consumption in the form of a published memoir which forges her identity with the “great man” and utilizes her association with him to valorize herself. This memoir is a counter-hegemonic voice within the Grenfell Mission discourse.

Notes

1. Unleavened loaf or cake of flour and water baked in wood ashes (New Oxford Dictionary, 1998).
2. "A 'triple certificate nurse' was the old style qualification for somebody who had undertaken General Nursing training, Midwifery training and Infant Welfare training; it was a well respected qualification" (Trish Dutton, LaTrobe University, email to the author, 18 February 1999).
3. Rock- and pebble-littered area. My thanks to Trish Dutton for providing this.
4. She wrote about her experiences in *The Paths I've Trod* (Spectrum: Melbourne, 1981), chapters 5 and 6. An excerpt was printed as "Christian Insights," in *Women's Voices From the Spanish Civil War*, ed. Jim Fyrt with Sally Alexander (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1991), 194-199.
5. "... Newfoundland and Labrador are but a small part of the world's needs. Yet what Grenfell did there can be done in the world in better days to come. The pattern set by his warm heart and his professional skill in a thinly populated wilderness can serve continents" (Burchill, *Labrador Memories* "Introduction" x).
6. The exception is *Northern Nurse* (1942), written by Elliott Merrick, not Kate Austen—the nurse's husband, not the nurse.
7. Photos include: The Authoress; Iceberg off Labrador; School House, St. Anthony; St. Anthony Hospital Day; Labrador Industries; Indian Harbour; Fishing Stages in Labrador; Disabled Fishermen Making Toys; North-West River Hospital; Sir Wilfred Grenfell with Patient.
8. Travel writing has been referred to as the "beggar of literary forms" (qtd. in Stanley 51); and a "generic hybrid" as it is "an annex to history, autobiography, the essay, and other literary forms" (Schriber 9-10).
9. All letters, unless otherwise noted, are from PANL, MG 63, Dora Burchill personnel file, and are listed according to sender, recipient, date. Memos are also from the same file.
10. Perry gives the example of Nurse Barnard: "In 1937 the London office of the IGA got word that Nurse Barnard was intending to write an article for *Nursing Times*. Barnard was promptly reminded of the policy that workers submit all articles before publication. The secretary explained that this policy was the result of 'very one-sided accounts' written by staff which 'led to much criticism of the Mission from outsiders'" (Perry 28, n.4).

11. Them Days Archives (TDA), Greta Mae Ferris Collection (GMFC), c. 1920s.
12. According to the letters contained in her personnel file (PANL).
13. My copy lists July 1947 as 1st edition, and October 1947 as 2nd edition. This would suggest a second impression.
14. July 1948 *ADSF* did announce her engagement to Reid Smith (2). It is curious that her engagement and not her book was mentioned. Burchill's own letter to Seabrook (7 July 1947) announced her engagement and was also filled with news of her book.
15. A notation in Burchill's handwriting on the article, "Bronze Award for Author Nurse's Winning 'Paths'" [1980], enclosed in her 1 January 1980 letter to Dr. W.A. Paddon notes that the title from the author was "I'll Walk With God." My thanks to Sheila Paddon for supplying this letter and accompanying article.
16. In a letter to Lesley Diack, Seabrook wrote: "Sister Burchill, an Australian, who was at Indian Harbour for a summer before the War, has just published her second book *Innamincka* where she served for two years under the Australian Inland Mission. Hodder & Stoughton have published it in Australia, and it is due out here next week ... I have a copy, and it reads well, though of course it is not a literary feat, but the action moves fast and holds one's interest." Seabrook proposed sending Diack a copy for her criticism, but there is no record of Diack's answer (PANL, MG 63 Lesley Diack personnel file, Seabrook to Diack, 1 February 1961).
17. In Australia, Burchill had articles published in *Age*, *Australian Women's Weekly*, *Herald*, *Nurses Journal*, *Nunwading Gazette*. Overseas: *Lady*, *Totnes Times* (UK) (Trish Dutton, email to author, 20 April 1999).
18. "Although she has produced a number of books that are interesting accounts of her life and work these have received no critical attention from the literary world and ... none have been reviewed" (Trish Dutton, email to author, 18 February 1999).
19. William H. Wilde, Joy Hooton, and Barry Andrews, *The Oxford Companion to Australian Literature* (Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1994).
20. Debra Adelaide, *Australian Women Writers: A Bibliographic Guide* (London & Sydney: Pandora, 1988), 23. Trish Dutton could not find the origins of these awards, and concluded that they are not prestigious awards.
21. Trish Dutton, email to author, 18 February 1999.

22. "The fortnightly visit of the regular Government mail steamer, *Kyle*, is a major event ... the stately vessel brings not only longed-for mail, but a delightful touch of civilization as well" (*Labrador Memories* 64).

23. For example: "In the course of our duties we washed our first aboriginal bed patient with meticulous care. Until we became accustomed to the musty aboriginal smell, we thought it was a symbol of 'The Great Unwashed'; "We learnt that the blacks had less sensitivity to pain than the whites"; "The adoption by some blacks of the white man's culture and the intelligence of the half-castes were amazing" (*Innaminka* 52).

24. In his introduction to *Imperial Monkey Business: Racial Supremacy in Social Darwinist Theory and Colonial Practice*, Jan Breman explains that "[d]iscrimination against fellow beings of another race was a variant of the attitude of superiority shown towards the lower classes.... Social Darwinism aimed not only at bringing a new perspective to the combination of race and class, but also at explaining and justifying colonial expansion.... Racial discrimination in the overseas territories went hand-in-hand with class consciousness" (2, 3).

25. Perry credits Burchill with overwintering at Indian Harbour (70, n.24; 103). Burchill, however, spent three months of the summer of 1938 at the summer station of Indian Harbour. Burchill herself noted that "Indian Harbour ... can never be anything else but a summer station, owing to its geographical position on an island of frozen seas. There is no population during the winter months, for the island is completely frozen over" (*Labrador Memories* 55).

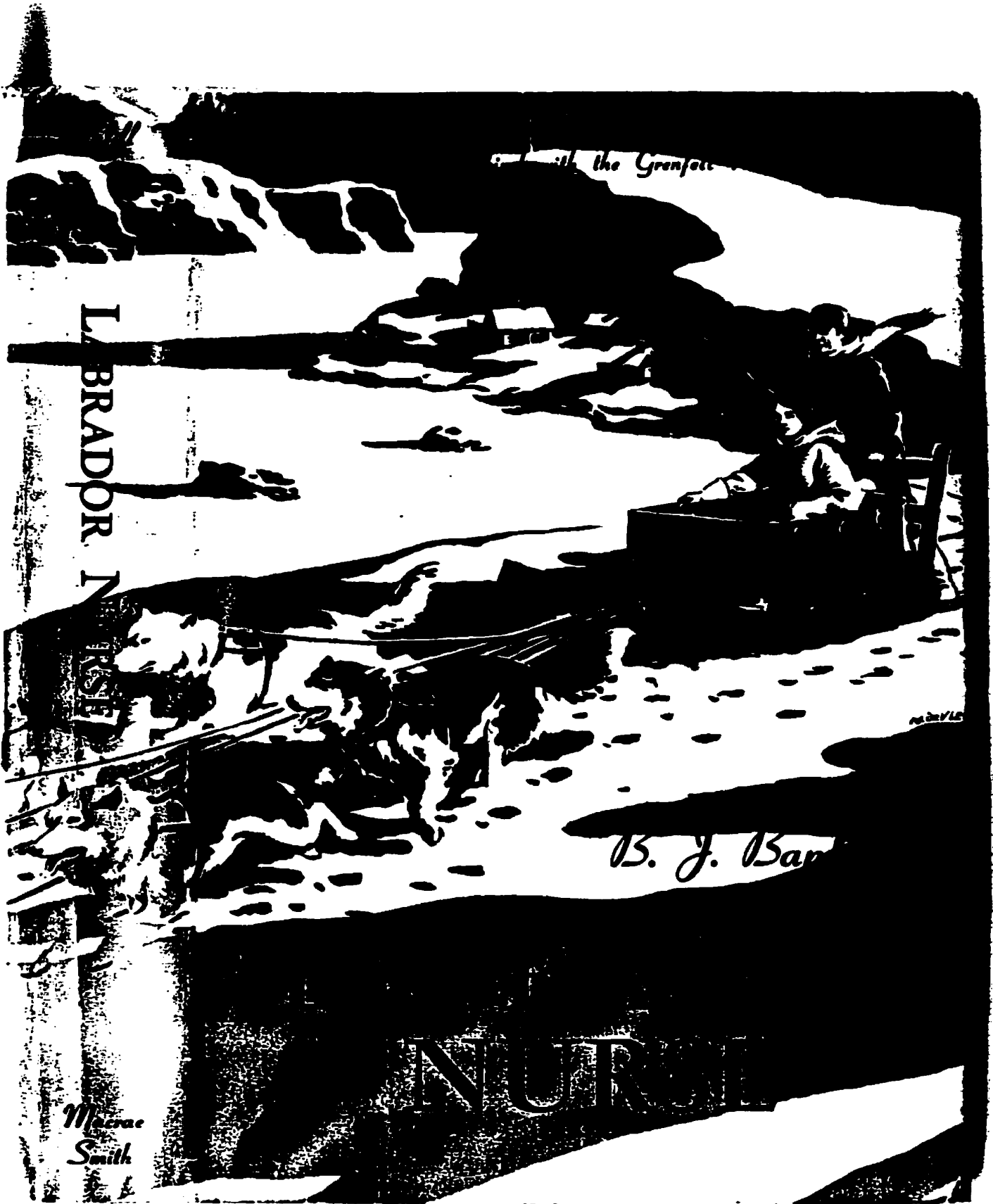
26. In subsequent books Burchill uses Weekes and Weeks. Johnson is not mentioned in *Paths I've Trod*, where she recalls "[a] happy time of companionship ensued before she [Wickes] sailed away during the next visit of the *Kyle*. Her American accent utterly fascinated me and she was enthralled by the Robinson Crusoe atmosphere of the island" (106). The companion fades out of the picture in *Labrador Memories* even in the most important scene. When Burchill goes to New York to meet Wickes, Johnson does not receive a mention.

27. TDA, GMFC.

28. PANL, MG 63, Dora Burchill personnel file.

29. In *Paths I've Trod*, she notes that "[w]hen the great missionary doctor came into the room ... Miss Weeks [sic] and I fulfilled a mutual dream. The great man greeted us warmly, the kindest pair of blue eyes I ever remembered, shining with an inner radiance undimmed by time" (115).

30. My thanks to Sheila Paddon for this information. See also n.15. Memories of Burchill's visit were also provided by Joy Headland, telephone conversation, May 1999.



Cover of *Labrador Nurse* (1953)

Chapter 4

Bessie Jane Banfill: Balancing Tragedy with Humour

A nurse must see the humorous, as well as the tragic side of her work. She must be hardened, but not hard, or she will break. Neurosis, lonesomeness, or Coast sickness will break her unless she can have a good laugh in the midst of tragedy.

When tragedy strikes, nature balances the sanity of the human race by presenting at the same time the humorous side of the picture. (Banfill, Labrador Nurse 206-07)

4.1 Introduction: A Stirring Tale

Writing in 1914 in an article entitled “Hospital Work of the Labrador Mission,” George W. Corner steered those who liked “stirring tales” to the books of Grenfell and Norman Duncan (73):

I cannot say much about the nursing work of the [Grenfell] mission. I hope that [one of the doctors] may sometime induce one of the nurses to write an account of this side of the problem. The successful makeshifts and scorn of hardship which make the medical work a joy to patient and physician, the faithful and patient service, the lonely, cold night watches, the cheering visits of nurses to distant homes, would make a tale worth telling. (77)

At the time of Corner’s article, no such published account in book form written by or about a Grenfell nurse existed. In addition to Dora Burchill’s *Labrador Memories* (1947), another precursor to Bessie Banfill’s memoir (1952)—the story of nurse Kate Austen’s Indian Harbour experience (Merrick, *Northern Nurse* 1942)—qualified as a “stirring tale,” but Austen did not write the account herself. Corner’s hope and implicit challenge is fully realized, however, in Banfill’s published memoir of her adventurous life with the Grenfell Mission at Mutton Bay: written by Banfill herself, it is both a “stirring tale,” and

“a tale worth telling.” In *Labrador Nurse*, Banfill, who spent two terms of approximately one year each, fourteen years apart, on the Labrador coast, reconfronts and reappraises her two experiences at Mutton Bay through the filter of memory. She divides her Labrador memories into two parts: the first encompasses her first term (1928-1929) at Mutton Bay and occupies the largest space textually (154 pages, eleven untitled chapters); the second, her return in 1942 (until 1944), occupies 99 pages in seven untitled chapters.

Traditional autobiography assumes “the facticity of memory,” an assumption that what a person remembers is in some way “the actuality” of his or her life (Buss, “Anna Jameson” 43). But, “a consistent self, one that subsumes its experience in the world into a meaningful, directed and stable portrait of self” is not created from a belief in this facticity of memory (Buss, “Anna Jameson” 43). Memories are “as much acts of imagination as they are acts of recall” (Buss, “Anna Jameson” 43), and consequently *Labrador Nurse* cannot be mined to yield a picture of the “real” Banfill. In *A Poetics of Women’s Autobiography*, Sidonie Smith suggests that in “[a]n effort of recovery and creation” the autobiographer “joins together facets of remembered experience—descriptive, impressionistic, dramatic, analytic—as she constructs a narrative that promises both to capture the specificities of personal experience and to cast her self-interpretation in a timeless, idealized mold for posterity” (45). Memory, that “trace of something from the past” that the autobiographer relies on, is, as Smith points out, “ultimately a story about, and thus a discourse on, original experience, so that recovering the past is not a hypostasizing of fixed grounds and absolute origins but, rather, an

interpretation of earlier experience that can never be divorced from the filterings of subsequent experience or articulated outside the structures of language and storytelling”

(45). Smith continues,

As a result, autobiography becomes both the process and the product of assigning meaning to a series of experiences, after they have taken place, by means of emphasis, juxtaposition, commentary, omission. The play of seeking, choosing, discarding words and stories that suggest, approximate, but never recapture the past is what Elizabeth W. Bruss calls the “autobiographical act”: an interpretation of life that invests the past and the “self” with coherence and meaning that may not have been evident before the act of writing itself. (45-46)

In *Labrador Nurse*, Banfill reconfronts and reappraises her memories which she considers to be of “extraordinary interest and importance” and “wishes to preserve the thisness of the experience which so enthralled [her]” (Billson 261, 268). The memoir-writer, according to Billson, wishes “[t]o represent time as it once was and can never be again; to portray it in such a way that it can be re-experienced; to suggest its moral truth” (270). In her memoir, *Labrador Nurse*, Banfill explores in detail two significant, and similar, short periods of time that act as what Helen M. Buss calls “a kind of crucible of the whole life” (“Pioneer Women’s Memoirs” 54). *Labrador Nurse* contains “the smoothness of *formed* reminiscences ‘recollected in tranquillity’” (Craig 92), written after Banfill had been a missionary-nurse with the Woman’s Missionary Society (WMS) for fourteen years and are refracted through the lens of the missionary, that is, through Banfill’s sense of self as a missionary. This act of rescuing the past for reconfronting and reappraising is, Buss suggests, “a means of creating a version of the self that the writer

can accept as her own" ("Pioneer Women's Memoirs" 46).

Labrador Nurse was published by Ryerson Press in 1952; Macrae Smith Company, Philadelphia in 1953;¹ and Robert Hale, London in 1954. The texts of both the 1952 and 1954 editions are accompanied by a glossary of twenty-one vernacular words, as well as an "Historical Note" which explains the discovery and settling of Labrador; in the 1953 edition these Notes are combined with the Preface. The 1954 edition includes a map and seventeen photographs interspersed throughout the text. The title is similar to Merrick's *Northern Nurse*, but it more strongly echoes Grenfell's *A Labrador Doctor*. Both Grenfell's and Banfill's books denote place and profession. The omission of a definite or indefinite article in Banfill's title suggests the generic Grenfell nurse, one in a line of nurses. Not only does the title raise questions, but the use of Banfill's initials as opposed to her full name leaves the author's gender unstated. It is unclear why Banfill used only her initials: did she hope to appear more professional and to find it easier to penetrate the male-dominated world of publishing?

4.2 Biography of a Frontier Missionary-Nurse

As with Dora Burchill, a paucity of records makes it difficult to re-create Banfill's life.² Bessie Jane Banfill was born 18 January 1899,³ the sixth of eight children, on the Banfill family farm near Richmond, Quebec. Her background was that of several generations of tough farmers from England and New England. The Banfills probably came from Cornwall, England and show up in Portsmouth, New Hampshire records in the

1670s.⁴ After graduating from Sherbrooke General Hospital 28 June 1923, Banfill, who later thanked God “who gave [her] the inspiration to train for a nurse” (*Indians of the Pacific* 174),⁵ first nursed with the Victorian Order of Nurses, before embarking on a peripatetic nursing career. Banfill remained certain of her career choice: “There is no other profession which gives greater compensation when day is done: the satisfaction after a miraculous recovery, or after ushering in a new life, or just helping the weary and sharing their troubles” (*Indians of the Pacific* 174). She travelled in England, France, and Belgium, nursed in California (“Frontier Nurse” 14)⁶ as well as the Laurentian Sanatorium at Ste. Agathe des Monts, Quebec. While her early career cannot be detailed with absolute certainty, we do know that five years after graduation, Banfill went to Mutton Bay⁷ to work with the Grenfell Mission (1928).

Located between Forteau and Harrington hospitals, Mutton Bay was the site of a Grenfell Mission nursing outpost under the jurisdiction of the Harrington District. At the time of Banfill’s arrival in Mutton Bay, the nursing station had been opened for less than two years (Banfill, “Retrospect” 164); it owed its existence to Nurse Agnes Murray (fictionalized as Sister Martin in *Labrador Nurse*), long time nurse-in-charge at Harrington Hospital (Hodd 8). The new station “was supported by the Anglican Church, which contributed \$1,000, and the Quebec government which gave a grant of \$500” (Nevitt 192). Banfill, who was praised for her “first-class work” in “dealing most competently with the difficulties which arise in the early stages of the establishment of a nursing station” (Johnson 75), was posted to Mutton Bay as sole nurse in charge for one

year. It had “no running water, no electric light, no radio-telephone, no central heat and [was] stuck on bare rock” (Curtis to Houghton, 4 May 1959).⁸

After Mutton Bay, Banfill was nurse in charge of a Red Cross outpost at a fishing village in the isolated Magdalen Islands in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.⁹ The exact dates of this posting cannot be determined, but are likely to have been between 1929 and 1931.¹⁰ *Nurse of the Islands* (1965) recalls her Magdalen Island experiences.

Banfill next trained as a missionary at the United Church Training School, Toronto. Student “Biographies” (United Church Training School Year Book 1931-32) has this entry for Banfill: “She enters into things with zeal and zest” (4).¹¹ Little is known about this period of her life, but it is possible that Banfill did not complete her course of studies, as she is listed in the 3 May 1932 programme of the United Church School Annual Convocation & Graduation Service for 1931-32 in the “Two Year Course—Junior Year” category.¹² There is no extant documentation substantiating that she completed a senior year. Banfill was “designated” (possibly ordained) 7 June 1932 at Sackville, New Brunswick, and in the same month appointed as Woman’s Missionary Society (WMS) missionary to Rosedale War Memorial Hospital, Matheson, Ontario.¹³

Out of the nine students listed with Banfill in the 1932 convocation programme, five were registered nurses. Women who trained at the United Church Training School came from “a variety of educational and occupational backgrounds: nursing, teaching, social and secretarial work,” and were prepared “to serve in social and educational spheres both at home and abroad” (Parsons 179). Medical personnel provided healing and

evangelism in tandem in medical and hospital services; it was assumed that “the doctors and nurses who staffed the medical centres provided by the Church possessed a sure and certain faith and had the means to communicate it” (R. Smith 268-69). As a missionary-nurse with the WMS, Banfill’s positions combined these dual roles. As Donna Sinclair points out, “From its early beginnings in the Presbyterian (1825), Methodist (1880), and Congregationalist (1871) churches, through its formation as the WMS of the United Church in 1925, and until its demise in 1962, the WMS was both the quintessential woman’s organization and ... a family” (2). It was “a place where women could go with their idealism and sense of service” (Sinclair 4). This structure “created by women, supported by women, and administered by women,” was, in short, a matriarchal organization that provided purpose, “a place to grow, and serve” (Parsons 176, 170). As Rosemary R. Gagan notes, “[f]or women in particular missionary work was an enticing and respectable profession whose supportive female atmosphere provided a congenial alternative, albeit sometimes only temporarily, to marriage, a family, and the strictures of a patriarchal society,” but its “most constant incentive” was “an intense and overpowering impulse to ‘do service for the Master’” (x, 58). This compares with the idea in “Outpost Nursing” that nursing is a service given before marriage (Dickinson 69). The WMS provided empowerment, and an avenue for women (home and foreign missionaries) to do things that most women could not do in those days. For thirteen years, Banfill was a part of this matriarchal organization.

Banfill, as Lady Superintendent, opened the eight-bed United Church WMS

hospital in Smeaton, northern Saskatchewan (called Wentmore in *Pioneer Nurse*) in 1933. Her mission—"to open a new hospital in bush country—seemed a challenge, an opportunity to meet a real need; to help homesteaders in a drought-stricken land" (*Pioneer Nurse* 9). At Smeaton, far from the rough seas of coastal Labrador and the Magdalen Islands, Banfill faced an entirely different adventure: the challenge of pioneering. As she muses in her memoir of this experience, adventure and service were polarities that she could meld into one in her nursing experiences:

Was the final deciding factor [to give up a good position for pioneering life] a desire for adventure and change of environment or was my final decision influenced by the need of the less fortunate, lonely, and isolated homesteaders? ... I, like thousands of others before and since was not satisfied with learning about life from books. Only first hand practical experience would give me understanding of life in western homestead districts. Relatives regarded me as being "just not quite right." But I remembered someone saying, "No one can really know if he is alive until he undertakes some foolish or wild adventure." (*Pioneer Nurse* 10)

In this posting, Banfill faced impossible conditions: "a bare nucleus of a hospital ... Unfurnished rooms, fresh paint, wet plaster and filthy floors added a chill to the dreary atmosphere and outlook"—the building "was surrounded by six-foot snowbanks, without necessities like pots, pans, beds, water, plumbing system, food, telephone, neighbours or the wherewithal to work. Well, I had asked for the pioneer life, and I'd got it" (*Pioneer Nurse* 21, 27). After the Smeaton hospital was running smoothly, Banfill was transferred (October 1934) to Wakaw, Saskatchewan (called Wlakall in *Pioneer Nurse*) south of Prince Albert, as Lady Superintendent of a hospital there.¹⁴ Although she battled with her conscience about going, her duty as missionary was to bring life to the underprivileged:

What if I refused to accept the offer? Much as I would have liked a few years of fellowship with these friendly, homely people, to enjoy the fruits of my first labours, I realized that hundreds of people more worthy than I had planted and sowed, but had not had the privilege of enjoying the harvest. I recalled vividly having met many missionaries who had remained in one position too long. I made myself think, half-heartedly, that I wanted to pull up roots again, and enjoy the adventure of a new type of nursing. But it was with a sad heart, I decided to leave these people, accept the offer and make the best of the situation. (*Pioneer Nurse* 83)

Banfill's Wakaw posting was "nightmarish" (*Pioneer Nurse* 89), yet she stuck to it. As she wrote to her relative, Evelyn Banfill: "It is a hard place to keep young nurses. I am the only WMS Missionary here (old). There is practically no social life, therefore the younger nurses get married, or [are] too homesick to stay ... The elderly doctor (who is also minister) seems to wish to engage the younger nurses, although they cannot seem to stand the non-social strain" (6 November 1936). In *Pioneer Nurse* she attributes her perseverance to her "Scotch heritage, pride, or stubbornness": "[t]here was nothing I could do but adopt [sic] myself to existing conditions and try to keep myself from going insane.... I derived much satisfaction from recalling that character is not put to the test when all is going smoothly, but in times of trial and tribulation" (89). Banfill is silent on details of her trials. Her memories of her Smeaton and Wakaw experiences are memorialized in *Pioneer Nurse* (1967). In 1935 Banfill received a medal from King George V.¹⁵

Banfill was transferred 1 August 1936 to Ahousaht, on Flores Island, off the west coast of Vancouver Island, British Columbia. She was nurse in charge¹⁶ of seventy or more children at an Indian Residential School in a village without a doctor. At Ahousaht,

Banfill was thrust into yet another “alien” culture, one where she had to combine nursing with the duty of reservation policeman. Her dedication to this post, although she was ill and exhausted, was exemplary, as delineated in this memorable anecdote:

Christmas week unfortunately was bitterly cold and the penetrating rain and dampness, so familiar to that part of the Coast, added to the chilliness. It ate through the marrow of my bones. The small electric plate never seemed to warm my bedroom. The dispensary was cold and damp, and my clothes never thoroughly dry. Each night I dragged myself home from the village, tired and starving, but I lacked the energy to eat proper food. I crawled into bed, fully clothed, with extra sweaters and woollens, socks and a hot water bottle. Several times I had to make emergency night calls in the village. All the time my conscience was rebelling against my treatment. But my misguided conscience or foolish stubborn Scottish pride in the nursing profession, held me with the sick people.

A few sunny days helped clear up the village influenza before the children and staff returned to the School. But with the added mental strain, exhausted after battling single-handed with so many sick patients, I contracted acute bronchitis. I discovered that I was running a high temperature and unable to throw off an almost constant cough. I knew it would be foolish and asking for trouble to work among so many tubercular patients without having a few days’ rest. I had also been warned to keep physically fit.

Regulations demanded that a nurse, even to take a full day’s rest, must wire Toronto officials for consent. I wired the secretary. She informed me that, even with a temperature of 103 and a persistent cough, I was not justified in asking for a few days’ leave and rest, without a doctor’s certificate.

Too sick to care whether I lived or died, I shivered and perspired as I staggered in the cold rain over the half mile of slippery walk, then waded through the muddy village to the wharf. Lying on the board bunk, seasick and retching, I knew why something had prompted me on that hot August day to bring my old goat coat. Friends had kidded me about going to the North Pole. But it prevented me from contracting pneumonia and no doubt saved my life. (*Indians of the Pacific* 142-143)

The goat coat which worked miracles in her memoir version does not appear in her letter to Evelyn Banfill (7 January 1937) written en route to Victoria on the SS *Maquinna*. This

letter clearly illustrates the exploitation of the nurses:

The old war horse had to give up for a short time. About the middle of November we had an epidemic of peculiar colds and coughs in the school. Two of the staff were off duty. It was essential to give night medicines to the children, or have them down with pneumonia. I realized I was overdoing as I was only getting about five hours unbroken rest out of twenty four. However, felt that I [would/could?] carry on until the children were dismissed for the vacation. In November I developed a nasty cough but no cold. On the 11th of December I had to take a child across to, and give an anaesthetic for[,] the doctor. Coming home we ran into a rough sea and rain storm. I got chilled. The result was a cold as well as a cough. As soon as the children were dismissed I crawled into bed and only did emergency work. We had a sudden change of cold weather, this, together with the cold draughty school was too much for me. On the 28 I developed acute bronchitis with an acute infection in my cheek bone with excruciating pain. Drugs would not give relief so I was taken across to the doctor. He gave me a thorough examination, and said there was no pneumonia or tubercular, but that I was in a very run down condition and would pick up something if I tried to work. I really was so weak I could not work. He said I was to have five or six weeks absolute rest away from the Indian[s]. I wired Toronto and they followed the doctor's advice and here I am en route. It is possible I may have to have an operation if the infection in my cheek does not subside. Dr. Robertson wants me to keep in touch with a specialist. They say the first week is the hardest, [word missing] I do not find it hard just [word missing] sit around and look pret[ty]. It is far harder than work [word missing]. However, I should not compl[ain] as this is my first break since I graduated.

Everything goes on much as usual. I am enjoying my work among the India[ns]. One soon becomes very fond of the little children. I do hope it is not the climate that is affecting me because I am just getting to know their customs and habits, and would dislike having to be transferred before my furlough.

Despite her gruelling schedule, in 1936 Banfill made time to study two Grade 12 subjects by correspondence.¹⁷ Near the end of *Indians of the Pacific*, her memoir of her Ahousaht experience, Banfill anticipates a month's vacation to give her time to adjust before "undertaking entirely new problems, with New Canadians in the West" (168). Her next

appointment was to Teulon, Manitoba 1 August 1937. Part of 1938 was spent in Richmond, Quebec, on furlough. A notation in a WMS file dated 24 November 1938 points to possible problems—"Should have examination later with special reference to nervous condition, if continuing in W.M.S. work"—but there is no accompanying explanation, and based on her Ahousaht experience, one can only speculate on exhaustion or possible burnout. Banfill's resignation from the WMS was effective 28 February 1939. On 23 March 1939 she was invited to its Dominion Board. Banfill's correspondence with her family suggests brief stints with the WMS after her second Mutton Bay posting. Banfill did work briefly with the WMS in Kamsack, Saskatchewan (September to October 1944),¹⁸ and her letter to Evelyn Banfill from the WMS Hospital, Bonnyville, Alberta, suggests more relief nursing in the west:

I cannot keep track of myself so how can I help wonder how others can do so. The WMS wired to see if I would relieve on general duty for a week or two until they could get a permanent nurse out here. The hospital had been closed because they could not get enough nurses to open it. At first I refused, as I do not intend to do general duty. Eventually, I agreed for two or three weeks. As yet, no nurse has showed up ... Two weeks ago I received a wire to ... come as matron to a fourteen bed hospital in Saskatchewan. The matron and both general duty nurses are walking out at the end of the month. Naturally, I am not agreeing to anything definite until I investigate why the walk out en mass. I have promised to go and investigate the first of the year. They want me to do the X Ray work, so in my spare time I am studying X Ray and will do a little experimenting with our old machine here. If you hear hair sizzling you will know I have sent someone up in smoke. I have never run an X Ray machine. I will have to give all the major anaesthetics, so and [sic] studying up a little on that. (15 December 1944)

Banfill investigated the matron's position at Kelvington, Saskatchewan, but deemed it

“an impossible situation”: “The staff are all Roman Catholics, and the town largely RC and Jehovah’s Witnesses.” “[B]ad reports about drinking nurses” was the deciding factor against another hospital: Banfill had objected to this social evil at Kelvington. Banfill, however, was not “losing financially, because these hospitals pa[id] about a quarter as much again as the mission hospitals.”¹⁹ There are considerable gaps in the extant documentation of this part of Banfill’s career.

In 1942, an urgent call from the Grenfell Mission resulted in Banfill’s return to Mutton Bay to take charge for another year. According to *Labrador Nurse*, at the time of the call, Banfill had returned to the United Church Training School in Toronto,²⁰ possibly to complete the studies she had left in 1932:

In May, 1942, I would be finished with my studies and I was contemplating a new adventure which would need several years to complete. On the twenty-sixth of May I came home to The United Church Training School. As I passed the wicket on the way to my room, I picked up my mail.... “Unless you come it [Mutton Bay nursing station] will remain closed ... Can you take the next boat, which leaves in ten days?” (*Labrador Nurse* 158)

A woman with Bessie Banfill’s strong sense of responsibility as a nurse and missionary could not refuse such a call to duty, to service.²¹ It was wartime, and Banfill felt compassion for the isolated Coast people who were “without dentists, doctors, nurses, or hospitals” (*Labrador Nurse* 158). Her decision to go was made “[a]fter two days of prayer and thought” (*Labrador Nurse* 158). According to several sources,²² a fall from a dogsled injured her back and prevented her from doing further full-time nursing, but if this is so, it is a “silence” in her memoir. There she states: “I was nearing the end of my

term at Mutton Bay, had in fact overstayed my time because of the continued scarcity of nurses, and I was tired” (*Labrador Nurse* 249-50). Another comment alludes to “a twenty-six month stretch of continuous duty” (*Labrador Nurse* 253). Banfill does not reveal her reasons for this discrepancy and for omitting reference to the injury.

Banfill’s back injury curtailed her life of full-time adventurous nursing. After Mutton Bay, and in addition to relief work with the WMS out west, she nursed part time at the Department of Veterans Affairs Hospital, St. Anne de Bellevue (“Frontier Nurse” 14). In 1945 she bought a house—“a shack that had not been lived in for several years. Fourteen loads of rubbish had to be hauled away before I could make headway” (letter to Evelyn Banfill, 7 June 1946)—in the small farming community of Avonmore, Ontario where she lived until her death. She worked part time in the Cornwall General and Ottawa Civic hospitals as well as did private nursing (“Frontier Nurse” 14). Once retired, she bought a small car and learned to drive again.²³ Banfill participated in community and church activities, yet she was not considered pious or evangelical; hers was “a practical faith not a dogmatic one.”²⁴ Nursing was viewed as a precursor to marriage, and marriage was expected of all women,²⁵ yet Banfill does not fulfill this role. Strongly independent, Banfill chose the nontraditional path for her life—a career over marriage—and preferred nursing to being a farmer’s wife.²⁶

While recovering from hip surgery (a fall on 31 October had resulted in a broken hip), Banfill died suddenly of a heart attack 13 November 1975 (“Frontier Nurse” 14). Her eyes, as she had specified, were donated to the eye-bank, her body to Queen’s

University Medical School (if refused, it was to be buried at a particular parish). Banfill's sense of humour is evident in her last stipulation: there was to be no funeral service, and if anyone changed her plans they paid all the expenses. Bessie Banfill went to marriages and baptisms at her Avonmore church, but never to funerals. She cared about the living.

Her obituary in local Ontario papers praised her as a writer and a frontier nurse, who was one of "[f]ew Canadian women [who] have faced so many responsibilities in the care of the lonely, sick or dying, far from glistening operating rooms and doctors' help" ("Frontier Nurse" 14). With her "keen sense of duty," in her "career of outpost nursing in different parts of Canada" Banfill "carried her lamp with tender compassion, a sense of humor, and practicality" ("Frontier Nurse" 14). "[A] writer who shared her many experiences with countless millions through the marvels of the printed page," Banfill made "a very significant contribution to the literary world" ("Frontier Nurse" 14).

4.2.1 *A Writing Life*

After retiring from an active nursing career, Banfill began to write. Did she write "because she enjoyed it, had time on her hands because she could no longer do nursing ... enjoyed people and the stories about them," as her nephew suggests, or did she write out of a "strong sense of loss" for a past which she "revere[d] and misse[d]" (Billson 261)? Billson asserts that it is the memoir writer's "belief in the importance of h[er] memories as a unique contribution to our understanding of the past" that motivates her to write (268). Hugh Banfill writes that his aunt was "a modest down-to-earth person" who "did

not seem to have any pretensions about her writing but enjoyed the thrill of seeing her name in print, that she was interested in others, not in herself.”²⁷ (Maybe this says more about the nephew, who employs the old stereotype of female modesty, than the aunt.) According to her nephew, she was particularly surprised and pleased when “chapters were reprinted in a foreign language,” and delighted when new copies of her books arrived at her door. Banfill insists that his aunt “didn’t have any sense of self-disclosure.” “To write,” Susan Griffin believes, “one must have a sense of self ... one must begin with the sense that one’s own life is worthy of scrutiny” (4). Banfill published four books of memoir,²⁸ in effect turning her life into texts. Banfill believed in the importance of her memories; she was interested in the self.

In a review of Banfill’s first memoir in the *Toronto Globe*, William Arthur Deacon introduces *Labrador Nurse* as another book in the Grenfell tradition, following after Norman Duncan’s *Dr. Luke of the Labrador* and Grenfell’s own work: “Now we have the first book by a nurse who ministered there [Labrador] ...” (12). But Deacon does Banfill’s memoir a disservice by his comparison. His pronouncement—“Miss B.J. Banfill’s *Labrador Nurse* belongs in the class with Sheila MacKay Russell’s *A Lamp Is Heavy*, because it is the self-story of a Canadian nurse, and with *North Pole Boarding House* by Elsie Gillis, because it describes minutely the life of a remote region” (12)—admits to a superficial reading of all three books. *A Lamp Is Heavy* is a fictional account of a nurse in training, and bears little comparison with *Labrador Nurse*. (They are both about nurses, but the similarity ends there. It has more in common with *North*

Pole Boarding House than with *A Lamp Is Heavy*.) The remainder of Deacon's "review" actually tells the would-be reader little about the book:

Outstanding characteristic of this new personal narrative is the complete subservience of the author's personal needs to the demands of her scattered charges.

There are tales of many voyages through wild storms in small boats, tales of long trips by dog-sled in bitter cold and even blizzards, to say nothing of the patients who came continuously to her tiny station at Mutton Bay....

Miss Banfill, overworked, puzzled over cases which required a doctor rather than a nurse, habitually seasick when the water was rough, has no complaints....

Social history of the first order is found in the first description of a wedding to which the nurse had been summoned hastily because dates are generally set hastily.... (12)

The 2 August 1952 *Ottawa Citizen's* notice of *Labrador Nurse* also suggests a connection with *A Lamp Is Heavy* and "other volumes retailing the experiences of Canadian representatives of the noble profession of Florence Nightingale [which] have appeared within the last year or so."²⁹

Dr. Hodd of Harrington Hospital, who placed Banfill in "a line of very splendid and faithful nurses" at Mutton Bay, noted that she "later wrote *one of the books* [about Mutton Bay] called *Labrador Nurse*" (9, my emphasis). Twelve years after Banfill's *Labrador Nurse* was published, another memoir bearing the same title, written by another Grenfell nurse, was published. How is it possible that two books with the same title, written by two nurses of the same organization, written about the same geographical region, were published? How could this have passed the vigilant IGA censor? The answer to this question leads directly to the censor. Banfill herself "knew of at least one other

nursing book which had been published later with the same name *Labrador Nurse* by someone who hadn't checked to see if the title had been used before."³⁰ But this is not the total picture. That the Grenfell Mission agreed to this title and in effect ignored the existence of Banfill's book when a title was being selected for Lesley Diack's book—a book endorsed by the IGA—might suggest marginalization of the former on the basis of nationality.³¹ In a discussion about a potential publisher for Diack's book, Seabrook reminded Diack about Robert Hale, "who published a badly written book by a Canadian nurse," adding that "[y]ours is far and away above her standard" (4 December 1961). Seabrook's pejorative remark is a blunt criticism of Banfill's memoir. Seabrook does not even bother to name Banfill, simply referring to her by her nationality and publisher. In her position as IGA secretary, Seabrook was not unaware of the publication of books by Grenfell alumnae; for example, in pointing out Burchill's second book *Innamincka*, Seabrook commented that "it reads well, though of course it is not a literary feat, but the action moves fast and holds one's interest" (Seabrook to Diack 1 February 1961). Diack, who was becoming concerned about a title for her book, wrote to Seabrook (n.d., possibly March 1963): "Are you *sure Labrador Nurse* has not been used as a title before—I thought it was the name of that book written about Mutton Bay—Anyway you should know!" Seabrook likely did know, but there is no trace of her reply; one *Labrador Nurse* was nonchalantly dismissed ("that book"), and a second *Labrador Nurse* was published in 1964.³²

An exchange of letters between Seabrook and Irene Biss, a former Grenfell

Mission teacher, suggests that in the matter of naming Diack's book Seabrook may have ignored the existence of Banfill's book. In her reply to Biss's comment—"I see there is a new book listed *Labrador Nurse* by L. Diack & wonder if the one of that title by Nurse Banfill is out of print. It was very good" (Biss to Seabrook, 16 September 1963)—Seabrook promoted Diack's book and attempted to re-direct Biss's attention to her protégé's book. Seabrook wrote to Biss: "Possibly Nurse Banfill's book is out of print. Lesley Diack's book is extremely good / think, and we have already sold quite a number of copies" (Seabrook to Biss, 19 September [1963], my emphasis).³³ "[E]xtremely good" surpasses "very good," and selling "quite a number of copies" wins out over "out of print": Seabrook casually dismissed Banfill's book.

How was Banfill's *Labrador Nurse* received when it was published? The answer probably lies in the reader's geographical location, on what side of the Atlantic he/she was located. In a letter to Seabrook, William Savage of Charles Scribner's Sons wrote: "I saw a short review in the *London Times* of *Labrador Nurse* by B.J. Banfel [sic] which was published by Robert Hale. I read the book when it was published here and wondered whether you had seen it"³⁴ (3 May 1954). Seabrook's reply, if indeed there was one, was not documented. Maybe on the other side of the Atlantic Banfill's nationality was detrimental; after all, she was a Canadian nurse in an organization staffed primarily with English and American nurses.³⁵ At the administrative level, nationality was a thorny issue:

I notice with a good deal of concern your criticism of the English nurses, that “they are the messiest, untidiest” people you know. Of course you realize that we have got to get along with them because we are not going to get U.S. or Canadian nurses to fill vacancies on the nursing staff; that is absolutely certain.... I must reiterate the fact that we have got to depend upon England to supply our nurses now and in the future. We hoped in the past that when Newfoundland became a province of Canada, the Canadians would take more interest in staffing the stations, but it has not turned out to be so. (Curtis to Thomas, 30 November 1954)³⁶

This cross-nationalities tension is corroborated by other correspondence. Seabrook wrote to Penelope Barnard: “British stock is up and Dr. Curtis thinks there is no one to beat an English nurse, so much so that he is relying on us to fill these important posts. As far as I can gather from the other side, both American and Canadian nurses have no guts and they have few applications” (Seabrook to Barnard, 27 March 1947).³⁷ Were they too independent and democratic for the hierarchical Grenfell organization? Banfill’s memoir makes it perfectly clear that she had guts.

The October 1966 issue of *ADSF* reprinted an editorial entitled “Outpost Nurse,” which began: “The recently published book *Labrador Nurse* by Miss Lesley Diack serves as a sharp reminder of the valuable services rendered by the women who serve in the outpost nursing stations in the Canadian North,” nurses who “are called upon to accept responsibility far beyond that which a nurse in the more populous parts of the country is expected to carry” (Dickinson 66, 67). Why is there no mention in this article (in a North American magazine) of a Canadian nurse? What about the Canadian nurse’s *Labrador Nurse*? It was equal proof of the “valuable service” provided by a Canadian Grenfell nurse. The *ADSF* editor did not rectify this omission, not even with a footnote. Despite

the Grenfell Mission's lack of attention (with the exception of a short publication announcement in *ADSF*) to Banfill's book, it achieved success on this side of the Atlantic. Estimated sales from Banfill's *Labrador Nurse* exceeded the two million mark, and in 1963 Banfill signed a contract with Franklin Publishers in New York to have excerpts of her books translated into Arabic,³⁸ Persian, Urdu, Bengali, Indonesian and Malay for "the purpose of enticing those people to the nursing profession" ("Frontier Nurse" 14).

Although *Labrador Nurse* is divided into two parts, Banfill appears to conflate her two Labrador experiences. She refers to herself as a "missionary" or "missionary-nurse," but unless her position as a Grenfell nurse qualifies her to label herself thus, the term is a misnomer. Banfill did not become a WMS missionary until 1932, so it is only *after* her 1928 posting to Labrador that technically she can refer to herself as a "commissioned missionary of another denomination" (*Labrador Nurse* 43). Banfill is clearly refracting her past through the lens of her missionary experience. Despite spending several years in two separate terms with the Grenfell Mission in Mutton Bay, unlike Burchill, Banfill's Grenfell connection is not overt or intrusive. At the beginning of her memoir, Banfill introduces Wilfred Grenfell and the Grenfell Mission by way of contextualizing her placement. The Grenfell apparatus is then given a background position, and the experiences of the nursing station nurse take centre stage. The reader, however, is always aware that Banfill is writing from her position as a Grenfell nurse, and her presence in the community is connected with that organization. Although Banfill praises the work of the

Mission, she does not, like Burchill, elevate Grenfell to a deity. The memoir portrays the Grenfell nurse coping with the elements and the difficulties of running a nursing station. An awareness of her predecessor, the “mother” of the station, is a thread that runs through this memoir. Unlike Burchill, Banfill puts herself in a matriarchal tradition rather than allying herself with the patriarchal Grenfell tradition.

Banfill’s praise for the Mission is more overt in her two *ADSF* articles than in her memoir. In “Retrospect of a Year at Mutton Bay” (1930), Banfill glorifies her Mutton Bay experience, and is keen to disseminate “the good work” of the IGA and “the benefits which a nurse can derive from a year so spent” (“Retrospect” 163). In that year she learns that so many conditions were implicit in the label of “Grenfell nurse”; it meant “a Jack-of-all-trades—housekeeper, stoker of fires, plumber, industrial worker and social adviser, to mention a few,” and she advises meeting “the ups and downs of Coast life with a cheerful countenance” (“Retrospect” 164, 165). For Banfill, the hardships of the North are balanced by the “vast” compensations. In typical official discourse, Banfill adds her own voice to the call for nurses, and personalizes the propaganda in her concluding paragraph: “I cannot let pass this opportunity for expressing my high esteem for the wonderful work of the Grenfell Association, my appreciation of the spirit which animates the staff and my thanks for the pleasure and benefit which I derived from a year of service on the Coast. To any nurse who may read this may I say that she will never regret having given her service to the International Grenfell Association” (“Retrospect” 165). “Night Watch,” written after a second term with the Grenfell Mission, ends with another call for

nurses: “The need, the challenge, and the fascination make life full and satisfying for nurses and doctors. Just at present, hundreds, perhaps thousands in Canadian Labrador have no doctor or nurse to whom they may turn in distress” (45). Her concluding sentence, replete with Biblical cadences, is placed on a separate line to textually emphasize the need: “The harvest truly is great but the laborers are few” (“Night Watch” 45). This puts it squarely in the context of a Christian missionary enterprise.

Although the title *Labrador Nurse* suggests that Banfill is nurse to the entire coast of Labrador, Banfill’s focus in the memoir remains on Mutton Bay. References to her family and other life exist at the periphery of the story, often in parenthetical commentary. She is participant, witness, and at times *histor*. A thread of humour runs through the narrative. What, if anything, does it conceal? Is her criticism encoded in humour? Does humour dissipate the tension?

4.3 *Labrador Nurse*: Composition of Balance

Labrador is mysterious beauty, pioneering adventure, deep-sea fishing, screaming gulls, mushing dog-teams, sailing boats, sputtering motors, trailing kinoos [canoes], greasy seal blubber, fish odors, and hospitable fisherfolk. (Labrador Nurse 157)

4.3.1 *Tensions in Achieving “Seasoned” Status*

This olfactory, aural and tactile Labrador, so full of energy, beckoned to Banfill fourteen years after her first (1928) Mutton Bay posting. In 1942, Banfill eagerly anticipates a change from being “[h]emmed in by apartment walls, stifled by stuffy germ-

laden air, working with restless self-satisfied people who [are] always rushing about to provide security for themselves" (*Labrador Nurse* 161). The peripatetic Banfill, always eager for new things, would no doubt agree with Kate Austen, that nursing is "the finest job an adventurous girl can have if she must wander" (Merrick, *Northern Nurse* 1). The word "adventure" does not figure quite as prominently in Banfill's memoir as in Burchill's, yet Banfill is not lacking a desire for "adventure."³⁹ Her initial posting to Mutton Bay is categorized as "a new adventure"; after her first maternity case had departed the nursing station, she speculates on her "next adventure" (*Labrador Nurse* 11, 34). "Adventure" is part of Banfill's vocabulary. Terrence L. Craig sees such terminology as part of missionary discourse:

The question of excitement acquires prominence in these movements from fact to fiction. Words such as "thrilling," "exciting," and "adventurous" are frequently used in the blurbs and prefaces ... to describe ... the experiences of the missionary protagonists.... (115)

Banfill's "career of outpost nursing in different parts of Canada, [carrying] her lamp with tender compassion, a sense of humor, and practicality" ("Frontier Nurse" 14), was, no doubt, partly fuelled by her desire for adventure. Outpost nursing lured adventurous nurses like Burchill, Banfill and Austen. Grenfell himself also preferred the more adventurous route; in *Nurse of the Islands* Banfill recalls "Dr. Wilfred Grenfell's remark that when faced with two choices, he always chose the more adventuresome and got more out of it" (16). In *Pioneer Nurse*, Banfill states her need for movement, for adventure, that being "impulsive by nature, and restless and dissatisfied with hospital routine and nursing

patients surrounded by luxury, I longed for more challenging adventure and freedom” (9). Banfill got “more” out of outpost nursing than a routine hospital job.

One of Banfill’s nursing school supervisors had noted that “[c]onfronted with challenge and difficult problems, disaster never seems to ruffle Bessie Banfill” (*Nurse of the Islands* 7). It is a necessary trait for a life of adventurous nursing. Banfill’s vulnerable point is the sea. Nursing in Mutton Bay and the Magdalen Islands, however, involves daily interaction with the sea:

I had for a long time treasured the ambition of becoming a missionary nurse. But my doubts were many. I admired and longed to work with God-fearing fishers of the sea, but, for instance, with such a queasy stomach as I had what good would I be assisting patients on boats? Should I back out? The words of an old fisherman kept coming back to me—“If you don’t want the sea to get into your blood, stay away from it.” I had tasted sea-life. Inland living did not satisfy the salt-water itch in my blood.... (*Nurse of the Islands* 7)

Banfill prefers life with difficulties; for her, adventure in general makes life full and worthwhile. It hardens one. To Banfill, the tedium of routine life does not offer “much adventure”: “We have extracted the backbone from life when we remove the difficulties” (*Pioneer Nurse* 184). Day-to-day life in Mutton Bay provides an abundance of adventure: travelling by boats on rough seas, and by dog team and komatic in winter constantly exposes her to adventure and the danger inherent in the adventure.⁴⁰ Her first komatic ride is described with typical irony:

Before we could think or act we were thrown from the komatic and stood waist deep in icy slob water. As I sank, I wondered how deep the pond would be and if there would be another layer of ice underneath to hold us.

Also, who would notify my relatives? There *was* another layer and it held.
(*Labrador Nurse* 98)

Another time, she relates, “With a sickening shudder I realized why he had shouted, ‘Stick to the komatic.’ One second in the rushing water below us and I would have been sucked under the ice” (*Labrador Nurse* 100). Another crisis, a komatic capsizing, is recalled with momentary humour:

Blankets, thermos bottle, camera, food, hot-water bottle, and I tumbled from the komatic and, like snowballs gathering momentum, we rolled and spun back to the bottom of the hill. There was not a ridge or crevice on that icy surface to gain a foothold. Like Winnie the Pooh, plunk, I landed in a deep snow-bank at the bottom of the hill.

Halfway up the cliff, Mr. Gray [her driver] clung to the crust and shouted down, “Are yous there?” For some reason this tickled my funny bone and I burst out laughing. Where did he think I would be? But my mirth was momentary. There was real consternation in his voice. So I shouted up, “Sure, it was a grand slide.” [...] We dug our toes and fingers into the crust and slowly inched our way to the top. (*Labrador Nurse* 117-118)

Adventure is a component of the official Grenfell discourse, and Banfill claims her share.

From the beginning of the memoir, the contrast between the new nurse and her predecessor, the seasoned nursing station nurse, creates tension. Banfill appears to be playing out her predecessor’s script: the “new nurse” is expected (and places pressure on herself) to live up to her predecessor, who is as “[a]gile as a fisherman,” can stand “upright in the bobbing boat” and “scramble[] up the swing ladder” (*Labrador Nurse* 25).

In contrast to this performance, Banfill makes an undignified entrance to Mutton Bay:

I was no coward, neither did I wish to disgrace the nursing profession, but it was with a sinking heart that finally I walked to the swinging ladder, raised my eyes heavenward, and started to back down it. Wobbling,

lurching, I was grabbed by two fishermen and swung from the bottom rung into the rocking boat.... (*Labrador Nurse* 25-26)

Banfill's inability to deftly manoeuver the swinging ladder and maintain her footing on the land reflect her off-coaster status. The diction of "slipped," "sprawled," and "hobbled" clearly delineates a clumsy greenhorn outsider, and suggests a rite of passage:

Another ladder to climb [at the wharf] and there at the top of the stage Uncle John was waiting to welcome me.... And up I went over the top to the wooden stage. From there I slipped and sprawled over green, slimy rocks, waded in spongy, water-soaked moss, then hobbled down a corduroy bridge, made of uneven, small peeled poles, to the Station. (*Labrador Nurse* 26)

Feeling "insignificant and unwanted" and "very much alone," Banfill's fears and aloneness are underscored with the maid's plaintive cry: "Hern's gone! What'll we do when we gets sick? Hern knew just what to do for everything" (*Labrador Nurse* 27, 28). The afterthought—"Ise forgets yous is here"—suggests that Banfill is considered a nonentity even by the Station's maid, and it reveals her initial shaky confidence (*Labrador Nurse* 28). By late fall, however, her confidence has strengthened to a point where, even hampered by stiff limbs, she can swing down the rope ladder and jump into a boat. She describes her movements as fluid and confident; she no longer wobbles or lurches or needs help. And at the end of her first term, she, like her predecessor, can "scramble[] up the swinging ladder to the deck": she has become the seasoned nursing station nurse (*Labrador Nurse* 152).

Considerable space is devoted to creating the tension of her first case, a near-term maternity patient with a history of post-natal convulsions. Terrified of and anticipating

potential disaster, Banfill keeps her clothes on all night, “ready for action, and determined not to fall asleep” (*Labrador Nurse* 31). The nursing station nurse is expected to make independent decisions, and not to call the doctor for minor troubles, but “for advice only in extremely severe cases” (*Labrador Nurse* 31). Banfill torments herself whether this case fits the criteria. A series of rhetorical questions reflect her mental agitation: “Should I take a chance? Would the doctor reprimand me if anything went wrong? Would he lose confidence in me if I could not tackle a simple maternity case alone?” (*Labrador Nurse* 31-32). Compared to the intensity of this buildup, the birth of the baby is reduced to a comment and placed in the centre of the paragraph, its placement indicating its diminished significance:

There was no time to reconsider my decision [to call the doctor]; action was needed immediately. Half an hour later a fine ten-pound girl arrived. Downstairs [the maid] shouted, “Yous cake, she’s in cinders. Yous never said for mes to take hern out.” (*Labrador Nurse* 32)

The act of delivering the baby restores Banfill’s confidence, and is followed by a peaceful interlude where nature is portrayed as a restorative; nature accepts the outsider as part of the microcosm. It is with heightened awareness that Banfill looks “out” over nature; her mind soothed by every discrete and intensified sound.

Such a minor catastrophe as a burned cake did not trouble me. I could deliver a baby. The Lord willing, everything would be all right. A weight rolled off my shoulders. I carried a rocking chair out to our little porch and gazed over the peaceful water, and I too became calm. The barking of dogs seemed more friendly. Children’s laughter was more merry. The waves had a more homey sound as they lapped the rocks. The putt of motorboats, carried by the soft sea breeze, was more gently familiar. All these sounds seemed to be whispering, “You are part of us.”

The twilight deepened and tired fishermen, who had been jigging for squid for the next day's bait, whistled and sang as they guided their boats to the home wharves. Then darkness enveloped the village. It was a joy to be alive and to have a part to play in the little community. City hubbub, smoke, noise, greed, and grimy coal-dust-laden air were a million miles away. Relaxed and invigorated, my mind at peace, I went inside. (*Labrador Nurse* 32-33)

The movement from outside to inside is accompanied by the internalization of the peace provided by nature. A similar scene is created in Part II after a particularly difficult case, a case which Banfill approached with a stated lack of confidence. A heightened awareness and description of landscape follows after success with the case:

The sun dipped to bed in the western horizon leaving a beautiful afterglow. How I longed to be an artist so that I might capture in permanent form the lovely colors! Our boat spanked the waves as they rebounded from the shore, then we drifted lazily to the wharf. As I climbed the rocks to the Station I could hear the putt-putt of motorboats wending their way shoreward and see dimly a sailboat or two slowly drifting toward home as noiselessly as the gulls. Across the water, came the call of a loon and screams of dozens of gulls. The night breeze died away, and, just as I reached the Station, darkness settled over the whole hillside. (*Labrador Nurse* 166)

In this case, Banfill states the connection rather than leaving it to be inferred: "The peace and beauty of the evening was reflected within me. I was filled with high aspiration and hope" (*Labrador Nurse* 166).

In Mutton Bay, nature offers a calm and peace not provided by religion. Even before stepping off the boat in Mutton Bay, Banfill weaves romanticized thoughts of "[t]he spire of the new church ... silhouetted against the horizon and sky was a magnet of welcome. I could imagine the bell softly ringing at the service hours and the worshippers

slowly wending their way along the narrow, well-beaten paths which led from all directions to the church” (*Labrador Nurse* 19). The reality is not so romantic or welcoming. Religious tension is an undercurrent that runs through *Labrador Nurse* and through Mutton Bay. There is a certain irony in the fact that Banfill is the wrong religion. Her first Sunday in Mutton Bay brings her first humiliating and humbling experience associated with religion; it occurs in the church. Its significance can be posited from its placement in her memoir, coming even before the first maternity patient:

With all eyes on me, I had to march to the second seat from the front and sit down. Not being an Anglican, I opened the prayer book at random and pretended to follow the service with my lips. The clergyman, Mr. Moak, stopped the service, called his young son up to him and passed him an open prayer book with whispered instructions. His hobnailed boots made a great noise in the stillness as the lad came clumping down the aisle and handed it to me. I accepted the book. The boy went back to his seat and the service continued.

[...] Humbly I knelt, but more humiliation awaited me. The kneeling bench shot out from my, by now, extremely humble knees. With a quick, noiseless scramble I dragged the bench back under my knees.... (*Labrador Nurse* 28, 29)

Banfill details another anecdote in Part II, one that clearly exposes the ritual nature of the religious ceremony which is carried out irrespective of the circumstances. From being the centre of the congregation’s attention on her first Sunday, this time she is the sole congregation:

The clergyman, robed in his clerical gown, marched down the long aisle to the vestry. He went inside and announced, “We will sing Hymn Number 286, ‘O Brothers, Lift Your Voices’.” ... [The bell] pealed forth, telling all worshippers (me) that the service was about to commence. With the prayer book open in his hand, head bowed, he swished through the door and took his place beside the pulpit. The organ burst into “O Brothers, Lift Your

Voices.” It did not seem quite appropriate, since we two females [Banfill and the organist] were the entire congregation ...

Mr. Meek went through the whole morning service, with me making all the responses, and then straight from the shoulder, with both eyes focused on me, he delivered a most personal and inspiring address.

Never before or since have I been the sole congregation with a half hour sermon delivered directly to my soul. It was a peculiar feeling not soon to be forgotten. (*Labrador Nurse* 175)

In Mutton Bay, an Anglican and Roman Catholic community, the clergy “had charge of all the souls along the Coast and called at Mutton Bay at more or less regular intervals” (*Labrador Nurse* 42). In Banfill’s memoir, the religious tensions inherent in such a situation are wrapped in a cloak of humour. The common occasion of birth foregrounds the religious schisms and attests to the artificiality of church dogma:

Theoretically, every baby is born an Anglican or a Roman Catholic, but actually the decision is not made before birth and many times not by one or both parents. Since there is much intermarriage of members of these two churches the deciding factor is often uncertain until the last minute before baptism. All the parents were anxious to have their babies baptized as soon as possible and when one parent was Protestant and the other Roman Catholic, the baby entered this world with a twofold pull. One parent and grandparent prayed for a Protestant offspring. The other parent and grandparent prayed for a Catholic child. Frequently chance settled the question. If an Anglican clergyman came around the point before a Catholic priest, the baby was made a good Anglican, or vice versa if a Roman Catholic priest entered the harbor first. (*Labrador Nurse* 42)

After one delivery, Banfill muses on whether she had “helped increase the Anglican flock or the Roman Catholic membership”; despite religious tensions, “the Roman Catholic mother in the home of the Protestant grandmother and the non-denominational baby” needs care (*Labrador Nurse* 42, 42-43). “Just four hours too late the Catholic priest arrived”; so the baby is fated to be Anglican, and the relatives comfort themselves “that it

was God's will this baby should be a Protestant" (*Labrador Nurse* 43). Banfill occupies an uneasy position as a non-Roman Catholic, non-Anglican nurse in Mutton Bay, and is marginalized because of her religion:

In Mutton Bay, to be religious, one must be an Anglican or a Roman Catholic. I was a commissioned missionary of another denomination and was allowed to teach in the Mutton Bay Anglican Sunday School, to lead the Girl Guides, help with the Women's Association, and stand as godmother for certain babies, but they did not consider it right that I should take communion or have any part in the intimate life of the church. Possessing certain signed documents from the bishop and working with a broad-minded clergyman, I might have been able to receive permission to take communion in the church; but I did not wish to press my desire, and I needed no permission from either Anglican or Catholic to have communion with God in my private life. (*Labrador Nurse* 43)

The matter of religion also impacts on the nurse outside of the church. While on her winter trip, Banfill has to defer to the minister in the matter of sleeping arrangements. Several dog-team parties sought shelter at the one available house where the hostess gave her only guest bedroom to the minister. Banfill had to "crawl[] into" her hostess's recently vacated "narrow, homemade bunk behind a blue checked gingham curtain," and "stretch[] [her] weary limbs between two quilts spread over some hay which padded the board slats" (*Labrador Nurse* 124). The minister, on the other hand, enjoyed the comfort of "a cozy, soft, goose-feather tick" (*Labrador Nurse* 124). Although Banfill envies the minister's comfort, she admits peevishly that the hard kitchen floor, where the drivers, the father, and the eldest boy slept on blankets, was preferable to a just-vacated bed. In this instance, the status of the minister is transcendent.

4.3.2 *Battling Seasickness*

In addition to the matter of religion, another narrative thread that runs through the memoir is Banfill's propensity to seasickness, one that is foreshadowed by her experience en route to Mutton Bay for the first time: "As the vessel rolled, lurched, and swayed, one by one we collapsed, reached out, and drew our seasick cups to our green-grey lips. Retching, tossing, and moaning we spent the night" (*Labrador Nurse* 17). During Banfill's posting to Mutton Bay, her seasickness is a constant companion. Such vulnerability attests to her humanity, as well as to her sacrifice; the harsh environment requires survival instincts. The power unleashed in one Labrador coastal storm unnerves the normally confident, capable Banfill. Her depiction of this end-of-the-world experience foregrounds its awesome intensity as well as her fear. The confession humanizes her:

I had heard that phenomenal tidal waves had carried away whole villages, that earthquakes had been foretold, that Jehovah's Witnesses were predicting the end of the world, and I had not been shaken. This first time I experienced the approach of a Labrador storm, I may as well confess I felt frightened and awed. I went upstairs, pinned my money in a handkerchief and placed it inside my uniform pocket. My uniform and money would go with me. There was nothing to do but wait. (*Labrador Nurse* 54)

The coastal storm scene is carefully crafted. The onomatopoeia of the harsh action verbs embedded in short staccato declarative phrases are piled up to portray a nightmare display of a storm which has apocalyptic potential.

At four-thirty the storm struck. Rain pelted down in torrents. It lashed the windowpanes. Water dripped through the roof. Rivulets coursed below doors and windows. The Station rocked, beds swayed, windows rattled, and puffs of smoke belched from the kitchen stove, doors banged and the wind whistled and shrieked round every corner. It was not yet nightfall but

I had to light a lamp. With the darkness conquered, fear left me. Like the Rock of Gibraltar the building had stood the first impact. Safe inside, the ruthless blasts could not harm me. (*Labrador Nurse* 55)

Although the introduction of light quells her fears, Banfill cannot relax. A call to a maternity case involves a journey over this post-storm sea ("Dress warm, Sister, outside, the sea shes wonderful. 'Outside' meant deep water beyond Mutton Bay point. That point always spelled seasickness for me" [*Labrador Nurse* 56]). Banfill's incompatibility with stormy seas must be mastered as it cannot be eliminated. Duty demands strength of character:

Before we reached that dreaded Red Bay point, the water became "loppy" and tossed our boat sideways, then pitched it forward as it lifted the bow out of the water. Green water sucked us down and then a great wave hurled us into the crest of the next one and we spanked down on the breakers. The thud shivered the boat from aft to stern. Finally a bigger wave picked us up and tossed our boat around the point into smooth water. The boat stood on end, heaved, pitched and lurched. I clung to the edge, retching and vomiting. At that moment I was not blessing the nursing profession or newborn babies. (*Labrador Nurse* 57)

That Banfill could endure never-ending seasickness yet continue in her work attests to her dedication as a (Grenfell) nurse, to her concept of service, and to her determination.

Whether or not it engendered fear or spelled seasickness, for Mutton Bay nurses the sea and its concomitant dangers are always present.⁴¹

A most uncomfortable "biting cold, wet trip" (*Labrador Nurse* 136) in an open boat, with a wet canvas as her sole protection against the elements, is another exercise in endurance:

Soon salt-water rivulets trickled from my face. These rivulets tasted like the ocean and emitted that briny odor so closely associated with seasickness. The swaying motion of the sea did not help matters. Green and limp, I collapsed against the side of the boat.... (*Labrador Nurse* 137)

On this trip from Mutton Bay to Harrington Harbour, Banfill clings to the leg of the male pilot to keep from being tossed into the sea. Would a proper lady present herself as throwing up and clinging to the leg of the (male) pilot? The image of the retching nurse is not found in the official discourse as it would be considered unladylike (too un“civilized”?) and unbecoming to a Grenfell nurse. Banfill is human, not an automaton, and she presents a self with flaws. In this marine environment, they are all insignificant specks on a tossing ocean; they are all enveloped in blackness, and the nurse’s life depends on the skill of the local pilot.

The sea grew rougher, the breakers roared louder, the air grew colder, and the spume tasted saltier. The boat pitched and tossed from side to side. No longer able to sit on the seat, I clung to Uncle Ed’s leg while he braced himself at the steering rudder. As always, Uncle Ed’s calm, confident manner and wrinkled, cheerful face gave me moral support. He placed a board above my head to protect me from the extreme force of the gale. But this only added to my discomfort because it acted as an eave spout, directing the cold trickle down my already goosefleshy neck.

The force of each wave made the boat shudder as vast convulsions shook it from stem to stern. By four o’clock it was rolling hideously and darkness settled about us. Nothing could be seen across the great black expanse except imaginary shapes like phantom specters along the shore. Through and around these ghostly figures the wind made curious wailing sounds. Not a star could be seen in the ink-black sky; not a gleam of light shone from the shore; all about was blackness and the booming of the sea. The even rhythm of the great piston engines was broken by pulsating throbs. As the boat pitched into a breaker it would miss a beat, pick up the lost pulse, and roll back to the next wave. (*Labrador Nurse* 137-138)

The return trip to Mutton Bay (on the mailboat) promised more of the same: “Chilled to

the marrow and with a hard mailbag for a pillow, I succumbed to the pangs of seasickness. As I leaned weakly over the edge of the boat I wondered whether or not it was all worth while" (*Labrador Nurse* 140).

Banfill's memoir is replete with occasions of battling seasickness. She piles up such anecdotes to emphasize the grim conditions she has to endure as well as to foreground her sacrifice and her strength of character in conquering those circumstances.

One anecdote—the safety pin versus the sea—has overtones of a Biblical parable:

One mile out on our homeward journey we struck deep water and, as if from nowhere, like those sudden gales on the Sea of Galilee, a wind-storm broke around us in great fury. The small boat was not built for rough water, and we pitched, lurched, and tossed alarmingly. One huge breaker lifted our boat on its crest and threw her forward onto the next breaking wave. Broadside, with a terrific smack, we struck the wave as another from behind broke with full force over the deck, washing everything before it and soaking us to the skin. As if rebelling at such rough treatment, the engine gave three kicks, sputtered, and died. Now we were really at the mercy of the sea. Another white-capped wave threatened to swamp the boat, but she managed to balance on the wave, roll sideways, then right herself before we were completely submerged. (*Labrador Nurse* 146)

Every minute was thought to be their last, and even "[w]ith a clergyman and a missionary aboard offering prayers," the answer comes from a safety pin (produced from Banfill's inner garments), which does duty as a trigger plug, and saves the day. Banfill subverts her mother's "wise teaching" (*Labrador Nurse* 147)—never to pin her clothes together—in this lesson in disobedience.

The basis for Banfill's three-page *ADSF* article, "Night Watch" (October 1949), is an emergency in dangerous November seas. one which required a round trip of

approximately 225 miles, and several nights in a boat. Banfill later details this experience in eleven pages in *Labrador Nurse*. “[S]wathed in woollen undervests, sweaters, leather jacket, waterproof dickie, woollen socks, and rubber boots” (like “a parboiled wild goose”), Banfill’s “first long-distance, close-quarters, non-private, minus-necessities trip” is shared with two men (father and son) in very cramped quarters (*Labrador Nurse* 182, 184):

We had one cabin, approximately six by ten feet, in which there was a stove, table, two berths, a swinging lamp, two men and me, plus our extra clothing, wood, food, and supplies, but with absolutely no privacy.
(*Labrador Nurse* 183-184)

Once they reach their destination, Banfill has to use a (unspecified) treatment she had never done or seen administered: “but if it were the only thing to do I must do it. I set to work” (Banfill, “Night Watch” 44). On the return trip (with a very ill patient on board), they encounter a raging blizzard: “The force of the gale swung the boat about and a wild sea faced us. In a few moments the boat was coated with ice and snow.... The boat pitched forward, lurched backward, and then rolled broadside, all in one moment” (*Labrador Nurse* 188). As Banfill points out, “It was a ghastly business to have the responsibility of this unquestionably dying patient, enveloped in blackness, anchored on a rolling, mad sea, in a blinding blizzard, and not know when and how we would be able to travel forward” (“Night Watch” 44). The word “ghastly” is significant. As sole medical personnel, this Grenfell nurse must cope with her own seasickness, but more importantly, she has to tend to her patient without indulging in self-pity; she has to have nerves of steel

in order to deal with everything in far-from-ideal conditions. Not only is the temporal and spatial landscape enveloped in blackness, but Banfill's very essence seems permeated with the same sense of blackness:

Outside was inky blackness that one feels rather than sees. A feeling of pending danger filled my soul. The sound of the waves grew louder and closer. I felt a dark blanket drawing itself around and over us. As we swayed, rocked, and plunged in the semishelter, we could hear the weird, unearthly roar of the sea and wind, followed by the loud boom of the breakers as they broke in fury against the rocks. Through that eerie darkness those booms sounded like angry cannons answering each other out of the depth of nowhere. As one died away in the distance, the next boom roared at its heels.

It was a ghastly business ... an emergency patient facing death, every moment counting, not a relative aboard, no means of communication with land, and frequent treatments requiring a sterile needle and syringe. A swaying wood stove and a sliding basin in which to boil my sterile equipment did not help matters. (*Labrador Nurse* 188-189)

Banfill complains little, but her difficult time is hinted at in one sentence: "I must confess there swept over me an intense longing for city conveniences or even the black veil of privacy on the open deck" (*Labrador Nurse* 190). The diction of "intense longing" and "city conveniences" signal Banfill's desperate need for personal private space. The ever-practical Banfill knits a sock for the Anglican bazaar while waiting for the storm to abate.⁴² Despite the hardships, she considers it one of her most interesting trips, as it had given her "a deeper insight into the hardships involved in getting patients to a doctor," as well as "a chance to learn how much voluntary boatmen will uncomplainingly suffer in order to be of service to their fellowmen" (*Labrador Nurse* 193). Is she using this as a mirror? When Banfill praises the boatmen, her reader praises the nurse for the same

reason. This technique is observed in a summary of the patient's difficulty in travelling; it is also the nurse's difficulty:

The care of the sick, in these sparely populated areas, still offers immeasurable difficulties. Rain and snowstorms rage with undiminished force. The treacherous, cracking spring and fall ice make travelling difficult or impossible. Many times, in order to get the doctor or nurse, the patient has to travel through blinding snow or beating rain, over pathless marshes, portages, over rocks or ice, and through deep snow, slob water, or mud.... (*Labrador Nurse* 174)

4.3.3 *Adjusting to a Coastal Culture*

The nurse not only experiences difficulty in travelling, but in adjusting to cultural mores. Although Banfill is present at many births, she only details a few in her memoir. In this first instance, although it provides the catalyst, the fact of the maternity case is secondary to an exposé of the surroundings she encounters as a result of the maternity call. Neither Banfill's training nor socialization have prepared her for what awaits her when, in responding to her first maternity case outside of Mutton Bay, she is catapulted into a coastal kitchen. There she finds five incongruous inhabitants—three living, one dead, and one inanimate—in a surreal environment. A tobacco-squirting, pipe-smoking wizened old man; a “wolflike bitch” with her “drawn-back lips” revealing sharp fangs; a baby asleep on the kitchen floor on “a wadded-up black sweater,” beside it “an empty liniment bottle with the top encased in a rubber nipple,” with “[t]hree flies perched on the tip of the nipple as they sucked at the last sticky drops”; “a heavy, pungent greasy odor permeat[ing her] nostrils,” directed her nose “to the wall where two big seals with

smooth, sleek sides dripped blood and water”; and “a large wooden barrel full of icy water,” “open to dust, flies, and germs,” with its requisite “company tin dipper” for all to drink from (*Labrador Nurse* 59, 60) compose a nurse’s nightmare. The non-sterile conditions of the kitchen are a sharp contrast to the “spotlessly white, sterile caseroom and delivery room” of the nursing station:

This would have to be my sterile water, dipped into the kettle, boiled on the stove, and carried upstairs. This barrel water and family wash basin, its greasy water-line marks washed off with the slop cloth and scalded, would be my sterile outfit. Later, by the hot kitchen oven, evading brown squirts, I would bathe the new arrival in the same washbasin. When finished, I would share a delicious, appetizing seal pie or stewed seal meat cut from those friendly seals in the corner.

I gave thanks for a strong stomach and good digestion. (*Labrador Nurse* 60)

Her ironic comment, set on a separate line, powerfully indicates Banfill’s revulsion, even from the distance of time. The meal, “seal meat saturated in seal oil thickened with flour ... [w]ashed down with lye tea,” which provided “enzymes, juices and blood-builders” for “new energy” (*Labrador Nurse* 62), is particularly unappetizing. Banfill partakes of regional food with the locals, and as evidenced in this anecdote, she does not elevate herself above them. *ADSF* reports give accounts of nurses who sterilized their cups before drinking tea in the house of the local people, and those who would not drink or eat with them.⁴³ Banfill’s gestures might be construed as disgusting by some, but Banfill creates a self who is adaptive, despite her incompatible religious background, despite her lack of sea legs, and one who can eat an unappetizing meal in less than appetizing surroundings. This adventurous nurse has a pioneer spirit, and does not break in such

unfamiliar surroundings.

A later maternity case has Banfill longing for the “friendly grandmothers, water barrel, [and] warm home” (*Labrador Nurse* 72) of the previous case. She had been unprepared for the lack of sterile conditions at the first house, but what awaited her at the Casey house was even more staggering:

She [the patient] was lying on filthy quilts on a sagging board bunk in a rickety two-room shack. The floor cracks were so wide I could see the damp mud below. Everything about the shack indicated a lazy husband. It was destitute even of the barest necessities. Several children crawled over the rough, cold floor. Mrs. Casey’s husband was nowhere to be seen and apparently not interested in my diagnosis. (*Labrador Nurse* 72-73)

Here is a family ruined by the evils of drink. Instead of showing concern about his wife’s welfare, the lazy husband is off getting “pickled” (drunk). Without a boatman, Banfill, “as stranded as Robinson Crusoe” (*Labrador Nurse* 73), is very much in control in this situation. Having assessed the situation, Banfill decides on aggressive tactics, and heads for the shore, “intending to give someone a piece of [her] mind” (*Labrador Nurse* 73), and calls across the tickle to rouse Mr. Casey to action. “[U]ncombed and unshaven, with a hangdog expression and shiftless eyes,” the abysmal creature grunts rather than articulates. Banfill quickly dispenses with “explanation[s],” and gives him “[r]aw truth” instead: “If you keep your wife here she will die. At the Station I will try to save her.” The response is curses and snarls: “Ise has no use for doctors or nurses. Neighbours said I neglected hern. That’s why Ise sent for yous. No missus of mine shall be separated from her children.” He dares to command Banfill: “Hern stays and yous stays” (*Labrador*

Nurse 74), but she proves her superiority. She is an old hand at “deal[ing] with such domineering hulks of humanity”; the solution involved “ignor[ing] them.” Banfill speaks to and through the boatman—“You have heard my diagnosis. If Mrs. Casey dies here, I may have to charge her husband with manslaughter. I am ready to start home”—calculating that this threat will “corner[]” Casey and achieve acquiescence. Casey responds with “a surly, menacing leer,” and issues his own threat, calculated to appeal to her sympathies, “Yous can’t leave her here to die.” Banfill, made of sterner stuff, “kept on toward the shore.” Casey is forced to relent: “halfway there he came slouching up to us and muttered, ‘Take her along’” (*Labrador Nurse 74*). This anecdote exposes animosity toward the Mission but also proves the importance of the Mission and its nurse. Early in her memoir, Banfill refers generally to “[t]hese Coast people ... [who have] a deep-rooted faith in the words ‘Grenfell’ and ‘Grenfell Mission’” (*Labrador Nurse 20*). But is Casey the exception? Does she create this didactic anecdote to demonstrate the need for the Grenfell Mission? The tension between the nurse and the people of Mutton Bay is more overt in Part II. As sole nurse, Banfill is often forced into difficult situations “diagnosing by means of telegram, letter, or a neighbor’s account ... and prescriptions must be simple and harmless” (*Labrador Nurse 171*). Despite her good intentions, Banfill receives her share of stinging criticism when hostile people are skeptical of the nurse and modern medicine:

To criticize without knowing the facts seems to be a failing of human nature. At times my treatments were viciously attacked. Very few patients would do this to my face because I was the only nurse, kept the only drugs

available, and they might have to seek me in emergency....

Soon I learned that the best policy was to ignore non-co-operation and not to let the patient know I had heard anything, but to give something that would not be much waste if thrown away. But I always told the truth tactfully and considerately to the relatives as far as they could comprehend it. In this way I got along very nicely with the majority of my patients. (*Labrador Nurse* 171)

4.3.4 *Painting an Appreciation of Nature: Beauty Balances Negativity*

Despite often tense relationships with the people of Mutton Bay, Banfill was unequivocal in her love of nature. In *Pioneer Nurse*, she describes herself as “[a] lover of nature and the simplicity of outdoor life” (83), and her keen awareness of and sensitivity to nature is apparent in her word-pictures of the prairies. From the beginning of her Mutton Bay experience, Banfill appears sensitive to the Labrador landscape. Even before she gets off the boat, she surveys “the beauty spread out” before her (*Labrador Nurse* 18). Banfill first paints the scene with broad strokes, and fills in the finer details in the second paragraph. This passage has elements of a set piece, and the image of the fairy is particularly ironic (cf. with Burchill’s condescending use of fairies). It is not clear if Banfill is trying to portray her sensitivity to landscape by writing a set piece, or suggesting that one can find beauty in Mutton Bay, as she does in her word-pictures.

High above the roof of the Station, the sun glittered on a lovely waterfall. From melting ice far above, the water came trickling through a narrow crevice down the rocks, then splashed into a pond at the bottom with a fine showing of misty spray. Hemmed in on three sides by cliffs, fed by the waterfall, fringed with green, leafy shrubs and furze, this pond gently rippled with the breeze. A mossy carpet sprinkled with pink blossoms and bright green leaves led up to the pond. Even from a distance, I could picture a fairy flitting lightly over this mossy carpet to the pond (later,

knee-deep, squish-squashing in water-soaked shoes, deep in this moss, I did not think of fairies).

On the rocks near the dock I could see the wildflowers clearly. They were blooming profusely, making the most of the short northern summer. Through the velvety green and brown moss that carpeted the rocks, lambs'-quarters with tiny black eyes set in babyish faces, purple iris, and a bright orange flower I could not name thrust their short sturdy stems.

Behind the natural rock garden the great cliffs extended upward. Here was a little stunted shrubbery and beyond, the welcome spires of firs and spruces. (*Labrador Nurse* 18-19)

Banfill attempts to create a paradise out of the Mutton Bay landscape, a paradise bounded by majestic firs and spruces. Banfill paints word-pictures in another description: "Today a faint ripple stirred the crystal clear surface of the pond. Water wigglers and bugs chased each other on the muddy surface near us, while lily pads, with pink-white blossoms, floated on the opposite side" (*Labrador Nurse* 30). And after a storm, she "drank in the beauty as mauve-purple clouds faded to pinky-red, then burst into flaming orange as the sun crept up from the horizon" (*Labrador Nurse* 57). Just as Burchill presented a feminized seascape, Banfill, using feminine domestic images, portrays winter as beautiful, serene, calm: snow and ice are less threatening and violent than the sea:

Just as man's routine changed so did the harbor: barren black rocks and cold, green, lacy white-capped water disappeared, for during the next afternoon goose-feather snow fell steadily. By night the hillside was a world of sparkling, fleecy, white beauty. The water was a pudding mess of "slob"—ice and snow mixed and similar to unformed ice in an ice-cream freezer. Later this changed to a glare sheet of solid ice and, still later, to a soft, white-padded carpet.... (*Labrador Nurse* 93)⁴⁴

Unlike humans, nature is constant and provides solace:

Human beings might disappoint us, boats might come and leave, but the sky never failed to provide us with ever-changing, awe-inspiring panorama

of picturesque, colorful scenes. Blood-red, the sun sank behind the cove, its rays extending far across the tundra, then it blanketed itself behind the hills and trees and left behind a gently shifting, vast purple and gold afterglow. The stars appeared one by one until suddenly the whole sky was ablaze with silver lights, the crescent moon crept up from the horizon to add her share of beauty, and the northern lights danced and crackled and shone with their own special magnificence. (*Labrador Nurse* 177)

Craig posits that in missionary writings landscape “had to be described in terms sufficiently harsh that the missionaries’ lives would seem heroic, but not so harsh as to discourage recruits” (44). Banfill’s depictions of the sea provide sharp contrast to the idyllic portrayals of plant life, rippling ponds, and panoramic skies. Both, however, exist in the real world of Mutton Bay.

4.3.5 *Accepting the Culture*

During Banfill’s first weeks in her new environment, sleep would not come as her mind “mulled over such questions as: Would a doctor have done differently? Had I done everything possible for that human life?” (*Labrador Nurse* 64). A month later, her “shaky-kneed days were forgotten” and “deep sleep awaited [her] as soon as [her] head sank into [her] eiderdown pillow” (*Labrador Nurse* 64). Although Banfill had come to Mutton Bay to minister to and to serve the people, she also learns from them. At first she is impressed by their “extreme taciturnity ... when they have nothing to communicate they say nothing!” (*Labrador Nurse* 35); with time, she learns to accept the rhythms of the seasons and the people. When Banfill returned to the coast, she is familiar with these rhythms, as one trip demonstrates: “All the time my mind kept jumping ahead. Would

there be any way of getting her to a doctor? But having learned never to borrow trouble until trouble walked across my path, I decided to enjoy the komatic drive" (*Labrador Nurse* 243). The taciturnity of the local is juxtaposed with Banfill's need for social interaction; it is a dialectic she learns to accept:

At first this silence seemed strained and hard to endure with equanimity. But soon I realized that it was more friendly than talk about our neighbors or the minister's wife. I learned to sit calmly and silently in some home during a raging storm while waiting for the advent of a new baby or the crisis of a pneumonia patient. During those silent sittings I realized how unnecessary, and how often harmful and ruthless, was our daily, social city conversation. But I did long at times for someone with whom I might exchange a few words about something besides fish, boats, weather, price of seal, lead dogs, traps, and mail.

Yet what could be more vitally interesting to these fishermen—and to their wives and children? The whim of the sea may mean no seal, few fish, therefore no boots, no clothing or food for the family.... (*Labrador Nurse* 35-36)

Banfill shares with Burchill a longing to engage in a discourse other than that involving the local currency of fish. Banfill enjoys, yet feels stifled by, her parochial environment. She learns that "there is wisdom in accepting advice from seasoned fishermen" (*Labrador Nurse* 114), a lesson that Burchill did not heed. On one occasion when she is stranded on an island in a raging blizzard, she "longed for a breath of fresh air," but the fishermen forbid her "to set foot outside the door in such a storm" (*Labrador Nurse* 230). She accepts their wisdom: "An Off-coaster, if wise, never goes against the advice of an old fisherman, especially in the face of 'weather'" (*Labrador Nurse* 230). Another time she is amazed at how "a fisherman can be asleep one moment, while a blizzard rages, and wide awake the moment it stops" (*Labrador Nurse* 190). She respects and praises the wisdom

of the fishermen. The community patriarch, Uncle John, links the two parts of her memoir. On her return, he welcomes her back to Mutton Bay. He is her mentor and tutors her in the ways of the community, and because of him, she can qualify as “almost an old-timer” (*Labrador Nurse* 162): he is “a visionary man”:

He was thrifty, energetic, sympathetic, co-operative, and progressive; yet he could read but little and write less.

Uncle John was the prop, the support of the whole village. He had impressed me with his efficiency and kindness the day I landed in Mutton Bay, and as long as I was there my respect for him deepened. When food was scarce he shared his own meager store with the less fortunate.... A useful, upright member of our community and a fine Christian was Uncle John. (*Labrador Nurse* 48-49)

Banfill’s view of the fisherfolk is occasionally romanticized; for example, although they are “[p]oor financially,” they “possess that contentment within their homes and with their lot that philosophers say is the heart of happiness. Their struggle is with life; their joys are in their achievements in the constant struggle to keep themselves and families above the starvation mark” (*Labrador Nurse* 36-37). The people “were an unending source of interest” to her (*Labrador Nurse* 248). At times it seems as if Banfill regards them as anthropological specimens: are they to be studied, or served? Banfill wavers between praise and criticism for the local people, and at times her commentary is tinged with criticism; for example, “Coast people often act first and think afterward. Dodds’ Almanac said pneumonia followed convulsions and was fatal. Mrs. Teal *knew* [her son] would have pneumonia because he was in convulsions. [He] had indiscreetly eaten too much fresh seal meat” (*Labrador Nurse* 124-125). One of the markers of social “progress” in

the Mutton Bay of 1942 is the beauty specialist who has replaced the nurse as the cutter of hair. Banfill is critical of this encroachment of the modern: “a permanent is an exciting event. There is no running water, electric drier, or drainage, just vanity and nature” (*Labrador Nurse* 167).

No matter how much she purported to admire the people, Banfill struggled with and was appalled by their lack of hygiene, lamenting that “[a] nurse’s life on the Coast is a continual struggle with an almost complete ignorance of modern standards of hygiene” (*Labrador Nurse* 106). As she observed, “[b]acterial bugs do not present any problem to these people because only bugs seen with the naked eye are considered dangerous” (*Labrador Nurse* 107). Yet Banfill herself was often confounded with results that had nothing to do with medical science. Sometimes the age-old folkloric remedy often “cured.” It was after one such experience that Banfill began to “listen[] to grandmothers”: “If an onion poultice had cured pneumonia, and there were no other ingredients available for a poultice, it was worth trying. If the child got better, the parents were satisfied and had more confidence in the nurse—for the time at least” (*Labrador Nurse* 109). One totally confounding case not only foregrounds the polarities of folklore and modern medicine, but it also exposes Banfill’s isolation from other medical personnel:

[The patient’s] temperature was one hundred and two. In a hospital, those borealis rays spreading axilla-ward meant instant action. Operations for such cases require hours of preparation and careful technique. The nearest doctor was travelling the Coast many miles east of us, but something would have to be done. I decided to try external heat and trust to Providence while I went home to read my medical book. Four hours later

Mary's temperature had climbed two degrees and I had absorbed all that the medical book could tell me. (*Labrador Nurse* 107)

Although the doctor miraculously appears, fate and folkloric remedy (superstition) win the day. This anecdote, like the Casey case, exposes resistance to the modern medicine represented by the Mission. "Fisherfolk had no confidence in nurses and they *knew* doctors loved to cut people" (*Labrador Nurse* 108). An "old, sweaty cap" bound to Mary's breast is the agent of the miracle. The efficacy of such treatment defies question; the reality, in the words of the nurse, "[w]e examined Mary and most of the redness and inflammation had disappeared. Her temperature was normal, so we did not operate" (*Labrador Nurse* 108). Banfill cannot explain or understand the unexplainable, and attributes it to folk belief. While it is not as overt as Burchill's ethnocentrism in her portrayal of a Labrador caught in a time warp, a certain superiority invades Banfill's explanation:

I had learned that many of the disorders my patients suffered stemmed from superstition. If a patient had a strong religious faith he had a better chance of recovery. I tried hard to understand the beliefs of these partially illiterate, primitive, superstitious, hard-working folk who live far from public health teaching. Far be it from me to belittle sterile technique, but this miracle case of Mary still puzzles me. (*Labrador Nurse* 108-109)

Outpost nurses had to handle many cases beyond the scope of their training. In 1928 and 1942 Banfill copes with many cases requiring the skill of a doctor or a surgeon. As she faces the case of a retained placenta, she confesses that "[a]lways before in my experience this had been the work of a doctor" (*Labrador Nurse* 165). On this occasion, she "attempted to recall what doctors had done in similar circumstances.... Confidently

(inwardly less confident) I assured this Job's comforter [patient's sister] that Mrs. George would soon be all right" (*Labrador Nurse* 165). Banfill has no choice but to attempt something for which she has no training.

4.3.6 *Fishing Adventures*

Banfill, however, does not remain aloof in her ivory tower (the nursing station); she fills her "ignorance" about "fish caught in the nets and traps" (*Labrador Nurse* 38) by participating in such activities. In fact Banfill enjoys fishing and details three distinct fishing episodes. In her presentation of a fishing trip with a local family, she focuses primarily on the pipe-smoking sciatic patriarch, who regales her with stories of his fishing days: "As curling clouds of smoke rose above his head, he settled down to entertain me with tales of his own heroic deeds and unsurpassed ability" (*Labrador Nurse* 39). Her fishing encounters are different from Burchill's; for Burchill fishing is an experience which brings her into further contact with an all-male world. In a Norman Duncan-like anecdote, Banfill describes the day that the four-year-old lad is to begin "to be a fisherman." As the father proudly informs her, "The three of wes has the bestest outfit in this harbor. Today yous'll see our nets will be full. That's because Ise knows where to set our nets. Other men goes by chance, but Ise tells yous Ise knows how to fish" (*Labrador Nurse* 39). Despite the rolling sea—a signal for seasickness—Banfill's focus is on others, not on herself, and her own seasickness is not textually evident. The focus is on the sea as teacher, teaching the children to have respect for its might:

Both Donnie and Blanche were deathly seasick. Down went the boat and up came their breakfasts.... The sea, not their father, was “learning” them to be fishermen. I realized that the sea had to be conquered before a boy would make a fisherman, and I knew also that soft words and sympathy would never make a hardy, efficient fisherman.... [Mr. Benny] seemed almost to enjoy their suffering. Donnie never whimpered or uttered a word as the swells and rolling increased; he seemed to take it as part of his life. (*Labrador Nurse* 40)

Ice fishing is a panacea for exhaustion from nursing duties: “An urge to do something besides my regular nursing possessed me.... I knew that if I could have a short break away from stoking, supervising, and sickness, life would be more like living than just existing” (*Labrador Nurse* 209). Mr. Orman and his little son, Billy, go trout fishing, and Banfill asks to go along:

At the mention of a fishing trip my weariness dropped from me. I had heard so much about trout fishing through the ice that I felt it would be a fine relaxation. I went home and laid out my heavy clothes, fishing line, hooks, and a piece of salt pork for bait. (*Labrador Nurse* 210)

This adventure provided “more thrills than an ordinary boat fishing trip” (*Labrador Nurse* 210). Rather than watching from the sidelines, Banfill gets “cold, damp knees” from kneeling on the boughs on the ice and “jigg[ing] ... lines up and down” (*Labrador Nurse* 212, 211). Nature is again presented as a restorative, and this outdoor activity makes her “a new person”: “Miles from sick people, yet knowing they could reach me if an emergency arose, I felt gloriously free” (*Labrador Nurse* 212). Banfill is much less fragile than Burchill, and her activity has created “a gnawing appetite” (*Labrador Nurse* 212). She is now ready to partake of, and enjoy, food that she would previously have considered an unappetizing “concoction” (*Labrador Nurse* 118): “There were dozens of

cinders in the canned beans, the tea was strong enough to float an egg, and the canned sausages were half cold and greasy, but I enjoyed every mouthful and ate more than I had eaten at one meal for the past three weeks”⁴⁵ (*Labrador Nurse* 212).

A final fishing episode—“I began to think I really had a fish story”(253)—is placed between the concluding anecdotes of the memoir, and involves Banfill catching a salmon, without a rod, net or license. Employing a diction of conquest, battle, and victory, Banfill’s animated account details the ultimate thrill. She cannot conquer her seasickness but she conquers an elusive salmon:

... [one] salmon had underestimated its strength and was carried sideways and fell, panting and exhausted, on the flat rock at the edge of the water. Tired by the long struggle, it remained there gasping as if stunned, then it raised its head and commenced to flop about in an attempt to get back to the cool water. But it was doomed, for I knew I would have that prize. Never before had I seen such a fish on shore, alive, and waiting to be taken. I dropped my trout rod and line and made a quick dash for the unfortunate, helpless victim. I forgot everything, even the danger of slipping into the treacherous rapids or of being bitten by the salmon. Until I grabbed this one I never realized the power of a salmon. It fought like a tiger and when I jumped onto its back it bucked like a bronco.... It bucked and fought a battle of wit and strength as I clung to its slippery back. At last, the powerful strokes of the tail became weaker. Covered with blood and slime, perspiring and wet from the flying spray, I was nearly exhausted; but I had the satisfaction of seeing that magnificent fish flop, once, twice, three times, then remain still, panting, but with no more fight in it. Although I was the conqueror I did not gloat over a fish that had put up such a gallant battle.

Too tired to move, I sat on its back, then slid off onto the rocks, but still held firmly to its gills. If it gave a final flop and swam away in its native waters, I should have only a doubtful fish story to tell.... (*Labrador Nurse* 251-252)

It is a curious story and a complicated situation: “The salmon ... was my prize but not my

fish because I did not have a license to fish for salmon”; she takes it to the cannery:

Between the cannery and me there were rocky ledges, underbrush, and treacherous paths over which I needed both feet, hands, and eyes to climb to safety. I did not dare leave this beauty to go for help because if I did it might be spirited away and I would think it was all a dream.

My clothes were a mass of gore and slime. I cupped some water in my hands and took off the thickest of it. At best, I looked as though I had been fighting a bloody battle. With my fingers fastened in the gills of the big fish and my line and rod over my shoulder, I set off over the winding trail. Every few feet I had to ease the salmon to the ground and take a breathing spell. Finally I reached the cannery. Mr. Vassey was certain that the salmon would weigh fifteen to seventeen pounds. He was as surprised as I was; he had been a fisherman for forty years and had never heard of such a thing happening before. I began to think I really had a fish story.

... It made eleven pounds of delicious eating and must have made a feast for many people, but I did not get a taste of it. The sport of catching it offset the loss of eating it, and the day’s outing helped me through the last part of a twenty-six month stretch of continuous duty. (*Labrador Nurse* 252-253)

In Banfill’s first fishing story, a storm arose, and “a good haul” did not result. On that occasion, however, “Two fine salmon had also strayed into the cod net. The silver salmon are exquisitely beautiful fish, and when ... held ... up in the sunlight their silvery sheen, gasping gills, and bright black eyes made me feel like a murderer” (*Labrador Nurse* 41). When she goes ice fishing, she is unlucky and “did not land a single trout” (*Labrador Nurse* 213). In her “real” fish story, her victory supercedes her feelings of murder. This makes up for all her other fish-less fishing trips; this time, however, she is on land.

4.3.7 “Intense Longing”: Encoding Personal Desires

In a description of the penetrating cold that echoes Cecilia Williams’s, Banfill

introduces the primitiveness of her nursing station accommodations through the humorous image of a turtle.

At six o'clock, from under a mountain of blankets, encased in woollens, turtlelike I would stick out my head, give my nose a tweak to make certain it was not frozen, then draw back into my shell to recover from the shock. In a few moments I would gingerly stick out one bedsocked foot, then another, shiver, then finally emerge completely. Now the real ordeal commenced as I side-stepped a snowdrift to close the ventilator, if it were open, then leaped back to the icy linoleum. Quite frequently I did not open the ventilator because tiny mounds of snow sifted under and over the sills bringing plenty of fresh air with them.

Two feet from my bed a stovepipe came up from the office coal fire. Before retiring I placed my water jug, tooth paste, and wash cloth beside the pipe. Many times the water and paste were frozen solid....

At four o'clock one morning my foot struck something wet and cold. On investigating that my hot-water bottle had leaked and my blanket was crisp with frost.... (*Labrador Nurse* 98-99)

Although for the most part Banfill appears to cope with the “primitive” conditions and prides herself on learning on-coaster ways, she occasionally longs for certain luxuries and conveniences of city life; her “intense longing for city conveniences” (*Labrador Nurse* 190) has already been noted. The personal creeps in, and Banfill finds it increasingly difficult to live a totally ascetic life. Intense longing for bathing merits frequent mention, and Banfill encodes her personal desires in this activity of bathing. Her longing for a simple bath—not terribly hedonistic—takes on greater significance with the Biblical reference to Esau (Genesis 25), who sold his birthright for a bowl of red pottage to satisfy his hunger, yet she downplays her desperate need with the use of “trivial”:

Occasionally every Off-coaster succumbs to an overpowering longing for some trivial city luxury. After a fashion, I had managed a daily sponge bath, but one day an irresistible longing for a hot tub swept over me. I

recalled how nightly, when I came off duty, I used to step into a steaming tub of water. Like Esau, perhaps I now would have sold my birthright for such a tub of soapy water. (*Labrador Nurse* 68)

Banfill displays ingenuity to satisfy her “craving,” paying two boys “twenty-five cents each, to carry the water from our pond, a quarter of a mile away” (68). But, once collected, the water itself presents a dilemma: it teemed with “‘invisible algae,’ and other living things such as bacilli and bacteria. Hundreds of visible wigglers squirmed about, while on the surface leaves and stems chased each other inside their circular confines” (68). Textually, Banfill signals the complexity of this enterprise by placing it on a separate line: “A bath was going to be more complex than I had anticipated” (*Labrador Nurse* 68)—again there is that sense of irony, of understatement. But she is not defeated: she constructs a “wiggler-net of three thicknesses of gauze and stretched it across the wash boiler” (*Labrador Nurse* 69).

A bucketful at a time, Annie and I carried the water upstairs. Never before had plain hot water held such an attraction. At the moment that luxurious hot tub was more tempting than a million dollars.... After a soapy wash and a brisk rubdown I glowed with satisfaction.

When there was plenty of rainwater, without too many wigglers, worms, and leaves, a bath was one of the looked-forward-to summer luxuries. In winter, the water might congeal into ice during the bath. (*Labrador Nurse* 69)

Baths were less complicated in other seasons:

Our attic was flooded and tubs were set out to catch the overflow in the hall; the shed was a swimming pool. Annie went about bemoaning this waste of water so I suggested that she put a sign outside the door: “Attic, private bath—a shilling; hall, semi-private bath—ha’penny; shed, no privacy—free.” She threw up her hands. “But, you wouldn’t let no one undress in our shed, would you? Why, that would be wonderful

scandalous!”

Annie’s sense of humor was strictly limited.... (*Labrador Nurse* 69-70)

In early spring, with “[t]he woolly odor from winter underwear” still clinging to her body, Banfill “pined for a dip in fresh water” (*Labrador Nurse* 148). A suitable bathing pool is provided by a fresh water pond in the rocks.

A few feet across the pond the whole shore was covered with ice. We had earned a bath. Ice or no ice, we intended to have one.... I dipped one big toe into the water, shivered, drew back, then simultaneously [the schoolteacher] and I mustered courage to make a sudden dash. We took a deep breath, plunged under, and in a second came up sputtering water, shivering, and with chattering teeth. That was the coldest but most refreshing dip I ever took. Blue-lipped and with gooseflesh bodies, we sprawled on the rocks and let the hot sun stream over us until perspiration again oozed through our pores. (*Labrador Nurse* 149)

Banfill had been “sighing for the hot baths of the city, but none of them ever gave [her] the stimulating feeling ... from that bath under the open sky, cooled by ice and warmed by the sun” (*Labrador Nurse* 150). Another time she “stepped out of woollens donned fifteen days before,” and “lathered, scrubbed, and polished [her] body until it glowed”: “With a clean body, fresh clothes, and a satisfied stomach,” Banfill is ready for anything (*Labrador Nurse* 237). After the emergency November boat trip where she spent nearly a week in a small boat with three men, she luxuriated in the pleasures provided by food, sleep and a bath:

A few hours’ break from duties and routine work always proved a great treat ... For dinner a delicious goose, browned like a Christmas turkey, awaited us. This, after several days of boat food, was so wonderful I have not words to describe it! A tub bath and three hours of unbroken sleep in a stationary bed, minus woollies, for the first time since the previous Friday.

was heavenly.

An old saying, "A daily bath is necessary for good health," may be true, yet I felt in the best of health and extremely alive without that indispensable bath. But it was refreshing and invigorating to luxuriate in the water.... (*Labrador Nurse* 192)

When Banfill reaches Quebec City at the end of her first year at Mutton Bay, her personal needs (the luxuries of civilization) are attended to first: "Feeling like Rip Van Winkle, and reeking with fish odors, I sought the Young Women's Christian Association and a bath. After a luxurious tub, shampoo, haircut, wave, and movie, I took the train for home" (*Labrador Nurse* 153-154).

Craig notes that "missionaries took pride in attesting to their physical toughness and their adaptability to harsh circumstances. Stories of ... endurance on the trail, told as they impressed the natives, are meant to impress the reader as well" (78). Endurance spells exhaustion, and as Jill Perry emphasizes, "Exhaustion was one of the nurses' biggest problems ... Complaints of exhaustion continued throughout the 1920s and 30s" (96). Williams, Carwardine, and Bailey are examples of this. From her first day in Mutton Bay, Banfill is aware that the nursing station nurse is on call twenty-four hours a day, 365 days a year. There is no respite. Not only does she cope with the district's medical problems, but her other roles seem endless. On one occasion as Banfill prepares to attend a coastal wedding (a trip necessitating an overnight stay), she had already been up "two whole nights that week" (*Labrador Nurse* 83). Exhaustion (and a hint of cultural superiority) is why she is not "enthusiastic at the thought of sitting long hours in a crowded room permeated with the mingled odors of humans, dogs, sealskin boots, and

food” (*Labrador Nurse* 83). A wedding celebration does not mean rest for Banfill.

Although it is after three when she finally gets to bed (“Half asleep, I hauled off two sweaters and my skirt then pulled on my pyjamas over my woollens. With heavy quilts tucked about my neck, snuggled into a goose-feather bed, I forgot the world” [*Labrador Nurse* 87]), her rest is short-lived: a baby needs delivering. It is five before she returns to bed and at seven she is urgently awakened as “a heavy, wicked sea [is] making outside” (*Labrador Nurse* 88) necessitates heading for Mutton Bay without breakfast. “Cold, hungry, tired, and sleepy” (*Labrador Nurse* 88), once more Banfill crawls out of bed. Exhausted and sleep deprived, a rough trip in an open boat is her reality:

Two miles out our boat headed straight into the teeth of a monstrous wave. The boat mounted high on the swell as green water rushed under and a beastly white-capped wave split over the stern. Icy salt water cascaded above us and drenched everything and everybody. Women screamed, “Us’ll all be drowned! Plez! Plez! John, turn back!”

Mrs. Lyons dropped to her knees and started counting her rosary ... John knew if he turned back he would have to leave his boat in that harbor all winter. Also we would have to hike six miles over an almost impassable unbroken trail of rocks and portages. But to go on might mean death to all. The boat righted itself and, with a loud spank, struck the next wave. We rode the crest of a wild breaker ... Each mile seemed longer and rougher than the preceding one.

... We had taken four hours to make six miles ...

No more Coast weddings that involved a night’s stay for me!
(*Labrador Nurse* 88-89)

4.3.8 *Blurring of Roles*

The Mutton Bay nurse made an annual winter trip with a dog team and driver in February/March to visit her district. “to check undernourished babies, haul out rotten

teeth, clean up smelly sores, and give mothers pre- and post-natal advice—in fact, to be Jack-of-all-trades in the medical and nursing line” (*Labrador Nurse* 110). While a “miniature dispensary and operating room” was a necessary part of the equipment, there was no space for even a change of clothing for the nurse. Banfill had heard “such exciting tales” of her predecessor’s winter trip that she “keenly anticipat[ed] one of [her] own” (*Labrador Nurse* 110), but fears and self-doubt surface the night before she is due to leave, and her troubled mind conjures up graphic scenarios:

... sleep would not come. Troublesome gremlins crept into my mind to keep me awake. First, I had a vision of being snow-bound in an isolated spot with no food. Slow freezing from starvation presented a ghastly picture. As that scene faded, I seemed to be trying to deliver a baby but was unable to because I had forgotten my forceps. A suggestion made just before sleep is hard to eradicate. Mole hills grew to mountains. After hours of tossing and turning, I dropped into a non-restful sleep.... (*Labrador Nurse* 112)

An epidemic awaits her at one settlement: “Seventy-five men, women, and children were in bed, huddled over stoves, lying on couches or curled up on the floor beside the hot stoves” (*Labrador Nurse* 125). Going “from home to home examining, diagnosing, and treating ... [with a] limited amount of drugs” (*Labrador Nurse* 125) is exhausting, and creates an overwhelming sense of inadequacy. Banfill “longed to be three nurses—one here [St. Paul’s], one en route [on her winter trip], and one at Mutton Bay” (*Labrador Nurse* 125). There is no relief, and an exhausted Banfill copes alone: “For a week, from early morning until far into the night, I went from one patient to another, easing a gasping baby, softening and freshening the pillows of men and women, holding cups of water and

dropping pills into mouths of patients ..." (*Labrador Nurse* 125). On another occasion Banfill was called to Harrington Hospital to lend assistance. She had already "endured twelve strenuous hours and the storm followed [her] into the hospital," but after a few hours of sleep, she "donned a sterile gown and gloves [after several years of non-practice] and assisted the doctor" with three operations, and returned to bed "for a couple of hours before going on night duty" (*Labrador Nurse* 138, 139). As she describes it, the next three days involve a blurring of roles and are "nightmares of nursing, issuing clothing, spreading redberries on the rocks, bathing babies, and supervising maids" (*Labrador Nurse* 139). As for rest, Banfill "caught a few winks of sleep at night, with an ear open for bells and babies demanding night feedings" (*Labrador Nurse* 139). Such is the brutal schedule and pace of an isolated nursing station nurse.

Being a Grenfell nurse meant much more than simply having a nurse's certificate; it demanded filling a plethora of non-medical roles. Jill Perry notes that "[e]xtensive non-medical work continued to be a standard expectation of Grenfell nurses throughout the 1920s and 1930s" (84). The nursing station nurse was the Jack/Jill-of-all-trades, and this is foregrounded in Banfill's memoir. Her training had not prepared her for cleaning stovepipes and setting up "winter stoves," but as her predecessor had done these chores, she "could not mar the reputation of the Mutton Bay nurse" (*Labrador Nurse* 76).

Fuelling the heater almost causes disaster. Responding to the maid's information that her predecessor had always "filled the Quebec heater with coal and closed off the dampers before going to bed," Banfill felt that she had to "live up to Sister's reputation" (*Labrador*

Nurse 93-94). The result of heeding this advice is “a terrific explosion” that “raised the top of the heater, released the gas, and then the top had settled back into place” (*Labrador Nurse 94*). The maid’s horrified response contains the missing, but essential, bit of information: “Oh, Sister, ’tis wonderful that wes be alive! Yous should have let off the gas before closing it up” (*Labrador Nurse 94*). When a death did occur in the community, there was “no doctor to issue the death certificate, no undertaker to perform the necessary functions, no clergyman to comfort the sorrowing family. A nurse must be prepared to be all of these” (*Labrador Nurse 113*).

Chief among the nurse’s non-medical duties was social work. During “standstill” months of November and early December, the station nurse sandwiched in “community and social work, home-nursing classes, welfare visits ... pre- and post-natal [classes], conduct clubs, [and] help[ed] with Red Cross work” (*Labrador Nurse 94*). The nurse, along with the Grenfell community worker, cut hair and conducted Sunday School when there was no available clergyman. On her winter trip, Banfill learned again that “a nurse has to be Jack-of-all-trades” (*Labrador Nurse 126*). She did not think while training for three years to be a nurse that one day her “duties would include making dog shoes [canvas booties]!” (*Labrador Nurse 126*). The advent of Christmas also brought time-consuming duties. The nurse “prepare[d] and sen[t] a toy, a bag of candy, and a card to about six hundred children in twelve isolated villages along the Coast” (*Labrador Nurse 180*). Although the articles were supplied by the Mission, “the nurse has to sort the toys, choose appropriate gifts, and allot exactly the same amount of candy for each child”

(*Labrador Nurse* 180-181). Training nursing station maids was a task Banfill particularly disliked: "Heat, flies, and training a new maid gave me a few more grey hairs and taxed my nerves and stomach to the limit" (*Labrador Nurse* 221). These young girls had never cooked from recipes, and although Banfill enjoyed "nicely cooked food," she "learned not to be too particular. It was never wise to look at things too closely or to analyze the contents. As long as it was nourishing and had been boiled or baked it would not kill me and it was food" (*Labrador Nurse* 222). In a letter to Doris Banfill, she lamented, "This is the third maid. None of them had done much cooking before coming here, so I never know what may present itself on the table. I may order blanc mange. It may appear as mush or as an indian rubber ball" (15 February 1943).

On the medical side, Banfill also filled roles for which she had no training. In part I, the dentist visits, and Banfill assists. In part II she is the dentist: she applies the forceps and Uncle John provides the wrist force. Banfill has little experience to prepare her for this onerous task, but her humanity forces her to action:

Having had previous experience with those long-rooted, black-cavities shell-edged teeth, I remembered the crunch of the outer decayed rims when the forceps were applied. I had seen the dentist take out such a tooth, piece by piece, under local anæsthetic and did not want to tackle this one alone; but what could I do? It would be inhuman to send him back until a doctor might pass his way some months later. Something had to be attempted.... (*Labrador Nurse* 173)

"Something had to be attempted" is Banfill's motto in many cases that needed a doctor or a surgeon. A case of "rized finger" was a case for a doctor and an anaesthetic. The doctor is unable to come, and Banfill attempts this without the aid of either, with a maid to hold

the flashlight, leaving the nurse with both hands free for scalpel, swabs and patient. On another occasion, confronted with an injury where the “whole scalp had been ripped open to the bone” (*Labrador Nurse* 240), Banfill performs surgery. She had to “rack [her] brains to recall skull surgery witnessed in the operating room” (*Labrador Nurse* 241):

I had never tackled such a wound, but there was no way out of it. I recalled that it was not advisable to give an anaesthetic to uncertain skull cases except in extreme emergencies, and especially without a doctor available. Fortunately, I had brought a bottle of green soap. With soap and razor I cut away as much of the matted hair as possible, thus delaying as long as possible the suturing operation. I taxed my brain to recall surgical details, and tried to fortify myself physically and spiritually. (*Labrador Nurse* 241)

With a very primitive operating room and without anaesthetic, Banfill sutures the wound, then praises her fisherman-patient for his “courage and grit” which “would put most of us to shame” (*Labrador Nurse* 241). Banfill’s readers recognize that her praise is equally applicable to herself. What pluck, what courage to tackle this gaping wound, this “sickening sight” (*Labrador Nurse* 240) without knowing the correct procedure or having the necessary skills. Miraculously, several days later her patient drives his dog-team to the nursing station for a change of dressing.

4.3.9 *Appropriating Official Mission Discourse*

Banfill concludes her memoir with two touching and contrasting anecdotes that appropriate the themes of family/sentimentality, and which fit the official Grenfell discourse discussed in chapter 2. First, she depicts “[s]hiftless, lazy, ignorant” Peter Smith, who can “hardly write his name,” who “doggedly refused to exert himself to

supply one cord of wood so that his little daughters could attend school” (*Labrador Nurse* 248). But Peter Smith is vulnerable—his weakness is his three-year old daughter. After her death he wants a snapshot of the “tiny, angel-faced babe ... dressed in her Sunday white dress ... so fragile and sweet,” by which to remember her (*Labrador Nurse* 249). With this request, Peter redeems himself unknowingly, and Banfill’s respect for him increases: “Tender hearts are often covered by hard-shelled coverings” (*Labrador Nurse* 249). In case she appears too carried away by this display, she points out that “had he been more thoughtful and a better provider probably today he would have a living instead of a picture Nancy” (*Labrador Nurse* 249). Nancy reflects Banfill’s inability to save a life: “Her life and death seemed to stand for the almost insuperable difficulties with which the Labrador nurse must contend” (*Labrador Nurse* 249).

Little Janey, “the other side of the picture” (*Labrador Nurse* 249), is one patient whom Banfill does help. Her father—“powerful, quick-tempered, big-hearted Red John from across the tickle,” a “giant-size[d] man” with “huge broad shoulders, bulging muscles, and fat chin stubbled with reddish-brown whiskers [which] gave him the appearance of a cave man” (*Labrador Nurse* 253)—stands in sharp contrast to Peter Smith. Red John’s voice “boom[s]” and his physical presence is intimidating: “I looked up at him and felt like Tom Thumb gazing up at a giant and wondered how I would ever keep up with those powerful, long strides” (*Labrador Nurse* 253). Red John had boasted to the villagers that “Wese never call Sister. Ise has no use for her newfangled ideas” (*Labrador Nurse* 254)—he is the skeptic, the scoffer. (His wife has sent him.) Janey is

not suffering from diphtheria or croup, but a fish bone, an artefact from coastal life, impedes her breathing:

I ... crooked my finger, and ran it along the tonsil area, then to the tongue. There it encountered a two-pronged pinlike obstacle. The child spluttered, choked, and kicked frantically. Red John leaped forward, grabbed my arm, and bellowed, "Yous choking hern." He jerked my arm back. Out came my finger and with it a V-shaped fishbone....

Red John looked at me and faltered, "Ise didn't mean to butt in, Sister, but Ise thought she was dying and I loves her so." He bent his huge shoulders forward. Little Janey entwined her wee arms around that great neck. He raised her face to his and stood tenderly holding her as she slobbered kisses on his cheek. (*Labrador Nurse* 254)

Once the fear of losing his daughter has been removed, he is quick to state a need for Banfill's medicine: "Ise guess wese needs yous here in Mutton Bay." "His words of thanks were few but there was no doubt as to their sincerity and they warmed my heart" (*Labrador Nurse* 255). The unbelieving has finally believed; with this victory the nurse and the Mission gain stature.

4.3.10 *Leaving "Up North"*

Although she is "loathe to leave," Banfill left the coast in early August. Her totally exhausting year is summed up in one sentence: "Physically I was in need of a rest and a holiday" (*Labrador Nurse* 255). Banfill's first experience of peace is portrayed as a scene from the rocking chair out on the little porch, as she gazes over the water (*Labrador Nurse* 32/33). Her last Labrador scene is also viewed from the porch, as she muses on "the afterglow of a magnificent Labrador sunset." These scenes frame her Mutton Bay

experiences. As it had fourteen years previously:

Some of the peace of that lovely evening stole into my heart and I thought not of the hardships of life on the Coast nor of the tragedies I had witnessed, but of the fine people I had come to know—their free and independent spirit, their enjoyment of simple pleasures, their patience and courage, their unselfish helpfulness in time of trouble, their faith in God and their desire to do His will. (*Labrador Nurse* 255)

Banfill had planned a different life (she does not disclose details) for herself, “and when the call came that Mutton Bay needed me, the decision was not an easy one to make. But I was glad, very glad, that I had had these years here; I had come to love this harsh yet beautiful land and the reserved yet friendly people I had served to the best of my ability” (*Labrador Nurse* 255).

At the end of part I, Banfill takes a young boy out of Mutton Bay and transports and transplants him to Montreal. At the end of part II (and her memoir), her last sentiments are voiced by a “homesick lad who had gone from Mutton Bay to Montreal” (*Labrador Nurse* 255). He is “living in what was luxury compared to his Coast home and yet he was unhappy” (*Labrador Nurse* 256). When asked how he liked living in the big city, “his pent-up feelings found relief in words,” that despite making money,

At home the ducks and birds will be coming in from the sea ... the trout will be leaping in the streams ... the salmon will be coming up the river ... the fish will be running in the deep water. I can see a seal near a cake of ice and I am not there to shoot it.... I miss the smell of the sea, the smell of the fish, our northern lights.... I miss the howl of the dogs at bedtime and coming home at night, the neighbors asking, “How many fish today?” Here, in the city, you have everything, but 't is so dirty, so noisy, and so crowded.... People are always in a hurry ... and they don't care what you're doing.... I like it better up north. (*Labrador Nurse* 256, ellipses in original)

The essence of Coastal living cannot be equated with materialism. There is no dialect in this passage, and the focus is on the sights, the sounds, the smell of the north. She is the homesick lad who “knew with complete certainty that when I reached the big city with its noise and bustle and hurry I should often feel like this homesick lad, for I, too, ‘like it better up north’” (*Labrador Nurse* 256). In *Labrador Nurse* Banfill revisits in memory the land and the people and (textually) it allows her to be there.

4.4 De-Mythologizing the Image

According to Craig, “Missionary service has not attracted cowards; it has attracted people with unusually strong wills as well as faith, and with the determination, discipline, and intelligence to impose both their will and faith upon peoples they were prepared to love in advance of meeting them” (25). Banfill’s memoir reveals bravery, physical endurance and independence equal to any male doctor’s, even as it also reveals weaknesses. When Banfill arrived at Mutton Bay she is, literally, wobbly on her feet, but she quickly finds her “sea” legs. With confidence from a successful first case, she is in her stride. The capable Banfill is the quintessential Grenfell nurse, and she does not complain about the vicissitudes inherent in her position as nursing station nurse. Everything is considered a matter for learning. She is gutsy, independent, competent and proves herself able to deal with anything. Not only is she sensitive to nature, but she is sensitive and compassionate to people. Banfill does not transgress any boundaries of propriety, and she admires and learns from the coastal people, particularly Uncle John,

the community patriarch. Occasionally Banfill's commentary hints at a cultural superiority. Banfill is human: she plays up her propensity to seasickness—she suffers, and she describes it in detail, more than once. She gets exhausted, but complains little. She has personal fears and insecurities about her ability to perform as the sole medical personnel on the station. Although the personal is not foregrounded, it is insistent, and encoded in her “intense longings.” Considerable religious tensions in the community are portrayed as a subtext, not as an overt problem. Banfill runs the Mutton Bay nursing station on her own, with the help of an aide/maid, and with an occasional visit from the doctor or dentist, but the frenetic pace belongs to the nurse. There is little change from her first tenure to her return over a decade later. In her memoir, she lives out all the roles that are expected of the nursing station nurse: she creates an admirable heroine.

Craig criticizes accounts like Banfill's (that is, writings related to missionary “full” lives) as lacking “the human spark,” “the depth of character description and relationships that gives a level of fascination to the full lives,” and “a sense of completeness” (112). He sees them as “partial books” that yet “display the texture of place to a greater extent.” They are, he admits, “not failed lives, as their aim was clearly more limited ... Neither are they uninteresting books, if one accepts the limits of time and character, and values the emphasis instead on the text as travel and fund-raising literature” (112). Craig seems to be doing Banfill the same disservice as Beacon had years earlier: partial reading.

ADSF did announce Banfill's book, but to label it “a vivid and graphic picture”

tells nothing about the book:

Attracted by the work of the Grenfell Mission, founded by Sir Wilfred Grenfell along the rugged coast of Labrador, Bessie Banfill spent three years ministering to the needs of the scattered fisherfolk, who wrest a precarious living from the sea on those shores.

Following the example of others who have written on the noble profession of Florence Nightingale generally and the experiences of Canadian nurses particularly, Miss Banfill gives a graphic and vivid picture of life as lived by English fishermen and their families, as seen day by day through the eyes of a trained nurse.

Born near Richmond, Quebec, the author graduated from the Sherbrooke Hospital and has practiced her profession as a nurse in Saskatchewan as well as in Labrador. *Labrador Nurse*, published in August, 1952, by Ryerson Press, Toronto. Author Bessie J. Banfill, now of Ottawa, Canada. (E.G.G., "Books" 118)

A quarter-page publisher's (Robert Hale) advertisement in July 1954 *ADSF* offers *Labrador Nurse* as "a most inspiring story of courage and devotion," yet it insists on the author's "most attractive modesty, making light of the dangers and hardships she shared, often entailing hazardous journeys by dog-sleigh or open boat to bring medical aid to some isolated family" (65).

Where exactly does this memoir fit in the official Grenfell discourse? Does Banfill paint too harsh a picture? Did the book contain too much Banfill and not enough Grenfell? It fits, in part, the image of the nurse promulgated by propaganda, but it shows the practical, real side of nursing for the Mission. It is more graphic than Burchill's memoir or the later memoirs of Diack or Jupp: is this why Seabrook dismissed it? It shows plenty of adventure as well as the image of the nurse as angel of mercy. But it also shows what the romanticized picture painted by Grenfell and the propaganda writers did

not: it exposes (in part) the bone weariness experienced by Banfill—she does not state it but her narrative makes the reader feel it. It shows the variety of tasks that are often numbing, exhausting, and far outside the range of her skills or training. It also exposes her fears about her ability to cope with this responsibility. It presents Grenfell nursing in too much realistic detail to fit in with the sanitized, romanticized official discourse. The image of the retching nurse vomiting over the side of a boat, or one who is covered with blood and slime, perspiring and wet from the flying spray in the salmon battle, is not a positive propaganda tool. While it is not clear whether Banfill's manuscript was vetted by the Grenfell Mission, it seems unlikely. Writing and publishing without the proper stamp of approval was somewhat iconoclastic, and Banfill, like Burchill, presents a counter-hegemonic voice.

Notes

1. All quotations are from the 1953 edition.
2. I have been unable to locate the records (personnel files) of the Ottawa branch of the IGA, where presumably Banfill would have been on file. The source of Banfill's origins are provided by Hugh Banfill.
3. The *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador* lists Banfill's date of birth as 1904. According to Hugh Banfill, 18 January 1899 is the correct date (letter to author, 15 February 1999).
4. Banfill repeatedly refers to her "Scotch" heritage. For instance, "Being Scotch I am using red [typewriter ribbon]. Ordered an all black ribbon and received this one. Usually use both sides. Also, am writing early because postage is going up a cent shortly!!" (letter to Evelyn Banfill, 11 October 1967, from Avonmore). It appears to denote frugality.
 My thanks to Hugh Banfill who generously sent me a total of fourteen letters which Bessie Banfill had written to her relatives Evelyn and Doris Banfill. The ten letters to Evelyn span from 1931 to 1964: 7 June 1931 (from Leslie Post Office, Quebec); 6 November 1935 (Wakaw, Saskatchewan); 7 January 1937 (SS *Maquinna* en route to Victoria, BC); 15 December 1944 (WMS Hospital, Bonnyville, Alberta); 12 January 1945 (Kelvington, Saskatchewan); 7 June 1946, 30 October 1963, 17 March 1964, 7 August 1964, 11 October 1967 (Avonmore, Ontario). And seven letters to Evelyn: 15 February 1943 (Mutton Bay); 27 March 1970, 4 May 1972, [] December 1972 (Avonmore). Banfill's Avonmore letters were typewritten. In addition to the letters, there was one post card of the Laurentian Sanitarium at Ste. Agathe des Monts, Quebec, with explanatory notes of the buildings in Banfill's handwriting on the back of the card.
5. There are gaps in Banfill's early nursing career. In its "List of Permanent Staff and Volunteer Workers," *ADSF* (July 1928): 66-69 lists Bessie J. Banfill and gives her address as The Chipman Hospital, St. Stephens, New Brunswick. Banfill may have nursed there prior to Mutton Bay.
6. "Frontier Nurse and Widely Read Author Bessie J. Banfill Dies," *Glengarry News* (Alexandria, Ontario) 20 November 1975: 14 (all quotations cited as "Frontier Nurse") was provided by Hugh Banfill. The text of this obituary is the same as "Works of B.J. Banfill, Nurse, Author, will be remembered," *Standard Freeholder* 18 November 1975. My thanks to Coleen Payne, Cornwall Public Library, for sending me this obituary.
7. Mutton Bay also figures in Lesley Diack's story, and to a lesser degree in Dorothy Jupp's. Diack spent her first winter on the coast (1950-51) there. In 1959, Jupp was asked

to go to the failing nursing station for the summer. She accepted, then changed her mind. She wrote Dr. Gordon Thomas: "I really feel that I do not want to go to Mutton Bay, as with things as they are, I feel I could not settle down, and put my back into making a job of it. Also, I do not speak French, and I am not a Roman Catholic" (PANL, MG 372, Box 32, File: Dorothy Jupp 1959-1961, 12 June 1959). Banfill also did not speak French nor was she a Roman Catholic.

8. PANL, MG 63, Business Office, Box 8, File: Misc Reports, Curtis to Houghton, 4 May 1959. Rear Admiral Frank Houghton was Business Director of the IGA.

9. United Church Archives (UCA), Acc. No. 83.058C, Box 29, File No. 1.

10. Since she graduated from United Church Training School for Missions in 1932, Banfill's posting to Magdalen Islands would have been sometime between leaving Mutton Bay (1929) and entering Training School. A letter written to Evelyn Banfill (7 June 1931) is headed: "Leslie POffice, Quebec." The community of Leslie is located on the northern tip of the Magdalen Islands.

11. Page 6 of the same notes: "Bessie Banfill—Hobby: Bargains; Weakness: Chewing Gum; Favorite Saying: The question is." UCA. 98.101C.19.7.

12. UCA. 98.101C.16.6.

13. UCA. 98.101C.16.6.

14. UCA. 83.058C.200.1.

15. According to the jacket of the 1953 edition of *Labrador Nurse*: "In 1935, *while* she was doing pioneer nursing in the West, Miss Banfill received a medal from King George V" (my emphasis). Cf. with the explanation in her obituary: "*For* doing pioneer nursing in the West, she received a medal from King George V in 1935" (my emphasis). It can only be stated with certainty that she did receive a medal.

16. UCA. 83.058C.200.1.

17. UCA. 83.058C.200.1.

18. UCA. 83.058C.200.1.

19. Letter to Evelyn Banfill, 12 January 1945, from Kelvington, Saskatchewan.

20. I was unable to find any extant records to verify this.

21. Cf. Magdalen Islands: she “had no choice” but to go. “Desperately sick people needed me. I had health, strength, qualifications, energy, initiative and a desire to help wherever most needed” (*Nurse of the Islands* 7).

22. Obituary: “A fall from a dog sled injured her back after 20 months there, and she was prevented from doing as much full-time nursing.” Jacket blurb: “In 1942 she returned to the Labrador Mission and suffered a serious back injury when thrown from a dog-team, thus preventing her from doing full-time work.” Did she fall, or was she thrown? In any case, Banfill was bothered by back pain. In a letter to Doris Banfill, she writes: “my back will not permit me to travel long distances, without having to suffer for it” (27 May 1970). And again, to Doris (4 May 1972), that her “travelling days are over.” She sleeps on a “fracture board, and usually have to put the electric pad on about 3.00 [a.m.]. So decided, 73, was a ripe old age to stop gadding about.”

23. She had first owned a Ford Model T about 1925 which she learned to drive on the fields of her cousin Herbert Banfill’s farm at Waterville, Quebec (Hugh Banfill, letter to author, 15 February 1999).

24. Hugh Banfill, letter to author, 28 January 1999.

25. For example, “Is it not time that we offered to some of our fine young nursing graduates, possessed by a spirit of adventure and a desire to give a few years of service before marriage, an opportunity to assist our own developing North?” (Dickinson 69).

26. Banfill kept a letter in her safety deposit box: it was an invitation to marry a farmer, but the name had been cut off (Hugh Banfill, letter to author, 15 February 1999).

27. Hugh Banfill, letter to author, 28 January 1999. In a letter to Evelyn Banfill 11 October 1967, Banfill writes: “Had a pleasant surprise yesterday. Received my copies of *Pioneer Nurse*, which I ordered as soon as published. Again being Scotch, I am sending my Christmas presents early in case relatives might buy copies. Hope you enjoy the book. I have not had time to read all of it. Started last night but was interrupted.”

28. Hugh Banfill notes that Banfill had started another book before she died, but this has not been substantiated.

One newspaper article noted that Banfill’s books are listed in “the archives as medical, travels and biography, rather than fiction, as all her books are revelations of the kinds of demands made upon doctors and nurses, public health workers, missionaries and Red Cross conditions in remote areas” (“Frontier Nurse” 14). The reference to archives here is unclear. The deposition of Banfill’s manuscripts is unknown. Her nephew, who was her executor, did not find any of them after her death (Hugh Banfill, letter to author, 28 January 1999).

29. PANL, MG 63, Great Britain and Ireland, Box 9, File: Press Cuttings 1950.1951-52. This notice is unsigned.

30. Hugh Banfill, letter to author, 28 January 1999.

31. PANL, MG 63, Great Britain & Ireland, Box 9, File: Press Cuttings 1950.1951-52 contains an article published around the time of Banfill's book which attests to this marginalization: "Praise for British Nurses: Outposts in Labrador" (*The Scotsman*, Edinburgh, 19 November 1952):

Tribute to British nurses ... who have gone out to Newfoundland to serve with the Grenfell Mission, has lately come from the American superintendent, Dr. Charles S. Curtis, C.B.E. If it were not for these nurses, he writes, the nursing stations of the mission scattered along the Labrador and Northern Newfoundland coasts would be closed, "as we have tried in vain to secure nurses from this province, the mainland, and the U.S."

These nurses work in the most isolated and difficult parts of the province, and Dr. Curtis cites one as having travelled the previous day for fourteen hours in a small boat covered with canvas, bringing a sick child to St. Anthony Hospital.

[...] ... when the ice is too thick for boats yet not strong enough for dog-teams, which usually run over sea ice as land is too rocky and precipitous. Nurse, patient, and driver sometimes arrive frostbitten.

Chopping off ice to make tea, and putting the bread, butter, and milk near a fire to thaw, can all be part of the routine on a journey by komatik with a patient in urgent need of operation. Besides nursing, social and welfare work is included, the nurse being brought into closer contact with the fishermen and their families than is usual in less isolated places. Long distances have often to be covered, and the nurse may have to remain for a night or two in a patient's house....

32. PANL, MG 63, Lesley Diack personnel file.

33. PANL, MG 63, Irene Biss personnel file.

34. PANL, MG 63, Great Britain and Ireland, Box 13, 3 May 1954. I have been unable to trace this review.

35. See, for example, Art Cockerill, "Ready Aye Ready: Three Decades of British Women in Newfoundland and Labrador," *north nord* (May/June 1976): 23-27.

36. PANL, MG 372, Box 1, File: Curtis 1954-1955, Curtis to Thomas 30 November 1954.

37. PANL, MG 63, Penelope Barnard personnel file.

38. Hugh Banfill notes *Khibrat Fi Al Tamreed (Experiences in Nursing)* (1970), published in Cairo, which, he suggests, may have been translated from *Great Adventures in Nursing*, comp. Helen Wright and Samuel Rapport (Harper and Brother), or there may have been two books (Hugh Banfill, letter to author, 15 February 1999). I have not been able to trace this.

39. Banfill's adventurous streak was apparent after she left nursing. According to Hugh Banfill, "Her brother Will was a visitor from Richmond and when he was in his seventies he mentioned that he had never flown and wanted to. So they went to Ottawa and flew to Montreal" (Hugh Banfill, letter to author, 15 February 1999).

40. Clayre L. Ruland writes of her winter trip: "Struck our first slob ice in St. Augustine Bay, and for a while I had a very helpless feeling. The dogs were literally swimming, and the bars of our komatik were submerged. We got through safely, but I don't want to repeat the experience.... Am still half frozen from ten continuous hours on the komatik, and glad to be in my own bed tonight. Have covered approximately three hundred miles since I left thirteen days ago, and treated over a hundred patients. True, I am tired, but it is very satisfying to feel that you are able to do something for somebody, however small, and I would start out again tomorrow and make the same trip if necessary" (52-53).

41. Catherine Cleghorn depicts the hazards of travel from Mutton Bay to Forteau. In a 30-foot trapboat, "[t]he forecastle provides quarters for me. One can kneel on the floor or sit upright in it," and Cleghorn has to "crawl on all fours over a roof covered with ice" as the only method to get from the forecastle to the after cabin which contained the food: "One slip, and an icy swim in a December sea" (94).

42. On another occasion (returning to Mutton Bay in 1942) she reads a detective story: "There were thirteen of us aboard, there are thirteen letters in the name *Nellie A. Cluett*, and Miss Banfill, a nurse going to Mutton Bay, was reading a detective story which contained approximately thirteen murders" (Merrick, "North Again" 82). (Merrick refers to Banfill, "of Toronto and the homestead country of western Canada," as one of the five "not-so-seasoned passengers" on the *Cluett* in very rough weather.)

43. An extract from Florence Bailey's letter is included in the Annual Report for 1907. Bailey writes, "I left about six o'clock, and arrived home feeling both cold and hungry, for I had nothing to eat since the morning, as I did not care to run the risk of eating food in these houses" (*Toilers* April 1908, 91).

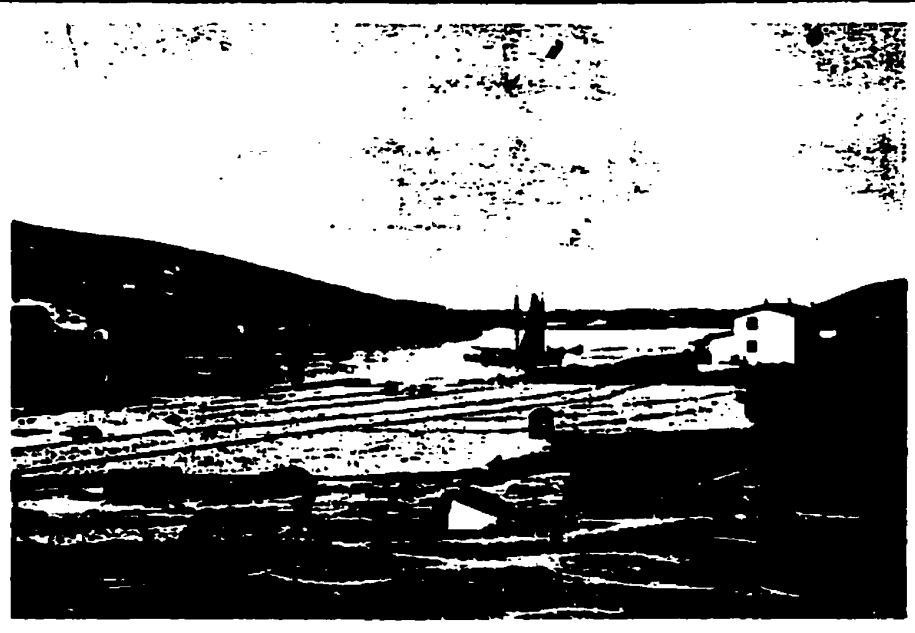
LESLEY
DIACK

LABRADOR NURSE



GOLLANCZ

LABRADOR NURSE



Three years with the women
who live in the only
sparsely populated area
in the world.

LESLEY DIACK

With a Foreword by the author

Cover of *Labrador Nurse* (1963)

Chapter 5

Lesley Molloy Diack: From Harassed Martha to Contemplative Mary

I think it is Evelyn Underhill who somewhere asks the Marys of this world never to forget "the poor harassed Marthas at the expense of whose pain the rest of the world lives"; out here we were often harassed Marthas, often with little or no time to pray ourselves, all we could do was to offer our daily lives and to hope that someone was making good our deficiency. (Diack, Labrador Nurse 120)

5.1 Introduction: Sacrificing the Female Author to Mission Propaganda

Late in December 1954, a baby with sacro-coccygeal teratoma [tumor in the sacro-coccygeal region] was reported in the St. John's *Evening Telegram*¹ as Siamese twins. This baby, born with a mass over both buttocks, was delivered at home and admitted to the Grenfell Mission's Flowers Cove nursing station one day after its birth.² As hazardous travelling conditions over the ice could have precipitated a fatal hemorrhage, the baby was kept at the nursing station until 2 January when it was airlifted to St. Anthony where a three-pound tumor was removed. Until that time, the baby required skilled care, and the nursing station nurse, Lesley Diack, had to rely on daily radio-telephone (R.T.) contact with the hospital. However, scant attention was paid to the nurse in the drama played out in the press. Never named, she is mentioned in two articles as "the nurse" or the "Grenfell nurse" and her only role is to report the case to the doctor or to attend the birth. Diack's own story of baby Hazeroth, "The *True* Story of Our 'Siamese Twins,'" appeared in *ADSF* (April 1955). "No credit due to us at all—just one of those things that is a privilege ..." (Diack to Seabrook, 31 January 1955).³

The Grenfell Mission used the text and title of this *ADSF* article (excising all personal names, with the exception of the doctor, Dr. Thomas) for a publicity pamphlet.⁴ The author's name is not found in the pamphlet; she has been edited out, invisibilized, unlike the hero, the (male) doctor of the Grenfell Mission, who is named seven times. As the headnote makes clear, Diack has been reduced to a gender stereotype—"a Grenfell nurse," modest and self-sacrificing, to whom such events are "an incident"—and sacrificed to propaganda, substantiating the claim that "feminine traits are associated with powerlessness and being controlled," as opposed to the doctor, whose masculine traits traditionally belong with "power and control" (Basow 7). An emphasis on service—an ideology promulgated by the Mission's official discourse—occupies the space generally reserved for author credits; in effect, a depersonalization:

The following account of an incident in the life of a Grenfell nurse, so modestly and simply written, tells its own story of the spirit of service, and of the people whom the Grenfell Mission serves in the sub-Arctic and still-remote country of Labrador and Northern Newfoundland.

It is not clear from the pamphlet if the text was written by a nurse; it could potentially have been any Mission personnel. From the author's comments (the baby was "brought in to us at Flowers Cove Nursing Station"; "[t]he tumour was quite unlike anything my assistant or I had ever seen before"), and the accompanying headnote quoted above, we can only infer that it was written by one of the nurses. The headnote, with its reference to modesty and simplicity, suggests a female author: "modestly" (self-effacing); "simply written" (women do not write anything complex). The diction of the headnote further

suggests that it is unnecessary to name an author, as it “tells its own story” of the spirit of service; “service” was, after all, the foundation of the Grenfell Mission, and expected from its nurses.

After the Hazeroth pamphlet was printed, Betty Seabrook, GAGBI’s secretary, sent a copy of “*our* little leaflet, which is *your* story of the ‘Siamese Twins’” [my emphasis] to Diack, adding, “It is so well written that I felt we ought to use it, and everyone is enjoying it very much. How is Hazeroth?” (Seabrook to Diack, 19 August 1955). It was used because it was excellent propaganda material, not because it was “so well written.” Diack had absorbed the official discourse and written a story with all the properties of good propaganda: the right subject (the ailing infant), and a saviour (the noble benevolent Mission). These ingredients, mixed with the right amount of pathos, create a touching story. Without the Mission’s hospital and hero-doctor, Hazeroth would have died. An objectified Hazeroth is a propaganda tool; rewritten into the official Grenfell discourse of the appeals pamphlet, it will help to recruit nurses seeking adventure (the helicopter ride adds a touch of adventure) or wishing to be angels of mercy, or to solicit funds. As Jill Perry has pointed out, “[p]ropaganda was, from the beginning, a driving force in the Grenfell enterprise ... public financial support was a key ingredient in the Mission’s ability to function. Private donations were unabashedly solicited by official Mission publications” (27). In her letter to Diack, however, Seabrook makes no reference to the fact that Diack’s name is omitted from the pamphlet. A sense of deflation results from the placement of Seabrook’s question (“How is Hazeroth?”):

Hazeroth, like Diack, has served her purpose—both are tools of the Grenfell Mission.

The Mission derived considerable propaganda from the Hazeroth case. Diack also prepared a case history on the “world famous baby” for the British *Nursing Mirror*: medically it was an interesting case. The first four paragraphs of Diack’s case history (manuscript version) provide an introduction to the Mission; a final paragraph focuses on its adventure potential:

The helicopter, with its door to door service, undoubtably makes the ideal ambulance for evacuation of patients from isolated and remote areas. It has many practical advantages, arising out of the facility with which it lands. Also, one need never fear to get lost in a helicopter! On this occasion, when travelling to St. Anthony in a thick snow-storm, the pilot did get lost temporarily while trying to cross a vast expanse of ice on a frozen bay; twice he circled, in an endeavour to find a landmark, then, just at the crucial moment, some small, black dots were espied on the ice below. It was a dog-team, and down came the helicopter, and landed beside it, to ask the way! (5)⁵

The case history, routed through Seabrook, the Mission’s (London) censorial eye, was subsequently published by the *Nursing Mirror*, who offered to “pay a fee of three guineas for the copyright.” Seabrook waived the fee as “we may wish to publish it in some of the medical papers ... [and] we think publicity will be better for the Mission” (Seabrook to Diack, 18 April 1955). Seabrook informed Thomas of Diack’s “extremely interesting” case history, noting that “those things do help to make the work of the Mission known in this country” and suggested its potential for publication in the *British Medical Journal*.⁶ But Thomas, it seems, did not prepare an article for publication. Diack was not consulted about the disposition of the copyright or the fee. Once again, another of her articles had

been appropriated by the Mission.

Like Banfill, Diack, in her memoir of the same title, *Labrador Nurse* (Victor Gollancz, 1963), confronts and reappraises her memories (Billson 261). The memoir style, suitable to those who see their development connected to historicity, allows Diack to join her own life with that of the Mission. Helen M. Buss's suggestion that "[a] researcher must expect that a woman's memoir will often be more than it purports to be" (*Mapping* 24), is the case with Diack's memoir. In a consideration of Diack's *Labrador Nurse*, the reader has to read between the lines in order to realize that "more." According to Buss, such an active reader needs to know "the personal, cultural, historical, and literary contexts that informed the writer" (*Mapping* 23)—a contextual reading. In reading any women's accounts we are "'interpreting a text in which a marginalized subject speaks a dominant discourse' that requires a Ricoeurian 'hermeneutics of suspicion,'" by which we recognize that "women are always inscribed as other in patriarchal language and 'texts give no direct access to an "author" or to "true" women's experience'" (Buss, *Mapping* 24-25). Helen Carr, who writes on native women's accounts and from whom Buss quotes in the previous statement, suggests that we see these accounts as examples of Freud's "talking cure" which offers these women the chance to "become subjects" (Carr 137). And as Buss concludes, "although we may not completely accept the literal reality of the figure the autobiographer presents, we believe in the power it gave her and we believe in the power of language to liberate her desires, her deeply felt selfhood" (*Mapping* 25). What power, if any, did Diack gain from writing

her memoir? What is the “*true*” story of Lesley Diack and her connection with the Grenfell Mission?

5.2 Biography: A Geographical Journey

Born June 1910⁷ in Simla, India, of British nationality, Diack graduated from East Suffolk and Ipswich Hospital in 1932, and until 1939 did school nursing. From 1939 to 1946 she was Sister/Assistant Matron with the Territorial Army Nursing Service, mostly overseas in France, Iceland, North Africa, Italy, and India, and after the war did prison work and school nursing. In 1949 while working at a school in Wiltshire, Diack learned of the Grenfell Mission, and shortly after met with Seabrook. Seabrook felt that Diack was “[a] fine, capable woman ... anxious to do a worth while job” and despite the lack of a State Certified Midwife certification, she recommended Diack for a nursing station rather than a hospital as her “common sense, age and experience [were] best suited to the former” (memo, 5 April 1949).⁸

Diack was lured by the romantic picture of life on a remote Labrador nursing station presented by Seabrook in Diack’s first interview (official Grenfell discourse).

Diack was, like Burchill, eager for a new adventure:

[The nurse] must be ready, and able, to deal with any emergency that might arise. She [Seabrook] told me something of those emergencies, and of the adventures some of the other nurses had had, and of the fantastic situations in which they sometimes had found themselves. She talked airily of icebergs, and blizzards, and hazardous journeys in small open boats, and she made it all sound such fun.

I can still recapture something of the excitement with which I sat

and listened to her; here, at last, I thought, was the sort of job that would demand all that I could bring to it.... Her enthusiasm was so infectious ...
(*Labrador Nurse* 10)

Diack had also read Grenfell's *A Labrador Doctor* before she sailed to Labrador (Diack to Seabrook, 19 April 1949). In preparation for her own book, in an attempt to determine how Seabrook inspired her, Diack requested that Seabrook re-create their first interview:

You responded so much to all that I could tell you and so kindled the fire. My reaction varies with all who come here. My inspiration is drawn chiefly from reading over the old magazines, simply written but so inspiring in its simplicity; the fine tradition on which the Mission stands, men and women of all classes and creeds who gave their services so willingly, so unselfishly and who faced danger and primitive conditions unflinchingly and with such courage—all who were inspired by Grenfell who drew his power from his great faith and practical Christianity, who was loved for his faults as much as his virtues. I feel that as long as we remember this and honour it the Mission will grow in strength and never fail. (Seabrook to Diack, 14 January 1955)

En route to Labrador, Diack comforted herself with the memory of Seabrook's "glowing account, and hoped devoutly that it wasn't only her great distance from it that had lent such enchantment to her view" (*Labrador Nurse* 12). "Adventure," "fun," "excitement," and "enchantment" are all airily dispensed to sell the job.⁹ Out on the nursing station, a case of obstructed labour quickly exposed the gap between romance and Diack's reality:

There seemed no possible way of getting the baby born except by putting on forceps. It had seemed rather thrilling and exciting hearing about nurses doing things like that when sitting in Betty Seabrook's London office: it was a little different out there when faced with the actuality, when it was clear just how much was at stake, possibly the life of the mother or baby....
(*Labrador Nurse* 85)

After five years with the Mission Diack saw through the veneer of the rhetoric, and

complained to Seabrook that “all you secretaries recruit too much on the glamour of the job, (which nowadays is largely non-existent) instead of the worth-whileness of the medical work.” She offered an alternative discourse: “If you could stress a bit more the intense interest of the medical aspect of the work, and that, in spite of the difficulties of terrain and travel, that it is a first-class medical service that we give, then I think you might do better ...” (Diack to Seabrook, 20 July 1955). The presentation of the job as “romance” or “glamour,” however, was an important part of official Mission discourse, one which had proved to be a strong propaganda tool. In Katie Spalding’s time, one nurse formed “a far too romantic idea of life on the Coast, chiefly owing to *A Northern Nurse* [sic]” (Spalding to Clark, 4 May 1944). But was the book or the secretary’s discourse the culprit? When an attempt was made to disillusion this nurse about “the romance of Labrador,” it became clear that “the romance of it all [did] play a part in tempting us all to go, n’est-ce pas?” (Clark to Spalding, 10 May 1944).¹⁰ Time had not dulled the lure, and Diack was equally susceptible.

The letters exchanged between Seabrook and Diack in 1949 were the beginning of a long correspondence, which evolved into a friendship of sorts, with Seabrook later acting as Diack’s editor-cum-secretary-cum-mentor. Their correspondence consisting of over 300 letters provides the basis for this constructed biographical sketch.¹¹ Letters often reveal private thoughts that are in violent contradiction to public behaviour (memoir included), and Diack’s letters are no exception. They also demonstrate that Grenfell nurses were expected to devote their lives to the service of the Mission. Buss argues that

in the case of women whose autobiographical writing often constitutes their only published writing, “the research of the biographer, other documents related to the autobiographer’s life, the records of women in similar circumstances, as well as the information gleaned from unpublished correspondence, can help provide a similar intertextual reading for female subjectivity,” a reading Buss calls a contextual reading (*Mapping* 35). Diack’s letters tell a fascinating story as well as provide a contextual reading. When Seabrook’s and Diack’s letters are read intertextually against Diack’s public autobiographical production, they foreground the powerlessness of the nurse, who is marginalized as a woman and a nurse in the patriarchal Mission, as well as expose the tensions in nurse/secretary and nurse/doctor relationships. In addition, Diack’s correspondence with Dr. Gordon Thomas expresses defiance, exposes taboo subjects, undermines authority, and challenges the patriarchy.¹² Diack’s correspondence, which lies buried in archival collections, shatters the romance of the Mission.

5.2.1 *Early Stepping Stones: Spotted Islands, St. Mary’s, and Mutton Bay*

Early in 1950 Diack was appointed nurse-in-charge of the Spotted Islands summer nursing station, which had been closed since 1941; her appointment was for approximately three months (June to September 1950). One of Diack’s professional testimonials¹³ highlighted her “administrative ability, high nursing skill and a tactful approach.”¹⁴ Another praised

... [her] high principles, good judgement and sound common sense ... a

quiet serenity of manner and tactful approach ... undoubted gifts of leadership. She knows how to combine firmness, when this is required, with tolerance and understanding ... these somewhat exceptional qualities would be of special value in situations requiring delicate handling, and where personal problems are involved.¹⁵

Even before she left for Spotted Islands, the Mission, eager to utilize the services of such an eminently qualified nurse, asked Diack to take the Mutton Bay nursing station for the winter. Diack sailed across the Atlantic and arrived in St. John's 30 June 1950, travelled up the coast on the *Northern Ranger* to St. Anthony, and continued on to Spotted Islands on the Mission boat, *Maraval*, meeting Dorothy Jupp en route at St. Mary's River:¹⁶ "I loved meeting Miss Jupp ... she was so helpful with advice and answers to all my interminable questions—she is a wonderful person, and it was a great joy to find such an excellent little hospital run in the very best English tradition—and everywhere we've been the people speak of her with such love and affection" (Diack to Seabrook, 14 July 1950). After one month at Spotted Islands, Diack, still under the spell of the "romance," wrote effusively to Seabrook: "I am more than grateful to you for so inspiring me—*of course*, I'm simply loving it all" (14 August 1950). For Diack, nursing at Spotted Islands was a "stepping stone[] to an unknown future" (Billson 281): "all our tasks, however apparently complete, are really only foundation stones from which others may begin" (*Labrador Nurse* 28). Despite the lack of strenuous nursing, she felt significant in the overall picture. Leaving Spotted Islands was a surprise: "The *Maraval* hooted at 11.20 p.m. one night—and I had to be packed by the morning ... I could have wished he'd given me a little warning!" (Diack to Seabrook, 25 September 1950), and is Diack's

introduction to the unpredictability of staff shuffling. Perry notes that “the unpredictable nature of Grenfell nursing required levels of individual resourcefulness and adaptability which surpassed the already-high levels required of nurses in general.... And unpredictability could come from many directions; a nurse might be suddenly transferred to a new post by the Mission hierarchy ...” (79). Susan Felsberg, another Grenfell nurse, recalls how frequently one or two of her colleagues “were zapped back and forth with only ½ hour’s notice by Dr. [W.A.] Paddon.”¹⁷ Diack relieved Jupp at St. Mary’s for a few weeks before going on to Mutton Bay where she remained until the following spring.

5.2.2 *The Horror of Forteau*

Diack arrived at Forteau in early June 1951. Her first night there she “lay awake for a long time thinking things over,” how after the preparation of Spotted Islands and Mutton Bay she could now say: “This is my task / This part must I fulfil, / This is the thing that I was born to do” (*Labrador Nurse* 94). To Diack, this is her destiny. To the Mission, however, Diack is part of the official discourse. To Thomas, Diack’s response in one case was an example of the “fortitude and skill” of Grenfell nurses. Diack had contacted a schooner to take her down the Coast, despite the rough November seas, “bringing the case back to the Forteau Nursing Station, where [she] succeeded in delivering successfully, a complicated and difficult obstetrical case” (Thomas, “Coast Chronicle” 104). Despite praise for her “fortitude and skill,” the syntax of Thomas’s next sentence (he credits the inanimate schooner as the primary agent for success), reaffirms

the nurse's secondary position: "But for the co-operation of the schooner and prompt action of our nurse, the outcome might have been quite different" (Thomas, "Coast Chronicle" 104). In his report, Curtis casts Diack as the heroine who, in early November "when the North Atlantic is very rough," availed herself of a fishing schooner (that happened to be lying in Forteau harbour) to transport a patient to St. Anthony ("Sixty Years" 5). These reports, although differing in the details, employ the same discourse. Diack and Ivy Durley, a nurse at Flowers Cove who had once "spent fourteen hours in a small boat, protected from the weather only by a canvas cover" to bring a seriously ill patient to St. Anthony, are publicly praised as heroines (Curtis, "Sixty Years" 5). These "English nurses"—the backbone of the Mission, without whom, according to Curtis, "we would have to close down the Mission" (qtd. in Outerbridge 66)—are touted as "true examples of the spirit of the British": they "carry on the tradition of the British pioneer who in the past went out to the outposts of the Empire and labored with little reward but with the satisfaction of work well done" (Curtis, "Report of Service" 113). (But what about the equally courageous Canadian nurses? Bessie Banfill, for example, endured a trip in an open boat with a wet canvas as sole protection [Banfill, *Labrador Nurse* 136-37].) Despite praise for nurses' devotion, fortitude and courage, the Mission's (male) doctors receive the highest accolades:

These men must be abdominal surgeons, obstetricians, orthopedic surgeons, pediatricians and general medical men. The results that they achieve are amazing, practising on one of the last frontiers—Newfoundland and Labrador—where specialization in medicine is not possible. (Curtis, "Sixty Years" 6)

The nursing station nurses, who provide the optimal conditions in which these doctors can be multi-skilled, must in reality be as multi-skilled as the doctors. The sexual division of labour in the Grenfell Mission hierarchy is demonstrated in Curtis's example: doctors are male, nurses are female, and heroines rate below heroes.

What Diack had considered her destiny deteriorated to a nightmare, "a horrid winter ... too long a story to tell" (Diack to Seabrook, 16 April 1953). Without any extant letters to provide a context for what Diack terms "the greatest trial¹⁸ of all," that "of dealing with a paranoid personality in isolated circumstances," we have only her oblique references in *Labrador Nurse*, and her use of the title of Herman Wouk's novel, *The Caine Mutiny* (1951), to symbolize her plight of that winter, to "mirror[] something of the kind of thing I was up against" (*Labrador Nurse* 144). Wouk's novel, with its strong moral overtones, poses an ethical problem: in this novel "raised to the nth degree, is the problem of the individual versus authority" (Whyte 243). The lesson is plain: "It is not for the individual to question the system" (Whyte 245). Diack, unable to question the authoritative Mission, is alone with the situation referred to in her correspondence as "the Leggo affair" [unidentified], a situation that caused "strain and difficulties": "I was so alone with it all, and it was so intangible, that at times it was difficult even to be sure of my own judgement" (*Labrador Nurse* 144-45). Diack provides a pile-up of "dreadful frustration[s]" she lived through that long winter

... of R.T.'s not working when needed most; of people not being available when they were; of telegraph lines being down to hold up urgent messages; of bad weather and infrequent mails, so that not even letters

could be sent; and over all the gathering storm-cloud of impending crisis, for there is something contagious in the effect of the paranoid on simple people, as we know from Hitler's Germany. (*Labrador Nurse* 144)

Geographically, professionally, and psychologically imprisoned, and cut off without any mode of communication, Diack is totally isolated.

The doctor, who is nameless in this Leggo situation (has his name been edited out?), is an important player in Diack's distress: "That others doubted it [her diagnosis] was made plain on one of the doctor's rare visits, and the more I tried to convince him of the horror of the situation, the more powerless I felt to convey one half of it" (*Labrador Nurse* 145). Does the doctor think her irrational? The doctor, who is unconvinced of the nurse's diagnosis, "explained the difficulty of getting sufficient medical evidence in such cases, and the risk to a doctor's whole career should a patient be certified without it" (*Labrador Nurse* 145). As in *The Caine Mutiny*, is it the individual versus authority, the nurse's sanity versus the doctor's career? In this situation, Diack has to accept passively the doctor's decision, and her chilling description of this volatile situation speaks volumes about the situation of women (in this case, the nurse), powerless against such a system as the patriarchal Mission:

It was then that I began to realise something of what lay ahead. There I was, caught in the midst of this fantastic situation, and there was nothing I could do about it, but just accept it. It would have to be lived out day by day till things came to such a pass that the diagnosis proved itself; what might happen meantime no-one could tell, but obviously it would be no use appealing for help unless things became much worse. (*Labrador Nurse* 145)

Diack realized "the danger" to herself and "the extent of the campaign to discredit [her]."

but “mercifully [she] didn’t know how effective that was to be” (*Labrador Nurse* 145). Is Diack deliberately vague: is the danger mental, physical, or professional, or all three? Was the campaign to discredit her from within the organization, or from the community? The answers are not clear. Diack remains imprisoned in the Kurtz-like horror “of all the weeks that followed” until finally “no-one could doubt the diagnosis or fail to certify” (*Labrador Nurse* 145). The situation is played out, at the nurse’s expense, until the doctor himself diagnoses. After Diack’s complaint of “a horrid winter,” Seabrook reassured her “how much the people think of you at Mutton Bay” and offered praise for the “splendid job” Diack was doing: “we are very fortunate indeed in having you on the Coast” (22 May 1953). This pattern is observed throughout their correspondence: the nurse expresses anger, anxiety or frustration, and the secretary responds with praise and encouragement.¹⁹ It was no doubt part of Seabrook’s secretarial role to smooth psychological tensions and disillusionment, but the stress of this situation took its toll on Diack, and she requested a six-month leave.

5.2.3 *Worthless Contract, Powerless Nurse, Bitter Reality: Flowers Cove*

After the horror of the Leggo affair, Diack continued to promote the Mission on her return to England (October 1953), giving talks from Mission-prepared scripts. Seabrook marketed Diack (“an excellent speaker”), who in turn promoted the Mission, and hence raised more money. For her return to the Coast, this time on a two-year contract, Diack wanted to be posted specifically to Forteau,²⁰ but as the Mission omitted

this condition, she returned her contract unsigned. She would not accept a contract that would permit the Mission to move her at whim, “just anywhere.” No longer the naive, idealistic nurse who had gone out to Spotted Islands in 1950, Diack now rebelled against the powerless position inherent in such a *carte blanche* contract. As an experienced Grenfell nurse, she now had knowledge of other revoked “contracts,” specifically Ella Hewitt who had taken leave from Forteau with a contract to return, but another nurse arrived, “did a *very* good job there, and asked to stay.” Hewitt “was just sent off to Mutton Bay—(Poor Miss Hewitt, almost the first thing she asked me when I arrived there, even made me promise, was not to ask to stay at Mutton Bay in her place.)” (12 January 1954). Instead of Forteau, Labrador, Diack was sent to the two-nurse station²¹ of Flowers Cove, a community on the northwestern side of the Great Northern Peninsula (across the Strait of Belle Isle from Forteau, about 75 miles from St. Anthony) in Newfoundland. With her contract reflecting a clause that she was “to be stationed at Flowers Cove for the duration of her two-year contract,”²² Diack signed an agreement. But, in reality, her hard-won clause had the same status as Hewitt’s contract. When Diack undermined Thomas’s authority and threatened the Mission hierarchy, she, too, was ordered to another station before the expiration of her contract.

When Diack came to the Coast in 1950, she visited the Department of Health at St. John’s and met officials of the “Newfoundland Nursing Service” [identity unclear]. The reasons for, and the outcome of, such a visit are unclear. The Association of Registered Nurses of Newfoundland came into being on 1 January 1954, regulated by a

new provincial Act, and Newfoundland nurses acquired the right to regulate their own profession (O'Brien, "Nursing" 135). On her return to Newfoundland in 1954, Diack sensed a change in attitude; now "the impression [was] that we Grenfell nurses think ourselves a little apart and superior" (10 November 1954). Diack's letter to Seabrook objecting to this bifurcation reflected a bizarre combination of naïveté and idealism. Volunteering as spokesperson for this group, and in effect joining with them, boded trouble for Diack's tenure with the Mission. In the monolithic Grenfell organization, power was clearly drawn along gender lines:

There they told me of a new Licensing Act which has come in—that *all* nurses working in the Province must be registered, the annual fee for which is \$12.00. This also makes one a member of the Canadian Nurses Association and includes a subscription to their magazine—The Dept[artment] started writing to St. Anthony about this last Jan[uary]—finally got some reply sometime in August, but I gather still not very satisfactory—I promised to do what I could with individual nurses as I see them on my way around ... It has just got to be, a law that has to be accepted—Personally I think it is an excellent thing anyway, we do not want to [be] apart and anything that draws us nearer to the nursing organisation as a whole should be welcome—what chance of getting our registration fee found for us?!! (to Seabrook, 10 November 1954)

In the Grenfell hierarchy, males (doctors) wielded power, while females (nurses) were powerless and expected to conform to stereotype, and to serve without challenging authority. In this case, the authority did not wish integration.

In Diack's case, the authority was Dr. Thomas. Her portrait of him in *Labrador Nurse* is a set piece of official discourse; it is antithetical to that which emerges in her correspondence, particularly of her second term (outside the memoir's temporal setting):

Dr. Thomas I felt I knew, but it was interesting to meet in person the owner of that Canadian voice with which I'd had many R.T. consultations. He looked younger than I expected, and certainly young for the size of the job he was holding down. He was not only a first-class thoracic as well as general surgeon, but he had a great vision and grasp of all the details of his scattered practice; his capacity for work was tremendous. To us, on the nursing stations, he was always available. We only had to put through a request to speak to him and we knew he would be there, and there on time; and his quick summing-up of a situation and his crisp decided instructions were always very much to the point. What is more, he could see our problems from our point of view; he never under-estimated the strain and responsibility of the work on the nursing stations. [...]

In the isolation of the life out there, we got down to fundamentals and to knowing people in an incredibly short space of time. There was no room for artificialities, no time for social formalities, and values change when time is seen as the most precious commodity of all. (*Labrador Nurse* 101)

Unlike Curtis who had much praise for British nurses, Thomas criticized them as “the messiest, untidiest’ people” he knew. Curtis advised him to “get along with them”; due to a lack of interest, they could not get U.S. or Canadian nurses, they had “to depend upon England to supply our nurses now and in the future” (30 November 1954).²³ Was Diack included in Thomas’s critique of British nurses? Did this affect his later comportment towards Diack? Or was it a matter of the nurse attempting to undermine the doctor’s authority? Despite his antipathy, Thomas wanted to transfer Diack to St. Anthony as sanatorium matron (she may have been the only eligible person).²⁴ Curtis agreed with Thomas’s proposal but felt that Diack might not want to leave the nursing station; the stipulated contract clause, he felt, would “rule her out as head of the Sanatorium” (29 December 1954).²⁵ Curtis may have been prepared to honor Diack’s contract. At the same time as he wrote to Curtis, Thomas unofficially and confidentially asked Diack to

consider the position,²⁶ but there is no record of her reply.

In an “unofficial letter for [him] alone,” Diack informed Thomas that Flowers Cove was “a great job,” but protested about being left alone when her co-worker was borrowed by the St. Anthony hospital (1 December 1954).²⁷ At first, Diack praised her co-worker as “a wonderful person, one of the very best—with great inner strength” (Diack to Seabrook, 31 January 1955), but six months later complained of her performance, and blamed the station’s deteriorating standards on her:²⁸

After all, all she knows of the Mission standard of medicine and patient care are what she learned from Win [previous nurse]; she seems to refuse to accept mine.

I don’t doubt but that I have made many mistakes in my handling of her, I guess I have tried to let her down too easily, but now I think ... I must be more forceful about being the nurse in charge. (Diack to Thomas 10 April 1955)²⁹

Diack later criticized her co-worker’s “complete lack of co-operation ... in fact, an almost active unco-operation ... like trying to push a car uphill with the brakes on!” (20 September 1955).³⁰ Co-worker tension was a potential problem: “Mission officials realized that in situations of stressful and isolated work, negative relationships between female co-workers were something to ward against” (Perry 104). Co-worker tension, along with loneliness, exhaustion and professional anxiety, accentuated the gap between discourse and reality. Because of a shortage of nurses at St. Anthony, Diack’s co-worker was borrowed “for four weeks, six weeks ago.” In a “fit of temper,” Diack dashed off a letter to Seabrook venting her grievances and frustrations: “I am just about all in as a result of coping with Flowers Cove alone for a very busy month, and with a large scale

measle[s] epidemic just getting under way, and with the prospect of having to cope alone indefinitely” (20 July 1955). Her original exuberance for the Grenfell adventure now mitigated with a dose of bitter reality, she exposed her “real” position as nurse in the Grenfell hierarchy. Diack was not the only Grenfell nurse to complain: after forty-three years of service, Ivy Durley was “shocked” to discover that she would not be awarded a full pension, and wrote a strong letter of complaint to the “patrons” of GAGBI. She described her working conditions at Flowers Cove: “No mod cons, water hauled by barrel from spring, wood stoves, oil lamps, no R/T. Disrupted telegraph communication. Often inaccessible to medical aid, 60 miles dog team, more by boat.”³¹

5.2.4 Criticizing Administrative Inequalities and Loss of Spiritual Focus

For Diack, the glamour and romance of the official discourse, so significant in her initial interview, had tarnished. No longer “blindly devoted to the Mission’s principles and hierarchy,” Diack “questioned, criticized, and defied” Mission rules and regulations (Perry 95). She ranted about the inequality between hospital and nursing station “rules.” “You offer no security of any kind,” she accused: no pension scheme, no sick pay, no superannuation, and woefully inadequate national health contributions:

I know the last thing we want is people coming out here for the sake of the salary, but you have got to compete for nurses in the world market, and security is one of the things that people demand to-day* (*or else a salary that compensates for the lack of it [handwritten]).... Also I think I am probably right in saying that I think that it is time that the Mission realised that it must pay its nurses an adequate salary. (20 July 1955)

Over several letters, Diack continued her epistolary diatribe. Alone for six weeks, “every day, for 7 days a week ... from 8 am until 11 pm or 12 mn, and often up in the night as well, seeing ... [on her] peak day ... 53 patients, as well as all the in-patient work,” Diack was close to “the break-down stage.” Self-effacing Grenfell nurses are, she suggests, “a bit ashamed of our weaknesses in this way”; “once we recover our balance and spring prefer not to think too much about it.” Trained to serve, Grenfell nurses go beyond realizing that a holiday is needed, “meekly submit to what is really a sort of blackmail on our vocation to the job, and plough on” (6 August 1955). Blind service cultivates blackmail. Diack, twice referring to that “blackmail” by Thomas, had difficulty in adjusting to Thomas’s regime. The word “blackmail” is strongly accusatory. Who is blackmailing whom? Does the fault lie with the individual nurse, or the administration? How much power does an individual nursing station nurse (“the poor relation”) have? If contracts and unpredictable staff shuffling are any indication, the nursing station nurse has none.

On one hand, Diack conforms to the stereotype of the self-sacrificing Grenfell nurse; on the other hand, she challenges that stereotype. With the growth of the St. Anthony hospital, nursing station nurses, according to Diack, were forgotten, isolated, and overworked. Cognizant of the widening gap between central administration and the outlying nursing stations, Diack insisted that the hospital nurses received preferential treatment; the inequalities were glaring: “When I see the lavish expenditure on equipment at St. A[nthony] hospital I confess it does make me feel a bit sore, just a very small

proportion of what is spent on that would pay the salary (and a decent one!) for an extra nurse to relieve round to give us holidays” (6 August 1955).

In Diack’s eyes, the Mission ignored its nurses, paid them pittance, and had strayed far from the original Grenfellian ideals. The spiritual neglect resulting from the latter, she suggested, was one reason for the difficulty in keeping nurses. Disparaging the current administration in her pointed but nostalgic observations, Diack treads a precarious path:

If the Mission were really a Mission with the spiritual side much more fully developed, if in every department people were working out from a true spirit of vocation, if we had chaplains working out here with us, if behind us there was more prayer and less money, if Director’s meetings started with prayers instead of cocktails, if in short we could really get back to the Grenfell spirit, then I don’t think we would even notice if we were being stretched, we would glory in it, as Sir Wilfred himself did, and all the problem[s] would sort themselves out in their true proportion. (6 August 1955)

Diack felt that the Mission had come to the “cross-roads where it has got to make the decision” whether to be mission- or business-oriented: “[Getting back to the truly Grenfell way of life] is a job that is much too big for us to even attempt in our own strength” (Diack to Seabrook, 6 August 1955), but is possible with God’s help. In her memoir, Diack reclaims this missing spiritual element.

5.2.5 The Reprisals of Challenging Authority: St. Mary’s

Thomas gave Diack “orders to proceed” to St. Mary’s River immediately (he had already chosen two replacement nurses). Diack wrote to Thomas: “I take it, as the only

answer to the protest over the breach of my contract has been in the form of orders to proceed to St. Mary's River immediately"; and she "consider[ed she] was jumped into accepting the move, with no time to think it over" (4 October 1955). Diack's autonomy was circumscribed by her position. As Perry points out, "[n]o matter how removed from the usual doctor-nurse hierarchy a nurse might feel at her isolated nursing station, falling out of favour with a Mission doctor could spell the end of her Grenfell career. Most of the time, nurses were not even aware of the professional manoeuvring which 'went on behind the scenes'" (115). Diack clings to the fantasy of her contract clause ("for Flower's Cove only") and uses it as a bargaining tool to remind Thomas of her "rights" (as *she* perceived them). Diack informed Thomas that she would go to St. Mary's, but she had "no liking, nor aptitude for chronic nursing": "[I]t is never any good trying to fit a square peg in a round hole, it just makes everything very uncomfortable for all concerned" (20 September 1955). Like Hewitt, Diack is powerless. For the remainder of her employment with the Mission, this contract breach bothered Diack. The move was "the very last thing" she wanted, and prompted an appeal to Thomas: "surely you must see how completely the whole thing puts me on the spot? And surely, under the circumstances, I am entitled to an assurance—and I would like it in writing—that the I.G.A. is prepared to pay my passage home whenever I want to go" (28 September 1955). Although Diack is a pawn in an uneven power struggle, she resists manipulation, and uses her pen as a weapon to fight for her rights. She reminded Seabrook: "You laughed when I insisted on that special clause in my contract, but history does repeat itself, doesn't it?" (4 October 1955). She accused

Thomas: "I feel the shortage of nurses cannot be as acute as you made out if you can afford to have three of your St. Anthony nurses away on holiday at once" (4 October 1955). Diack questioned Thomas's decision to put two young, inexperienced nurses in Flowers Cove, asking him how he would feel if "asked to hand over St. Anthony in two days, to two raw internes, and take yourself off to Cartwright?" Uprooted and adrift, Diack exhibits ambivalence.

I will try St. Mary's River and will let you know at the end of October whether I am prepared to stay, that is if you want me to, (perhaps you will let me know about that), but I doubt if I shall be able to settle to that type of work [chronic nursing]. I had put my roots down deep here [Flowers Cove], thinking that you meant what you said about there being a job here for me to do for several years yet, and am finding it hard to have to uproot them so suddenly, and just when one was beginning to see some results for 10 months very hard work; so am in no mood to tackle something new. (4 October 1955)

Diack's move to St. Mary's is followed by considerable vacillation (earning Curtis's sarcastic "the Diack matter")³² about leaving the Mission. A contrite Diack apologized to Thomas for the trouble she had caused, blaming it on being "thoroughly over-tired"; she did not realize "quite *how* tired" until she arrived (8 October 1955).³³ Diack defers to authority, yet she is unhappy. She even requests a salary increase to compensate for her revoked contract and uprooting, but her bargaining logic does not aid her cause:

After all, the Mission were prepared to send two nurses to do this job, and so, I imagine, under the circumstances, would also be prepared to raise my salary, anyway to the equivalent of the combined salaries of the two nurses originally appointed to come here. (Diack to Thomas, 14 October 1955)³⁴

Diack herself wondered why she “felt so desperately upset and unhappy about the whole affair,” and explains that it was possibly because she was “forced into making the wrong decision” (20 October 1955); the diction of “forced” focuses the blame on Thomas.

Another letter accused Thomas of not telling her the whole truth, suggested lessons that he could and should learn from this, and criticized his dealings with people, upsetting the delicate balance yet again. To Diack, the move to St. Mary’s River was a demotion:

“When one has graduated a little beyond the minor ailments, (and so few even of those) and just selling aspirin and cascara [a laxative] and working in the clothing store, then the adjustment ... from a station like Flowers Cove is an almost impossible one to be asked to make” (20 October 1955). But a demotion is a reminder of her powerless position, what happens when the individual pits herself against authority.

A revoked contract and a nursing station shuffle resulted in Diack seeking validation and challenging Thomas:

One thing I hope you will have learned from this, is that our work on the Nursing Stations, though of minor importance to you in comparison with the work at St. Anthony, is of great importance to us, otherwise we could not do it as whole-heartedly as we do. You can move a nurse from one department to another in a hospital without her minding very much, because she has no abiding in the people, since they come and go anyway; but out on the Nursing Stations we get our roots down deep among a particular group of people and their needs and their problems and it is very hard indeed to have to leave and start all over again, particularly out here where, on the N[ursing]. St[atio]ns anyway, our only recreation is in the work, and where it takes most of a year: 1. To get to know the people, and 2. For them to know and have confidence in a new nurse. (20 October 1955)

Diack’s dispirited cooperation stemmed from occupying a position from which she could

see the flaws in the organization. Addressing Thomas as an equal instead of a superior by using his first name, she advised him how to run the Mission, and to add to Diack's metaphor, waved a red flag in front of him:

I think, Gordie, that we should be able to expect to be told the whole story on these occasions. I know, too, that there are other people who have found the same thing in your dealings with them, and I am sure it is not the best way to get the best out of your staff, certainly not with the type of staff who come out to work with the Grenfell Mission. The dangling of a carrot in front of one's nose is really only fit treatment for a donkey, it is merely frustrating and irritating to anyone with more intelligence. (20 October 1955)

In his reply, Thomas insisted on a definite decision:

... any action that ever has been taken has always been done after due consideration of the staff available, and for what we considered the good of the Mission as a whole.... However, we would like to know as soon as possible if you intend to remain there or not.... I would appreciate it if you could decide definitely whether you will be remaining or not, so that we will know whether further staff changes have to be made. (24 October 1955)³⁵

Having been apprised of her feelings by letter, Seabrook's reassurance, couched in propaganda potential, added a hint of moral blackmail: "Everyone enjoys reading your article about Hazeroth, and you will be pleased ... that several subscribers have increased their contributions because of it" (26 October 1955). Trusting Seabrook with her "true" feelings, Diack was now "on [her] guard against letting anything matter ... too much" (28 November 1955). Once again Diack attempted to expose the "real" Mission, citing other examples of unfair treatment, primarily the further indiscriminate shuffling of Mission staff without regard for their personal feelings. In fact, she insisted, the Mission abused

the devotion and loyalty of its staff. The bitterness of reality was a far cry from Diack's initial high ideals:

On arriving out here, and before I met Dr. Curtis, I was told "Yes, he's all right, at least it's all right if he likes you, but if he doesn't you could be the best nurse in the world but you wouldn't stay." The first people I got to know out here ... the Forsyths³⁶ ... going home after 25 years on the Coast ... were so dreadfully bitter and dis-illusioned ... Then came the Dorothy Jupp episode ... that shook us all to the core ... (Diack to Seabrook, 28 November 1955)

Diack's reference to "the Dorothy Jupp episode"³⁷ as another example of the Mission's abusive treatment of its staff will be discussed in the next chapter. Diack dared to criticize and she, too, could be the object of the same treatment. In another futile move, she sent (17 December 1955) detailed recommendations—"Holidays and Equality of Contracts for Nurses" and "That the Question of Nurses' Salaries be revised and that they be brought more in line with those of the Health Department of Newfoundland"—for consideration at the next Director's meeting. It is not known if these were ever discussed.

Diack not only poured out her angst and frustration to Seabrook, but also to Joan Stedman and Ivy Durley, both Grenfell nurses, both of whom also corresponded with Seabrook. In her discussion of Diack's vacillations and accusations with Stedman, Seabrook hinted at a loss of control: "Probably she is very tired as she had a heavy spell at Flower's Cove, and you know how easy it is to let things get on top of you" (10 January 1956). Three days later, Seabrook informed Stedman that Curtis "hopes that you will return to St. Mary's River when Lesley Diack leaves in the Fall."³⁸ At this point, Diack had not decided "when" nor even "if" she would be leaving. Had a campaign to get

rid of her already begun? In May 1957 Stedman requested a meeting with Seabrook about another disturbing letter she had received from Diack.³⁹ Seabrook's correspondence with Ivy Durley, who had been a strong support to Diack on her first term out, poses the question of Diack's unstable mental health. In one letter, Seabrook, enlisting Durley's opinion of Diack's present state of mind, refers to Diack's "real chip on her shoulder," "her present state of mind" (20 December 1955). Seabrook reports "[a] more composed letter" from Diack (20 January 1956); "Lesley Diack's letters are more rational ..." (17 May 1956); and, "[a] very rational and cheery letter from Lesley Diack" (12 February 1958). Diack was regarded as "irrational" when she expressed anger, a common charge against women, but here it is levelled by one of her own gender. (Later Seabrook praises Diack for having pulled out of "such a steep dive" [19 March 1956].) Durley received several "very lengthy letters" from Diack; one contained "a ballad in which St. Mary's is portrayed as the poor relation, and St. Anthony as the rich."⁴⁰ Durley blames Diack's frustrations on a flaw in her character and, in effect, advocates passive acquiescence: "By now, you [Seabrook] will have realized that many of [Diack's] problems lie within herself ... [she] is sincerely wanting things to be better, and it will become evident to her I am sure, that when so much is wrong in so many places, and with so many people that we touch, then we ourselves must become suspect" (9 February 1956).

Without compromising her official position as Secretary, after a protracted silence Seabrook offered soothing words to Diack:

I feel that the Mission had really got you down, and so wish I could help. I

know that overwork and isolation can give a slant to things which would normally stand upright. It is not like you to dwell on the bad things that have happened in the Mission. There is so much that is good.... I have your letters which were unhappy before you left Flowers Cove, but I think the point that gets you is the breaking of the contract, whatever the circumstances—yet so often there are two sides to a question.

You know that I think a very great deal of you, and admire your ideals and high standards, not always easily understood.⁴¹ Therefore, I know that you would not take any action unless you thought it was right, in the purest sense. It is very sad, and I hate to think that you are so unhappy. [letter signed “With love”] (letter arrived 18 January 1956)

The diction of this last paragraph suggests an evasiveness, vagueness combined with a subtext of ethical blackmail. Although Diack is ambivalent—“I don’t really want to sever my connection with the Mission altogether, at least I don’t think I do” (29 February 1956)—she considers Seabrook as her lifeline. Diack was seemingly unaware of Seabrook’s duplicitous correspondence with Durley and Stedman questioning her state of mind:

You seem, bless you, to have realised what a dreadfully low state I had got into. Shock on top of strain and over-work is I think the real answer. It *was* a shock having Gordie [Thomas] flying in like that with such an entirely unexpected proposition, it came as a shock too, to find that all I had been trying to do hadn’t really meant anything to anyone else, and that I was expected to hand it all over in two days to two completely untried, inexperienced newcomers.... very peremptory order to hand over in two days and proceed to St. M[ary’s] R[iver].

I would be the first to admit that I ought to have been able to take it in my stride ... had I not been so tired with the long strain of sheer over-work ... I would have been able to, but as it was it just knocked all the stuffing out of me. (29 February 1956)

Seabrook continued to express her concern (“I *was* awfully worried about you and felt that there was so little I could do at this distance”).⁴² Carefully worded to remind Diack of her “position” of service, Seabrook subtly offers her opinion, modulated with praise: “I

do think there must be some agreement and after all one accepts those terms when you agree to serve. One should then, I suppose, forget the time limit and do what lies to hand. You have done this so well and have contributed a very great deal to the Coast.... To have pulled out of such a steep dive takes courage and faith and only a few people would have accomplished it" (19 March 1956). Diack's next letter to Seabrook returned to the same inequalities:

There is never a single day in the year when we can relax and know we won't be disturbed, never a single night when we can go to bed and shut the door and *know* that we can stay there till the morning.... Neither Dr. Curtis nor Dr. Thomas have ever spent one winter alone on the Coast and I don't think either of them have the slightest idea as to what that really means. I don't mean the isolation only, but the fact that there is no-one to turn to for help, that whatever comes, however tired or short of sleep one may be, one must still go on. (26 April 1956)

Her final comment—"I guess I should have been a Suffragette!!!"—reveals her own struggles, and her awareness of the loneliness and frustration of agitating for her rights.

5.2.6 *Frustration: A Creative Response*

Although Diack did not receive any appeasement from Seabrook or Thomas, her frustration had a creative outlet, verses which "wrote themselves for me when I was trying to make the decision whether to stay on here [Mary's Harbour]"; as she told Seabrook, the verses "will tell *you* more than any letters" (29 February 1956). In the four-stanza poem, "If," modelled on Rudyard Kipling's famous poem of the same name (which, according to Kipling, "contained counsels of perfection most easy to give" [qtd.

in Ricketts 294]), Diack piled eleven “if” conditions in a thirty-two-line sentence, which as in Kipling’s poem, are impossible to fulfil.

IF

(With the usual apologies to Rudyard Kipling)

If you can run a Grenfell Nursing Station
Content to build on what has gone before;
If you can live in splendid isolation
And find it splendid, and no less, no more;
If you can bear the eyes of all upon you,
When things go wrong, yet none to share your joy;
If you can keep your vision bright within you,
That nothing may your inward peace destroy;

If you can know that solitude and silence
Are simply aids the still, small voice to hear,
Though babies’ crying and storm-winds howling violence
More often clamour on the outer ear;
If you can deal with every crisis sent you,
Content to be “the nurse” without a name;
If you can meet with boredom and adventure
And find their values work out much the same;

If you can bring to every task that’s set you,
The same whole-hearted zest to do it well;
And not allow the trivial things to fret you,
To carry on though there is none to tell
Nor understand the things for which you’ve striven;
If you can keep your motives always pure;
If you can know that strength demanded *is* strength given,
However great the load, that still is sure;

If you can find your depth and core be shaken
As though your very self were torn in half,
With the job you’d give your life, your all to, taken
From you at one sweeping change of staff,
And yet can find the lesser tasks enrich you
And can prove a higher calling than the more,
Then maybe you will profit from the lessons life can teach you
When lived alone upon the Labrador.⁴³

Signed “De profundis / All Saints Day [1 November] 1955,” this poem has been wrenched from the abyss of despair. For a Grenfell nurse to survive, she must be, in effect, an automaton: anonymous, depersonalized, faceless, inviolate, and uncreative. Seabrook, who commented that “I think your verses are so right,” wondered if Diack wanted these verses published in the magazine [*ADSF*], “or are they too intimate?” (19 March 1956). There is no record of Diack’s reply or Seabrook’s response. It is doubtful if *ADSF* would have published them as they are too damning to the Mission’s benevolent image. Troubles occasioned by “this ---- R.T. set!” prompted a new set of complaints (31 May 1956),⁴⁴ and this time a 12-stanza ballad (see Appendix VI) is Diack’s mode of expression for frustrations about the malfunctioning communications system. This poem exposes the hierarchical situation of nurses on isolated and lonely nursing stations, their voices ignored, unheard, with the hospital at St. Anthony getting all the latest equipment. The final stanza clarifies the nursing station’s second-rate treatment. It is not clear to whom the poem was written, or if it was ever sent to Thomas.

Diack was determined that Thomas needed teaching (her letters refer to “lessons” he should learn). Her idealistic notion of fairness prompted her to present her story in yet another medium, a six-page “narrative” written solely for him.⁴⁵ Diack began her damning narrative with a quotation from an uncredited letter she herself had written at the end of her first term:

One of the most important things that keeps the nurses at the Nursing Stations going is the feeling that we always have the whole-hearted support of both yourself [Curtis] and Dr. Thomas ... you both understand

so well the individual problems of each station, and each nurse is very much appreciated by us.

The radio-telephone is a wonderful machine, but it would not be such a comfort to us were it not for the fact that Dr. Thomas is always available, whatever the hour of day or night, to help us out in whatever emergency may arise ... It is the knowledge that we have behind us the unfailing support, co-operation and understanding of the authorities, that enables us to carry what might otherwise be an impossible load. (*ADSF* January 1955, 117)

Her persuasively written narrative is complete with dialogue, with Thomas himself as one “character,” and refutes her earlier praise (January 1955) of both Thomas and the radio-telephone. It relates crisis after crisis: how the Mission had let people down, jeopardized lives, and how Diack herself as a patient had been neglected by the doctor, concluding:

I still think the radio[-]telephone can be a wonderful machine, but it entirely fails in its function unless advice and help is available in the other end. My personal experience during the first two years made me feel that I can no longer rely on the support, co-operation, or understanding of the authorities at St. Anthony, consequently I am beginning to find the load is an almost impossible one, to be asked to carry. By expecting a nurse to carry on so entirely alone unaided, in my opinion, the Mission is not only putting an entirely unnecessary strain on the nurse, but it is also failing to give adequate medical care to the people for whom it has made itself responsible. (21 July 1955)

Diack received a terse note from Thomas: “I note what you say about your unwillingness to continue under the present system and I presume you will be terminating your contract at the end of October” (24 July 1956).

5.2.7 *A Final Vacillating*

A few months later Diack asked Seabrook to “forget this last year and anything

that I have said or written” (24 September 1956). Curtis had agreed to let her give St. Mary’s a further test for another year. But after a vacation, an ambivalent Diack writes, “I think the answer may be Yes, that I shall want to stay, but would prefer to have been back a bit longer from leave before deciding. Hope that is O.K. with you. If you must have a definite answer by any particular time, please will you let me know” (Diack to Thomas, 27 February 1957).⁴⁶

One final epistolary confrontation: a perturbed Curtis contacted Diack (11 October 1957) concerning her request for a four-month vacation beginning April 1958, which he could not understand in light of her vacation the previous year. Diack’s reply, which outlined her rights, resulted in Curtis’s authorization of leave from the end of March 1958 (she had already contracted for a further period of service, but the contract had not been sent to the business office). But by December 1957, Diack had changed her mind, and now wanted her contract revoked. Diack’s decision to leave resulted from “the sum total of many things too numerous to write about, simply really that I think the time *has come*” (Diack to Seabrook, 13 December 1957).

I was just about all in, the way we all get sometimes working on our own. Nice to have one’s perspective cleared, too! It made me realise more clearly than ever that I have been in “cold storage” long enough! By that I mean in such complete isolation. I think seven years of nursing station life is long enough, or shall I say seven years of my own company with nothing to relieve it! My main reason for leaving though, is that I haven’t got enough to get my teeth into in this job here. You may remember I had doubts on that score from the very beginning, but just the same I have tried very hard to fit myself into it, and chiefly because I wanted to, but I am pretty sure now that most of my frustrations here have arisen from that. It has not been easy to make the decision ... (29 January 1958)

Diack left Labrador in March 1958 and started training with the Queen's Institute of District Nursing in Exeter 1 May 1958 (Seabrook to Stedman, 25 April 1958).⁴⁷

Seabrook's testimonial praised Diack's intelligence, reliability, adaptability, stability, work manner ("excellent"), health, and relationships with colleagues. During her eight years with the Mission, Diack had "held positions of great responsibility ... in charge of our Nursing Stations in the North, often hundreds of miles from a doctor, where she has had to act on her own initiative and be thoroughly resourceful. She has common sense, which is so necessary ..." (letter of reference, 31 March 1958). A vacillating Diack has been effectively transformed.

5.2.8 *Propaganda from a Distance: Back in Britain*

In England, Diack and Seabrook exchanged Grenfell news, lunched together when Diack was in London, and Seabrook occasionally visited Diack in Devon. After settling in as Queen's nurse, Diack wrote an article for *District Nursing*, which she submitted to Seabrook for typing and approval: "If there is any fee, you are welcome to it, or maybe you would like to keep the copy-right as you did once before, anyway it is all yours to do with as you wish, only please no alterations except may be words here and the[re] or punctuation!" (12 November 1958).⁴⁸ The Hazeroth article had not been forgotten. Seabrook, who shrewdly seized the propaganda potential of this new article, reassured Diack that she wrote well, and that her article "should be a tremendous help to future nurses going to the Coast for the first time" (14 November 1958). As to the matter of

money, "Shall we go shares over the article? I think you should accept something ..."

(Seabrook to Diack, 19 November 1958). "District Nursing with a Difference" (by Lesley M. Diack, S.R.N., S.C.M., Q.N. cert.) is Diack's carefully crafted, sanitized picture of the Grenfell organization; it oozes the "glamour" promoted by the official Grenfell discourse. In it Diack employs the discourse she had accused Seabrook of using: focusing on glamour without any hint of the harsh reality of coastal nursing. As in her memoir, the surface veneer is maintained. Why she perpetuates this discourse is unclear: was this the only way to achieve publication? Despite her former letters of complaint, poems, and narrative, Diack glibly writes:

Each station too, is equipped with a radio-telephone, and this is, quite literally, the life-line of the nursing station. Isolated as some of the station nurses are, maybe 80-100 miles away from the nearest hospital or doctor and with transport only possible in good weather, many may be the occasions when lives may literally be saved by this most modern method of communication.

The main call station is at the hospital at St. Anthony, and from here "skeds" are kept three times a day with every nursing station. Much administrative business is done over the "R.T.", but its main function is to keep the nursing stations in touch with the hospital and for consultation with the doctor.... ("District Nursing" 261)

There is plenty of adventure, for the Grenfell nurse "may still be called upon to deal with the emergencies herself." The "worst of all ... are the obstetrical emergencies," but fortunately "[p]ractically all the nursing station nurses *are* British midwives," and "as British midwives, we should at least know what *ought* to be done." The picture carries cultural superiority, as well as the suggestion of an autonomy and support that Diack never had: "The organisation of the work and the district is left entirely to the nurse,

though advice, support and help is always available.” What about Forteau? The Leggo case? In a final hook Diack mixes religion, Grenfell, and the lure of Labrador:

The Grenfell Mission is inter-denominational, and though perhaps no longer a “mission” in the usually accepted religious sense, it is compounded wholly of people willing to go that second mile. In the words of its founder, Sir Wilfred Grenfell, “The lure of the Labrador is not its finished civilisation but its eternal challenge; the challenge to get up and help others, the chivalry of the Christ service.”

It is a lure that many find irresistible, a challenge that is still being met. (“District Nursing” 262)

No longer a Grenfell nurse, Diack continued her fund-raising efforts by giving talks about the Mission. Seabrook’s clever manipulation is evident: first complimenting Diack as “the right person” to give a particular address; mentioning how that particular group had given “the most generous support” to the Mission; and using Diack, with her “long and varied experience” on the Coast, as a tool to “inspire and encourage” this group for more support (26 April 1963). It was superb strategy. On one occasion when Seabrook wanted Diack to give a talk, she billed it as “a wonderful opportunity,” tossing out the incentive that it might encourage sales of her book (14 January 1964). Eventually Diack became ambivalent: a refusal followed by an offering of stand-by service, with a later definite and final disengagement:

I’m terribly sorry, but have decided that it must be a definite No ... I’m sorry, really, because I don’t think I should have entertained the idea in the first place—It’s not only the pressure of work here, but also because for some reason, I am quite unable to put it across these days—Was showing the slides here last night, and I realised that I must make it a firm No for the future—Maybe it’s because all that I had went into the book, and I was being quite honest when I said it was really written because I found it so hard to talk about these things—For a time I could do it quite lightly and

easily, but now I can't—and that, Betty dear, is final— (13 February 1964)

Seabrook's reply is typically neutral and understanding.

5.2.9 Diack as a Pawn against Dr. Gordon Thomas

Early in 1963, Diack was appointed to the position of Assistant Superintendent with the Ranyard Nurses in London, where she supervised and helped to train district nurses (Janet Filby to Seabrook, 18 February 1963).⁴⁹ Diack's letter to Seabrook about this new challenge is reminiscent of her enthusiasm for Spotted Islands: "I am *loving* the new job—full of interest and such nice people" (6 April 1963). But, despite a new focus, Diack remained sensitive to the Mission, and when appalling "stories ... trickl[ed] back" from the Coast about the Grenfell Mission (23 August 1964), Diack insisted that it was "high time that all those of us who really care about those people rose up and demanded an inquiry into what is going on." Curtis had died in 1963, and the Thomas administration was not going smoothly. Despite six years away from the Coast, the long arm of the Grenfell Mission continued to thrust itself into Diack's life. Early in 1965 Seabrook asked her for another contribution to the Grenfell cause (greater than her service, her book?), one directly related to the Thomas administration: would she "be prepared to say what [she] thought about [Thomas's] attitude to the Staff and to the people?" This request was accompanied by the requisite praise, this time from the IGA Board chairman, who had enjoyed Diack's book and suggested that "we should advise those going to the Coast, to read it" (3 March 1965).

By testifying against Thomas, Diack would, according to Seabrook, assist the “cause to put things right on the Coast and perhaps prove to the Board that those who are unhappy about the present situation, are men and women of integrity, and not people given to malicious gossip” (3 March 1965). Seven days later, a more agitated letter from Seabrook suggested, ironically, that Diack would be a factor in “setting things to right.” Is this some sort of warped justice? Had Seabrook forgotten the differences between Thomas and Diack, and all the problems associated with the latter’s Flowers Cove and Mary’s Harbour postings? Or is it because of these differences? Diack is ostensibly a convenient tool to be manipulated in this political arena, and one where Lord Grenfell himself summoned Diack’s opinion of Thomas. Seabrook’s letter to Diack about this matter exerted pressure on Diack:

Obviously, the V.I.P.’s and I.G.A. Directors are all behind Dr. Thomas. They ... pay only short visits to the coast and do not penetrate the surface. Only those who live and work there, know the real facts. We are terribly anxious to put things right, so that the Medical Staff can work in happier and fairer conditions, and the people be given the kind of service to which they are entitled.

If you feel you can join with us in setting things to right, I wonder if you would be a dear and telephone Lord Grenfell, and arrange a date to see him ...

We all dislike being involved in this, but I think if our loyalties are with the Mission, the Coast and the people, we must fight the present Administration under Dr. Thomas. (10 March 1965)

One weapon in fighting the Thomas administration was the suggestion that Diack apply for the post of Director of Nursing Services (St. Anthony)—a position which would catapult her into the higher power structure. Such a position would, in effect, give Diack

some authority to continue her previous “suffragette” activity. Diack’s earlier “ideals and high standards, not always easily understood” are now described by Seabrook as “strength of character”:

I realise it is a big decision for you to make, but it would be wonderful if you did apply for the post of Head of Nursing Service, as you know the Coast and the conditions so well. It would be a challenge, and the road would not be easy, but you have the necessary strength of character to tackle the job.

[...] I know Lord Grenfell would very much like you to take this post, and you would have our blessing. The book is an excellent lead. (18 March 1965)

Diack met with Lord Grenfell, and her letter to him received Seabrook’s approval. The Chairman of the Executive Committee wanted Diack to submit her name as “Head Nurse on the Coast”; he thought it “a wonderful suggestion, and might be the saving of the situation” (30 March 1965). Although the Executive Committee had been unwilling to work with the Lutterworth Press to save Diack’s book situation (discussed in section 5.3), they now expected her help and loyalty. But Diack’s days with the Grenfell Mission were over:⁵⁰ a Canadian, Barbara Nelson, who was not a midwife, was appointed as the Director of Nursing Services. Great Britain, however, was displeased, and Seabrook remarked snidely, “how much she knows about Nursing Stations is a moot point. So we have two Canadians [Nelson and Thomas] appointed to the posts of Hospital Administrator and Director of Nursing Services, who may, or may not be stooges—time will tell. Power in the wrong hands can be a deadly weapon. We all feel very disappointed, because you would have formed the right basis for that important post”

(Seabrook to Diack, 1 June 1965). An incongruous combination of Diack and Nelson appeared in an *ASDF* article (October 1966) which opens: “The recently published book *Labrador Nurse* by Miss Lesley Diack serves as a sharp reminder of the valuable services rendered by the women who serve in the outpost nursing stations in the Canadian North” (Dickinson 66). The article was accompanied by a photograph of Barbara Nelson and Dorothy Jupp in conversation. But Diack, who had been manipulated as a propaganda tool for the last time, had a new direction.

5.2.10 *From Harassed Nurse to Contemplative Sister Mary Luke*

In November 1965 Diack entered St. Mary’s Abbey, West Malling, Kent, a convent of enclosed and contemplative Benedictine nuns. Before entering, Diack spent time there in the Abbey’s Guest House.⁵¹ Founded in 1891, St. Mary’s was built on the ruins of a Benedictine nunnery founded about 1090 by Gundulph, Bishop of Rochester and for some time was the only enclosed and contemplative Anglican Benedictine community (Anson 462-63). According to Peter F. Anson, these nuns, whose chief occupation is prayer, have never sought publicity:

As in all enclosed and contemplative Benedictine communities, their chief work is the celebration of the Divine Office in choir. The Latin *Breviarium Monasticum* is used. Matins is recited at 4 a.m. ... There are no lay sisters: the nuns do all their own work and look after their garden which includes fruit and vegetables. Printing, weaving, and script are among their handicrafts and they make their own altar breads.... (465-466)

St. Mary’s Abbey is similar to other Benedictine communities in that “every Benedictine

community is a family”; “[t]he postulancy lasts for six months and the novitiate from two to three years. Solemn vows are taken after three to six years in simple vows” (Anson 466). “Be hidden—efface yourself” are aims that apply to the spirit of these Benedictine nuns (Anson 466). Diack’s farewell letter told Seabrook that she would “*always* want ... news of you and of the Mission” and hoped that “things *will* work out well on the Coast” (14 November 1965). Even after Diack entered the Abbey, Seabrook asked for her help, only now the currency was prayer. Diack was “well—*very* well—and happy” in her new venture, and “the Mission, and the people of Labrador, figure[d] in [her] prayers” (2 January 1966). Unlike her coastal postings, Diack is never ambivalent about this step:

To my great joy, I am to be allowed to take the next step—and am to be “clothed” as a novice, on Whit Sunday, and with the name Sister Mary Luke—I hope you will rejoice with me, even if you do not wholly understand—I don’t really want the news broadcast ... We are allowed letters at Christmas and Easter, but, of course, requests for prayer may be sent at any time.... (1 May 1966)

A year later, as novice, she was “very well—very happy—very sure” (29 March 1967). Seabrook kept Diack informed of the “Coast situation” in her annual letters, how “[o]ur friend G.W.T[homas] does not change and [she] doubt[s] if he ever will” (31 March 1969). Sister Mary Luke assured Seabrook that they “keep you all, and the people on the Coast, and deep sea fishermen, very much in [their] prayers” (29 March 1967). Diack was now part of a spiritually-connected community. Although she acceded that it would “be good to have a talk” with Seabrook, “it doesn’t really matter, does it? Nothing can make any difference to that all-important deep-down friendship” (29 March 1969). Things of the

spirit were now the *raison d'être* of Diack's life. It is not clear if Seabrook ever visited Diack at the Abbey; one proposed visit was refused as visits were limited, "for our real contact with, and for, people is on the deeper level of prayer" (5 January 1970).⁵² In a final letter which announced her own retirement, Seabrook remarked how she had enjoyed Diack's letters, so "full of happiness and serenity" (18 December 1970). The anger, resentment, outrage at the injustices, determination to stand up for her own rights and those of other nurses, which were so characteristic of Diack's Grenfell Mission days, are absent. Diack had found peace in her true destiny.

Sister Mary Luke continued to correspond with Stedman and Durley. In a letter to Stedman (26 September 1990), she recalled clear memories of Labrador:

Thank you so very much for the Hazareth [sic] booklet. I have very much enjoyed re-reading it, and experiencing over again some of what "Them Days" really meant to us, and how *doing* the job gave back to us so much more than we ever gave to the people. We were fortunate indeed to have had such good things in our lives! [...] I realize how "stand-offish" I must have been to have got to know so few of the Mary's Harbour people at all well ... Betty Seabrook supplied all the [pictures] printed in *Labrador Nurse*. [...] Life there was primitive in the extreme—how quickly one's mind travels it all again. Hardly any need to go back and travel it again on the *Kyle*, and few of the old folks would still be there. It would have been interesting though to see how Gordon Thomas and Tony Paddon were weathering their advancing years, what in fact, they have become at the end of it all. ("Letters" 10-11)

Sister Mary Luke died 29 November 1996⁵³ at the age of 87, "having professed in [St. Mary's] community for 26 years. At the time of her death she was very frail in body, but her mind was almost as sharp as ever it had been and she was struggling to express her thinking on faith and evolution in another book."⁵⁴

5.3 *Strength Enough Given to Labrador Nurse: A “True” Story*

5.3.1 *Stories to Story: Seabrook as Secretary, Mentor, and “Editor”*

Seabrook first asked for “attractive or interesting stories” when Diack was at Mutton Bay, stories that would “help in writing to children in the Sunday Schools and Schools; they love a true story and it keeps up their interest” (2 November 1950). Stories for propaganda are secondary to the demands of the nursing station, but Diack promised: “I will *try* ... Just now, all my spare time is spent in the garden” (13 July 1952). Seabrook responded: “I do know how terribly busy you are, and you must only do this if you really have a free moment” (16 September 1952). While in England (1953), Diack wrote that she was “sorry to prove such a broken reed over the stories for the children ... perhaps when the Christmas rush is over, but I make no rash promises” (21 December 1953). Seabrook’s response was similar: “Just send one along when you have a moment and feel inclined” (30 December 1953). Even after Diack had left the Mission, Seabrook still appealed for “stories.” Diack promised, “If I get a lull will try and get a children’s story written for you—I wish I could do a pen portrait of my beloved Benjie—the small Eskimo boy—but I doubt if I could do him justice” (14 March 1959) (see appendix V for published stories). In 1960, a desperate Seabrook wrote:

I know you have very little spare time, but if a story for very young people came into your head, it would be wonderful if you could put it down on paper and send it to us. We desperately need a story about the Coast for primary Sunday School children. We have a senior one, but the little children like something simpler and not too long. You write so well, and it would be such a help ... (16 May 1960)

There is no evidence in their correspondence to suggest that Diack ever sent any stories.

Diack was, as Seabrook was aware, writing an even bigger “story”—her memoir. Based on her first term with the Grenfell Mission, *Labrador Nurse* is divided into four sections: the first (nine chapters) focuses on Spotted Islands; the second (eight chapters) St. Mary’s and Mutton Bay; the third and fourth (nine and seven chapters, respectively) focus on Forteau. In the first two sections very little happens; the book’s “message” is in the last two sections. The book, with a validating foreword by the eminent gynaecologist, Aleck Bourne,⁵⁵ was published by Victor Gollancz in 1963 and has a complicated, convoluted history, a history inextricably connected with the Mission.

With the exception of the last three chapters which were written in her first months at Flowers Cove, the “whole thing was just dashed off in ... six weeks ... in Germany”⁵⁶ (11 May 1956). The book’s existence was revealed when Diack complained to Seabrook of her difficulty in getting across “just what the Grenfell Mission is, and does,” and wanted Seabrook to re-capture their first interview:

Just write down for me the sort of things you might, in fact, *did* say to me four years ago, when you really did inspire me—I want it to be the way *you* see it, why *you* think the work of the Mission is important and a little of its early history—in the way you would put it over if you really wanted to inspire a nurse to go—*Please* would you do it for me? and send it out air-mail?—I do so want to get this book across, I think and hope you will see why when you read it ... (Of course, I am actually prepared to find the Magnum Opus is a howling failure—) (Diack to Seabrook, 5 November 1954)

Although Diack knew that the book was “much too long and detailed,” she felt that “there is something there, maybe there isn’t” (31 January 1955). Pleading an inability to be

impartial, Diack sought Seabrook's "very candid personal, as well as professional Secretary I.G.A. opinion"⁵⁷ (14 May 1955). Diack's letters reveal that a sense of urgency underscored the book. Diack's earlier writing—poems, narrative, letters—had provided an outlet for pain, frustration, and anger, and the book may have served a similar catharsis:

I just *had* to write it, and I think because I hoped it would give me the right to say to the world what I did in the epilogue. Also I fancy I had to get the Leggo incident out of my system, and maybe the whole thing had to be in order to sort myself out ... (17 December 1955)

(There is no epilogue in the published version; it was possibly edited out by Seabrook.)

Writing the book was a draining experience, "all I had went into the book," Diack informed Seabrook after its publication (13 February 1964). In a later letter she reiterated the compulsion to write it: she "just *had* to, couldn't help myself, but I haven't a clue as to what the book says to anyone else" (11 May 1956). She "had to get it all down just as it was, or as it seemed to me, and not dressed up for publication." The rawness and pain of Diack's experience was captured on paper: "the slightest deviation from the truth *when writing* just made me feel completely hypocritical and then none of it was worth while. There was much that cost me a great deal to put in, but all of it had to go in, even if some of it has to come out again!"

As with Diack's articles, Seabrook saw the "[e]xcellent propaganda" potential of the book ("should definitely be published"), and from the beginning encouraged its publication (13 April 1956). It was incidental that some of Diack's thoughts were "really enlightening": they were to be subsumed into the greater service of the organization:

It would be a tremendous help to those ... going out for the first time, as well as of extreme interest to people unfamiliar with the work. Excellent propaganda; and some of your thoughts are really enlightening....

The book would fill a long felt want and be invaluable—there has not been a good book on service with the Mission for a very long time. (13 April 1956)

Diack recognized that the manuscript needed “editing and a lot of cutting,” and after dashing it off, had not revised it. She sought reassurance from Seabrook “that the whole thing wasn’t too subjective”: “I have a horror of too much of the ‘I,’ and the only thing that would excuse that would be because of the under-lying message” (Diack to Seabrook, 11 May 1956). On another occasion she noted that, “I have a horror of it getting presented in a way that will put ME in the lime-light in the sort of way that some of Tony Paddon’s earlier articles did ...” (3 February 1962). Both statements are curious; as Diack is writing autobiographically, she is the subject. Did she fear criticism from the Mission if she placed herself in the limelight? Diack felt that the manuscript should be submitted in its raw state, as “most publishers have professional writers who brush up these kind of books, punctuate them and put them into good English and omit the indiscreet bits.” After her tantalizing reference to the “indiscreet bits,” Diack insists that “I certainly don’t want anything left in that the Mission would not approve of, but on the other hand it was not just written as propaganda and there are some things over which I would definitely want to have the final decision.” What would cause disapproval? Such comments as “the slightest deviation from the truth,” the “under-lying message,” and the “indiscreet bits,” which all point to a larger purpose, seem to have been excised in the final product. That the book has

a larger purpose is substantiated by the following: “If this [condensing and cutting] is to be done then I would far rather have it done by someone like the Lutterworth Press—who will retain the right emphasis ... I want the emphasis to remain as suggested by the present title [*Strength Enough Given*], even if it has to be changed” (3 February 1962). Seabrook assured Diack that if Lutterworth did publish it, “they will retain the right emphasis. I know only too well what you mean about the ‘I’” (8 February 1962).

The original manuscript obviously contained controversial material, as even at this point Diack wondered about Curtis’s reaction, acknowledging that his permission would be necessary in order to publish it, but preferred that he did not see it in its raw state. In her comment—“if it gets published some of the profits, (if there are any!) would go to the Mission”—Diack appropriates Seabrook’s own psychology. The “truth”—the exposure of the power dynamics, maybe?—had to be covered up, excised, or tempered. Seabrook felt that it should be published with “the suggested pruning,” but acknowledged that “[it] is best to edit it before the powers that be read it” (June 1956).

The book received scant attention in their correspondence from June 1956 to July 1960. Before Diack left the coast, Seabrook asked her about the book (24 October 1957). In July 1960, an enthusiastic Diack, now in England, wanted “to revise the Magnum Opus!” The catalyst: a Mills and Boon [publishers] competition for (first) books with a medical background (one category: non-fiction), and Diack asked Seabrook to be her “guide and mentor”: “It seems as if it might be meant for me! especially as the closing date is June 10, my birthday!” (24 September 1960). Seabrook’s role in this undertaking is

never clearly defined. Seabrook's technical suggestions reveal her colonial attitude; for example, "could you tone down the last three lines, in case the book is read by the people on the Coast? They might take a little umbrage, although we know this is the truth. Otherwise excellent, and don't make any of these alterations unless you agree with them. They are really hardly worth mentioning" (10 January 1961). To Diack, Seabrook's comments are indeed significant:

Many thanks for your most helpful suggestions, just what was needed. When I re-read after the Christmas recess to get in the mood again, I was vaguely conscious of that which you had clarified for me. Also ... places where I was a bit self-conscious! (17 January 1961)

Diack wanted Seabrook to shape the book without criticizing it. Her constant requests suggest a need for validation.

No hurry about anything, in fact, if you have any drastic criticisms to make, better not to be too quick making them. I find it much easier to be objective on my own if I have left it for awhile and then come back to it.

I realise now how appallingly amateur the original is, all the same it is an invaluable record for the re-hash ... (24 September 1960)

Diack submitted the manuscript chapter by chapter to an encouraging Seabrook, who was erroneous when she suggested that the editing would be "fun": "I always felt that your MS was well worth publishing. It does seem to fit, and I am sure you will have great fun in doing it" (17 November 1960). Diack welcomed the encouragement and relied on Seabrook's unofficial role as editor. Two pages of Seabrook's editorial comments attest to this role, but as they are undated, it is not clear if these were for the Mills and Boon competition or for the later submission to Lutterworth: "the long descriptions of the Coast

in Part One, which rather repeat themselves” should be cut; “a shorter book ... of great benefit to those who thought of serving with the Mission and very enlightening to those unfamiliar with the work” would be preferable. Seabrook gave specific instructions regarding Part IV: “Omit Pages 23 to 68 being the story of L.M. [Lesley Molloy Diack],” and again a note for page 96, “to omit the rest of the paragraph as it refers to L.M.” Even in the published memoir, part 4 seems to have the most of L.M., and according to this comment the book originally had much more. How much more we can only speculate. Seabrook ordered Diack to excise L.M.—to remove her from the limelight—and in effect shape it into a Grenfell book of propaganda, complying with Mission’s rules and regulations. Although Diack has been silenced by another woman, traces do remain.

Throughout the laborious editing process, Diack frequently sought reassurance:

It is taking a lot of time and involves a lot of real hard work. This, for instance, is the third re-write of this chapter. I think I have got it now, but until last night, I was very ready to put the whole lot in the fire! It is not encouragement that I want, but your honest opinion. I want to write it for the Mission, not in aid of, but *for*, as a tribute, is perhaps what I mean, and I want so badly to catch the spirit of it. Anyway I know I can rely on you for an honest opinion. With this chapter I am up 450 words, but I don’t think it matters, it’s less travelogue, less of the diary. (Diack to Seabrook, 3 December 1960)

Diack did not conceive of her book as a source of propaganda. She struggled to clarify her intentions—*for* versus *in aid of* suggests her attempt to capture an intangible, elusive quality. Despite her attempts at elucidation, it is never clear why Diack wanted this book to be a tribute. After her own mistreatment, expressed so forcefully in her letters and poems, how could Diack possibly feel that a tribute is merited? Did Seabrook’s shaping of

the book reflect an understanding of Diack's intention?

Anyway I know I can rely on your judgement, and as long as I can be sure of your honest, candid opinion, that is fine, and I *am* grateful to you. And may I rely on you to let me know when you see faults creeping in, especially if I start getting too long-winded? One thing I think we must bear in mind, is that *we* start by being interested in the subject matter. The whole thing may seem quite different to the casual reader. I'm full of hope, you note! (11 December 1960)

The plural "we" suggests Seabrook's complicity, that her part in the authorship was a significant one (when publication problems arose, Seabrook is silent about her own role). Seabrook's loyalty remained with the Mission. Seabrook bolstered Diack's sagging confidence by reassuring her that "the book will be a best seller" (20 January 1961). In these early stages, her encouragement prompted Diack's remark, "I see now how those dedications get written, 'without whose help and encouragement, etc!' ... It is easier going now, as one thing most earlier readers remarked was that the narrative was good, so it's really just a case of trimming" (22 January 1961). Seabrook offered a variation of her secretarial-mode letters: her eye was on the propaganda element of this undertaking. To Seabrook's editorial eye "the whole reads well and moves swiftly"; such phrases as "[t]he narrative is good," and "the whole MS will read extremely well," are balm to Diack's ears. Seabrook also offered practical advice: "I think economy of words is the thing to watch, and see that the action does not flag." And an understanding of Diack's perspective: "So much of it is from the heart, and that comes through very clearly" (1 February 1961). But despite Seabrook's encouragement, Diack had "mood[s] of despondency" after typing a chapter: "I think this writing business with its waves of optimism and depression that recur

with the utmost regularity is not unlike a woman's menstrual cycle" (1 February 1961).

When the book was completed, Diack suffered from "complete revulsion about the whole thing" (25 May 1961).

5.3.2 *The Matter of the Title*

The title of Diack's memoir, *Labrador Nurse*, is the same as Banfill's memoir, published less than ten years previously. When Diack's book was more than three-quarters done, she proposed the title *Strength Enough Given*, a phrase from T.S. Eliot's *The Family Reunion*:

Where does one go from a world of insanity?
[...]
To the worship in the desert, the thirst and deprivation,
A stony sanctuary and a primitive altar,
The heat of the sun and the icy vigil,
A care over lives of humble people,
[...] Why I have this election
I do not understand. It must have been preparing always,
And I see it was what I always wanted. Strength demanded
That seems too much, is just strength enough given.
(I.ii.329)

This extract from Eliot's play is used as the epigraph to *Labrador Nurse*. "Strength Enough Given" is also embedded in Diack's earlier poem "If" (1955): "If you can know that strength demanded *is* strength given." At the opening of the play, Lord Harry Monchensey believes that he is chosen or elected by God for a special life. In his last speech, of which Diack's epigraph is a part, Harry does not understand why God has chosen him. As Nevill Coghill, in his commentary on these lines explains, "Harry's will

welcomes its surrender to the will of God, much strength is demanded of him, but the demand itself gives him strength enough" (223). The imagery used in Harry's speech is that of "religious asceticism and mission" (Evans 103). In the desert, a common image associated with mystics, "stripped of agricultural and technological advances, the mystics are forced to recognize their utter dependency on God" (Ochs 121). Evelyn Underhill, whose *Mysticism* (1911) had "a marked influence" on Eliot (Skaff 22), also influenced Diack, as will be discussed in the next section. Diack, like Harry, felt called by God to a special destiny: Labrador was her testing ground, a place where she was utterly dependent on God. Seabrook and an unidentified reader felt that such a title as *Strength Enough Given*, which implies a testing, would need a qualifying sub-title such as "A Mission Nurse in Labrador." In an attempt to find a succinct title, Diack requested "titles of other books written about the Mission," insisting that she did not want "to err by getting the same!" (7 May 1961). Seabrook's reply: "As far as I can remember the two nurses who have written about the Coast called their books *Northern Nurse* and *Labrador Nurse*. There may have been others, but I have not the particulars ..." (11 May 1961). Later when Diack awaited the Gollancz contract, she asked: "Are you *sure Labrador Nurse* has not been used as a title before—I thought it was the name of that book written about Mutton Bay—Anyway you should know!" (n.d.). There is no extant clarification. Diack's and Banfill's memoirs bear the same title, *Labrador Nurse*.

5.3.3 *The Struggle for Publication*

Although Diack did not win the competition, Mills and Boon encouraged her to publish her book. But publication became a struggle. By November, Diack, disgruntled with publishers (“Heinemann’s not interested, I feel quite de-bunked!”), sought Seabrook’s advice, “*please*, what would you suggest we do now? (Note the ‘we’!)” (19 November 1961). Although this letter implies joint authorship, their correspondence regarding the book’s publication reveals a reversal of roles, with Diack using Seabrook’s own effective strategy. Offering Seabrook two possibilities—to submit to Harrap, the publisher of J. Lennox Kerr’s biography of Grenfell (“Would you consider giving me any sort of pull there? or is that asking too much?”), or to go “straight to an agent”—Diack threw out the hook: “I have always intended that 10% of the royalties should go to the Mission. I am not giving you that information now as a bribe! but just a stated fact.” Diack’s reason for “un-load[ing] all this” on Seabrook is that she “just cannot get properly detached about it ... Or shall we burn the lot???” (Seabrook’s response: “There is no question of burning the lot—we will press on regardless” [4 December 1961].) But is Diack simply using this strategy to ensure that her book does get published?

Seabrook proposed Lutterworth Press [Proprietors: United Society for Christian Literature] who published books with “a missionary message,” and also approaching the *Nursing Mirror* about serialization. And, as a final recourse, Robert Hale, who published “a badly written book by a Canadian nurse [Banfill’s *Labrador Nurse*]. Yours is far and away above her standard, and it might be worth writing to them” (4 December 1961).

Other plans included advertising it in the Mission's Christmas card catalogue and *ADSF*, as well as having copies on sale at the London office, "so you would have our support" (4 December 1961). While waiting for the Executive Committee to decide the book's fate, Diack expressed anxiety: "*I am sure we ought to aim at a Christmas market—it is the best time for sales, particularly a book with a winter flavour, also it would save labour and expense if you could send out notices along with your Christmas card ones*" (9 April 1962). Diack, relieved that Seabrook was "willing to take the whole thing over," admits knowing "nothing of these things am quite prepared to be guided by you, or rather if I may, to leave it entirely in your hands" (5 December 1961). But ultimately, she does not. Her earlier protestation of detachment forgotten, Diack became embroiled in publication negotiations. The following is a condensed version of the convoluted history of the publication of *Labrador Nurse*. It is an important exposé of the Mission's treatment of Diack and their vacillating involvement with her book.

In her letter to Lutterworth, Seabrook emphasized the "Christian message" of Diack's book (18 December 1961). As a straight publishing venture on their own was not feasible, Lutterworth proposed publication with the Mission's co-operation in the form of a "guarantee to take a certain number of copies," as it was "very difficult to float a book of this kind nowadays" without it (Lutterworth to Diack, 6 March 1962). Lutterworth's proposal made no allowance for payment to the author: "Would the author need some payment?" they asked Seabrook (4 April 1962). To Seabrook's comment, "I am not sure how you feel about a fee," Diack was emphatic that "the author will most *certainly* require

some payment!!” In her reply to Lutterworth, Seabrook downplayed Diack’s insistence on a fee: “I think she feels she would require some payment ... I do not think this would be a large sum” (12 April 1962). Lutterworth suggested an “outright payment” of £50 as “a useful recognition” of her work (13 April 1962). (Diack had spent £75 on typing the manuscript, and £50 was little compensation.) Seabrook promised to “have a word” with Lord Grenfell about Lutterworth’s terms, as she expected the matter to be on the Executive Committee’s agenda on 1 June (Seabrook to Diack, 9 April 1962). Diack raised a curious question: “It would also be very interesting to know *why* you think the book should be published—on which grounds you will be bringing it forward” to the Committee (9 April 1962). Is she suspicious of the platitudinous quality of Seabrook’s words? Seabrook had earlier labelled the book as “brilliant,” “excellent,” and “a best seller,” but now considered it “good”: it would have “a certain public ... Personally I would like to see it published, because I think it is worth doing” (17 April 1962).

The decision whether to co-fund the publication of *Strength Enough Given* was an Executive Committee decision, and involved “spending public money,” with the concomitant “risk of losing some of it” (17 April 1962). Seabrook’s original enthusiasm and superlatives are downgraded to an ambiguous statement: “It is very difficult to tell how the book will be received by the public.” It was easy to give Diack epistolary encouragement, but, in reality, risky to back her book to the Committee. Still undecided about the book’s future after their June meeting, the Committee postponed the matter until September. Seabrook had informed Diack that this indecision was due to the non-receipt

of Miss Gordon's comments.

Seeking advice from Gordon, editor of the *Nursing Mirror*, Seabrook marginalized the book: it "would certainly be of interest, I think, to the nursing world, but we are not sure if it would appeal to the general public" (Seabrook to Gordon, 3 May 1962). (The "we" now announces her complicity with the Committee.) Diack complains of the thinness of this reasoning: "comments have been made that the book will only be for a limited public, but can you think of *any* book, best-sellers included, that is suitable for anything but a limited public?" (28 May 1962). Seabrook, who wanted the book read by a *Nursing Mirror* reader, informed Gordon that the book's author "may have written for the *Nursing Mirror* in the past"⁵⁸ (3 May 1962). As one of Mills and Boon's competition judges, Gordon had voted against Diack's book because it was insufficiently lively and contained no conversations⁵⁹ (4 May 1962), and had insisted that the book was insufficiently well written to be published. Seabrook's mention of Lutterworth's interest prompted a re-reading. Gordon's original opinion remained unchanged: it still "suffer[ed] from being too much of a narrative" and would be "more readable and exciting had the author included much more dialogue—and some really arresting points" (Gordon to Seabrook, 5 September 1962). Seabrook offered Diack a diluted version of these comments.

Becoming increasingly annoyed with the frequent postponements of the publication of her book, Diack reminded the Mission that this time the copyright belonged to her:

When I wrote that I had always meant the Grenfell Mission to have 10% of any royalties on the book, I meant 10% of any profits I might make on it ... Of course, if the Mission had to put up capital then that alters the picture; all the same, I think I ought to ask for at least an equal share of any profits that the book may make when all capital expenditure by everybody, including my own £75, has been refunded. I am not prepared to accept a lump sum for the sale of the copyright. I would prefer to take a chance on there being some profit! In this respect, I would like to ask for some very careful consideration of the suggested low price for selling the book, with the consequent very small margin.

I am sorry that I cannot afford to be more generous, but my Super-Annuation when I retire is only going to be £70.0.0 p.a. This, of course, is not wholly due to the fact that none was paid while I worked for the Mission, but it is this which prompts me now to ask the Grenfell Mission to be a little more generous than your letters to date have suggested. Also, you know, a very great deal of hard work went into the writing of that book; for six months it took all of my off-duty, days off and holidays. (28 May 1962)

Seabrook attempted to placate Diack for the “long delay,” assuring her that “these things do take time, especially where the Association’s money is involved.” But, Diack “should make something out of it, and if we agree to the 3,000 copies, then there would be more out of it for you” (6 June 1962). In August, after “nine (9) months ... dilly-dallying with the Lutterworth Press” (Diack to Seabrook, 31 August 1962), and waiting for a decision from the Committee regarding Lutterworth’s proposal, Seabrook suggested trying a publisher “with no strings attached,” specifically Victor Gollancz who “is usually ready to encourage new writers” (30 August 1962). A most annoyed Diack, “irritated by the incessant delays,” spilled her pent-up frustration onto paper (as Secretary, Seabrook knew that it was not going to be on September’s agenda):

... and now, at the eleventh hour, just before the Committee meeting at which you led me to expect that a decision would be made, you suggest starting all over again and submitting to another publisher—

By all means submit it to another publisher—what a waste of time these last three months ...

I would have gone ahead long since and done this myself—in fact the only thing that kept me to the L[utterworth] Press offer was that you had [word unclear] them and seemed to want them to publish — also I thought they were less likely to want to change the emphasis I have given to the book—In any case there is no need to refuse their offer, before submitting the MS elsewhere—Also, I suppose, if by any chance the book did sell well, there should be more profit for the Mission if they have put up some of the capital— (31 August 1962)

The book did not appear on the September agenda, and Diack was given a lame excuse:

Lord Grenfell will not be at the meeting tomorrow, and it has come too late to be included in the Agenda, but it will come before the next meeting in December, and this will give more members time to read the MS. I cannot force the Committee to back it, and the book cannot be published by Lutterworth Press unless we do. You are perfectly at liberty to try Hodder & Stoughton, and Harrap, as both have published books on Grenfell.... Authors I know, have been trying to get books published for years. It is a lengthy process, unless one finds a publisher who is looking for that particular book. (6 September 1962)

Seabrook sent the manuscript to Hodder & Stoughton, emphasizing that the book had propaganda-only potential: it “may not have a general appeal,” but would “arouse fresh interest in our work, and also help us with the recruitment of nurses for the Coast” (18 September 1962). Hodder & Stoughton felt that the book should be published, but doubted its commercial potential. Seabrook longed for “a wealthy patron to back it” (31 October 1962).

Seabrook also appealed to Helen Kirby,⁶⁰ an ex-Grenfell nurse, to read the manuscript, telling her that Diack was “anxious to publish this book, and I think there is a message in it, though it may not appeal to the general public. It could help with the

recruitment of nurses, and help the Mission in that way.” Kirby found it “most enjoyable,” but feared her own bias because it was evocative of her own Coast experience (7 October 1962). She also questioned the book’s commercial appeal, but offered the following praise and criticism:

... [it is] an excellent “quick sketch” of life on the coast & her descriptions of scenery, passages concerning her faith etc. seem to me very worthwhile & well presented—something very different from the rather breezy, adventurous vein in which some books of this sort are written—(*Northern Nurse* for example, which I didn’t care for!) [...]

The rather frequent medical allusions, I feel, will only interest those who understand a good deal more than the average reader (the abnormal midwifery cases etc)—Also perhaps there isn’t quite enough “light & shade”? All events seem equally important—but perhaps that is just my impression, I think it is perhaps the repetitive nature of the material that makes for this feeling—& nothing is “filled out.”

Anyway I did enjoy it & feel it would make a very good contribution towards the literature available on the subject, largely because I get the impression that Author herself must be a fine person, & presents the Mission and its work in such an untarnished light. I *don’t* think we could expect to gain much from it financially—but perhaps quite a lot in other ways—....

P.S. On reading this I wonder if it sounds very critical?—I don’t mean it to do so. I think the great *value* of the book is its difference from others of its kind—written at a rather deeper level ... (1 November 1962)

Seabrook agreed that Kirby’s criticism was “right and fair” (6 November 1962). Yet

Seabrook herself had been responsible for the editing and shaping of the book. Why does Seabrook not claim her part in the book? Why does she remain silent? Is Seabrook’s agreement with everyone about everything part of her role as secretary? The book’s “true” reception:

Lord Grenfell felt that it is repetitive, Lady Newton loved it and feels that it should be published, and others think that it is a worthwhile book, but not a

commercial proposition. Miss Gordon, Editor of the *Nursing Mirror*, felt as you do, that there was not sufficient light and shade or conversation. Hodder and Stoughton, who published all Sir Wilfred's books, read it carefully mentioning that it is a book that should be published, but that it would not be a financial success. (Seabrook to Kirby, 6 November 1962)

By now the book had fallen a long way from its potential best-seller status. The decision to discuss the book at the next Council Meeting was not even definite: "We shall probably discuss it ... but I doubt if the Members will be willing to risk spending £800, which we would have to do if the book were published by the Lutterworth Press should the book fail" (Seabrook to Kirby, 6 November 1962). Again Seabrook lamented the lack of a wealthy patron to fund a private printing of "[this] kind of MS" (Seabrook to Kirby, 6 November 1962).

By late fall, Diack took charge of the situation and of Seabrook, asking her to "send the MS straight off to Gollancz—asking them if possible to let you have their opinion by the end of November" adding, rather sarcastically, "(I take it your Committee meeting is December 7th)."

Apparently unaware of Kirby's response, Diack instructed Seabrook to "give Mrs. Kirby a prod," naively thinking that

... what we do with that copy depends rather on her opinion—but I take it there is no harm in sending that copy off to yet another publisher—and I wonder then whether it would be any good your ringing up Mills & Boon to see if they have any suggestion—they gave us the original introduction to Heinneman and might be prepared to do the same again—In fact it might be better to do this instead of sending it straight to Gollancz ... (1 November 1962)

Seabrook's apologetic letter to Mills and Boon ("this book does mean a great deal to Miss Diack") underscores the Mission's own stake in this. If published, it would mean a great

deal to the Mission. Seabrook's response is defensive, her tone one of reprimand, and her irritation obvious. Diack's book is not a priority on the Mission's agenda: "we simply have to do first things first":

I can only pass on the MS which goes with a covering letter, and pass on the results to you—I cannot press for immediate replies—delays there will be—as other people are busy too, and after all it is a matter of good will and not a command that the MS should be read. Everyone is deeply interested and are anxious to do their best and all hope that it will be published. (15 November 1962)

The book was discussed at the December meeting, but the Association did not want to "run the risk of having to spend £800, should the book fail, as after all, it is public funds" (18 December 1962). Although they would like to see the book published, they would not risk any public funds.

In response to an earlier request, Diack submitted a detailed, well-thought-out proposal:

... there are two assumptions with regard to Lutterworth Press offer to be sorted out first. For the proposal is based on these assumptions, i.e., that the Lutterworth Press offer of April 3 1962 meant that

1. That the Lutterworth Press pay the capital expense required for the first 1,000 copies, while any profits on them come to me and the Mission.

2. That the capital cost of the remaining 2,000 copies is to be paid either by the Grenfell Mission or by myself, or by a combination of the two, and would be recouped out of the sales of the remaining 2,000 books.

Also it is suggested that the book should be sold at 15/- (fifteen shillings); it would seem that a book of this sort is as likely to sell at 15/- as 10/6 or 12/6, unless there is a certain price level above which libraries will not buy, for presumably it is the libraries whose support it is most important to obtain. Could you please check this point with the Lutterworth Press, perhaps by phone, before Wed? Ask them whether 15/- would not be a better price.

On these assumptions, I would like to put forward the following proposition:

1. That the number of copies to be made be 3,000 at a cost of 7/11d.
2. That the published price be 15/-.
3. That after deducting trade discount of 33-1/3%, the receipt per book will be 10/- and the margin available 2/1d.

The proposals regarding financing to be as follows:

1. The Grenfell Mission and myself to put up £400 each to cover the £800 capital required by the Lutterworth Press to meet the capital cost of publication of 2,000 out of 3,000 copies.
2. The profit on the first 1,000 copies, i.e., approx £100 be taken by me to cover the expenses in connection with preparing the manuscript.
3. Subsequent income from sales to be shared equally by myself and the Mission until our joint investment is fully recovered.
4. When the investment is fully recovered, then all subsequent receipts would be for my account. (Diack to Seabrook, 1 February 1963)

Diack's adviser, who is never identified, suggested that she emphasize the propaganda component, "that for a small amount of capital outlay, [the book] has the opportunity of gaining valuable publicity, both among potential subscribers and potential recruits"; the Mission "would be foolish to turn down [her] generous offer"—"we may find we have marketed something of value, and not necessarily just of financial value." Is she suggesting a spiritual value?

Diack was informed that it was too late to be included in the 6 February agenda, "it had been passed and agreed by the Chairman, and there was no time to brief him again." Diack's "letter and proposition will come before the next meeting without fail, because it can be accepted or rejected as it stands with no other alternatives" (13 February 1963). Seabrook's diction—"You see, the Chairman must read and digest these things before the meeting, and there just wasn't time to do this on the 6th" (13 February 1963)—has strong

overtones of placating a child. But Diack had had enough:

Would you please return me both copies of my manuscript *Strength Enough Given*, separately by return registered post.

Would you please let me know *without fail* the date of the next Executive Committee meeting—and I hereby state that, except for the offer made in my letter of Feb. 1. 1963, I hereby withdraw all offer of any profit on the book to be given to the Grenfell Association. [“Sincerely, Lesley Diack”] (14 February 1963)

Totally frustrated, Diack appeals to Seabrook for empathy, “Can you not see it from my point of view, too? It is a year since the L[utterworth] Press first made their offer—and in 15 months the MS has only been to two publishers—It has been going to be discussed the next Exec[utive] C[ommi]ttee ‘without fail’ ever since last June. Sorry! but the worm has finally turned!!! Maybe that is what you intended” (16 February 1963). Diack had reached her limit of tolerance for this vacillating treatment. Seabrook’s soothing-secretary-mode response chided Diack’s impatience:

Had I pushed through your letter and proposals at the last moment it is quite possible that it would have been turned down. You may know, as well as I do, that a certain amount of lobbying is done before Committee Meetings. I would have had to get in touch with the Lutterworth Press, then send a copy of your letter to Lord Grenfell at the last minute, and he too, is a busy man, and then if he agreed to all this make copies for each Committee member. To do that in two days with appointments and other work on hand was a bit difficult, but the important thing is it would have been unwise to hurry Lord Grenfell and get him to make a snap decision, which could have gone the wrong way. Now when I see him I will show him your letter and warm him up to the subject, so that he may bring up the book to the next Committee sympathetically. It was in your interest, as well as ours, to wait for the next meeting. (18 February 1963)

Although Seabrook grammatically joined them in the last sentence, the veneer of “interest” had grown thin, as Diack had observed.

The details of the book's eventual publication by Gollancz are not evident from the correspondence in Diack's file. Maybe Diack herself or her adviser handled it. Lutterworth had been excluded by the Committee's decision to extricate itself from any financial responsibility for the book. Gollancz, however, took "full responsibility"; the Mission was "naturally very pleased" about this decision (Seabrook to Lutterworth, n.d.). *Labrador Nurse* was published 21 November 1963 (Seabrook to Thomas, 29 October 1963).⁶¹ Thomas was "very interested" in a copy of Diack's book, and offered to pay for it (Seabrook sent it gratis) (2 December 1963).⁶² Seabrook informed him that the book was "going well here, and she has some excellent write-ups" (10 December 1963).⁶³ What Thomas thought of Diack's book is not known, nor is Diack mentioned in Thomas's own memoir. This is telling, as they appeared to be good friends, and Diack even spent one three-week holiday with the Thomas family at St. Anthony (*Labrador Nurse* 137).⁶⁴

ADSF (October 1963) announced that Diack's book would be published by Gollancz in November. Six months later, another notice reported that the book was "a great success, and is now in its second edition. The reviews have reached a high standard, and been expressed in some of the leading journals and newspapers, including the *Times Literary Supplement*" (April 1964 *ADSF*). However, the "official" Grenfell Mission review did not appear until October 1964, almost a year after the book's publication. Written by Penny Nichols, the editor of the quarterly, it was non-critical, with a four-fold approach. First, nostalgia: "Capturing the atmosphere of the Coast is a difficult thing to do, and Lesley Diack has done this in her recently published book, *Labrador Nurse*. Using

graphic descriptions, she sets the scene for each section of her narrative, and selecting dramatic events she gives the layman an exciting view of the hardships and challenges of nursing on the Coast as it was to the old-timers.” Then, the matter of religion, and the suggestion that Diack used it as a prop: “Her serious approach to religious conviction in no way becomes heavy-handed, and in many ways helps to explain the reason why some individuals manage to remain constant workers under trying and very lonely conditions.” Thirdly, propaganda: “For Grenfell alumni this book is a delightful return to the Coast, and for the stranger it is an interesting invitation to a life of purpose.” And, finally, the last sentence succinctly addresses the bungling of the title, and effectively removes any blame for from the Mission: “The title of the book was the choice of the publisher” (87).

In England, *Labrador Nurse* was mentioned in a variety of papers and journals,⁶⁵ which for the most part gave only superficial and banal descriptions. The *Guardian*’s (Manchester & London) reviewer, Isabel Quigley, wrote that it told “very simply, disarmingly, and agreeably” about Diack’s Grenfell Mission experiences; it was “one of those rare, utterly unpretentious accounts of what in fact was high adventure but by the cheerful sound of it is made to seem almost humdrum,” with “faith, hope, and charity positively glowing through the lot” (29 November 1963). Siriol Hugh-Jones of the London *Tatler* rated it “a simple straightforward story, full of trust and courage ... nice, admirable and no literary masterpiece” (25 December 1963). To L.J.G. of *District Nursing*, Diack “portrays vividly her experiences” and has a delightful way of expressing herself in this “fascinating book”: “To the nurse with a spirit of adventure and service who is prepared to

accept great responsibilities and to make decisions when medical help is not always available, life in the Mission presents a thrilling challenge" (January 1964). Similarly, the *British Book News* review is a call to service: "Miss Diack's description of the grandeur of Labrador is masterly, and her writing will inspire her readers in an interest in the Grenfell Association and may encourage nurses and doctors to consider service with this international, interdenominational and interracial enterprise" (February 1964). *Flair* (March 1964) also labels it a "fascinating account," but suggests that "a map would have helped to give readers a better idea of the immense distances involved." Gladys Williams (*Good Housekeeping* [London] April 1964) recommends *Labrador Nurse* to "[t]hose more interested in how to live than how to believe in Christianity," as a story of "a person who is utterly convinced that she found her way to full, abundant living of the most satisfying kind" (14). And M.H. Scott, in *Nursing Times* (April 1964), labels it a "remarkable book," related with "modesty, humour and considerable feeling."

The first sustained commentary appeared in the *Times Literary Supplement*, and addressed the dearth of books by nurses:

Nurses are much written about by politicians, social reformers and script writers. They seldom have time, inclination or perhaps capacity to write about themselves. Miss Diack has inclination and capacity and has made the time to describe three years spent on the Labrador coast ten years ago. It is evident from her first page that glamour is not on sale here; it would wilt after a day's work on a nursing station of the Grenfell Mission. [...]

It is no joke to be caught in the Grenfell net and to plunge in with only half a midwife's qualification, as Miss Diack did ... She writes with a crisp breathlessness that only now and then fizzles out in mere chatter. These pages are full of hard, happy, risk-taking fun.... She can quote Bonhoeffer and Huvelin. The church may be closed because the parson

cannot get through till the spring, but she can steal a rare hour of solitude to climb through the snow to a pinewood where the peace that passes all understanding flowers below zero.... She learns that you cannot reach down to nourish the roots of this hard-pressed people without faith, hope and charity, as Grenfell would have defined them. This in the limit is what nurses are made of. (9 January 1964)⁶⁶

By February, sufficient positive notices prompted Seabrook's remark to Christopher Newton, the clergyman who had helped Diack in the Leggo crisis, that "Lesley Diack's book is a great success. She has had excellent notices and is very thrilled about it all, but so modest" (17 February 1964).⁶⁷ For Diack, "the nicest review yet" (Diack to Seabrook 28 March 1964) was Michael Wilson's in *St. Martin's Review*:

Many people have been thrilled by the pioneer medical work of the Grenfell Mission on the coast of Labrador. Here is a book with all the ingredients of adventure, human interest and need, mixed with an account of medical skill and courage, compassion, ingenuity and humour! Indeed Labrador tests its servants to the last ounce. The book is written with humility, and the matter-of-fact accounts of how difficulties of transport (mostly by boat in summer and dog team in winter), Arctic temperatures and medical emergencies are surmounted just take one's breath away. I've enjoyed this book immensely ... Next time someone says "What do you *mean* by vocation?" I shall put them on to reading this book by the right person in the right place. (Easter 1964)

How did the Grenfell alumni react? One "read [it] three times, and thoroughly enjoyed it" (Seabrook to Sister Mary Luke, 4 May 1966); Veronica Hodd and her husband, Dr. Donald Hodd of Harrington Hospital, both read *Labrador Nurse* and "thoroughly enjoyed it," but, she wrote

Just between us there is only [one] part which puzzles us and that is her account of the trying time she had at Forteau and what she calls "a campaign to discredit her"—of course we aren't kept in touch with what transpires at other stations but we have never heard anything about anything

of this nature. Of course there are times when every Grenfell worker must sometimes feel undercurrents of this sort—I know many who have but all have usually realized that it is natural to these folk to not accept everything we try to do in the spirit in which we mean to convey—Sir Wilfred certainly knew this full well. (Hodd to Seabrook, 8 January 1964)⁶⁸

5.4 *Labrador Nurse*: The Power of Diack's Moral Vision

The *Times Literary Supplement* noted that Diack quoted Bonhoeffer and Huvelin. These are but two of the varied sources from which Diack quotes or to which she refers, some identified, some not. These include Tennyson, Stephen Grellet, T.S. Eliot, Evelyn Underhill, the Bible (Matthew 6:34 and the Epistle of James), the Koran, as well as other unidentified quotations, and a reference to Herman Wouk's *The Caine Mutiny*. From the range of her quotations one can postulate that Diack was well read, but the spiritual ideas embedded in this intertextual weaving are more than a reflection of the depth of her reading. The embedded ideas represented by these quotations and references give Diack a way of inserting her own ideas without revealing too much of the "I." They give a clear indication of her philosophy—her moral vision.

Diack poured out much of herself in *Labrador Nurse*, and there was a sense of urgency in writing it. Her insistence on the emphasis of the proposed title, *Strength Enough Given*, suggests that she was writing more than a narrative of nostalgia to provide propaganda for the Mission. The spiritual neglect that Diack focused on in her letters, needs, she feels, an infusion of the original Grenfell spirit. In a close textual reading of *Labrador Nurse* it is clear that Diack's narrative "projects a moral vision of the past"

(Billson 261), her Labrador past. According to Marcus Billson, “The values of the memorialist are mirrored in [her] imaginative descriptions of the actions and characters of men [and women]” (261), and, I would suggest, in the case of this book, in Diack’s embedded quotations.

Diack’s reading material while on the Coast reflects a predilection for books with spiritual themes. When she first went out to the Coast, her reading requests⁶⁹ included Iremonger’s *Life and Letters of William Temple* (19 November 1950; 4 February 1952), the Christian leader who became Archbishop of Canterbury. She also requested *The Cloud of Unknowing*, the medieval text which became one of the devotional classics of the English church (17 December 1955). *The Cloud of Unknowing* is addressed to a young man who, like Diack, has been called to the contemplative life, and its main theme is that God cannot be apprehended by man’s intellect, only love can pierce the “cloud of unknowing” which lies between them. In *Labrador Nurse*, Diack uses two direct quotations from Evelyn Underhill (1875-1941), the English poet, novelist, and mystical theologian, who contributed significantly to the theology of mysticism, and who translated some of the medieval mystical authors into English (including *The Cloud of Unknowing*) with scholarly introductions and notes, as well as “taught a university course in mysticism” (Furse 150). Underhill not only had “the academic knowledge of texts, but also the experiential knowledge of God” (Callahan 27). Her mysticism “revealed divine transcendence in the homey details of daily life”:

Not satisfied with William James's description of "marks of the mystic," she offered four of her own: mysticism is practical rather than theoretical, its aims are entirely spiritual, its business and method is love, and it entails a definite, organic life-process of conversion and transformation that is not self-seeking. Mysticism is a loving, intuitive knowledge of self, God, others, and the world, based on personal religious experience. (Callahan 27)

Underhill's "religious upbringing was Anglican and seemingly only formal until, on a retreat at St. Mary of the Angels in Southampton, she underwent a conversion experience" (Furse 150). T.S. Eliot hailed Underhill as "a writer attuned to the great spiritual hunger of her times"; "[h]er studies," he wrote, "have the inspiration not primarily of the scholar or the champion of forgotten genius, but of the consciousness of the grievous need of the contemplative element in the modern world" (qtd. in Greene 2). In *Labrador Nurse* Diack deals with the difficulties of achieving a contemplative life. Even if her philosophy is not specifically stated, Diack's reading material and embedded quotations suggest a spiritual questing. It does not come as a surprise that she later entered an enclosed contemplative order of Benedictine nuns.

The four parts of Diack's memoir do not all contain the same level of spiritual intensity. Only the last two parts are permeated with an awareness of and questing for the spiritual dimension. Most of the quotations occur in parts three and four. At Mutton Bay (part 2), the presence of the Church of England parson, John Anido (and his wife Barbara) provide a welcome source of English company, and help appease her loneliness. But more than just a source of company, they provide a fulcrum for the spiritual. It is at Mutton Bay that Diack realizes that "It was the greatest joy to have the church, and regular church

services. How much we take all that for granted at home, and all it means in our daily lives, and in the background of our lives!” (*Labrador Nurse* 69). In Mutton Bay the church provides a new dimension:

One of the great joys of that first winter was working a district in close co-operation with the Church, and especially with a priest of such calibre. John Anido taught me a great deal, though probably more indirectly than directly. The close co-operation, and the fact that it was taken for granted by the people, gave a new dimension to the work and to my whole approach to it. No longer just on my own, I was caught up into the Church’s ministry.... (*Labrador Nurse* 77)

In one exchange between Diack and Barbara Anido, the matter of gratitude (they noticed how the people did not say thank you) expands into a discussion of cultural differences, but ultimately an occasion to glorify God. Diack felt slighted when no one thanked her, and complained that the people viewed her as simply doing her job, and not an individual they should thank. John Anido reminds Diack that her nursing duties are done for “the greater glory of God” (*Labrador Nurse* 84), not for gratitude, self-glorification, or the greater good of the Mission. And this, she realizes, is “one of the supreme lessons to be learned on the Labrador”:

to go on doing the job, like climbing Everest, just because it’s *there*: to be sure of motives: to maintain standards whatever the surroundings or the set-up; and if by any chance we should do the wrong thing, let it at least be for the right reason. (*Labrador Nurse* 84)

With this realization, Diack is carried into pondering the philosophical implications of gratitude, and she offers an altruistic alternative:

I sometimes wonder too whether we nurses don’t take the gratitude of our patients a little too much for granted. Shouldn’t we stop and think

sometimes and be grateful to them, for the opportunity that they, in their sickness and their pain, give to us to express our personalities and our best selves? After all, most of us are nurses because we like nursing; it's a job we do because we want to do it and we like doing things for other people. Gratitude, naturally, brings a glow, and we should be grateful for that too, but I wonder whether, really fundamentally, we have any right just to expect it. (*Labrador Nurse* 84)

This philosophical questioning comes on the eve of Part III, before Forteau, where she will be tested in matters greater than that of gratitude.

It is not just the physical church that is significant in Diack's daily life as a nurse, but the more intangible spiritual dimension. When faced with the ordeal of pulling an abscessed tooth, Diack relies on a higher power, noting how "We are given strength and grace when the time comes" (*Labrador Nurse* 71). And when the time comes, "I was surprised to find how steady my hand was as I directed the ethyl chloride spray and made the incision deep down ..." (*Labrador Nurse* 71). Diack relies on "the Almighty" to get her through not only a tooth-pulling session but through the demands of nursing station life:

There were obviously, in a one-nurse station, going to be occasions when I wouldn't be in the place where I was needed most. It would be impossible to foresee everything, to do what seemed best *at the time* was what mattered, and then not to fuss or fret but to hand over and trust the result to "the Almighty." (*Labrador Nurse* 75)

On one occasion in Forteau, a six-week epidemic leaves Diack in a state of exhaustion:

"The pitch of work was terrific, and for that whole six weeks I never got to bed at all, just slept on the couch in the sitting room within earshot of the wards" (*Labrador Nurse* 96).

Stretched to her limit, mentally and physically, and faced with one hopeless case, Diack places her faith in the Almighty, as that is all that remains:

I felt there was nothing more I could do, the result was not in my hands; I was half-dead from lack of sleep and there was [an expectant mother] in the waiting room who might need me at any time. I took a last look at the child, commended her small spirit into the hands of God, and then lay down on a bed by her cot. (*Labrador Nurse* 97)

Diack's faith is rewarded with a miracle: she awakes, "a few hours later to find, to my amazement, little Beulah just stirring in her sleep; her cheeks were pink now instead of bluish-grey and her breathing seemed easier. I could hardly believe my eyes, for a moment or two I could hardly see...." (*Labrador Nurse* 97, ellipses in original). Overwhelmed, Diack realizes the source of the miracle. For the reader's sake, she poses the question, "And what was the explanation?," and postulates an answer: "Perhaps an old-fashioned crisis to the pneumonia ... perhaps at last the penicillin had taken effect ... perhaps it was one of those occasions when all we can do is to let go and let God act ... but what did it matter *how* the miracle had occurred?" (*Labrador Nurse* 97, ellipses in original). One can ask a plethora of questions. There are no logical, verifiable answers—just an unexplained miracle, unexplained, of course, unless one believes in old-fashioned miracles. The *how* is not significant: it is the miracle itself that matters.

Christmas brings another significant spiritual experience, this time a literal and metaphorical mountain-top experience. Diack climbs "on up to the top of the highest hill," and with a colorful Forteau spread out below her, she pauses to reflect:

... the panorama of the coast lay spread out below me and the shining blue waters of the Straits. I could see across to Flowers Cove; already the lighthouse was twinkling; the sunset colours deepened, casting deep blue shadows on the snow on which I stood and turning the distant peaks to pink and orange.... (*Labrador Nurse* 114)

Suspended high above this riot of colours in a world of white, “All was still” (*Labrador Nurse* 114): the moment is devoid of action, an optimal condition for contemplation.

Isolated on this still mountain top, happiness is Diack’s uppermost emotion. She wants “to catch and hold” this moment, to arrest time at that intensity. But, as she clarifies with a quotation from the Koran, such a moment cannot be captured, fixed, or sustained: “the happiness of man is like a noon-hour halt under a shady tree, it must not, as it cannot, be prolonged” (*Labrador Nurse* 114). Taking a respite from action, Diack sits for a long time on a tree stump, “just looking and taking deep breaths of sheer happiness at the beauty of it all” (*Labrador Nurse* 114). Inhaling sheer happiness, Diack contemplates more than a literal mountain. Her musings are philosophical and spiritual:

I decided that age doesn’t dim the views from the mountain tops; it is just that one takes different paths up the mountains and it has to be savoured more slowly. I had known the dark valleys, too, at times of great strain and responsibility, when I had felt utterly inadequate for the task on hand, and yet there had been no one else; then perhaps afterwards had come “the joy of work attempted and achieved.” I had known moments of depression and extreme loneliness, but the view from the tops of the crests, be they waves or mountains, can only really be appreciated if one has come all the way up from the bottom. One works out a new philosophy of life in places like the Labrador. I realised that I had found that freedom which comes with ceasing to be a slave to personal possessions, in a life where “sufficient unto the day” was the only possible motto.... (*Labrador Nurse* 114, ellipsis in original)

The contemplative Diack knows that an awareness of suffering is necessary for a total life.

It is not clear if the impetus for Diack’s reflection is a particular Forteau experience or if she is musing on life in general. It is obvious, however, that her “philosophy of life” has been worked out, has undergone a transformation, an awakening, and has become *new*.

In *Women and Spirituality*, Carol Ochs points to the metaphor of the journey employed in traditional spirituality to represent the inward journey of the soul to God. Ochs finds this metaphor problematic as it is too goal-oriented; she prefers “the non-goal-oriented notion of the walk” (119) instead. If we substitute metaphors, Ochs suggests, we can still find value in the traditional spiritual stages once we view them as “experiences that we may, but need not, pass through as we come into relationship with reality” (119). Seeking a common thread between the experience of European mystics from the early Christian era to the death of William Blake, Evelyn Underhill identified five stages in the mystic journey: awakening, purgation, illumination, dark night of the soul, and unitive life. These stages are not reserved for the religious elite, but are shared powerful experiences in which all can find value. Based on Underhill’s five landmarks, and Ochs’s interpretation of them, I would like to read Diack’s Forteau experiences as “a narrative of transformation” (Barros viii), as demonstrating powerful experiences and change in her spiritual development, her new awareness of life. This is not to suggest that these occur as discrete or definitive stages in Diack’s memoir, but Diack’s portrayal of the spiritual bears traces of these stages, and, whether consciously or unconsciously, strengthens its underlying spiritual message.

5.4.1 A Narrative of Transformation: Stages in a Mystic Journey

Awakening or “unselfing” is usually preceded by a period when “the self is divided.... The awakening is usually marked by an event that, while it may seem

precipitous, actually concludes a long process of transformation” (Ochs 125, 124). Most of us have instances when we recognize that “something is more important than we are” (Ochs 125). The first steps to awakening concern “our condition of enslavement. The chains that bind us may result from our own limited perspective, our overpowering emotions, or the values of our society” (Ochs 125). Then comes “our conversion, or turning to the light. We may be freed by the personal inspiration of a significant other, or by a sense of emptiness or lack that leads us to feel that what passes for reality cannot be all there is” (125).

In her mountain-top experience, Diack’s recognition of the Biblical injunction—“Sufficient unto the day” (Matthew 6:34) (Diack uses it twice in her memoir) from the Sermon on the Mount (right after the Lord’s Prayer)—signals her freedom, as she explains, “that freedom which comes with ceasing to be a slave to personal possessions, in a life where ‘sufficient unto the day’ was the only possible motto” (*Labrador Nurse* 114). In this part of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is teaching that the laying up of treasures on earth (a form of enslavement), “where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal” is not the proper direction; we should instead lay up treasures in heaven (a spiritual investment). But this switch in philosophy involves an act of faith, and a living-in-the-day-only attitude: the Sermon on the Mount continues: “And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day *is* the evil thereof” (Matthew 6:28, 34,

KJV). Jesus teaches not to worry about tomorrow; each day has enough troubles of its own. In living one's daily life, the spiritual and the secular cannot be separated. In *The Spiritual Life*, Underhill discusses the spiritual life as co-operation with God and the Lord's Prayer as "a total concentration on the total interests of God, which must be expressed in action" (77, qtd. in Callahan 34). The implications of Underhill's attitude include "an acceptance of the interconnectedness of politics and spirituality, willingness to serve in difficult circumstances and to suffer for others in painful self-giving, tranquillity, gentleness in the ups and downs of daily life, and openness to secret transformation, including struggle, effort, and sacrifice" (Callahan 34). Diack advocates a similar acceptance.

Shortly after her mountain-top experience, Diack has an experience that is more than what it seems to be, when she is plunged into a life-threatening emergency. Exhausted, "not a whole night in bed for weeks," an unprepared Diack faces the emergency of a retained placenta, and has difficulty giving the anaesthetic:

I pulled myself together and for a moment took myself mentally into the atmosphere of an operating theatre; then, to my amazement, I heard a voice saying calmly and steadily, "Take deep breaths, slowly, in, out, gently does it, in, out, count one, two, three, four ..." It was my own voice that I heard, and suddenly everything seemed under control. (*Labrador Nurse* 118-119, ellipses in original)

Diack lets go and allows a greater force to take control. In terms of her spiritual development, it is a strengthening experience. What is essential to purgation, Underhill's second stage, is not some extreme practice, but character formation: "The self that has

been awakened must now be strengthened” (Ochs 127). In this situation, the patient survived, but “was bleeding badly ... [and] still needed our prayers: ten minutes later the danger was past” (*Labrador Nurse* 119). The placement of the colon in this sentence suggests that it was the strength of prayers that had averted the danger. The prayers come from across the water. Diack later discovers that the Flowers Cove nurses had listened to her emergency situation over the R.T., and “had had us [Forteau] in their thoughts and prayers a great deal that day” (*Labrador Nurse* 119). The strength and steadiness observed in the earlier tooth-pulling incident come from the same source, prayer, but this time it has an external conduit.

Stage three in Underhill’s schema is illumination: “The transformation that occurs through a life shaped by discipline frees us to see the world in all its wonder.... Illumination gives us not a vision of another world, but a new vision of this real—and valuable—world” (Ochs 129). After the emergency has been controlled, Diack takes “a short stroll out in the moonlight”—all is still, silent, and in the soft snow, “[her] steps made no sound” (*Labrador Nurse* 119, 120). In this still, moonlight-illuminated night, Diack contemplates the power of spiritual bonds. Although the placenta had been successfully removed, the patient still bled badly and “still needed our prayers,” but the strength of prayer averted the danger. Diack reflects on this experience: “I thought ... of how at the moment of giving that anaesthetic it had seemed almost as if someone or something else had taken control: something that had enabled me to rise to the occasion, and with it had come strength and steadiness. What is sometimes called ‘Grace of Office,’

perhaps, but it is not often that one is so clearly conscious of it in action” (*Labrador Nurse* 120). The strength and steadiness of the tooth-pulling incident is again evident. Reflecting on Ivy Durley’s comment about keeping Forteau in their thoughts and prayers that day was Diack’s “first inkling” of “a spiritual bond between us” (*Labrador Nurse* 120). This experience illuminates the power of prayer, and the power of the spiritual bond, and she considers the potential of this powerful tool: “I thought a little of what that could mean between us all at the different stations” (*Labrador Nurse* 120). When nurses unite to pray for their colleagues who are too busy with daily duties to pray, miracles happen. (During her second term, Diack was concerned with the Mission’s neglect of the spiritual; she criticizes the Mission’s casting aside of its spiritual origins to become a business-oriented organization. God is needed in the organization: prayer should replace cocktails.)

Diack’s experience and concomitant awareness cause her to reflect on the strength of (potential) spiritual bonds, and this leads to a deeper contemplation, “from trust and faith on to prayer.” Out on the isolated nursing stations, the Grenfell nurses are “often harassed Marthas, often with little or no time to pray ourselves, all we could do was to offer our daily lives and to hope that someone was making good our deficiency” (*Labrador Nurse* 120). As she explains, “We had had a small example of it that day, with Ivy and Win [nurses at Flowers Cove] for the moment with time to be Marys, and so the spiritual power-house giving me the strength I had so sorely needed” (*Labrador Nurse* 120). Exhausted, and facing a life-threatening emergency, Diack herself was the harassed Martha.

The Biblical (New Testament) story of Mary and Martha (Luke 10: 38-42) was used frequently by mystics as an illustration. A famous extended homily (and tribute to Mary) appears in the fourteenth-century English devotional classic, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, which Diack read while out on the Coast. It was also a recurring theme in Underhill's spiritual writing; for example,

St. Teresa said that to give our Lord a perfect service, Martha and Mary must combine. The modern tendency is to turn from the attitude and the work of Mary; and even call it—as I have heard it called by busy social Christians,—a form of spiritual selfishness. Thousands of devoted men and women to-day believe that the really good part is to keep busy, and give themselves no time to take what is offered to those who abide quietly with Christ; because there seem such a lot of urgent jobs for Martha to do.... I feel, more and more, the danger in which we stand of developing a lopsided Christianity; so concentrated on service, and on this-world obligations, as to forget the need of constant willed and quiet contact with that other world, wherefrom [sic] the sanctions of service and the power in which to do it proceed. (*Mixed Pastures* 74-75)

The story of Mary and Martha “provided the mystics with an analogue for the tension between the active and the contemplative claims upon their lives” (Furse 84). Mary, the “contemplative,” had chosen the good portion, which could not be taken away from her (Furse 83). Martha is the “practical housekeeper,” who represents “the *distractions* of the active (as opposed to the contemplative values)” (Furse 83). Diack's use of Mary and Martha illustrates the “spiritual bond” between herself and Durley. The force of such a spiritual bond, if activated by more nurses, would eliminate the polarities of Mary/Martha, and unite the harassed Martha and the contemplative Mary to provide a powerful tool in the Mission. When unleashed, the potential for miracles on the Coast would be limitless.

From this point on, prayer figured prominently in Diack's daily activity. Along with the prayers from across the Straits [Flowers Cove], Diack used "the radio systematically for ... daily prayers and Sunday worship" (*Labrador Nurse* 125); it grew out of "need for some form of corporate worship," that "grew into something very important" (*Labrador Nurse* 126). "We used [the Sunday evening Church-on-the-Air radio programme] as corporate worship at the station, arranging the work to fit in round it and tuning in all the radios to the same station. Then we added a morning service, and once a month there was a Choral Eucharist, and sometimes late at night ... I was able to go to church at home through the Overseas B.B.C." (*Labrador Nurse* 126). On weekdays,

... we found a fifteen-minute Morning Devotions which fitted well with the day's routine; so just beforehand one of the girls would rush down to take the fuse from the electric pump—it had a maddening habit of coming on and jamming things just at the wrong moment—and wherever we were we would all down tools and forgather for our family prayers. It became the mainspring of our day, nothing was allowed to interfere with it or be put first, except, of course, the occasional inconsiderate baby. (*Labrador Nurse* 126)

Diack's vision of a new world where the whole nursing station bonds in prayer, in a kind of Christian family, is put into action.

The dark night of the soul, the fourth stage, is "a time of trial, pain, solitude, and aridity.... It is a time when everything seems to go wrong, when we fall into depression and entertain doubts concerning our former enlightenment" (Ochs 130)—a time when it seems as if God has abandoned us. John of the Cross, a sixteenth-century Carmelite mystic, saw the dark night as a *passive* purification in which God takes the initiative to move a person

to a new level of spiritual maturity. “The mystic who endures this period of doubt, pain, and isolation takes comfort in the assurance that the suffering has meaning and that beyond the dark night of the soul lies the unitive life. We, on the other hand, enter the experience of aridity and desolation with no sustaining vision” (Ochs 130). Diack’s second winter in Forteau brings her “the greatest trial of all” [the Leggo affair]—“dealing with a paranoid personality in isolated circumstances” (*Labrador Nurse* 144). Constrained by either discourse or ethics, or both, Diack is unable to depict the horror, and it is encoded in a symbol (*The Caine Mutiny*). Diack recognized the danger to herself, and alludes to “the horror of all the weeks that followed” (*Labrador Nurse* 145). This experience provides a lesson, “the beginnings of a great lesson in detachment, for, as the Abbé Huvelin, has said, ‘God does not detach us from everything else in order that we may fall into a hole ...’” (*Labrador Nurse* 145, ellipses in original). Abbé Huvelin (1838-1910), “a saintly priest who might have acquired fame as a professor of theology or as an ecclesiastical historian, spent nearly the whole of his ministry in a subordinate position on the staff of a parish in Paris” (Wakefield 202-03). He “founded nothing, controlled nothing, wrote nothing, took no part in public affairs civil or religious ... [but was] a notable spiritual force and a soul of surpassing holiness” (Steuart 149). Diack is powerless and all alone; even the medical authority (the doctor) does not believe her. But her source of strength in this difficult experience comes from the spiritual realm, her belief, her involvement in the liturgy, “the Daily Office of the Church: the familiar liturgy of Matins and Evensong became a rock to which I clung” (*Labrador Nurse* 145), and lessons like

those from Huvelin. Diack also claims Bonhoeffer's words to strengthen her in her prison of Forteau and clings to her spiritual heritage. Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945), the German theologian, who was deeply involved in the struggle against the Nazi attempt to take over the church, was executed by the Nazis in Flossenbürg concentration camp, had written from his prison (Reist 19). Once again, it is clear that Diack has no other support but that provided by the spiritual. She repeats Bonhoeffer's words:

In times like these we learn as never before what it means to possess a past and a spiritual heritage untrammelled by the changes and chances of the present. A spiritual heritage reaching back for centuries is a wonderful support and comfort in face of all temporary stresses and strains. (*Labrador Nurse* 145)

In her prison of Forteau, Diack learned "a little of what Bonhoeffer meant by that faith that gave him in his prison cell 'a part in the communion of saints, a fellowship transcending the bounds of time and space ...'" (*Labrador Nurse* 145, ellipses in original). This fellowship has no limit. She may be all alone on the Coast, but on a plane transcending temporal and spatial restrictions, Diack is part of a fellowship, the communion of saints. This is her bedrock.

During this time of testing, Christopher Newton, the Church of England minister from Mutton Bay, provided a source of "blessed oasis": "Oh, the joy of the Christmas Communion ... it was so good to talk to someone from home, to talk for a brief while of things other than those of the Coast, of the deeper things ..." (*Labrador Nurse* 144).

Diack's need for "deeper things" is strong, and such moments, "snatched as and when they came, were veritable oases" in her life "out there" (*Labrador Nurse* 144). The deeper

spiritual things provide sanity and healing. Important in this is the “tower of strength” (sisterhood?), Ivy Durley, who held out “a veritable life-line” across the Straits (*Labrador Nurse* 146). Durley played an important role in Diack’s life, and not just in this crisis. Durley’s prayers were efficacious in Diack’s coping with the retained placenta case, and it is only when reflecting on Durley’s words over the R.T. that Diack first becomes aware of a “spiritual bond” between them (*Labrador Nurse* 120). Durley represents the contemplative Mary, and Diack the harassed Martha. Durley and Diack communicated over the R.T., but were “really only voices to each other,” yet “a great degree of friendship had sprung up” between them (*Labrador Nurse* 115-116). On her first New Years in Forteau they “saw the New Year in together” by having “a sched [scheduled R.T. communication] at midnight” (*Labrador Nurse* 115). A kindred spirit, Durley provides “advice and ... sense of humour” for Diack (*Labrador Nurse* 116). Diack derives a vicarious comfort and strength from Durley’s descriptions of the church and its liturgy:

I had a long chat with Ivy in the evening, she had just come back from Evensong ... The church had looked so lovely, Ivy went on; she had left during the last hymn, which they were singing in procession, and it had looked truly Christmassy as she came away, with the lights from the windows streaming out over the snow and the sound of the singing voices. I wanted to cry out, “Don’t, I can’t bear it.” I was missing it all so much that year, but you can’t interrupt on the radio-telephone. (*Labrador Nurse* 144)

Not only does Durley provide spiritual advice, but in the spring (after the Leggo crisis), she visits, and suggests that they switch stations for a week to ten days, to give Diack a break, so that she can be in Flowers Cove for Whitsun. Diack’s visit (giving her “a more distant view of the rugged Labrador hills”) seems “a haven of refuge after the storms and

stress of the winter” (*Labrador Nurse* 147):

The scenery [Flowers Cove] was so much more gentle; there were king-cups in the meadows, dog violets and sweet-scented orchids in the woods, and tall trees ringing the quiet rush-fringed pools.... (*Labrador Nurse* 147)

And at Flowers Cove, at Whit Sunday, she gets a chance to worship at the church (“a very beautiful little wooden one that bespoke much love and care”) where it is “lovely to hear Matins *sung* and by a choir in robes” (*Labrador Nurse* 147). She is so overwhelmed that she is “hard put to it to convince [herself that she] wasn’t dreaming” (*Labrador Nurse* 147). Durley was a comfort in Diack’s dark night.

To Underhill, contemplation was “attention to the things of the Spirit,” and she urged “the necessary link between work and prayer” (Callahan 31). Underhill called for “the integration of the practical and the contemplative life. We must find God in our practical everyday life, work, and suffering, as well as in our prayer life” (Callahan 33). At the end of *Labrador Nurse*, it is clear that Diack has managed to combine the active and the contemplative. She relates how the birth of a baby prevented her from attending Holy Communion, yet “the two events seemed interwoven” (*Labrador Nurse* 150), and are counterpointed in her narrative:

The baby was actually born while the service was taking place and once I knew all was well my thoughts went to join the celebration, which must have been just coming to its close. As I picked up the baby to put her on the scales, I thought of the priest as saying: “And here we offer and present unto Thee, O Lord ... this our bounden duty and service; not weighing our merits ...” She turned the scales at 9 lb. 15 oz. “Glory be to God on high,” and the baby cried lustily. (*Labrador Nurse*, 150, ellipses in original)

For Diack, the link between work and prayer is obvious: “If only one could more often

'offer and present' the daily work as prayer, and so achieve that mixture of the active and the contemplative which Evelyn Underhill describes as 'the one lit up by the other'" (*Labrador Nurse* 150). But the conflict between the two is "so full of frustrations; there were so many interruptions, it almost seemed as if they were intended, as perhaps, they were, for I came to see that the very interruptions and the difficulties in the way had themselves helped strengthen the 'hearty desire to pray'" (*Labrador Nurse* 150).

Underhill's unitive life is characterized by "an end to the previous oscillations between struggle and peace, renewed struggle and renewed peace" (Ochs 131). It does not insure against pain; "[t]he surface may ... continue to be as tempestuous as ever, but there is now a deep level of peace that cannot be shaken" (Ochs 132). A month after the Communion service, which Diack did not attend, the minister comes on a summer visit. "He came at a weekend, which was a very rare treat, and surely, I thought, with full Sunday services, I ought somehow to get to church" (*Labrador Nurse* 150). But despite her intentions, a difficult baby case prevents her Sunday attendance. There is a service on Monday morning, "and nothing, I vowed, should stop me then" (*Labrador Nurse* 151). Up "at crack of dawn, determined to be well ahead and with time in hand for anything unforeseen, but even *then*, just at the last moment, a boat came in bringing a patient" (*Labrador Nurse* 151), and a disappointed Diack results: "[f]or the moment I was oblivious to her need and her pain, I was so full of my own disappointment; then, as I prayed for grace to accept it, I saw how far I had been brought along the way, in that missing Holy Communion now mattered to me so intensely" (*Labrador Nurse* 151). But

the priest comes to her, and she does not have to miss the service. Diack's awareness suggests a "deep level of peace that cannot be shaken" (Ochs 132):

How often does life work out like that, the willingness to make the sacrifice being all that is required; and another truth to be learned, in that life out there, is how much we may be enriched by deprivation. (*Labrador Nurse* 151)

5.5 From Crisis to Strength: The Blending of Life, Self, and Writing

When Lesley Diack first met Dorothy Jupp at St. Mary's River, she was struck by Jupp's "calm assurance" and acceptance of "the fact that there would be three extra to share her evening meal" (*Labrador Nurse* 21). Diack speculated that this was how Jupp "would accept everything else that came her way" (*Labrador Nurse* 21). Like Jupp, Diack was an English nurse, and around the same age, but, Diack wondered,

Was this ... the sort of personality one needed to have in order to cope with living in isolation? Or was it, perhaps, the other way round, would it be the job that made the person?... (*Labrador Nurse* 21)

Reading Diack's letters and memoir intertextually, it is clear that Diack, unlike her textual speculation of Jupp, did not meet every hurdle with calm assurance or acceptance. In Diack's first term with the Mission, one case precipitated a crisis in her life, a crisis which was the impetus for her memoir, *Labrador Nurse*. As Marcus Billson points out, the memoir as genre is closely associated with periods of intellectual and spiritual crisis:

... memoirs appear especially suited for conveying the momentousness and specificity of the dramas of life, while providing some key to their meaning in the moral values of the memorialists. In times of crisis, the memoir-writer understands that [her] past and [her] very present are stepping stones to an unknown future. [She] experiences life more intensely, because the

very foundations of life as [she] has known them are threatened. (Billson 280-81)

How does Diack convey her story in her memoir, “a form shaped for and by the needs of men” (Buss, *Mapping* 61)? How does Diack inscribe a female selfhood in a form that not only will be subjected to the scrutiny of a reading public, but more importantly, to the censorship of the Mission? The Grenfell Mission, with its ideology of service, did not encourage individuality, nor the expression of personal experiences in a public form such as the memoir (with the exception of the Great Man, Grenfell, who had the Mission named after himself). A nurse’s individuality was to be sacrificed to the greater service of the organization. Within the Mission, Diack is a marginalized subject—as a woman, as a nurse, and because of her writing. She is clearly a subject who does not conform to patriarchal assumptions and conventions.

In her study of pioneer women’s memoirs, Buss agrees with Billson’s analysis of “how the memoir works through its preoccupation with historicity, with being in the world,” but, for the women Buss studied, “the special preoccupation with the private world allows them to bridge memoir and spiritual autobiography to write an account of their becoming women in the world, as well as the history of their being in the world” (*Mapping* 63). This distinction between being and becoming is one that Billson makes. And, Buss concludes, “in this familial and personal world, history is always interwoven with a woman’s own development so that the memoir writer is also an autobiographer” (Buss, *Mapping* 63). In *Labrador Nurse*, Diack’s spiritual awakening and personal

development are inextricably bound with the Grenfell Mission; it is blended/braided in her memoir with the work of that organization, and herself as part of it. The blending of narratives allows Diack “not only to reveal her own ‘text,’ but to claim her status as ‘creator of meaning’ from that experience” (Braham 118). “It is only as we receive the *metissage*, the blended story,” Braham concludes, “that we can grasp how life, self, and writing interact” (119). Buss also points to the usefulness of this braiding metaphor, or *metissage*, in her study: “For not only does the writer braid an identity, but as reader I may ‘allow myself to be interwoven with the discursive strands of the text, to engage in a form of intercourse wherein I take my interpretive cues from the patterns that emerge as a result of this encounter’” (*Mapping* 25).

Labrador Nurse inscribes a female character who is shaped by her Grenfell Mission experiences, shaped by the personal testing and purifying of those experiences, and who achieves the integration of the practical and the contemplative in a life “enriched by deprivation” (*Labrador Nurse* 151). Diack’s connection with the spiritual realm (which results from her service with the Grenfell Mission) confers empowerment. Her narrative is a “narrative of transformation,” of becoming-in-the-world as well as being-in-the-world. The “strength enough given” of her original title, and the emphasis she insisted on for her memoir, has a spiritual source. The entire story of Lesley Diack remains to be discovered, but an analysis of her memoir and her letters is a small step in allowing the subject to be seen a little more clearly, separated from myths or falsehoods perpetrated in the past.

Notes

1. See *Evening Telegram*, 30, 31 December 1954, and 3, 4 January 1955. The drama was played out in the press with appropriately dramatic headlines: "Joined Babies Born: 2nd Siamese Twins Born in Nfld." (30 December 1954, p. 3); "News of the birth was flashed to Dr. Thomas at St. Anthony from the nurse in charge of the Grenfell Mission Station at Flowers Cove"; "Supposed Siamese Twin Not Perfect Formation/ 'Copter is Delayed by Storm at Roddickton" (31 December 1954, p. 3); "the birth took place in the MacLean home at Green Island Cove and that the Grenfell Mission nurse stationed at Flowers Cove attended the birth"; "No Siamese Birth, Its Medical Term: Meningocele/ Helicopter Finally makes St. Anthony (3 January 1955, p. 3); "The MacLean Baby" (4 January 1955, p. 3).
2. Other sources differ from the *Evening Telegram* report. Seabrook informed Diack: "We were terribly excited to read of the birth of the 'Siamese' twins at Flowers Cove and had a good write up in the *Evening News*. Then we read of the actual event and think you did a marvellous job in delivering such a babe and keeping it alive as well as the mother" (14 January 1955). The case history prepared by Diack clarifies that this was a normal home delivery with a "local midwife" in attendance (22 December 1954, p. 2).
3. All letters, unless otherwise noted, are from PANL, MG 63, Lesley Diack personnel file, and are listed according to sender, recipient, date. Memos are from the same file.
4. PANL, MG 63, Great Britain & Ireland, Box 21: Appeals Pamphlets. It had a bright red cover; angled across the center was a black-on-white facsimile of a newspaper article (one column): "Helicopter Saves Newfoundland Baby" (St. John's, Nfld., Jan. 3 [AP]). The bottom one-sixth of the cover is occupied by: "The *True* Story of Our 'Siamese Twins'" / The Grenfell Association of Great Britain & Ireland. The text of the angled column is the same as that which heads Diack's *ADSF* article of the same name (April 1955).
5. See typescript "Case-History of Baby with Sacro-Coccygeal Tetroma [sic] Successfully Operated on at 12 Days," PANL, MG 63, Lesley Diack personnel file.
6. PANL, MG 63, File: Dr. G.W. Thomas 1957-68, Seabrook to Thomas, 9 March 1955.
7. PANL, MG 63, Lesley Diack personnel file. Diack's application to the Grenfell Association 14 March 1950 listed her age as 40 years 8 months. This suggests a birth year of 1910. In a letter to Seabrook (10 September 1960), Diack mentioned that her birthday was 10 June. Little is known about Diack's physical appearance. From a 1954 physical examination record we know that Diack was 5 feet 2½ inches, weighed 10 stone, and had her eyes corrected for near vision.

8. Diack visited Seabrook on 5 April 1949, and again on 10 November 1949. Seabrook's typed notes of these conversations record that Diack was "anxious to serve."
9. Seabrook uses this discourse in her own two-part article: see "Enchanted Voyage," *ADSF* (October 1946): 67-69; *ADSF* (January 1947): 118-121.
10. PANL, MG 63, Box 8, File: Mr. Denley Clark, FRCS.
11. Their correspondence forms the bulk of the Lesley Diack personnel file. It consists of approximately 315 letters, obviously with considerable gaps. (Diack's form of address/salutation and closing shift with her mood.) Duplicate copies of Seabrook's letters to Diack are in this file. Seabrook's responses are part of her duty as official secretary, and in that mode she wrote to all the nurses. There are separate files for "Miss Diack's book," and "Press Cuttings." Unless otherwise noted, references to letters are from this collection. Diack's spelling is irregular, particularly contractions, and I have silently amended these irregularities.
12. These are in her personnel file as she often sent Seabrook duplicate copies of her letters to Thomas. See also PANL, MG 372 Gordon Thomas Collection.
13. She was required to provide two personal and two professional references. In addition to her glowing professional testimonials, Diack provided strong personal references. One noted that Diack was "[a] person of excellent poise and judgment ... very adaptable and easy to work with ... energetic and capable ... strong, healthy [with] plenty of endurance" (Lt.-Col. J. Hall to Seabrook, 16 March 1950); the other "especially stress[ed] her adaptability to all circumstances, her friendliness, making her very pleasant to work with, and her independence of modern entertainment" and answered a definite "yes" to all points raised by the IGA (B.J. Mullington to Seabrook, 18 March 1950).
14. PANL, MG 63, Lesley Diack personnel file, Dr. J.S. Rixhardson [sic], Chief Assistant Medical Unit, St. Thomas's Hospital, London, 30 April 1946.
15. PANL, MG 63, Lesley Diack personnel file, D.C. Bridges, Late Principal Matron, Territorial Army-Nursing Service, London, 12 May 1946.
16. Mary's Harbour was formerly known as St. Mary's River. The names are used interchangeably.
17. Letter to author, 27 April 1999.
18. When Seabrook proposed to visit the Coast in 1954, Diack asked: "will you try and take a look at the "Leggo" papers in the General file, and also the copy of a letter to Dr.

Curtis written about Aug. 1953—Just for your information” (16 May 1954). Another reference is contained in a letter to Seabrook: “As far as Forteau’s difficulties are concerned, on both occasions they have been very actively fomented from the outside. I think, too, that a real blow-up such as we had with Leggo, sometimes just serves to clear the air!” (7 March 1955). There are no letters in Diack’s personnel file from 13 July 1952 to 16 April 1953, and I have not been able to uncover any clues as to the identity of Leggo.

19. How much of this was part of her job as Secretary is unclear. Seabrook wrote to Joan Stedman 18 August 1953: “We are looking forward to seeing Lesley Diack when she comes home this winter. She is a splendid person and I am so glad you like her” (PANL, MG 63, Joan Stedman personnel file).

20. “I definitely want to return to Forteau, and would like to have this contract made out expressly for Forteau” (Diack to Horace MacNeil, 4 December 1953).

21. Sheila Rawlings was Diack’s assistant. Dr. Curtis thought that Diack should try Flowers Cove as an experiment: “she would enjoy it” (qtd. in a letter from Seabrook to Diack, 22 February 1954).

22. In another agreement dated 30 December 1954, Diack was to go as Nurse in charge at Forteau from September 1954 to September 1956, at the annual rate of \$1150. Special clause: “That Miss Lesley Diack is to be stationed at Forteau for the duration of her two-year contract.”

23. PANL, MG 372, Box 1, File: Curtis 1954-1955.

24. PANL, MG 372, Box 1, File: Curtis 1954-1955.

25. PANL, MG 372, Box 1, File: Curtis 1954-1955.

26. PANL, MG 372, Box 35, File: Flowers Cove 1955-1962.

27. PANL, MG 372, Box 35, File: Flowers Cove 1955-1962.

28. PANL, MG 372, Box 35, File: Flowers Cove 1955-1962.

29. PANL, MG 372, Box 35, File: Flowers Cove 1955-1962.

30. PANL, MG 372, Box 35, File: Flowers Cove 1955-1962.

31. MG 993, Box 9, File: Grenfell Association of Great Britain and Ireland, Durley to GAGBI, 27 January 1973.

32. PANL, MG 372, Box 1, File: Curtis 1954-1955, Curtis to Thomas, 11 October 1955.
33. PANL, MG 372, Box 35, File: Mary's Harbour 1955-1962.
34. PANL, MG 372, Box 35, File: Flowers Cove 1955-1962.
35. PANL, MG 372, Box 35, File: Mary's Harbour 1955-1962.
36. Dr. Hogarth Forsyth and his wife (nurse) Clayre Ruland, both Americans.
37. "I feel awfully sorry to hear about Nain—I haven't seen D.J. [Dorothy Jupp] for years, but I can imagine a change may mean a tremendous upheaval in her life—and from what I've heard tell of her lately, I wonder if she'll be able to take it—There *is* something wrong with the Administration, Betty—Not so much perhaps with the changes made, as to the length things are sometimes allowed to go before changes are made" (Diack to Seabrook, 14 March 1959).
38. PANL, MG 63, Joan Stedman personnel file.
39. PANL, MG 63, Joan Stedman personnel file, received 16 May 1957.
40. Possibly a reference to the 12-stanza ballad about the problematic RT communication (see Appendix VI).
41. Those "ideals and high standards" were quoted as one of the Diack's strong points when it came time for the IGA to use her in a bid to fill the position of Director of Nursing (1965) with a British nurse.
42. In 1964, a nurse attempted suicide by overdosing on barbiturates. Thomas sent a memo to the Staff Selection Committee (Boston, London, Ottawa), 16 July 1964: "Due to the increasing number of staff members that have been found to have mental problems, after coming to the coast; it is recommended that all prospective staff employees be given a careful screening by a psychiatrist before being accepted for positions with the IGA for Northern Newfoundland and Labrador." PANL, MG 63, File: Dr. G.W.Thomas, 1957-63.
43. PANL, MG 63, Lesley Diack personnel file.
44. PANL, MG 372, Box 35, File: Mary's Harbour 1955-1962.
45. The narrative was appended to her 22 July 1956 letter to Thomas (MG 372, Box 35, File: Mary's Harbour 1955-1962). She had also sent a copy to Ivy Durley, "because I think she may be able to help you [Thomas] see things from the angle of the nursing station nurse" (22 July 1956).

46. PANL, MG 372, Box 35, File: Mary's Harbour 1955-1962.
47. PANL, MG 63, Joan Stedman personnel file.
48. A copy of this article is in her personnel file.
49. PANL, MG 63, Lesley Diack personnel file.
50. "As you may know, Lesley Diack applied for the post of Director of Nursing Services, but was turned down. She would have liked to have done it for two years, and put it on a sure footing" (PANL, MG 63, John Gray personnel file, Seabrook to John Gray, 20 April 1966).
51. How much time is uncertain; a few weeks in 1962, for sure.
52. The correspondence ends here.
53. See obituary written by Dr. John M. Gray in *Along the Coast* (January/February/March 1997): 8.
54. Sister Mary John, O.B.S., Abbess, St. Mary's Abbey, West Malling, Kent, letter to author, 17 August 1998.
55. Aleck Bourne, M.A., M.B., F.R.C.S., F.R.C.O.G. (1886-1974), was consulting gynaecologist at St. Mary's Hospital and to the Samaritan Hospital for Women and consulting obstetric surgeon to Queen Charlotte Hospital, London; he was also the author of many books in his field, his best known was *A Synopsis of Midwifery and Gynaecology* (*Obituaries from the Times 1971-1975*, comp. Frank C. Roberts [Meekler Books] 1978, 58-59).
56. I have been unable to determine anything about this trip.
57. Diack sought the advice of others. Between this letter and her next (26 October 1955), a letter from John Anido (who had been the Church of England parson at Mutton Bay when Diack was there), St. Michael's Rectory, Harbledown, Canterbury, Kent, to Philip Diack (Lesley's brother), 5 July 1955: "I am returning the script of Lesley's book, with a few comments. I am writing to her too and sending her a copy of these comments, and a few general remarks. I look forward to seeing the book published" (PANL, MG 63, Lesley Diack personnel file).
58. Seabrook did not specify the article Diack had written for the *Nursing Mirror*, an article Seabrook had been instrumental in getting published. J. Elise Gordon, while editor, spent a morning with Diack in her capacity as district nurse of Widecombe-in-the-

Moor, for her article "With the District Nurses of Devon" which appeared in *Nursing Mirror* 31 August 1962. (There is a copy of this article in PANL, MG 63, Lesley Diack personnel file, but the pagination is not clear.)

59. Typed transcript of telephone conversation between Miss Gordon and Seabrook (PANL, MG 63, Lesley Diack personnel file).

60. Kirby was a Grenfell nurse at North West River in 1938: she came for five months and stayed for one year. "I had read a life of Dr. Grenfell and was attracted to the Mission because it seemed to offer such a different life from that spent in an English Hospital and I felt ready for change and perhaps adventure" (CNSA, JNC#177, 12.01.028, Helen Kirby IGA.).

61. PANL, MG 372, Box 38, File: London Office 1963.

62. PANL, MG 372, Box 38, File: London Office 1963.

63. PANL, MG 372, Box 38, File: London Office 1963.

64. *As Labrador Nurse* covers the first three years of Diack's tenure with the Mission, this holiday with the Thomas family appears to have been before the conflicts between Thomas and Diack.

Patricia Thomas also remembered that Lesley Diack often went to St. Anthony and stayed with them for "a few days of R & R" (letter to author, 25 August 1998).

65. These are in Diack's personnel file, in a separate folder, labelled "Press Cuttings."

66. PANL, MG 63, Lesley Diack personnel file, Press Cuttings. "Nurse in a Cold Climate," *Times Literary Supplement*, 9 January 1964.

67. PANL, MG 63, Christopher Newton personnel file, Seabrook to Newton, 17 February 1964.

68. PANL, MG 63, Great Britain & Ireland, Box 16, File: Harrington, Dr. Hodd.

69. Colonel Vawdrey, a philanthropist, sent money to GAGBI to buy books for the nursing station nurses, because he admired the nurses (Seabrook to Diack, 2 November 1950).

A JOURNEY of WONDER

dorothy m. jupp

AND OTHER WRITINGS



A JOURNEY OF WONDER AND OTHER WRITINGS JUPP VANTAGE

Cover of *A Journey of Wonder and Other Writings* (1971)

Chapter 6

Dorothy Maud Jupp: Defending Against Fire, Famine and Disease

Miss Jupp needs no introduction as she is remembered for the way she has defended her post against fire, famine and disease for ten years. She looks the part—quiet, reserved and capable, never fussed whether she is caring for patients in her wards or welcoming lost fliers dropping at her door, or entertaining Mission staff workers or caring for the out-patients in the dispensary. (Ethel G. Graham, “Comings and Goings” 69)

6.1 Introduction: Jupp-as-Writer: The Grenfell Mission’s Response

Unlike the plethora of extant documentation on Lesley Diack’s memoir, Dorothy Jupp’s personnel file¹ does not illuminate either the genesis or the writing of her memoir, *A Journey of Wonder and Other Writings*² (1971), published three years before her retirement from the Grenfell Mission. The first extant reference to Jupp’s manuscript is Dr. Curtis’s dismissal of it as nothing more than the outpourings of loneliness, frustration, and unhappiness:

Two years ago [Jupp] brought to St. Anthony a manuscript that she had written of her life and work. Both Mrs. Curtis and I read it, and Miss Jupp told Dr. Thomas that she was hoping to have someone publish it, which I understand she was unable to do. This, no doubt, was a disappointment to her. It was simply an account of a frustrated and lonely person who had been lonely long before she came out here, and this Mission provided her with an environment where she at last found a niche. She was certainly most extremely unhappy when working with the Labrador Development Company, and in her manuscript she told how people laughed at her, and how unhappy she was with that organization. (Curtis to Seabrook, 24 June 1952)

It is impossible to determine definitively when this manuscript was written. By simple subtraction, it would have been in existence in 1949/50. A draft (found in Jupp’s “black book,” discussed later in chapter) of what ultimately became part I of *Journey of Wonder*

is headed 15/2/47. Whether this date reflects the copying of the draft into her “black book” or its original composition remains a question.

The Grenfell Mission’s (and Betty Seabrook’s) significant role in the publication of Lesley Diack’s *Labrador Nurse* is detailed in chapter 5, but Seabrook’s role, if any, in Jupp’s book is not so clear. Seabrook possibly read a manuscript draft in 1959,³ but five years elapsed before it was mentioned again: a retyped draft encouraged Jupp to “*hope to get it published soon!!!!*” (Jupp to Seabrook, 9 July 1964). Even after a fourth submission (publisher unknown) Jupp “*hope[d] to succeed some day!!*” (Jupp to Seabrook, 12 October 1964). Her intention to approach Victor Gollancz, Diack’s publishers, was abandoned on learning of Diack’s publication with them; she doubted whether they would “*want another of the same kind yet*” (Jupp to Seabrook, 12 October 1964). Seabrook advised Jupp to “*press on as Lesley Diack did*” (18 December 1964). As Jupp was unable to attract a commercial publisher, her manuscript was published by Vantage Press, an American subsidy publishing house, which, according to its mandate, welcomed “*work rejected by other publishers*” (Vantage 5). With Vantage, the author invested money in the first “*trial*” edition of the book, then received 40 percent of the retail price of every book sold in the United States at the standard discount, plus 80 percent of all subsidiary rights. No further financial outlay was required, nor was the author required to sell any of her own books. If the demand for the book warranted subsequent printings, it was done at Vantage’s expense, and the author received a 25 percent royalty on sales from these printings. Vantage designed the jacket in-house, and promised to announce its

books to bookstores, libraries, wholesalers and the reading public. But how much publicity Vantage gave Jupp's book remains a question. It is likely that Jupp, like Burchill, had to market and distribute her book herself.

There was a terse announcement in *Among the Deep Sea Fishers (ADSF)*: "Dorothy Jupp just had a book of reminiscences published by Vantage Press ..." (January 1972: 85). It received no further mention, nor was it "reviewed." Even more strangely, in "Living Legend—Dorothy Jupp, R.N., S.C.M.," an *ADSF* article celebrating Jupp's first visit (August 1979) to the coast after her retirement in 1974, Roberta Clegg urged Jupp to write her memoirs: "Dorothy ... is still so busy helping others that she has not had time ... to write her memoirs, as she had promised to do when leaving five years ago" (17). Clegg even offered a list of prospective stories:

... the dangerous boat rides to see the sick and dying ... the starving Indian band who arrived at Nain in 1954; or starvation on the south Labrador coast in '49 when the government sent her a whole shipload of food, which she herself was responsible for, along with her usual duties. Dorothy has so many untold stories of this Association's past. She also has the ability to write. Maybe, if enough of us asked Dorothy, she will sit down to write some of these interesting stories for us. (Clegg 18)

Clegg underscores that Jupp's ability to write is secondary to the exigency to memorialize the Grenfell Mission. Written in 1980, just nine years after the publication of *Journey of Wonder*, Clegg's omission of Jupp's published "book of reminiscences" is surprising: was Clegg unaware of its existence? This seems unlikely as Clegg was, in 1972, Assistant Administrator of the Grenfell Association's Nursing Services.⁴ Clegg enlisted a hypothetical support group ("enough of us") to lend weight to her request for "stories of

this Association's past." Jupp had published many stories about her own past, a past not associated exclusively with the Grenfell Mission, yet Clegg does not acknowledge either Jupp's "stories" in *Journey of Wonder* or those scattered throughout *ADSF* from 1945 to 1969 (see Appendix VII).

From the 1940s on, Jupp was encouraged by Seabrook to write stories; Seabrook requested "stories" from Jupp as she had with Diack. In 1948 Jupp sent three stories to Seabrook, adding, "If you want any 'fiction' stories for children I have one or two among my papers" (17 June). This suggests that Jupp wrote without solicitation. One story, "Susie," was used for Sunday School distribution. In 1949, Seabrook solicited more stories: "We have a publicity agent and if you have any interesting stories or experiences, do let me have them, as I think they would be put to good use and would help us from a propaganda point of view" (15 February). The plea for stories is a thread that runs through the Jupp-Seabrook correspondence. Given her busy life as a nursing station nurse, it is amazing that Jupp had time to write stories. After the food crisis (discussed later in chapter), Jupp wrote to Seabrook, "I hope to send more little tales ... I have some in rough copy, but have to type them up; up to now we have been so much in a state of upheaval, that we have not much time for anything else except Hospital work and coping with the food situation" (1 May 1949). The next day she sent a few stories and articles. Not only did Jupp write stories for GAGBI's propaganda pamphlets and articles for *ADSF*, she also published in *Newfoundland Quarterly* during the 1960s. Jupp was writing about her Labrador experiences, but not in book form.

Not only is Jupp's memoir conspicuously absent from Clegg's article, it is not mentioned in her obituary, which is itself curiously low key for such a "legend" (occupying a mere one-quarter of a page in *Along the Coast*). With death the "legend" has become much deflated. Although Paddon's and Thomas's memoirs contain references to Jupp, neither mentions her memoir, even though hers was published before theirs. Why the silence—perhaps a disapproving silence?—about Jupp's memoir? Did it contain distortions or embarrassments? Did it reveal an aberrant or rebellious Grenfell nurse? Had Jupp challenged the gender ideologies of the patriarchally-approved "cultural script" (S. Smith 47)? The lonely, unhappy nurse does not fit the approved image of the Grenfell nurse. When Shirley Yates, Seabrook's successor, purchased a copy of *Journey of Wonder* for the London office library, she marginalized it by labelling it "a most useful memento" (Yates to Jupp, 21 September 1971).⁵ Yates later informed Jupp: "I shall enjoy reading it ... I will certainly treasure it and keep it with my other 'Northern' Books" (nd). But whether Seabrook or Yates ever read the "useful memento" is not clear.

Unlike Burchill's, Banfill's and Diack's memoirs, Jupp's contains no prefatory material, no disclaimers, no foreword or introduction by a famous man—it has no external validation. Jupp's story stands alone: naked and unexplained. Her determination to get her memoir published suggests a strong need to present *her* story. Although the Mission is an integral part of the memoir, *Journey of Wonder* is not the reminiscences of Jupp-the-Grenfell-Mission-nurse, nor is it a paean to the Grenfell Mission, something Diack clearly intended with hers.

Jupp's memoir, published in 1971, encompasses two discrete periods of her early Labrador career (with the Labrador Development Company and the Grenfell Mission).

Part I of *Journey of Wonder* covers the period from 1938 to 1951 and ends with a retrospective of her years of service:

In June, I entered my 14th year of service "on Labrador." They have been years of ups and downs, encouragements and disappointments, joys and sorrows; but in the main they have been very happy years. Life is very good, and indeed it would be a very poor one if one worked only for one's own benefit, and for what one could get out of life for oneself; as has been most truly said, "*It is in giving that we live*"; and there is great joy in working in the Service of Christ.

My years at St. Mary's have been far happier than anywhere else on Labrador, mainly, I think because I had more freedom—and more responsibility. I have learned a great deal since I came out—spiritually, medically and socially.

Labrador is a great place to work in; one comes up against all sorts of things—and needs heroism and endurance. Labrador makes or breaks a person's innermost soul—there can be no half measures on Labrador—one either hates it or loves it.

It can drive one to do queer things, or it can show one the way back to find lost visions and endeavours; it can send one back to God, and what more could one want? (*Journey of Wonder* 143)

Jupp had spent ten of her thirteen Labrador years up to this point with the Grenfell Mission, but these concluding four paragraphs—set off from the rest of the text by a line of white space—contain no reference to the Mission. Jupp seems to have disassociated herself from the patriarchal organization. Possibly written after the anxieties of her post-interview experience (discussed later in chapter), Jupp negotiates a neutral path by inscribing a celestial authority—her work is "the Labrador," not the Grenfell Mission; she is "working in the Service of Christ," not serving the Grenfell Mission. Constructing her

identity as a servant of the Lord is a form of empowerment. Distancing herself from the mission-deprived Mission (the fact that the Grenfell Mission was becoming business- as opposed to mission-oriented was also distressing to Jupp as it had been to Diack), Jupp creates an identity which is in touch with the source, God.

Then there is a gap in the narrative. Part II details her round-the-world trip (1958/59) and a separate trip to Palestine in 1959. In this part, Jupp connects with the physical roots of the source of identity she had constructed in part I (Bethlehem, where Christ was born). Although Jupp continued working in Labrador until her retirement in 1974, and her book was published in 1971, her experiences after 1951 are not included in the manuscript. Was the travelogue added to give it a wider interest?

In considering why Jupp ends the Labrador part of her memoir at 1951, why it has met with such silence, and why it contains so many silences, I first examine three public(ity) events in Jupp's early Grenfell experience before taking a closer look at her memoir. These events, important in the creation of the Jupp "legend," reveal Jupp's problematic relationship with the Mission and its concomitant influence on her sense of self. These events—the fire of 1945, the food shortage (famine) of 1949, and the press interview of 1951—are examined in the interstices of press reports, archival material (official correspondence), Jupp's periodical publications, as well as her memoir accounts.

6.2 The Fire of 1945

From 1943 to 1951, Jupp held the demanding and responsible position of nurse-

in-charge of St. Mary's River hospital, a position inherited by default as there was no available doctor. Beeckman Delatour, a doctor who spent the summer of 1945 there, praised Jupp's solo work:

She has had a big job, and one that is confining. It has at times demanded twenty-four hours nursing duty, in addition to her duties as a housekeeper, including care of the wards and dispensary, and the sale of industrial goods, supervision of clothing supplies and their distribution, and inventories of all property. In addition to all these duties, emergency calls are made, sometimes at a distance of as far as fifteen miles. When the one and only nurse has felt she could leave the nursing station, she has only the young, locally trained personnel to leave behind.⁶

In 1945 a forest fire burned almost all of St. Mary's, destroying the doctor's residence and threatening the nursing station. The St. John's daily papers carried reports of the fire, but these brief accounts⁷ did not hint at the human drama at the heart of this event. Jupp had the responsibility of evacuating a hospital (ten patients, equipment and supplies), with only one available small boat, as well as the subsequent return and making it habitable. It was a situation to test the strongest, and it no doubt pushed Jupp to her limit. But Jupp showed her true mettle, and earned Curtis's appellation, "heroine of the North" (Delatour 105).

Jupp's published version of this experience appeared as a report in *ADSF* October 1945 ("Holocaust at St. Mary's").⁸ It was followed by an extract from Dr. Robert Miller's letter of tribute to Curtis. Miller's timely arrival on the scene provided much-needed help. By virtue of gender and rank, Miller wielded the authority, not Jupp. His testimonial promoted Jupp as an angel-of-mercy—one of the two available scripts for a nurse within

the Grenfell discourse—while at the same time foregrounded her need of a saviour:

[dated 25 July 1945] It is difficult at the moment to think of anything except Miss Jupp ... and the wonderful way she has handled everything with the help, of course, of all the local people, who are devoted to her....

I need not tell you that I agree thoroughly with your very high estimate of her ability and admiration of her personally. She has been a real tower of strength. When we arrived with the *Maraval*, I know it gave her a great sense of relief and knowledge that the evacuation could be more thorough and rapid than she had feared might be the case. She remained the calm executive till evening when all was over and the equipment stored safely in Baine Johnston's storehouse. She was really all in. The night before the fire started, she had been up all night with a bad maternity case, and the next was a constant vigil due to the fire having started and knowing that any moment the hospital might have to be evacuated in spite of insufficient help and boats. It had been a terrific spell of physical and nervous strain. [sentence omitted] (R. Miller, "Letter" 69)

The original letter contained one more sentence pertaining to Jupp which was deleted in the published version: "I almost wondered if she might break under the strain, but after a little relaxation and some sleep, she was ready for anything again, but has seemed might[y] tired all along."⁹ Would a "break"ing Jupp destroy the image of Jupp-as-heroine? In "Holocaust," Jupp credits Miller for his role:

At the most critical time, we were most heartened by the arrival of the *Maraval* with Dr. Miller on board. He immediately took charge of evacuation proceedings. He ordered everyone to leave everything by 10 A.M. and get out of the harbour, as it was getting too dangerous to stay. After closing all windows and locking up, the Doctor and nurse left the hospital, the Doctor being the last one to do so. ("Holocaust" 68-9)

By emphasizing, in a separate clause, that the "Doctor" is the last to leave, Jupp publicly accords the doctor his proper position of power, and credits his heroism. In a later *ADSF* article, "Labrador Epic,"¹⁰ in which, the headnote points out, Jupp tells the "true story of

the self-sacrifice of a good citizen,” it is Richard Curl, a 28-year-old part-Eskimo man, who emerges as the hero of the fire (“Labrador Epic” 80). This man raised the alarm, and sacrificed his own life in fighting the fire: “the heat and smoke of the fire got into his lungs, and congestion set in followed by tuberculosis, and Richard passed on to a higher life, having given his life in the service of others” (“Labrador Epic” 82).

In these two published articles Jupp modestly credits male heroes rather than herself. In her memoir, Jupp devotes one chapter, entitled “The Fire,” to this event.¹¹ Does this version have a hero, or does Jupp create herself as a heroine? If so, how does she achieve this? First, Jupp recreates the drama: a baby, delivered the night before the fire, “added to our anxieties”; Jupp worried that “If we *had* had to evacuate the patients during the night, the darkness and gloom would have added to our difficulties and terrors” (*Journey of Wonder* 113). With the use of collective pronouns in the possessive case, Jupp displaces her own anxiety, difficulty, and terror onto the public’s, yet draws attention to her own. Helen M. Buss notes that “[t]his displacement into another’s experience ... is a strategy that while seeming to de-emphasize herself and her feelings draws attention to them” (*Mapping* 43). Jupp next creates a miracle. Terrence L. Craig points to the anecdotal pattern of the miracle used in missionary texts: “At a point where help of some kind is needed for the missionary to carry on, it arrives miraculously in the nick of time, proving the missionary’s unshakable faith and God’s care for the mission” (77). When assistance is needed most, the *Maraval* miraculously sails into the harbour,¹² “and we realized, with relief, that we would be able to try to save something from the

wreck. It was something of a miracle that she was around here at all, as she had been in here just a week before on her annual visit to us ..." (*Journey of Wonder* 114). Jupp does not inform the reader that the boat has brought a doctor who takes charge; instead, she focuses on this divine intervention (that was not "just a coincidence"). Jupp "felt such an unseen presence all the time and at one time when [she] felt a bit 'panicky' [she] heard a voice say to [her]—'Be still, my soul, the Lord is on Thy side.' [She] knew then that everyone would get out of St. Mary's safely" (*Journey of Wonder* 114). This divine miracle, complete with an aural manifestation, absent from Jupp's earlier periodical articles, letters or reports, allows Jupp to write herself into the cast of heroes. Miller is not named once in Jupp's memoir account, but hovers at the edge of the narrative. Jupp, effectively displacing Miller when she replaces him with a miracle, uses the passive construction to create surreal deus ex machina evacuation proceedings: "Every bed and movable bits of furniture were carried out from the wards; the operating room was stripped bare; every bit of drugs ... and all Hospital records were removed to safety and put on board the *Maraval*, together with all the industrial goods" (*Journey of Wonder* 115). Despite all efforts, the Doctor's house burned and "the Hospital itself became unbearably hot and filled with smoke, so we decided it was time to get out while we could" (*Journey of Wonder* 115). The strategic use of "we" here implies a joint decision by two people of the same rank. In *Journey of Wonder*, both the doctor (unnamed) and nurse leave at the same time: "The Doctor and I were the last to leave after shutting and bolting every door and window ..." (115). As this is the only mention of the doctor in the

memoir account, it is clear that the doctor-as-hero has been displaced to permit Jupp to insert herself in her own story and claim her part in the heroism of the event. Jupp's (angel-of-mercy) role in the fire became an inextricable part of the Jupp legend and part of the Grenfell discourse, as it had with Diack and the "Siamese twins."¹³ Both fit the script of nurses as angels of mercy.¹⁴ In her memoir, however, Jupp claims for herself a status on par with the doctor.

6.3 The Food Shortage of 1949

Although the nurse was absent from the press accounts of the St. Mary's fire, four years later Jupp (and the Mission) were captured in the media limelight. In April 1949 starvation in southern Labrador occupied the St. John's daily papers for a week. In a multiple-deck headline reminiscent of turn-of-the-century *Toilers of the Deep* propaganda, the *Evening Telegram* of 7 April 1949 dramatically announced on page 3:

Starvation in Labrador

 Serious Shortage of Food in Labrador,
 To Avert Starvation Immediate Aid Must be Sent to St. Mary's River

 Only Seven Bags of Flour on Coast, Babies Being
 Fed on Flour, Water and Molasses-Water—
 There is No Milk and No Rolled Oats Available.

 International Grenfell Association Nurse in Area Sends Appeal for Help—
 Attempt Will Be Made to Fly Supplies in, Fog Causing Delay.

The article's opening sentence identified the catalyst: "Nurse Jupp" of St. Mary's River had sent "an urgent wire" informing the authorities of the "serious shortage of food on the

northern coast.”¹⁵ Concerned and frustrated with the situation in her district, Jupp wired an appeal to Premier J.R. Smallwood: with that assertive gesture she upset the Mission’s publicity protocol, and tangentially entered the traditional male domain of politics. Jupp’s direct appeal to Smallwood bypassed the Grenfell hierarchy. Whether Jupp was aware that she had flouted authority is not clear. Although her action was rooted in a strong humanitarianism, it coincided with the confederation of Newfoundland with Canada, and as such was automatically a political concern. Dr. Forsyth (the area Grenfell doctor) and Jupp had earlier sought help from local Government authorities [Rangers],¹⁶ but frustrated by their requests being “ignored, or forgotten,” Jupp took assertive action. Jupp’s wire to Smallwood, which was printed in the daily papers as well as broadcast over the Gerald S. Doyle radio bulletin,¹⁷ presented a grim picture:

There is a serious shortage of food on this coast. To avert starvation of the people food must be got here somehow. Babies are being fed on flour, water and molasses water as there is no milk or rolled oats. At the time of wiring only seven bags of flour were left on the coast. No milk, no meat, no vegetables, no butter and no tea.

A large number of expectant mothers and babies need immediate help. They need food, and all the drugs and cod-oil in the world is useless without it.

I appeal to you to use your influence to save the fishermen and their families before it is too late.... (“Starvation in Labrador” 3)

As a result of Jupp’s desperate (now public) appeal, the provincial government took immediate action, sending a plane carrying 910 pounds of food (and a doctor, Dr. Gordon Thomas) to avert the disaster; this was followed by the federal government sending an ice-breaker with \$25,000 worth of food. Over the next week, this drama occupied the

newspaper headlines.¹⁸ Jupp, as captured by the media, was a humanitarian heroine:

The most amazing aspect of the whole affair is the fact that Rangers in the affected area reported serious food shortages in the vicinity as long ago as March 25th, and apparently St. John's firms with branches in Labrador also knew of the food situation. Yet no one did anything about it until Miss Jupp's urgent appeal arrived on Thursday. ("Aid Reaches" 3)

By appropriating a public discourse, Jupp achieves media heroine status.¹⁹

ADSF did not publish Jupp's account of this event (if indeed she had written one). Thomas's report, "Winter Plane Trips" (*ADSF* July 1949) described the event as an "interesting plane trip to deliver some badly needed food" to southern Labrador:

Insufficient stocks of food were brought in last fall by the merchants, presumably because the coming of Confederation might mean an immediate drop in prices and therefore a loss to them.... the situation was becoming quite serious. The Ranger at Battle Harbour had been reporting the situation to headquarters but nothing was done, so Miss Jupp wired an urgent appeal to Premier Smallwood, stating that something must be done at once or the people would starve. [...]

We found the situation awful. At Fox Harbour all they had left was a little flour. They had no milk, butter, rolled oats, vegetables or meat. They were feeding four babies on flour and water and the babies were close to dying. At Booth Cove nine families were destitute and were feeding their children on molasses and water. They had nothing else. At Seal Bight, four families were destitute; one old man was bedridden due to starvation. Miss Jupp had seen children bloated with starvation and young men crippled with beriberi. It was hard to believe. [...]

After returning we immediately made a report to Premier Smallwood, telling him that we felt the only situation was to send a boat immediately. It was far too dangerous to try to land a large loaded plane, with the ice so bad and St. Mary's harbour so small. As a result of his efforts the icebreaker *Saurel* was sent with a load of food, and the situation was relieved. (Thomas, "Winter Plane Trips" 35-36)²⁰

While Thomas did not publicly criticize Jupp, neither did he praise her or her actions as

Miller had done in 1945. After verifying Jupp's statistics, Thomas reported to

Smallwood; his double use of “we” (Thomas as the Grenfell Mission) clarifies that his assessment, not Jupp’s, was the true catalyst in this event, and the fact that this was made after his return—spatially removed from Jupp—emphasizes this. An editorial reprinted from the *Evening Journal* (Ottawa), 11 April 1949, entitled “Babies Starving to Death” followed Thomas’s report in *ADSF* (and is repeated in his memoir). Although it challenged Canada to address “the care of its newly-acquired citizens in Labrador,” the editorial portrayed the Grenfell Mission as a collective hero(ine), with Jupp’s heroic act subsumed into the larger heroism and self-sacrifice of the Association.

In his review article, “Grenfell and his Successors,” J.K. Hiller addresses the significance of this situation:

In loose coalition, the Grenfell and Moravian missions embarked on a process of gradual decolonization which was very much in the spirit of the postwar world. Both of them actively supported Newfoundland’s entry into the Canadian confederation, and became allied to the Liberal regime of J.R. Smallwood. The Grenfell Mission in particular profited enormously from the influx of federal funds, which enabled it to expand significantly in northern Labrador. This was not the mission set apart but the mission as collaborator, and Gordon Thomas is quite frank about the process in his interesting autobiography, *From Sled to Satellite*.

In 1949, just as Newfoundland became a province, Nurse Dorothy Jupp sent an appeal to Smallwood to prevent starvation in southern Labrador. Smallwood immediately made the necessary arrangements, and Thomas flew up to Mary’s Harbour with a load of food.... Thomas was a good politician. (130)

Jupp’s appeal triggered what was to prove for Thomas “a rewarding association with the premier”; it provided him with direct access to Smallwood (“He gave me his unlisted phone number so that I could call him when I wished, and I always got a friendly

response. This relationship meant a great deal to me in the years ahead” [Thomas, *Sled to Satellite* 49-50]). This advantage was gender and rank specific: Thomas, not Jupp, was given the private number. Jupp remains outside the political loop.

As chapter 3 demonstrates, the Grenfell Mission controlled *all* publicity. Staff were reminded that government authorities would be offended if “stories of suffering and need” were circulated. Jupp’s portrayal of the food shortage no doubt qualified as a false and partial representation. In the eyes of the Mission, Jupp’s urgent appeal to Smallwood—encompassing a story of “suffering and need”—fits the rubric of publicity and, as such, was not the jurisdiction of the nurse; with this public action Jupp stepped outside her approved cultural script. Whether Jupp was aware of the political fallout of her actions is unclear, but immediately after the event she inquired if “the repercussions of all the uproar about, and on the Labrador, has reached ... the Grenfell [London] Office” (Jupp to Seabrook, 17 April 1949). Jupp had triggered a world-wide awareness of the plight of hunger-stricken Labrador people (“the world knows quite a bit about Labrador now,” she informed Seabrook). Although Jupp and Forsyth both sent messages to the Government, neither Forsyth’s message nor his initial role were mentioned in press accounts, as Jupp writes to Seabrook:

As early as the first week in December the shortage of food became evident, and the Rangers knew about it. To cut a long story short, things came to a head when babies started dying from starvation, and pregnant women and nursing mothers became emaciated and weak. For two months I had been on at the Rangers to do something but they did nothing. Finally Dr. Forsyth and I made a final appeal to them; as they still did nothing we both sent a message to the Government. Both our messages were broadcast

over Gerald Doyle, and the Government swung into action. A plane came over loaded with food supplies next day. The following day an R.C.A.F. plane flew over and dropped 40 packages by parachute. The icebreaker *Sorell* [sic] loaded up with food and came down ...

Needless to say, the Merchants got up on their hind legs, and spread it abroad that “their dealers were not short.” We do not know who was responsible, but we hear that there is, on board the icebreaker, a representative of each of the Merchants[,] the Rangers, and the Dept. of Public Health and *Mirror*.

The arrival of the *Sorrel* [sic] has indeed taken a load off my mind; someone else can give out the food now; I have nearly worn my brain out by trying to figure out how to equally distribute 3000 lbs. food between 85 families and have some left in case we did not get more food.

Wether [sic] by intent, or accident, the Rangers have left us severely alone. Not one of them came in to give out the food, so we had to do it.

Well, that is what happened; I imagine that there is going to be quite a fuss over this. (17 April 1949)

Jupp's memoir account has no mention of Forsyth's wire. In this letter to Seabrook Jupp downplays her own role. She is aware of the potential “fuss” of this event. Jupp informed Seabrook that she had received a telegram from the *Daily Mirror* [a popular British newspaper] requesting the Mission's London address: “So I ... gave it them thinking that the Mission might get some publicity.” The next sentence is particularly telling: “I did not give them any information.” Jupp may have been aware of the Mission's publicity regulations, but being a strong-willed, compassionate woman she grew tired of the incompetence of the system, and simply short-circuited it.

Jupp deals with this event, unlike the fire of 1945, in a few short paragraphs in her memoir, an account that is, in a sense, a disclaimer—her opportunity to publicly dispel the repercussions of and aspersions cast in the “fuss.” Initially, Jupp points out, she was

not the sole player in the events that mushroomed into a world-wide news item. She names Forsyth's initial involvement, but makes it clear that she was the catalyst: "I took matters into my own hands," she declared. Here is her memoir account:

In April [1949], Newfoundland Confederated with Canada, to the joy of some, and the sorrow of others; and so began a new era for Newfoundlanders.

In the second week in April an incident occurred [sic] which, in itself, was to have far reaching effects ... in April there was a great shortage of food. So much so that both the Doctor [Forsyth] and I made requests to the local Government authorities [Rangers] that they should do something about it. Our requests were ignored, or forgotten, and accordingly I took matters into my own hands, and sent a message to the Prime Minister of Newfoundland [Smallwood] stating the case and asking him to do something about it.

It never entered my head for one moment that the Prime Minister would broadcast the text of my message; had I thought so, I would have worded it differently. However, he got things moving, and soon planes were landing and flying over, dropping foodstuffs which we distributed—so much to each family.

The first plane arrived the day after the message went through ...

[...] For the next week we were rushed with giving out food to men asking for it for their families; we had to do it on our own, as no official came to help us.

At the end of that week, an Ice-breaker got into Cape Charles and landed tons and tons of food; which was distributed by a "Ranger" who came down on the ice-breaker; and so our part in the matter ended.

(Journey of Wonder 135-36)

Set off from the body of the text by a line of white space is Jupp's emphatic postscript to the reader, her clarification that her action was not propelled by any personal gain or glory, but because her loyalty was to the people and their welfare. This time she inserts (between two dashes for emphasis) the doctor's role in order to diminish her own role in this "fuss":

As I said, there were some far-reaching repercussions, and one of them was the fact that a rumour got around that this was just a political gambit, staged at the time of the Election. This rumour did not reach me until months later, and I was staggered by it; such a thing had never entered my head. So I emphatically state here that there *was* a food shortage, and it was left to us—the Doctor [Forsyth] and I—to do something about it. After our appeal to local Government authorities had failed, [sic] and that it had nothing to do at all with the Election issue.

... As usual, the Radio and Press made a great deal out of the matter; and I was snowed under with requests for information, and offers of help. (*Journey of Wonder* 136)

Jupp acted outside the frame of publicity protocol. She does not receive any tribute, and it does not, unlike the fire, become part of the Jupp legend.

While on furlough in 1948 Jupp had engaged in a hectic schedule of talks—whether from Grenfell-vetted scripts and/or her own compositions cannot be determined—about her Labrador work. Jupp was aware of the potential for her statements being misconstrued and the difficult position she occupied when engaged in such public activities:

Several people have asked me if the “talks” at the Grenfell Meeting were reported anywhere—or taken down by anyone—I said that I thought they were not, but it occurred to me later, that it was possible that some-one might have done so ... Going around various places produces many & varied suggestions & queries; among them are ... [list of questions] “Why doesn’t some-one write to the Press or a Member of Parliament demanding investigation into the economic & social conditions of Nfld. & Labrador” ... To all of which I have been beautifully non-committal & vague. (Jupp to Seabrook, 22 March 1948)

The proud reference to being “beautifully non-committal & vague” denotes Jupp’s awareness of the need to avoid publicity and political issues: hers was to be a background not a foreground position, and the difficulty for her resided in how to promote the

message without inserting the self. Jupp, however, was very much aware of and interested in political and social issues. Jupp's letter—"news" was one medium through which the London office learned of the political climate of Newfoundland and Labrador. Seabrook used an extract from Jupp's letter (17 June 1948) to appraise Sir Henry Richards (Executive Committee) of the appalling conditions on the coast:

... the lumber company crashed last December, and the people were left without food. Two thirds of the population of the District had to go on the 'dole' (\$5.00 per month). Dogs died in scores, and men had to walk to Fox Harbour, 25 miles over the ice and drag their supplies back by hand or on their backs. People look very thin and haggard, and the children seem to be listless. Several horses, belonging to the Co. were brought to St. Mary's for shelter and food—two of them dropped dead from starvation. Needless to say, no wood was cut—except for the Mission. Now no merchant will give any supplies *until* they get the salmon or fish.

I expect that you heard that the Plebiscite resulted in Responsible Government, but, as it did not have the two-third majority the Vote has to be held again, in July. Popular opinion is that the Responsible Government will romp home this year. Personally I think it will be disastrous for the country—especially for Labrador ... (Jupp to Seabrook, 17 June 1948)

In 1950, Denley Clark (GAGBI board of directors) requested that Jupp (along with Forsyth and Paddon) give her reaction to the effects of Confederation (21 February 1950).²¹ Clark's inclusion of Jupp in his unofficial panel is an acknowledgment of Jupp's political awareness. Although Jupp cited the 1949 famine incident as an example, she did not emphasize her own role in it:

You no doubt heard that there was a threatened starvation on the Labrador last spring, only averted by the prompt action of the Government in sending a relief supply—but I realise any Government would have done that anyway....

If there were no family allowances and no "Dole" stocks on the Labrador the conditions would be nothing short of disastrous for the

people. My personal and frank opinion is that there is more poverty and distress and unemployment on the Labrador than there was two years ago— ...

I think, that, in time, Confederation will benefit Labrador, but my opinion is, that it will take several years to put the fisherman on his feet again. I think that Canada will concentrate her efforts at present on developing the resources of Newfoundland and Labrador—and just give the people something to “get along with” for the time being—such as family allowances and Pensions.

My opinion is that Labrador has a very poor Representative in the House of Assembly [Harold Horwood] ... he seems to have no interest in Labrador. Up to now we have heard nothing of any speech or demands from him to the local Government on behalf of Labrador.

I do think ... that people everywhere had the idea that Confederation would change Newfoundland and Labrador overnight—falls in prices, lots of work, plenty of money and food, and a sense of being looked after.... (10 March 1950)²²

This act of eliciting a (female) nurse to comment on a political (historically male) matter validates Jupp’s opinion. Seabrook later appropriated nurses’ words (those of Jupp and Ivy Durley) to confirm her own opinion that Curtis was only interested in the medical and business end: “In spite of what he says there *is* a great deal of poverty and distress on the Coast to-day. When [Ivy] Durley, the nurse in charge of Flowers Cove was home in the summer she was nearly in tears over the wretched conditions in the Straits; Miss Jupp says the same thing at St. Mary’s River” (Seabrook to Clark, 1 March 1951).²³ On one occasion, due to the overzealousness of one Mission supporter, Jupp’s candid assessment (in the form of an extract from one of her letters) was sent, without her knowledge, to the Prime Minister of Canada, and from there to Newfoundland’s provincial Minister of Fisheries. Seabrook feared the repercussions of this action to the Mission. Jupp pointed out the difficulty of her position:

I am sorry that this has happened ... I do not remember what I wrote, but I do know that there was nothing detrimental to the Government or anybody in particular, as far as I *can* remember. I wrote of conditions just as they were at that time on the Labrador; I do not believe in exaggerating this, but I do think that, as folks are interested in the Labrador, and support the Mission, they should have some first-hand information of conditions and the situation on Labrador. I would hate to do anything to cause trouble, in the Mission, or for the Mission, I think the Mission finds things quite hard enough as it is.

As a matter of fact things *are* in quite a bad state on the Labrador ... One great difficulty is, of course, the difference of opinions, or statements. People have been on this coast for the summer, and gone home and said everything is grand on the Labrador (I do not mean Mission people), and then I say something quite different, and no one knows what to believe. Actually I think one has to live and work on the Coast to know what things really are like.

I am sorry about all this fuss, and I do hope it will blow over without any damage being done to the Mission. I would be glad to have your opinions on this, as to whether [sic] you think it best not to say anything about conditions on the coast, in my letter, although, quite frankly I do not know of anything else to write about if I do not. (Jupp to Seabrook, 1 November 1950)

Seabrook assured Jupp there was “no reason at all” why she could not write of conditions on the Coast “as they really are.” Seabrook’s concern, however, was “the effect it would have on the Mission and also on yourself.” Seabrook carefully added, “You know how these things can hit back like a boomerang” (16 November 1950). With each successive year as a Grenfell nurse, Jupp became more and more familiar with the “boomerang” effect—the rebounding of an idea causing considerable harm to its originator. Although Seabrook insisted that Jupp write her letters “as usual” (“I for one find them a great help in writing letters and telling people of conditions on various parts of the Coast; after all that is all we have to work on and one must know the facts to put them across,” she says)

and by doing so purports to give Jupp full control, Jupp's autonomy is circumscribed by the Grenfell discourse. The reprimand and order are implicit: "Naturally, one brings in the information tactfully and mentions no names." Jupp was left to wrestle with this dilemma: how to write "tactfully" (delicately?) of starvation, poverty and disease? Even in writing "as usual," Jupp must comply with the strictures of the discourse, and censor her own words: a diluted picture is needed in order to maintain the public image of a benevolent Mission. Seabrook concluded with the admonition: "Don't worry any more about it ... obviously all has blown over, and I do not think it will happen again." This exchange of letters foregrounds Jupp's conundrum: she was expected and encouraged to write letters to various groups, to give talks, to help with propaganda—all publicity venues—yet she had to do this within the narrow parameters of the Mission regulations.

A final event provides strong evidence of the "boomerang" effect of which Seabrook warned: it was one that had an irrevocable effect on Jupp's life, as well as on her writing. It proves the falsity of Seabrook's statement: the boomerang did "happen again."

6.4 The Press Interview of 1951

In October 1951 Jupp returned to England for a six-month furlough. On the eve of sailing, Jupp, known to the press from the 1949 food shortage incident, was interviewed by the St. John's press, and in doing so stepped irrevocably outside the frame of her approved cultural script as a Grenfell nurse.

The 30 October 1951 *Evening Telegram* announced: “Mission Nurse Paints Grim Picture of Trying Life of Residents of Labrador” (Power 3). The appellation of “Mission Nurse” effectively subsumes Jupp’s individuality/identity within the monolithic Grenfell organization. The verb “paints” connotes careful composition, with a hint of calculated exaggeration, and the emotive adjectives “grim” and “trying” set the tone of the piece. The accompanying picture of Jupp is curiously antithetical to the article’s content. A hearty Jupp laughs at something off-camera: the lack of seriousness of the picture belies the soberness of the article which praised Jupp as “ordained by nature to be a tower of strength for the burdened people among whom she is spending her life” (Power 3). Although Grenfell is not invoked, it is clear that like him Jupp had dedicated her life to the Labrador. Jupp is presented as a paragon: “With a deep sense of conviction, her calmness and tranquility seem to radiate the spiritual strength that makes up the character of this woman” (Power 3). The reporter observed that Jupp’s opinions came “straight from the shoulder and sometimes their very frankness is startling” (Power 3). Startling because of her position, or gender? The article presents a critical Jupp, one who speaks out for the people of Labrador, one who dislikes the arm’s-length approach of the “Government official” (not identified) who “flys [sic] down, spends a few hours looking around in the immediate vicinity—and reports back to his office that things look fine on the Labrador” (Power 3). Although Jupp criticizes Confederation and the government’s laissez-faire attitude, she has, however, abided by Seabrook’s instructions: she does not name names.

In the *Daily News* front-page story (“Labrador Conditions Grim, Nurse Reports / Miss D. Jupp Says Semi-Starvation Threatening In Some Areas”) Jupp is introduced as an “Angel of Mercy”—a title which places her firmly within the approved discourse: “She ... has made Labrador her home, and the nursing of the people there her life’s work. A kindly, warmhearted woman, of deeply humanitarian instincts ...” (1). In the interview Jupp’s reference to the famine incident is a symbol to warn of further disaster if the government does not take action (her approach is similar to her 1949 appeal, and the argument that she explicated in her letters to Seabrook and Clark):

Right now ... I am afraid if something is not done by the government immediately, the people in my district will be in a state of semi-starvation before winter is half over....

If the government does not do something now, the same situation which existed two years ago will be repeated this year, and many people on the Labrador will suffer terrible hardships from malnutrition—perhaps many will die from starvation.

I am not an alarmist ... but I cannot help pleading the cause of those people with whom I’ve spent so many years. I would welcome an official of the government who would come with me to St. Mary’s River and make a concise report to the government of conditions as they are, not as they would like to think they are. People in the rest of Newfoundland cannot imagine how people live on the Labrador. They are dissatisfied and unhappy with existing conditions. From now until next June they will suffer from cold and live in a condition bordering on semi-starvation....

I’ve been on the Labrador a long time ... and in recent years, my heart is sad to see how the health of the people is degenerating. The younger boys and girls are puny and are growing weaker physically every year. I am speaking from a medical point of view. If something is not done to help those people, the government will have to cope with an epidemic of tuberculosis.

I would also like to recommend, if I may, that the government start the Co-operative movement and get it well organized on the Labrador. This would be immensely beneficial to the people. (“Labrador Conditions” 1)

The picture accompanying this article revealed a more serious Jupp wearing a slight smile—a more controlled image and one more appropriate to the text of the article.

Despite the humanitarian impulse that impelled the interview, by allowing herself to be interviewed Jupp had once again flouted Mission rules. As suggested by earlier correspondence with Seabrook, Jupp was aware that publicity was outside her purview, and this time she broke the rule that insisted that “returning workers give out no interviews to the press or for publication in connection with their work or about the people or conditions on the Coast.”²⁴ This regulation left no space for a Grenfell nurse to make appeals to heads of government or to voice her criticism of the government or its officials. Whether Jupp’s own opinion was antithetical to or concurrent with the “official” Grenfell Mission stance was a moot point: Grenfell publicity was the jurisdiction of Mission officials, not its workers. Although Clark had solicited Jupp’s opinion of the coastal socio-political climate—and the gist of Jupp’s interview differed little from what she had written to him—the difference lay in the nature of her medium, and thereby exposing the public/private binary opposition. The *Evening Telegram* article concluded with a (public) declaration of Jupp’s sense of autonomy on the Coast and her love for her work at St. Mary’s: “A nurse becomes absolutely self-reliant—she has an independence that she does not have elsewhere ... I wouldn’t leave Labrador now for any other nursing job in the world” (Power 3). The Grenfell Mission, or Labrador?

Jupp and her words are doomed: four years passed before she returned to the Grenfell Mission. Post-interview events reveal the ephemeral nature of this

“independence,” that ultimately a nursing station nurse was far from “absolutely self-reliant.” Although they were thrust into situations requiring a degree of independence, these nurses were criticized and reprimanded when they demonstrated too much independence. Jupp is an example of this sharp dichotomy, and this is highlighted in the post-interview fallout (cf. a parallel situation in the Paddon-Jupp dispute later in the chapter). When Lesley Diack attempted to expose the unfair treatment of Mission staff—indiscriminate shuffling without regard for personal feelings—she insisted that the Mission abused staff devotion and loyalty. Diack used the “Dorothy Jupp episode” to substantiate her allegations, and reminded Seabrook that Jupp had been dismissed because of the interview:

Then came the Dorothy Jupp episode.... that shook us all to the core, though personally at the time I felt sufficiently loyal to the Chief [Curtis] to think that there *must* be more to it than met the eye, that she couldn't after all her years of really devoted service just have been *summarily dismissed* over a single indiscretion with a wretched reporter, a thing that could happen to any of us ...

... all I ask is that ... nobody will ever again be made as desperately unhappy as I have been these past few weeks, and as I realise now, Dorothy Jupp, and all the others will have been made too. No job in the world is worth that ... (Diack to Seabrook, 28 November 1955)²⁵

Diack pointed to Curtis's temperamental nature: “if he doesn't like you [you] could be the best nurse in the world but you wouldn't stay,” and the Mission had many “bitter unhappy workers who had given of their best to serve the Mission.”

Whether Jupp was “summarily dismissed” or the sequence of events manipulated to achieve the same end may never be conclusively determined. What is clear is that Jupp

paid the price for stepping outside the rigid frame of discourse. She first received “quite a stinging” letter (as she told Seabrook, “you know the Dr. *can* sting when he wants to”), but she did not share its contents with Seabrook. Her disclaimer that “[t]he press in St. John’s got hold of me, unfortunately, & their subsequent reports were absolute rubbish, & exaggerated out of recognition & a lot of it untrue” (23 November 1951), hints at victimization. As already discussed in this chapter, Jupp had given sufficient evidence of being aware of the need for a delicate handling of publicity. Her letters to Seabrook do not offer apologies for agreeing to the interview, or offer a reason for once again taking matters into her own hands. Therefore, it is likely that because Jupp’s memoir ends abruptly at this point in her Labrador work, this “stinging” letter affected Jupp, setting in motion a sequence of events that changed irrevocably the face of Jupp’s planned Labrador career. But whatever the impetus and rationalization for her action, Curtis was definitely “cross” with Jupp, and conceded (to Seabrook) that “possibly the reports are exaggerated” (Seabrook to Jupp, 28 November 1951). Seabrook suggested that “a tactful letter” to Curtis would “put the matter straight,” but what was connoted by “tactful” (a word she used in reference to the letter to the prime minister)? In this instance it called for Jupp’s obedience. Even after sending five letters to Curtis (up to the time of her return to the Coast almost ten months later), Jupp had received no reply from him. The doctor could be cruel as well as cross, it seemed, and Jupp’s obedience did not, as Seabrook had intimated, straighten out the matter. The silence extended beyond Curtis; “I have heard nothing from Dr. Curtis or anyone in the Mission” Jupp told Seabrook (n.d., recd. 31 July

1954). Had Jupp, the “heroine” (of the fire fame), been reduced to Jupp, the pariah?

Jupp’s anti-government interview comments had the potential to jeopardize the Mission’s government funding, and specifically at risk was the grant for the Sanatorium. The construction of the TB sanatorium at St. Anthony was approved in 1950, and completed in 1953. Seabrook conceded that “possibly it has made [Curtis’s] task heavier” (Seabrook to Jupp, 28 November 1951). (“[I]t” is not clear: the previous sentence referred elliptically to “the matter,” which I take to refer to the interview fallout.) Seabrook’s remark may have been calculated to make Jupp feel guilty for the potential political repercussions—something this incident did not lack. The Mission was waiting for funding from the government for the sanatorium. As Thomas pointed out in another article, at this juncture the Mission was “at the mercy of the Government”:

Even up until 1946 Labrador and northern Newfoundland had yet to catch up with the modern world. But the change did come in 1949 when Newfoundland joined the Canadian Confederation. This was to realize a whole chain of events which was to alter the character of the Mission as well as the life of the people.

Now enormous grants, equalization payments and family subsidies became available. Capital in the form of Government grants was found to enlarge and reconstruct buildings as well as build new nursing stations and hospitals.... The Government of Newfoundland ... became keenly interested in, and strongly supported, our work; and gradually a shift in emphasis from a private philanthropic-dominated budget to one composed largely of Government grants and funds came about.... (Thomas, “The Grenfell Mission” 11)

Jupp’s action had the potential to alienate the government before the funding came through and sabotage a very delicate situation.

After the interview Jupp sailed to Liverpool, but in her wake, the Government

publicly retracted her accusations. The Minister of Public Welfare, H.L. Pottle, gave a statement (31 October 1951) in the House of Assembly regarding the interview, questioning Jupp's credibility: "While Miss Jupp's statements are undoubtedly true in some respects ... it is felt that they make the situation out to be more serious than it actually is."²⁶ Pottle pointed to Jupp's lack of acknowledgment of the proper channels: she "did not make any effort to contact any member of my Department, or of the Department of Health ... in order to describe the circumstances." It is easy to speculate that Pottle's public gesture may have been included in Curtis's stinging letter to Jupp, yet there is no verification to indicate that Jupp was ever aware of Pottle's actions. Jupp's public allegations resulted in a full investigation by the Department of Public Welfare regarding the near-starvation conditions she reported; the report of the local welfare officer was succinct, and damning: "Nurse Jupp's report is utterly false."²⁷ In the eyes of the government, Jupp was an embarrassing troublemaker, and Pottle made no attempt to view Jupp's 1949 action as one prompted by a humanitarian impulse, but rather a single-minded attempt to capture the limelight—self-seeking rather than self-effacing:

On October 31st following Miss Jupp's publicity in both papers, including photographs, I made a statement to the House ...

You will know that this is not Miss Jupp's first time getting into print under much the same circumstances [1949 food shortage]. At the same time, I am sure that the Grenfell Association would not wish to be identified with any unfounded statements of this sort—statements which, I suggest, should not have been made as coming from a representative of the Association without your knowledge.

This morning I gave a news item to the Doyle Bulletin embracing the main points of the Welfare Officer's letter, and I hope we shall have no

further undisciplined statements from this woman. (Pottle to Thomas, 30 November 1951)

Pottle's public denouncement of Jupp invalidated her as a caring nurse. His use of the word "undisciplined" indicated that Jupp had stepped out of her (womanly) place. Calling her "this woman"—"this" has a pejorative ring, as if she was an embarrassment and untrustworthy—clarified that in the eyes of the government (as represented by Pottle), Jupp had tarnished the image of the Grenfell Association. Implicit in Pottle's final statement is a subtle threat to the Grenfell Mission to ensure that Jupp is silenced.

Back in England (and grappling with Curtis's stinging letter), Jupp engaged in a typical slate of furlough talks²⁸—all publicity for the Mission. She spoke at the Annual Reunion, where her role in the fire of 1945 was once again praised, but the more contemporary display of Jupp's heroic/humanitarian actions (the famine) received only silence. Not only did the Association expect Jupp to give talks, but they tried to utilize her as a commodity in any venue that would create publicity;²⁹ for example, Jupp appeared on Margot Davies's 9 May 1952 BBC broadcast "Calling Newfoundland."³⁰ During this furlough, one of Jupp's talks brought trouble. Ethel Graham, the Association's Canadian secretary, informed Seabrook of "a most peculiar letter" she had read to her. Graham was confident that Jupp was "back of it all," but "to do her justice, probably quite unintentionally." The sender of the letter was shocked to hear a Grenfell nurse relate "the pitiful conditions in Labrador—people starving, no markets for their fish, no future." Graham insisted that "it is all so untrue"—"with confederation there *is* no starvation."

She adds, "I am only surmising that this is D.J." (Graham to Seabrook, 23 May 1952).³¹

Jupp, blamed without being able to defend herself, had become less and less a heroine (it is not known if Jupp was reprimanded for this). With her criticism of Jupp's loss of proportion, Seabrook implicitly sides with Graham:

I think that in Jupp's district things are not too bright, but that is the trouble of staying too long at one station. One loses one's sense of proportion. As a matter of fact I do not think she is at all well, and we are keeping a strict eye upon her. So anything you may hear is undoubtedly exaggerated, but also may be due a little to Jupp's state of mind.
(Seabrook to Graham, 27 May 1952)

Graham referred to a letter (Jupp had written to a Halifax cleric) which was "decidedly not that of a normal person. She [Jupp] was emotionally upset and had gone off at a tangent" (2 June 1952).³² This new incident, according to Graham, was "of the same calibre," and Graham is quick to make Jupp an object of pity and scorn: "I am sorry for her but that is the sort of person who could do considerable harm if not stopped. I dislike spreading alarms ... I almost feel that she ought to have it suggested to her that [she] has been long enough in one place. I suppose wild horses would not prevent her returning to her post."

Jupp's impassioned interview remark—"I wouldn't leave Labrador now for any other nursing job in the world" (Power 3)—reflected a strong, assertive woman who knew her own mind. By 20 April 1952 Jupp expressed ambivalence about returning to the Mission. Was her ambivalence a defense mechanism, an attempt to save face—one which eventually manifested itself in her resignation? If Jupp was indeed dismissed, as Diack

stated, her ambivalence takes on a different perspective.

I think I ought to tell you something I have had on my mind for a long time—almost four years, in fact,—but in telling you I must make it plain that I have not decided anything *definite yet*, so I do not know what action you think best to take. Over the last few years I have got very discouraged with things on the coast—economically & otherwise—& I rather feel that I ought to resign at the end of my present contract, which expires on July 31st this year. *If* I did so I would refund my passage money & pay my own way home. In any case I would, of course, fulfil my contract & wait for some-one to take my place. I do not know what I will do instead, as I would not be able to nurse any more, after being on my own so much./ When I wrote Dr. Curtis, I told him I was very uncertain about things, but I did not tell him I thought of resigning, as I had no decision made then, but I did say that I hoped to be able to have an interview with him on the way north. I rather hate taking this step, but after 14 years isolation, it is beginning to get me down.... (Jupp to Seabrook, 20 April 1952)

Jupp's letter employs an unusual number of qualifiers ("I think I ought to tell you"; "I rather feel that I ought to"; "I rather hate taking this step"): is Jupp mitigating her unhappiness by offering to resign? Her confidence shattered, Jupp appears to have lost her identity as a Grenfell missionary/nurse and seems to be encoding her pain in these ambivalences. In the six months of her furlough, Jupp had gone from assertiveness (and loving her job) to planning her resignation. Curtis's letter blamed "a religious element" as the root of the Jupp situation (Curtis to Seabrook, 24 June 1952). Seabrook's suggestion that companionship would solve Jupp's problem triggered Curtis's criticism of Jupp's lack of interpersonal skills:

Ever since Miss Jupp has been with the Mission I have repeatedly urged that she have a companion, but she refused. Last summer I suggested that some of the women in the neighbourhood should spend the week-end with her, as there are several "competent" women in the area, but again Miss Jupp refused. Nine miles from St. Mary's River there is an American base

with very fine Army Officers and men, but Miss Jupp has been so aloof that these men never frequent the nursing station. Yet Dr. Thomas tells me that this past winter these men have constantly visited [Jupp's replacement] and have helped her a great deal. So the simple fact is that Miss Jupp herself is at fault ... Miss Jupp is a lone worker. She has done excellent work at St. Mary's ... While with other members of the staff she has an inferiority complex, but with the local people she has the superiority complex. How to fit Miss Jupp into this scheme is a problem, unless she is willing to take an isolated station to herself where she is a big frog in a little puddle. I have worked with Miss Jupp many years. She is an excellent midwife, and a tireless worker. But I doubt if she would fit in under any other scheme, or work with another nurse. (Curtis to Seabrook, 24 June 1952)

Is Jupp “harm”ful (Graham)? Does she need companionship; has she lost all sense of proportion (Seabrook)? Does Curtis propose a spiritual subtext as an excuse to be rid of her? What is *the* Jupp situation? A closer look at the sequence of events from Jupp's interview to her resignation, while inconclusive, lends credence to my reading that because Jupp dared to speak out in the public venue of the interview (with the concomitant angering of the Government), she was silenced. This silencing reflects the “boomerang effect” of Seabrook's warning.

6.4.1 *The Boomerang Effect*

On 4 December 1951, just over a month after Jupp's arrival in England, Seabrook expressed concern as to whether she was “getting some rest,” and in the same letter informed Jupp that Sir Henry Richards and Colonel Grenfell would be “delighted” if she would speak at the Annual Reunion. Jupp thanked Seabrook for asking her, adding: “I will do [it] & will try not to put my foot in it by saying something I shouldn't” (10

December 1951). A post-interview Jupp was grateful for the opportunity to speak, but feared the repercussions of such a public gesture. Jupp, already reprimanded by Curtis for speaking about the realities of her work (the interview), is faced with the same conundrum: she is to talk of her work, but what is she supposed to say?

On 1 February 1952 Seabrook asked Jupp to have a medical examination before returning to Labrador. Why now and not in 1948?³³ Was this a subtle means of determining Jupp's mental health? Shocked that it had been sixteen years since Jupp's last medical examination or x-ray,³⁴ Seabrook, who felt that this stalling was "a further sign of her mental stress" (Seabrook to Clark, 26 May 1952),³⁵ repeatedly urged Jupp to have the examination. Is there a connection between Jupp's decision to resign (20 April 1952) and the medical examination (which she finally had 4 June)? As for resigning, Jupp rationalized: "The question about Labrador *is* a big one, but I really do think I ought to resign and let someone else take on the job ... but I want to fulfil my contract and I think I *must* see the 'Chief' [Curtis] and tell him what I feel about things, I could at least give another 4 or 5 months service—or perhaps longer while someone else was being found—I do not want to leave the Station 'in the soup' or let the Mission down" (24 April 1952). The uncertainty and ambivalence in Jupp's letter to Seabrook reflected an internal struggle, and encoded her pain.

Although Jupp was due to sail to Labrador in June, on 12 May she requested extended leave. This introduced a new factor. Jupp had gone from planning to resign to asking for extended leave: "I have had this idea of extended leave in my mind for some

time—after I had the [ankle] fracture—,but it seemed selfish to ask for it ... I am in such an unsettled state of mind, that I feel I need longer to think things out and really make up my mind what I feel about things generally; also I want to see Dr. Curtis before I *get* to St. Mary's." A self-effacing Jupp had replaced the assertive interview Jupp: "I shall not insist on anything—if the New York office cannot grant [an] extension I will not raise the question again." Jupp blamed the ankle fracture for her tiredness ("I had been working since I came home—at Truro and on Deputation and being laid out just knocked the stuffing out of me"), yet she missed sailing back to Labrador because of "an attack of influenza and migraine" (Seabrook to Curtis, 24 June 1952) (the cable granting leave arrived after the boat she was due to sail on had left). Seabrook urged a floundering Jupp to "reach some understanding" with Curtis before returning to Labrador, "*I think* you want to be quite sure in your own mind what you really want to do, and somehow *I think* you are not really feeling up to it. *I think* it would be unwise to force yourself to return to St. Mary's River, don't you?" (15 May 1952, my emphasis). Ostensibly Seabrook is offering Jupp her opinion ("I think") without any concomitant encouragement to remain with the Mission. By now, Jupp was aware that her mental stability was being questioned: "I fear you may think that I am acting in a queer way, but I am not heading for a nervous break-down or anything like that; it is just that I really do think that I need a bit longer to get over the effects of the fracture—which pulled me down more than I thought." Jupp feared Curtis: "Also I am in an uncertain frame of mind and I'd like to get things straightened out and sort of taped in my mind *before* I see Dr. Curtis, otherwise I will

probably get no-where with him.” Jupp continued, “I still love Labrador and the work, but quite candidly I don’t feel equal to facing it again yet ... I might add that no one has influenced me ... Please forgive me for this upheaval ...” (19 May 1952). Was the “it” that she feared a reference to Curtis? When Seabrook told Jupp that it was “unwise” for her to return unless she was “really well enough, and this we must impress upon Dr. Curtis” (21 May 1952), Jupp prevaricates, insisting that “there is [nothing] wrong in the Medical line—I think it is mainly that I have been in such a mental upheaval that it has pulled me down physically. Strangely enough, things rather came to a head last night, as—for some reason—I managed to get a ‘black-out’ and am feeling pretty much under the weather today so I am getting a Medical this week ... I rather wish Dr. Curtis answered letters. I have written to him 4 times—air mail—over the past 3 months but had no reply—I wrote him again last night” (22 May 1952). Is this lack of acknowledgment the cause of her mental upheaval which manifested itself in her stalling? Jupp had blamed variously her mental and physical difficulties on a fractured ankle, an attack of influenza (“which may have accounted for the depression” [26 May]), migraine, a blackout, glandular fever (“which has hung around since I was sick 5 weeks ago” [9 July]), an unsettled state of mind, and mental upheaval. Is this an incipient hypochondria, a stalling mechanism, or a physical manifestation of her stress?

After several months of waiting for Jupp’s medical examination, Seabrook became forceful:³⁶ “Do have [it] without delay because if any treatment is needed you can have it straight away. and it may help you to pull out of your depression.” At the same

time, Seabrook defended Curtis's lack of acknowledgment: "I am sorry [he] has not answered any of your letters. I think he is rather at sixes and sevens, and very tired ... but it is naughty of him not to have done so" (23 May 1952). The diction of "naughty" reduces the severity of Curtis's actions to the playful actions of a recalcitrant child, instead of being responsible for the cruel silence that so affected Jupp. In one of her letters to Curtis, Jupp had mentioned that she felt she could not stay at St. Mary's for another three or four years, "but I did *not* suggest that it might be a good idea not to go back there; as you know he does not take kindly to 'suggestions' from anyone" (Jupp to Seabrook, 26 May 1952). Curtis had, Jupp noted, "a nasty trick of pushing people round at the last moment," and her final sentence foregrounds her lack of a voice: "However, I do not insist on anything; at the moment I will do whatever I am told to do—but it would be quite a wrench to leave St. Mary's."

Seabrook's own attempts at diagnosing Jupp are evident:

We have been very worried about her for a long time. From all I hear she has shut herself away, and has not seemed to want to talk to anyone. All the same, wherever she goes she has inspired many with her enthusiasm, her work and her love of the coast, and we had a donation of £100 ... from someone who had met and admired her.

She is very undecided, as you probably know, about the Coast, and what to do, which is unlike her. This general indecision and procrastination over the medical examination especially, was possibly a symptom of her state of mind and physical health, due to the loneliness of 14 years at St. Mary's River—an effect which she may not have realised. (Seabrook to Curtis, 24 June 1952)

In addition to her diagnostic attempts, Seabrook reveals herself as duplicitous:

I realise only too well how difficult the position is, and I am sure it would not have occurred if Jupp had been fit. It is so unlike her. She has been worried at not hearing from you, and this has increased her general anxiety. You know the old Jupp so well, and, given time to recuperate, she would be able to give many further years of service to the Mission. She is more anxious to return as her health improves, but I have not yet told her of your cable, nor of the doctor's decision, as I do not want to retard her progress at this stage. She would be upset, and if she knew you wanted her to return at once I am sure she would do so without a thought of endangering her health because she is so loyal and unselfish. (Seabrook to Curtis, 24 June 1952)

Why all of a sudden Jupp had “shut herself away,” become “undecided,” and procrastinated, all of which Seabrook was determined to blame on the loneliness of fourteen years at St. Mary's River?³⁷ Unlike Diack, Jupp did not rant in narratives or verses. Given Jupp's penchant for pouring out the grief and loneliness of her early painful days at Port Hope Simpson in a diary, it is possible that she poured out this new grief in a similar medium. Never loquacious, Jupp internalized her pain, her grief, her loss. In fact, her taciturnity was legendary (“So self-effacing that she tells very little about her work” is Curtis's early description). Seabrook speculated when she told Curtis: “At least this is what I think because as you know she says very little” (16 September 1952). Jupp herself talked about her quietness and reserve, how it was mistaken for something else. This time the mistaking had taken its toll.

Jupp formally resigned from the Grenfell Mission 30 June 1952 (effective on expiration of her 31 July 1952 contract). She told Seabrook: “I am sorry to take this step, but, after much thought & tension, I really feel it is the right thing to do. As you know, Labrador & its people mean such a lot to me so it *is* a terrific wrench, but one has to face

these things at times.” Seabrook admits that “it happened under rather a cloud” (Seabrook to Graham, 9 July 1952). Seabrook and Clark blame Curtis: “I think if Dr. Curtis had answered her letters and told her to have a longer rest, and shown some consideration, it would have made all the difference, even if her decision to resign had come in the end. It is hard, after fourteen years devoted service, that she should leave the Mission with such unhappiness, which I am sure is the case” (Seabrook to Clark, 8 July 1952). Clark hoped that Curtis would “come up to scratch and be very nice to her, even belatedly” (Clark to Seabrook, 9 July 1952).³⁸

Even after resigning, Jupp was unsure of her decision, yet felt it was “the right thing to do”—“[it] hurt badly & is a hard wrench to break with the Coast” (9 July 1952). Yet despite her resignation from the Mission, she is anxious to return to Labrador via any route. Jupp’s ambivalences about leaving the Mission suggest that the decision had been done under some duress. Jupp returned to Labrador (sailed 24 September 1952) as Nurse-Evangelist with the Moravian Mission at Nain, an appointment that barely survived attempted sabotage (obviously Pottle’s legacy):

The Moravian Mission say they have received a cable from the Minister of Health [Pottle] out there advising against the appointment as it might embarrass the Grenfell Mission. She is free to go, of course, her contract has expired and she is apparently fit. I think it is a little unwise of her to have applied and I know what Dr. Curtis will think, but I do not think we can stand in her way. (Seabrook to Clark, 18 August 1952)³⁹

Jupp’s doctor had blamed her “previous nervous tension” on “endeavouring to reach a decision about her retirement from the Grenfell Mission”; now she could return to the

mission field anywhere in the world, including Labrador. Seabrook related the news to

Curtis:

... the Moravian Mission telephoned ... [and] were anxious to know if [Jupp] were free to take up this appointment, as far as the Grenfell Mission is concerned.... I think they wanted to know if she had broken her contract, or if the Grenfell Mission would be embarrassed if she served under the Moravians. I think as you say in your letter, that there is a religious element in Jupp's situation, and possibly the Moravian Mission may fill this need. I still think that had she returned to St. Mary's River she would have had a complete breakdown. There is no doubt that her manner has been very strange since her return to England, and she was definitely not herself. (Seabrook to Curtis, 22 August 1952)

Seabrook sidesteps the issue that Jupp's return to England was also under a cloud. The distortions implicit in these letters show the wide-ranging boomerang effects of this entire Jupp episode. Jupp complained of rumours that she had resigned "for health reasons." It posed "a lot of difficulty & many complications" and the Canadian Government refused to guarantee her salary because she "had been forced to resign for health reasons, & had been told never to go to Labrador." "3 doctor's certificates, x-rays, & laboratory reports" reestablished her credibility. Still apprehensive, Jupp feared "something else may be cooking up. I have not yet heard a word from Dr. Curtis, which seems rather queer ..."

(Jupp to Seabrook, 14 September 1952).

Curtis, however, complained to Seabrook of being unable to understand "the Jupp situation": Jupp, he explained, had caused him "a great deal of worry" at a time when he was "beset with worries of great complexity" (Curtis to Seabrook, 16 September 1952). Curtis was impatient with Jupp's "religious side,"⁴⁰ and hoped the Moravians would

satisfy it. Not only did Jupp have missionary training (had Curtis forgotten that the Mission was originally mission-oriented?), but her public concern about the spiritual conditions of the Labrador people was a frequent topic of her Reunion addresses. Jupp, like Diack, was distressed to learn that the mission part of the Grenfell Mission was subordinate to the medical side, that it had become “just a business venture” (*Journey of Wonder* 79). As she confides, “To anyone else it may not have had much significance, but to me, as one trying to find her niche in the Vineyard of the Lord, it was, to say the least, very discouraging” (*Journey of Wonder* 79). Curtis informed Seabrook:

In past visits to St. Anthony Miss Jupp would not enter into any conversation, but simply sit, and it was only because people here felt sorry for her that they paid the slightest attention to her. She had really nothing to offer in the line of conversation or companionship, and I am perfectly certain she would not fit into a large set-up, and if she has in the background some religious situation I think it would be unwise for her to return to the Coast. (24 June 1952)

Curtis’s reference, although vague, is unsettling. After all Jupp’s devotion and loyalty Curtis proposed getting rid of her because of a vague “religious situation.” Curtis had begun his 24 June letter to Seabrook with a reference to an “inkling from other sources” that there was “a religious element” in the Jupp situation. Curtis, like Graham, made accusations based on conjecture. Curtis himself boasted that he was sufficiently “hard boiled” after thirty-five years on the coast to know that “in this matter of religion one must keep their feet on the ground”—the implication being that Jupp did not. Jupp’s religious zeal was anachronistic in the changing face of the Grenfell Mission. As far as Curtis was concerned, the “Jupp incident” was now closed.

Seabrook, too, seemed relieved to be rid of a potentially troublesome Jupp, and sided with Curtis in viewing Jupp's religious zeal as a curse:

I think for the last few years [Jupp] has been undecided what to do and her religious outlook is the cause. She did not want to leave the Coast yet felt the Mission had not the spiritual background she desired ... We all found her a changed Jupp when she was here and I think this inward tussle has been the cause of her illness; I think she was near a breakdown and had she returned to St. Mary's it would have developed which would have caused more headaches ... Possibly, the religious atmosphere of the Moravian Mission at Nain will satisfy this need, if it does then mentally she will be much happier. I think in all the circumstances it is best that she is not returning to the Grenfell Mission as this would possibly have come to a head sooner or later. She has done a splendid job for 14 years and we shall miss her ... (16 September 1952)

What prompted the "inward tussle"? Why was she "near a breakdown"? How can Seabrook assume that if Jupp returned to St. Mary's a mental breakdown would result? The diction of "fanatical" in her final comment—"As you say one must keep one's feet on the ground whatever our beliefs, but those bordering on the fanatical [Jupp?] are apt to become too introspective and so involved with their thinking that they fail to see the light"—is a strong indication of Seabrook's distaste for the Jupp matter. As already noted, Seabrook herself played a role in the boomerang effect that so affected Jupp. The interview fallout was the catalyst that triggered Jupp's break with the Grenfell Mission, and the beginning of her new (but interim) relationship with another strong presence in Labrador, the Moravian Mission.

6.4.2 Jupp's Moravian Interlude

The Moravians were the first resident missionary presence in Labrador. The Moravian Church, a Protestant sect which claims pre-Reformation origins, is “an ancient episcopal and evangelical Church; her Head is Christ; her standard is the Bible; her members are a fellowship of believers; her life is the service of God and our fellow men across the world; and her continuing and distinctive purpose has been to witness to the unity of all Christians and all the Churches in the fellowship of Christ.”⁴¹ In 1771, an expedition of fourteen Moravians left London and settled in Nain. They opened a second station at Okkak in 1776, and a third at Hopedale in 1782 (Hiller, “Moravians” 843). There has been a continuous Moravian presence in Labrador since 1771, which became the single most important European cultural force in that region (Rollmann 66). Not only did the Moravians missionize the Labrador Inuit, they engaged in trade, education, health, and other vital dimensions of public life. The Moravian missionaries received some basic medical training and each Mission had basic medical supplies. With the arrival of the Grenfell Mission, the Grenfell doctors made annual visits to the Moravian stations (Peacock 103). Jupp’s appointment as nurse to Nain resulted from an appeal to the Department of Health (Peacock 105).

Jupp’s determination to return to Labrador revealed strength of character. Written en route to Nain, Jupp’s letter to “My dear friends” suggests that she approached her new endeavour eagerly; it begins with a buoyant Jupp:⁴²

My joining the Moravian Mission is like a new start in life and I feel much the same as I did when I first came out 14 years ago and yet life is deeper and fuller and richer now for I have learnt so much and I realise that the past 14 years have only been training years; years of difficult[y] and dangers, doubts and misunderstandings, loneliness and fears and one's sanity could only be kept by hanging on to God where I learnt to understand people and expressed my thought and feelings on paper because there was no one to talk to and that helped me a lot and now I am going to this new job in Faith and Trust knowing that He who sent me here will see me through and my friends will still love and support me, whatever happens. It will not be easy as it means starting from scratch to build up a Medical Service here and I will be on my own entirely, there will be the language to cope with too, but it will be an exciting job too in many ways.

Jupp attempted to turn the difficult experience into a positive one, and in this way absorbed the hurts of the Grenfell experience. Later in the same letter, Jupp's fears surfaced:

I have very mixed feelings about Nain, now; for one thing I am rather afraid of myself, I am inclined to be quiet and reserved and people might interpret it for some-thing else; also I have a feeling that someone might make things awkward for me—or try to. On the other hand I feel so strongly that God has called me to this work and that He will see me through all right; and also I know that my friends think so too and believe in me and trust me and will back me to the limit. Probably the inactivity of ship-board makes things look depressing.

The identity of the “someone” Jupp fears is not apparent. Curtis? Pottle? Despite her fears, “pertinent truths” from a book she was reading inspire her: ultimately, “the God's eye view” was all that mattered, not temporality:

The writer [unidentified] says “You could not look at anything just through the small keyhole of now, when you look, you must do it in the larger way, from the height of time, not ignoring the imperfect now but including the coming THEN, the God's eye view must be yours.” The last part struck me so much—“God's eye view”—what a world of thought it

opens up!!! of the world, other people, our friends and those we love, and ourselves. So much lately the 23rd Psalm has come into my mind and with it—"I am persuaded that life nor death—can separate us from the love of God" and I try to fully believe it is true and yet it seems something too wonderful and beyond understanding. (6 October 1952)

Jupp's faith, although at times shaky, sustained her. Arriving in Nain October 1952, Jupp at some point became a Moravian,⁴³ and the only woman on the five-member Town Council.⁴⁴ It is not clear what it meant for Jupp to become a Moravian. Jupp received high praise from Rev. F.W. Peacock, the Director of Moravian Missions in Labrador, who in an *Evening Telegram* interview (10 July 1953), is quoted as saying, "We are very fortunate ... in securing Miss Dorothy Jupp," who "is doing a wonderful job among the Eskimos" ("Moravian Report" 1).

In 1955, after Jupp had been three years at Nain with the Moravians, Thomas asked her if she would transfer to the Grenfell Mission to run their (proposed) cottage hospital at Nain. Jupp wrote to Seabrook of this proposal, "so it looks as if I will be coming back into the Grenfell Mission again!!!! do you approve?!!!! I am glad to be able to get back into the Mission again; being a 'free lance' is all right in some ways, but it has more disadvantages than advantages; one does not quite know where one belongs, and there is nowhere to [go] if things go wrong. I think the two Missions should be able to work together with good will on both sides" (?2 February 1955). Jupp's enthusiasm to return to the Mission could suggest that she had not wanted to leave in 1952, or maybe she was unhappy with the Moravians. One year after returning to the Grenfell Mission, Jupp received clearly defined guidelines from Curtis (Paddon, who was in charge of the

Nain nursing station, had complained about Jupp). Jupp was not to send any correspondence to the Department of Health in St. John's, except through Paddon; monthly reports were to go to Paddon; and Paddon was to report to Curtis frequently on the progress of the Nain nursing station (Curtis to Jupp, 23 January 1958).⁴⁵ The message and hierarchy were clear.

6.5 Role of the Nurse

In a two-part *ADSF* article (1945), Curtis delineated nursing station nurses as "heroines." First, he praised them for "carrying the brunt of the medical work for the Grenfell Mission," in essence for being surrogate doctors (3). Yet the fact that nurses' essential duties encompassed domestic responsibilities clearly indicates sex-role stereotyping:

Not only are they continually in demand to take care of their districts medically, but in all other aspects of the life of the people they take a very prominent part. They conduct classes for mothers, give instruction in public health nursing. They are all active in the patriotic societies where the local women meet to knit for the boys overseas. In summer each of these nurses conducts a community garden and preserves a large quantity of local produce for the use of the station during the time when navigation is closed. In some of our stations the nurses have been instrumental in stimulating the efforts of the local women to preserve food for their own use. The nurses have helped them secure seeds to plant gardens, encouraged them through the growing season, offered prizes and sponsored local agricultural shows for the best home-grown vegetables, fresh or tinned. They have also encouraged the local families to procure hens and goats, for eggs and milk. (Curtis, "Heroines" 3)⁴⁶

Within these clearly defined parameters, there is no space for public gestures such as

Jupp's 1949 appeal to the government and her 1951 press interview. But here, however, Jupp is Curtis's first sustained example of a "heroine":

Miss Jupp is one of the most modest, self-sacrificing nurses we have ever had.

Miss Jupp has one local girl as a nurse's aide; otherwise all the medical work is carried on by her alone. Very often when the hospital is full of urgent cases she is called fifty or sixty miles away to see someone who is seriously ill, and she must go because there is no one else to answer the call. Miss Jupp is so self-effacing that she tells very little about her work and it is only by what one hears from the local people about how much they respect her and about some of the dangerous and difficult trips she takes that one learns how much she does to serve her patients.

... The clothing store is also under her supervision and consumes much of her time ... (Curtis, "Heroines" 3-4)⁴⁷

Curtis praised modesty, self-sacrifice, self-effacement, quietness/silence—all qualities considered "womanly"—as worthy of heroine status. The stellar qualities for a Grenfell heroine make her a heroine for her domestic capabilities; this ensured that the nurse maintained her traditional place in society. The clear distinction between the role of the nurse and that of the doctor is historically gender-specific; according to Mary Roth Walsh, "women as nurses, engaged as they were in a domesticated version of the doctor's role, posed no threat to the male physician" (142), but nurses were clearly below the doctor in the chain of command. Walsh offers the following example of sex-role stereotyping:

Dr. Edward Cowles, superintendent of Boston City Hospital, in recommending the appointment of a supervisor of nursing, made it clear that whoever filled the position, must stay within her "proper station" and no way be allowed to work against the physician in charge. The *Journal of the American Medical Association* was always quick to complain of any tendency of nurses to stray from their station; in 1901 it charged that many

doctors found the nurse “often conceited and too unconscious of the due subordination she owes to the medical profession of which she is a sort of useful parasite.” The *Woman's Journal* accurately described the typical response of the male physician: “... Nurses are docile, submissive, and keep their proper place, while *once let a woman study medicine and she thinks her opinion is as good as a man's.*”⁴⁸ (Walsh 142-143)

With her public gestures (appeal and interview) Jupp strayed from her “proper station,”⁴⁹ and her actions foregrounded the gap between discourse and reality:

... by portraying nurses as smiling angels-of-mercy, dutifully devoted to glorious and rewarding work, the discourse glossed over the harsher side of nursing for the Mission. Grenfell nurses were, first and foremost, overworked women; they routinely faced exhaustion, professional anxiety, loneliness, and co-worker tension ... [they] were not all blindly devoted to the Mission's principles and hierarchy. To the contrary, some nurses questioned, criticized, and outright defied, traditional gender norms as well as Mission rules and regulations. In doing so, however, they opened themselves up for reprisals. The “glorious rewards” of Grenfell nursing could be seriously undermined by the authority of male doctors in what was, ultimately, a patriarchal institution. (Perry 95)

Within the Grenfell discourse (which permitted portrayal of nurses as fearless angels of mercy), there was no room for an assertive, outspoken woman who dared to challenge or transgress the boundaries of gender norms.

In addition to Curtis's article, praise for Jupp was scattered throughout early issues of *ADSF*, generally in the form of patient testimonials. One testimonial from Celesta Gerber Acreman,⁵⁰ a Grenfell nurse, was accompanied by an explanation from Curtis. Acreman praised Jupp's “resourcefulness and coolheadedness” in saving her life: “I am deeply indebted to Miss Jupp, to the Grenfell Mission, and to God Almighty for saving my life at the recent birth of our son” (January 1949: 117). Curtis explained how

during one of the worst storms of the season Jupp faced with “one of the most difficult and serious obstetrical complications, entirely alone on her own resources” (117).

Without aid, except for advice by wireless, Jupp, with only “great skill and ability,” coped on her own (117). After Jupp was interviewed in 1951, Curtis’s view of her (revealed in his letters to Seabrook: private) deviated from his earlier (public/published) praise. Jupp’s 1949 appeal and her 1951 interview challenged traditional gender norms, and she no longer had positive propaganda potential. Her actions of stepping outside her script labelled her a threat to the Mission, and, as Perry has pointed out, opened herself up for reprisal. The world of politics was a masculine, not a feminine domain. Did Jupp (unconsciously) foreground this bipolarity? Jupp, however, could not be easily labelled, nor easily molded to fit “under any ... scheme” (Curtis to Seabrook, 24 June 1952).

6.6 Biography: From Domestic Servant to Writer

Jupp’s childhood is a big silence. According to W.A. Paddon (*Labrador Doctor* 108), Jupp, who was born in 1909, was raised in a Barnardo home⁵¹ in England. However, the jacket blurb of *Journey of Wonder* states that she was born in London, the “daughter of a police inspector.” In her memoir, Jupp herself refers to her hometown of Hove;⁵² the fact that she may have attended Church School Elementary in Hove, near Brighton, would substantiate this.⁵³ Or was Jupp illegitimate?

Her mother, when in work, was a cook who took Dorothy with her on various jobs. When not working they often slept rough, sometimes on Brighton beaches and were often reliant on the church Poor Box for

clothes and food. Her mother died of T.B. when Dorothy was 8 years old. She was sent to the Home of the Epiphany⁵⁴ in Truro [Cornwall] where the sisters looked after her until she started her Nursing/Missionary training.⁵⁵

Other than these speculations, Jupp's childhood remains a silence. The jacket blurb notes that "At twelve she went to work in a factory."⁵⁶ Later she was employed as a domestic servant at St. Andrews Missionary College (1925-1926). From 1926 to 1929 Jupp attended St. Brigid's Missionary Training College,⁵⁷ Highbury, England. She trained at Mayday Hospital, Thornton Heath, London (1929-1932), and did Midwifery Training (1932-1933). From 1933 to 1935, Jupp was at St. Andrews Missionary Training College at Stoke Newington and at Kennaway Hall Missionary Training College also at Stoke Newington. She worked as a Sister at London's Bermondsay Medical Mission (1935-1936) and its Mildmay Medical Mission (1936-1937).

Unlike Diack or Burchill, Jupp did not leave England for the Grenfell Mission. At the time of her sailing, Jupp's knowledge of the Mission consisted of what she had read in Grenfell's book, *Forty Years for Labrador*. Without knowing what or where Labrador was, in 1938, Jupp, at the age of twenty-nine, came to Labrador to work as a company nurse for the Labrador Development Company (LDC)⁵⁸ at Port Hope Simpson. In 1941 she was transferred to Trout River, Newfoundland, for ten months,⁵⁹ under the Department of Public Health and Welfare, before returning to Port Hope Simpson. When the LDC folded, she began work with the Grenfell Mission. From the beginning, Jupp's experiences on the Labrador were extraordinary:

Regarding my experiences out here, I think they would fill a book!!!! Once I was nearly drowned, another time I almost smothered in a snowdrift; the boat I was in smashed into an iceberg in a fog at another time; been mixed up in two forest fires; nearly frozen on a komatic drive; almost got burnt with a blazing oil stove; to say nothing of countless difficult medical and maternity cases; and now recently coping with [the] food shortage ... to us out here they are all in a day's work. (Jupp to Seabrook, 2 May 1949)

Many of these experiences end up in Jupp's memoir, which according to the jacket blurb is based on her diaries and articles (see Appendix VII) she had written of Labrador life.⁶⁰

6.7 Jupp's "Black Book"

Among the items that make up the Dorothy Jupp Collection (Sir Wilfred Thomason Grenfell Historical Society, St. Anthony) is a 7 x 9½" black hard-covered book (date of origin unknown). The book contains diary entries, an article/chapter, what appears to be a draft of part I of the book which would become *A Journey of Wonder*, as well as a draft of a letter to "My dear friends." Jupp used only the right-hand page of the book.

There are a total of 84 diary entries. The first is dated 24 May [1938], the day Jupp sails from Liverpool; this is a fairly long entry, and is followed by equally long entries for 25 and 26 May. On close textual comparison, it appears that some of this was copied directly into her draft version and subsequently into her published memoir. Then, a one-sentence entry for 27 May; short entries for 28, 29, 30 and 31 of May. There are entries for each day of June except 22 June [total of 29 entries]. Entries for July are a little more sporadic, with a total of 19 entries. August has 8 entries; September, 6; October, 1;⁶¹

and finally one for 1 January 1939. These diary entries appear to be copied from another diary, because in her memoir Jupp reveals that she covered “sheet after sheet” in her diary with outpourings “in the loneliness of that first winter” (*Journey of Wonder* 45). The black book does not, however, contain a single entry from the winter of 1938/39 (with the exception of a brief entry for 1 January 1939).⁶² Then a few pages torn out, but not enough to fit the “sheet after sheet” description. The next entries are from 1946: 11 in total from July 1946, a trip she took to Canada and the United States.

The diary entries are followed by five numbered pages, entitled “Labrador,” with the date 15/2/47 heading the first page. Whether this is the date of composition or the date which Jupp copied this from another draft is not clear. This is basically a version of the first two chapters of *Journey of Wonder*. Four blank pages separate it from what is, on close textual comparison, a draft version of part I of *Journey of Wonder*, with the exception of the fire at St. Mary’s in 1945. Jupp places the title “Labrador Missionary” at the head of the first page. The pages have been numbered in the top right-hand corner up to 100, but 98, 99, and 100 are blank (with roses pressed in the pages following “Labrador Missionary”). There are no more titles. At various spots, point-form notations are written on the blank facing page adjacent to the relevant spot—in the published version these are expanded into descriptive text. Interspersed at points throughout the text of the draft version are parenthetical notations/directions “See Diary,” “See Diary & ADSF,” “See Mss.” This suggests that Jupp is merging her earlier manuscript (possibly the one that Curtis read?), her diary, as well as *ADSF* articles in the formulation of her

new (published version) book, with the final published book a collage of all three. This is followed by 26 blank pages. The last three pages of the “black book” contain a letter drafted to “My dear friends” (in England) and is dated “North-west River 6/10/52.”

There is little significant difference between the draft version of Part I in the “black book” and that of the published version. The exception: in the draft version Jupp names names, which in the published version become depersonalized (“the Doctor,” “the Teacher,” etc.).

6.8 *A Journey of Wonder: Part I*

Although *A Journey of Wonder and Other Writings* is divided into two discrete and disparate parts each with its own style and tone, the first inscribes a female shaped by her Labrador experiences; the second, a female who strikes the pose of a traveller (active rather than passive). Part I, based on her diaries and articles, emphasizes Labrador and her first thirteen years on the coast: her LDC experience is followed by her Grenfell Mission experience. Jupp’s early Grenfell experience (1942-1951) is sandwiched between her LDC experience and her world trip. Unlike the memoirs of Banfill, Burchill, or Diack, *Journey of Wonder* is not *just* a memoir of Jupp’s Grenfell Labrador experiences. It is *not* a paean to the Grenfell Mission—its subject is very much Jupp. Beginning with her journey out to Labrador in 1938, the eighteen chapters of part I of *Journey of Wonder* depict chronologically her Labrador work until her return to England in 1951. Her subsequent resignation (1952) and separation from the Grenfell Mission (1952-1955),

which she spends with the Moravian Mission, as well the remainder of her Grenfell experience until her retirement in 1974, occur outside the narrative frame of the memoir. The first eight chapters detail her life as LDC nurse in Port Hope Simpson, Labrador, as well as ten months spent at Trout River, Newfoundland with the Department of Public Welfare. In these chapters Jupp conveys much anguish; she is lonesome, homesick, feels a failure, and experiences difficult cultural adjustments. After Port Hope Simpson and Trout River, Jupp, now an experienced Labrador nurse, becomes part of the Grenfell organization (St. Mary's River) in 1942. The period from 1942 to 1952 (with a brief period at Cartwright, a nightmare experience which she does not detail) includes the 1945 fire and the 1949 famine, and her memoir ends just before the controversial 1951 interview. The St. Mary's portion of Jupp's life inscribes a happy Jupp ("the most thrilling and happiest time of my life" [*Journey of Wonder* 76]). Part I of her memoir is the drama of her life—those experiences that "would fill a book."

It is clear from a comparison of the diary entries in Jupp's "black book" with the text of the published memoir that her diary material found its way into the narrative of the memoir. Jupp herself informs the reader that her diary is embedded in her memoir:

In the loneliness of that first winter I found more and more comfort in the King of Love and in His wondrous works of the beauty of the skies, the earth and the trees. Night after night I cried myself to sleep with disappointment and loneliness; as I had no other outlet for my thoughts and words I covered sheet after sheet in my diary with outpourings, some of which I record here. (*Journey of Wonder* 45)

Jupp used her (private) diary in the creation of her (public) memoir. According to Lynn Z.

Bloom, in the revising and editing of diaries “these superficially private writings become unmistakably public documents, intended for an external readership” (23). In using her diary in her memoir, Jupp’s emotionally naked writings are transformed into a public document—itself conveying a sense of history. The memoir, Billson points out, is “a representation of history, sometimes an argument, always a personal interpretation” (264). Since Jupp’s original diaries cannot be used for comparison, the degree of nakedness that has been covered in editing and revising remains a mystery.

The original function of Jupp’s diary was cathartic; like other diaries it was “a refuge where [the diarist] can rage, scream, cry, tear out her figurative hair, rant, rave, wallow in self-pity, go mad, threaten God—and no one has to know” (Wylie 91). Jupp’s diary writing helped her cope with loneliness, cultural barriers, and the social stigmatization of her Labrador experience—a situation where Jupp was very much the foreigner, the “other.” Jupp’s diary was a lifeline, “an outlet for ... tension through private expression, [and] provided an opportunity to alter or remove the source of that tension” (Kagle and Gramegna 43). When Jupp came to isolated coastal Labrador, she left her female companions behind, and her work as LDC nurse at Port Hope Simpson thrust her into a male-dominated work situation. Jupp’s diary was also a substitute for “personal contact with women friends ... mediating between isolation and communication,” “a kind of empathic ‘audience’ for the author’s private thoughts and feelings” (Davis 8, 9). Jupp’s attempt to form a close friendship with the female teacher at Port Hope Simpson ended disastrously. Jupp’s memoir revelation that her diary became her surrogate companion

occurs textually immediately after her revelation of the break with the teacher. Estranged from her companion(s), Jupp turned to her diary for conversation as well as for validation. Even though Jupp's diary was cathartic and provided a lifeline, "keeping a diary ... always begins with a sense of self-worth, a conviction that one's individual experience is somehow *remarkable*. Even the most self-deprecating of women's diaries are grounded in some sense of the importance of making a record of the life" (Culley 8). As Virginia Walcott Beauchamp points out, "Fixing the unspeakable in words can be an act of survival. Charlotte Perkins Gilman understood the power of that urge to write, as her protagonist of *The Yellow Wallpaper* affirms: 'I must write what I feel and think in some way—it is such a relief'" (47). For Jupp, writing in her diary was a similar act of survival.

Culley calls for attending to and identifying the "silences" of the text: "What the diarist did not, could not, or would not write sometimes shrieks from the page," and suggests that most diaries contain "silences created by choices, conscious or unconscious, made by the writer in her time" (22, 23). Suzanne L. Bunkers discusses the selective use of speech and silence and encoding ("the transmission of the writer's message in an oblique rather than in a direct manner"): "For a woman writing in a diary or journal, encoding can take a variety of syntactic or semantic forms, including indirection, contradiction, deviation, and silences" (194). Encoding becomes the writer's way of "breaking silences," of "finding avenues in which to speak, either directly or indirectly, about what has previously remained unspoken. The importance of encoding cannot be

overestimated, for it enables a writer to use speech and silence selectively (whether consciously or unconsciously) to address a variety of issues ..." (Bunkers 194, 195).

Similarly, Helen M. Buss finds the reading strategies of Nancy Miller in *Subject to Change* particularly helpful in heeding "the alternate surveys of identity and experience, marking a changed subjectivity, that are women's maps of selfhood" (Buss, *Mapping* 34-35). These include

attention to the special emphases that women add to their writing ("diachronic reoccurrences") which appear as a kind of metaphorical "italics" in their accounts. These "italics" may seem to be as inconsequential activities and opinions, ones that are even contradicted by the narrative voice, or they may seem to be implausibilities, oversentimental expressions, extraordinary or out-of-place figures (by traditional aesthetic standards), but they are, by a feminist reading, the inscription of women's attempts to cure their lives of certain prescribed patriarchal conventions. (Buss, *Mapping* 35)

Using these reading strategies, as well as paying attention to the selective use of speech and silence, allows me to read for a female subjectivity in Jupp's memoir.

6.8.1 *A Tripartite Persona*

The first few pages of *Journey of Wonder* introduce the three personae of Jupp: traveller, missionary, and nurse. First, Jupp presents herself as a traveller setting off on an adventure. The date of her leave-taking is an auspicious one: Empire Day—"the birthday of a great and beloved Queen"—but it was also to "one traveller ... a day of sorrow, excitement and the beginning of a great and new adventure" (*Journey of Wonder* 9). Within this mixture of feelings and emotions, Jupp places sorrow first. She refers to

herself impersonally as “one traveller” and speaks of herself in the third person when she explains: “Sorrow at leaving England, the land of her birth, and the excitement at facing the unknown, of being on a ship for the first time” (*Journey of Wonder* 9). The next paragraph announces, without introduction or explanation, how

It was a great and solemn thing for anyone to undertake the name or position of “Missionary”—the responsibility was tremendous—either at home or abroad. A professed missionary’s attitude to God, Life, and Fellow Beings is watched by all those with whom he or she comes in contact, and the success or failure of the Stewardship, entrusted to him or her, lies in those hands. (*Journey of Wonder* 9)

Coming immediately after the first paragraph of introduction, this paragraph is jarring—as if it was extracted from a formal address⁶³—and has a distancing effect. Who is the “Missionary”? (This paragraph was extracted almost verbatim from Jupp’s “Labrador” article/chapter in her black book.) Jupp does not announce that she is the Missionary, but the reader makes the connection that the traveller of the first paragraph is likely the Missionary of the second paragraph. The title of missionary gives Jupp a legitimate status, credibility. The opening three paragraphs contain no first-person pronoun, no “I,” but with the fourth paragraph’s announcement—“My acceptance of the post as nurse” (*Journey of Wonder* 9)—a third persona is delineated, and Jupp, the nurse, enters the narrative. She is a traveller/missionary because she is to be a nurse at the lumber camp settlement at Port Hope Simpson. This traveller/missionary/nurse has “a shy and retiring disposition, and [is] fearful of meeting strangers and going new places”; she is also rootless with “no real home ties” to keep her back (*Journey of Wonder* 9, 10).

With such a self-proclaimed timid nature, Jupp hardly seems missionary material. But Jupp's fears were tempered by "the knowledge, and the conviction that God had called [her] to this task, and that He would always give help, guidance and council [sic], strength and comfort" (*Journey of Wonder* 9-10).

Jupp is a traveller going out into the unknown—Labrador. She had read Grenfell's *Forty Years for Labrador*, but still had no idea "what or where, Labrador was"⁶⁴ (*Journey of Wonder* 11). With this step, Jupp takes a great leap of faith. Her journey, while undertaken on an auspicious day, is connected to an even greater event: "The sky was cloudy, but now and again the stars shone through to give light, comfort and joy to the traveller now as they did on that night so long ago when travellers in a desert looked up and saw a star which would lead them to the King" (*Journey of Wonder* 11). Although centuries have passed, the stars that guided the three wise men to the stable of Jesus's birth are the same, and her journey is part of a continuum. Despite the affirmation of celestial guidance, alone in her cabin on the ship, Jupp's carefully constructed identity slips to reveal a "pretty lonesome and miserable" Jupp who is "fighting the demon of panic ... rising in [her] soul": "Throwing myself on my knees, I prayed in the throbbing darkness for forgiveness, for my doubts and fears, and for my selfishness.... That first night at sea was a nightmare; I could not sleep, because I was scared stiff—of the sea and of the future" (*Journey of Wonder* 11). The diction of "fighting" suggests that Jupp is waging a battle; the "demon of panic" wars with "hymns of the Church, prayers and the comfort of the Bible" (her "strength and stay" across the Atlantic) (*Journey of Wonder*

13). From the beginning, Jupp inscribes herself as a complex figure: eager yet fearful, fearful yet trusting God (this duality is evident throughout). In the first eight chapters, as company nurse for the LDC, Jupp is a lonely woman, miserable, timid, shy, suffering all the vicissitudes that life as a Labrador nurse delivers. But, by the end of the memoir (i.e., part II), a different Jupp embarks on a literal and symbolic pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and has an epiphanic encounter with her Christian antecedents.

6.8.2 *Silences: I*

Before sailing to Labrador Jupp travels to Liverpool with “a friend who was also a tutor in [the Church Missionary Society’s Training House in north London]” (*Journey of Wonder* 10). Who is this friend, and why this brief mention? One of the “silences” in Jupp’s memoir is her relationship with this friend. It has to be filled by reading intertextually with her diary entries (and draft version), where the friend, Miss Holmes, is named as the person who accompanied Jupp across England. Miss Holmes plays a larger part in Jupp’s farewell to England than the memoir reveals, but with the exception of this trace, this is silenced in the published version. In *Journey of Wonder*, she admits, “I must confess that it was a great big ‘wrench’ to leave England, and several times I was hard put to keep back the tears which were so near the surface ...” (*Journey of Wonder* 10). The word “wrench,” used often in Jupp’s memoir and in her letters, suggests violent twisting, and encodes moments when Jupp is unable to voice the pain or depth of emotion she is feeling. Jupp constructs the identity of the brave missionary to cover the pain. In her diary

entry for 24 May 1938—the date of her sailing—the memoir’s constructed identity is replaced by one which allows her to “long” for Miss Holmes, and make a psychic connection with her by writing a letter to her even before the ship sails. This gesture reflects deep feelings, an inability to be separated from the beloved: Miss Holmes, as Jupp reveals, is “much more than a friend.”

... it was so good to have Miss Holmes with me ... marvellous journey across England ... Miss Holmes slept most of the way ... had dinner with Miss H and Norah⁶⁵ ... Miss Holmes and Norah left 9:30 ... [to bed] read [sailing] letters & quiet time, prayed hard for forgiveness for cowardice & fear, not lonely but just longing for her; wrote letter, felt continuance of friendship so strongly, feel it *is* so true of the Abiding presence. Means so much that she came to docks with me; bigger wrench than believed possible, tried to be brave but rather gave myself away; much more than a friend; was such a terrific struggle to go on & not give in at all; was really rather scared of things.

Miss Holmes’s sleeping body accompanied Jupp across England, yet to Jupp it was “so good” to have her there. This diary entry is dominated by references to Miss Holmes, and by an intensity of feelings Jupp cannot articulate. Jupp’s restless night is mitigated by a tangible connection to Miss Holmes: (25 May) “did not sleep much but read & prayed & tried to believe & not be afraid; read Miss H bedtime letter & sailing letters.” Miss Holmes occupies Jupp’s thoughts, and on the second night at sea she dreams of her: (26 May) “could not sleep ... dreamt of Miss Holmes.”

Jupp’s diary entry of 16 June is the last mention of Miss Holmes. Jupp, who is now in Port Hope Simpson, writes: “letter from M.H. [Miss Holmes?] ... great joy to hear from home; do you ever regret sending a letter; just a moment of weakness, perhaps a

realisation of something—that she does care for me, thank God for her; ... longings at time to have place of [my] own; perhaps someday.” This entry suggests that Jupp has sent a letter to Miss Holmes. By using the second-person pronoun, Jupp includes the reader in shared experience—shared regret? The reader might share the thought but not the details. Whatever Jupp had written was so private that she omits it. As an orphan, then a ward of the convent, as a maid and student in the missionary school, Jupp never had a room of her own, or any home. The fact that she longed for a place of her own is significant. Why this particular moment? How does this connect with Miss Holmes?

It is not clear exactly where Miss Holmes belonged in Jupp’s life, if she was an old friend or a recent relationship. The diary entries for 24, 25, 26 May reveal an intense emotional attachment. According to Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, some nineteenth-century women assumed “an emotional centrality in one another’s lives. In their diaries and letters they wrote of the joy and contentment they felt in one another’s company, their sense of isolation and despair when apart” (63). This is not just specific to nineteenth-century women. At Port Hope Simpson, Jupp tried to form a close emotional tie with the (British) school teacher, Miss Brew, but this relationship (the only one in the memoir), ended in disaster. Textually, the Port Hope Simpson portion of part I is coloured by this tormented relationship. On arriving at Port Hope Simpson, Jupp was met by “the English-born lady Teacher of the Settlement; I had heard about her in St. John’s” (*Journey of Wonder* 23). In her narrative, the teacher remains nameless and is known only by her profession. But, as with Miss Holmes, Miss Brew’s name is used in both her diary entries and manuscript

draft, where Jupp also records glimpses of her activities with the teacher. From 4 June diary entry we learn that Jupp “met Miss B ... very English, fine person.” Her 17 June entry identifies this female: “Miss Brew true organizer”; 23 June “Talked with Miss Brew.” Jupp and the teacher “build a chicken house in the woods” and take “a tour of visiting in and around Humby’s Cove” (*Journey of Wonder* 26, 27). Jupp, it seems, spent a great deal of time with the teacher: Jupp conducted Physical Training sessions at the school, and together they formed a Guide Company and organized games in the Community Hall for the boys and girls (*Journey of Wonder* 43). What seemed to be the blossoming of a close friendship between these two English women, deteriorated into a battle of philosophies, a clash of personalities, and eventual dissension along religious lines. As Jupp often pointed out in her letters to Seabrook when the question of an additional person to alleviate the loneliness of nursing station life was raised, incompatibility is worse than loneliness.

6.8.3 *The Loneliness of Port Hope Simpson*

Jupp’s diary entries are silenced, and her memoir details about the nature of her conflict with Miss Brew suggest that this was a meaningful relationship for Jupp, and its ending affected her greatly. Jupp’s “relations with the Teacher in that first and only winter ... spent with her became more and more strained.” She wrote:

I am, by nature, very quiet and reserved, and inclined to keep my thoughts and opinions to myself. Unlike her, I could not talk about religion with the enthusiasm and effusiveness she displayed, although I honestly think I felt

and thought as deeply as she did. I always remember the disappointment and surprise on her face when she asked me what I thought about the "Second Coming" [a tenet of Pentecostalism] and I answered that I did not know, as I had not thought a great deal about it. Once I was asked to give an address at one of the Services on Sunday; at times I helped in the Sunday School. From time to time we discussed questions of Religion, but neither of us could agree as we both had different ideas and points of view, but we should have been able to see each others' point of view.... (*Journey of Wonder* 43)

Jupp and Miss Brew are both strong, intense women. Religion was not the only cause of disagreement. Jupp, it seems, displaced her unexpressed emotions and affections onto animals.

Two things led up to a final break between us. I had a kitten given to me, and it was a great pet and companion. Maybe I lavished more affection on that cat than I should have done; also I still had the puppy with the broken legs. The teacher tried to persuade to me to make away with them both, but I could not force myself to do it; her reasons were understandable in that she felt that I was not showing enough care and affection for the people and also she did not approve of animals in the house. (*Journey of Wonder* 43)

Is the "people" of the last sentence of the quotation a reference to the teacher? Jupp concedes that the teacher is right (the reference is not clear: animals or religion?): "I knew that she was right, and yet, I was terribly lonely. I had not grown to know the people yet, and as yet I had found no companionship or comfort, and these two young animals with their fun and antics helped me a great deal" (*Journey of Wonder* 44). Jupp's loneliness, it seems, is not ameliorated by sharing accommodations with Miss Brew: "I had found no companionship or comfort."

But the final break between them centered on religion:

Finally, at one time we had a discussion about children playing on Sundays, and I voiced the opinion that there was no harm in it. Her reply of, "As we do not seem to agree, we'd better not discuss religious questions," hurt me terribly. These ... were not the only things that caused the rift, and I worried a lot about it all. I knew ... that people would be quick to notice any disagreement between us, as two of the Staff, and especially I knew that the spiritual work would suffer a set-back. Unfortunately, my natural reserve was interpreted by the people, as well as by the Staff, as snobbish pride. I longed to help the Teacher; she had had a hard time, and the office boys often "took a rise out of her," which she felt and resented keenly. Her love and zeal for her Lord and trust in Him for guidance was very real and sincere. (*Journey of Wonder* 44)

Jupp has detailed religion and animals as causative agents, but her comment that "These, of course, were not the only things that caused the rift" (*Journey of Wonder* 44) indicates that Jupp might be silencing the "main" reason. Jupp felt that some of the difficulties she experienced at Port Hope Simpson were gendered problems: "I felt instinctively that I was actively disliked by the Office Staff, and other officials in the Company" (*Journey of Wonder* 74). [The draft version reads: "In regards to the office men I think it was due to the fact that I would have nothing to do with them except in the line of business."] Do the men flirt with her, or proposition her? Was she considered strange? Does her relationship with Miss Brew provoke gossip? In her memoir Jupp sees "religious grounds" as the primary reason for being disliked: "Quite a bit of this was, I believe, on religious grounds; and also they resented the fact that I would have nothing to do with them except in the line of business." The latter—sexual politics—is explained:

... I have nothing against healthy boy and girl friendships, and a real, happy, sacred, marriage is one of the most beautiful sacraments of life; but I was much concerned at the way boys and girls fooled around with each other, and could not behave themselves. However, I was not the only one

to come under fire from the Office boys; the Teacher had a far harder time.
(*Journey of Wonder* 74)

Did the “teasing” of Miss Brew (which she mentions twice) have a sexual subtext? Were religious tensions used to displace the tensions of her relationship with Miss Brew?

With her relationship with the teacher broken, Jupp finds comfort in the spiritual and in nature; her diary, according to her memoir, becomes her surrogate companion and comfort, and confidante. In Jupp’s second year, the teacher returns to England for a holiday; Jupp is offered “a passage on the same ship if [she] wanted to go. In spite of everything, I decided to stay in Labrador” (*Journey of Wonder* 49). What is the “everything”? Is it that she would not go on the same ship as Miss Brew? The juxtaposition of these two sentences is curious, as if one impinged on the other. The teacher, now engaged to be married, does not return. Jupp however, persisted in attempting a connection: “I have not seen her since, nor have I heard from her although I wrote to her several times” (*Journey of Wonder* 49). Jupp’s attempts to reestablish a connection are rejected, and are reminiscent of her feelings of rejection and hurt when Curtis ignored her letters.

Jupp’s second summer was “better than the first ... there were more women around. The cook that year was a woman and often women came aboard [the *Meigle*, where she stayed] to buy at the store” (*Journey of Wonder* 48). Jupp, it is clear, missed the companionship of women. After Miss Brew, “[a] new teacher came ... a Newfoundlander, and also another maid. We all lived in the Staff House on the top floor”

(*Journey of Wonder* 49-50), but offers no details about this new teacher. Although Jupp mentions a teacher at Trout River who shared her boarding house, the gender is never revealed. Jupp does make one friend in Trout River, “a woman with several children. Her husband was in prison serving a sentence for robbery, to which he had been driven by sheer desperation and want. She was a very keen Christian woman” (*Journey of Wonder* 65). Like Jupp this woman is marginalized. Jupp’s memoir is silent on Miss Holmes (diary), but includes details of the problematic relationship with Miss Brew (silent in diary).

Jupp’s memoir reflects her concern for the spiritual welfare of these people. This is also evident in her diary (8 June): “These people need Christ so badly & we must be able to show Him to them. He alone can supply that thing they are lacking.” Jupp, the missionary, is sensitive to the religious tensions of the community. The religious tension that existed between Jupp and the teacher also existed in the community of Port Hope Simpson:

During the winter Services were held by the teacher; and the Pentecostal still gained converts; the tension between the Pentecostal and the [Anglican] Church grew and was fanned by a very small incident in the Fall.

As in all schools, the children were taught little songs about birds and animals ... innocent songs were condemned as [the] work of Satan and sinful, and the teacher as a sinner for teaching them. This undeserved hard opinion caused the Teacher and the Manager some concern and unhappiness; but in their humility and faith they took the trouble, in prayer and discussion, to the one place where one can leave all troubles in confidence—at the feet of God; and it was my privilege to share in that and other prayer meetings.

Unfortunately, I have always found it difficult to express my deep

feelings in words, and so often my prayers were silent. I knew that God understood and heard my prayers.

Sometimes I had the feeling that the others may have thought that I did not take much interest in the prayer meetings, but deep down I was as keenly interested and concerned as the people involved. However, later on, things gradually straightened themselves out; tension relaxed, children returned to school, and in time the incident was forgotten. Unfortunately, friction remained beneath the surface and now and again made itself felt. (*Journey of Wonder* 37)

The religious tensions are between the Anglicans and Pentecostals, the latter being newcomers to Labrador. Pentecostalism, which in its early stages frowned on any frivolity in activities or dress, was introduced to Newfoundland in 1910 by the American Alice Belle Garrigus. Under Garrigus's leadership, the initial introversionist sect had, by the early 1920s, characteristics of a conversionist sect (Pinsent ii). The first Pentecostal assembly in Labrador was established in 1936 at Port Hope Simpson (Janes, *History* 190), just two years prior to Jupp's arrival. Labrador was considered a fertile field for Pentecostal missionary work not far from home—one that was reached by a boat constructed for that purpose (Janes, *Floods* 235). The LDC would not give permission for the Pentecostals to “construct a building on the town side of Blackwater Brook, yet before winter set in they had built a small, rough house with a portable partition which was taken down for church services” (qtd. in Janes, *History* 191). D. Claude Young and another pastor oversaw the pioneer work, and in 1938 Young relocated his family to Port Hope Simpson, remaining there until 1946. Jupp, with the LDC's Manager and the Teacher, attended one Pentecostal service, but left before the service ended. Jupp recalled: “The singing was very bright and cheerful, the extemporary [sic] prayer was very personal and

emotional” (*Journey of Wonder* 36).

Like the Pentecostal newcomers, so Jupp is on the outside in her new life. But a spiritual connection with England sustains her: “In spite of (or perhaps because of) doubts, fears and setbacks, I always had the feeling of being upheld by prayer. Sometimes it puzzled me (and maybe it sounds strange to say that) but I knew that my friends across the water would be thinking and praying for me” (*Journey of Wonder* 39). Despite her own awareness of a spiritual comforter, loneliness is a thread that runs through Jupp’s memoir (part I). Port Hope Simpson was “the beginning of a great adventure, opportunity and service” for Jupp, yet on her first night there she “[f]ight[s] down a sudden desperate feeling of home-sickness” (*Journey of Wonder* 23). With everything new and strange, Jupp experienced dislocation, “a weird sensation—never before had I heard dogs howling, motor boats chugging, nor seen the Northern Lights sweeping across the sky, keeping me spell-bound” (*Journey of Wonder* 23). She is fascinated, yet lonely. The first week on Labrador was “very, very hard, and panic just stared me in the face. Sometimes I felt that I could not face the future at all out there, and be left on my own. I suffered severe loneliness and homesickness; no one came near me and I had little or no medical work to do. My great help and comfort in those days was prayer, and the promise that with God one is never alone ... Through prayer God gave me that grace and strength to fight against the weakness of doubt and fear” (*Journey of Wonder* 25-26). That God is the source of her strength is the missionary’s message. Jupp chides herself for her fears, and poses a series of rhetorical questions to sort out her own duality, ending with an

affirmation of faith:

And so the days went on, getting busier and busier, with less time to feel lonely and growing deeper in the knowledge that one [s]hould not feel lonely at all when one *knows* that He is near. Is it lack of faith? Is it fear? Does it show weakness to feel lonely and homesick? Is it because we rely on ourselves, rather than Him? Sometimes I wondered why I was out there at all; I seemed to be doing nothing at all worth while. Then the thought would come to me—"the future is in the Hands of God, and we live to glorify Him only." So often we fuss and worry without seeing results, when we should leave them to God. (*Journey of Wonder* 26)

In her first weeks in Port Hope Simpson, Jupp battles loneliness and homesickness on a constant basis. Her diary entry for 10 June: "felt terribly lonely & homesick ... difficult to understand people, sometimes feel cannot do it, afraid of being left on my own; but never left alone if He is near & He is all who counts; God give me grace to fight against the weakness; of doubts & fear." On 13 June she writes, "why does one get a sense of loneliness when we *know* that He is near, is it lack of faith? or fear? is it weak to feel lonely? & homesick? ... Oh Father, teach us to pray." [This is copied directly from her diary.] Her intellect tells her that God is near, but she feels bereft; the feeling of loneliness wipes out the rational, and she appeals to God. 14 June: "why am I so fearful, alone and yet not alone." 15 June: "All's well, wonder at time why I'm here; do not seem to be doing anything; yet the future is in the hand of God I came to glorify him." By July, Jupp's diary revealed a happier Jupp: (1 July) "Life very good but busy"; (23 July) "lonely & not enough to do, wish men would not be so inquisitive ... Life is good ... Christians do fail terribly." The arrival of the mail was one comfort from the loneliness: "THE MAIL ... was always an excitement, and much looked for. Only people away from

home can know what it means to see a letter with the old, familiar handwriting and stamp" (*Journey of Wonder* 27).

Later witnessing a tragic fire that took the lives of a father and his daughter, Jupp questions her call:

The tragedies set people thinking—some more deeply than before; some just a passing thought.

Some of us were privileged in education, and understanding things; we had gifts of knowledge from God; and how have we used them? If we had been called suddenly, how would we account for our stewardship? Some of those who died suddenly were not *professed* Christians. How could we, who professed and called ourselves Christians, face our Maker if we had neglected His command? And ignored His Love? Our position was indeed critical; yet we were to serve and love Him better.

I was particularly worried and thoughtful about things. I did not seem to be making headway anywhere; even my relations with real Christian people were strained. I still had the reputation (although undeserved) of being proud and bumptious; and very, very, few people, if any, knew that my silence and reserve was due to a strong inferiority complex, and shyness. I had no wish to "push myself forward," and my position rather carried with it a lonely life. Also I was British, and a chance remark passed by a Newfoundlander to the effect that, "there were too many British people around," cut rather deeply.

I knew that every day I was failing my God, and the job He had given me to do; and yet I longed to do something—to find some outlet for my energies—spiritual as well as medical.

I began to realise, more and more, that some folks in England who had told me that I would not be suitable as a missionary, were right.

That winter I experienced deep despair, and misery, aggravated by another matter ... (*Journey of Wonder* 52-53)

Jupp feels a failure. Whatever this "matter" is that Jupp refers to in the last paragraph is silenced—is it taboo? Again she selectively uses speech and silence to encode the "matter." Is it related to Miss Brew, or a new situation?

6.8.4 *Trout River: Newfoundland Duty*

Jupp is asked to go to Trout River; she does not want to go and is “strongly tempted to resign and go to England; but somehow I felt that, if I did, Hope Simpson would be without a Doctor—and probably a Nurse; so no one would be *any* better off” (*Journey of Wonder* 62). Although Jupp performs her duty, the trip up the Straits is “a nightmare,” not from the rough seas, but the upheaval of her emotions: “I experienced homesickness and despair as I had never done before. I very nearly went on to England from Corner Brook; I felt I could not face the new venture” (*Journey of Wonder* 62). Three days after her arrival in Trout River, Jupp develops “a bad dose of flu, and felt miserable, homesick and generally fed-up” (*Journey of Wonder* 62). It is not clear if the emotional upheaval caused her illness. But, as at Port Hope Simpson, after an adjustment period, Jupp “took a new lease on life” and a “good look” at herself (*Journey of Wonder* 63). She acknowledges that the only way out of her “selfish despondency” is “to work and do something for someone else”; as she explains, “I ‘went right to it’; visiting and working until I felt too tired at night to think” (*Journey of Wonder* 63). Work is Jupp’s panacea for loneliness and depression. Yet when her stay is over, Jupp resists leaving:

So the summer passed, and gradually I found that I had a very soft spot in my heart for Trout River, and wanted to stay there so that I could do some of the things I had set my heart on. However, that was not to be; in the Fall of that year I received a telegram from the Department of Health and Welfare telling me to return to Hope Simpson by the next steamer; I replied saying I felt I would like to stay where I was, but it was met by a very curt order to leave on the next boat. (*Journey of Wonder* 67)

Jupp’s request to stay is a defiant gesture. Retrospectively, she acknowledges fate: “It is

amazing how things work out; if I had had my wish and stayed at Trout River I would have missed many opportunities, and might not have found my true place in life, and this book may never have been written" (*Journey of Wonder* 68). Despite "mixed feelings" about leaving Trout River, Jupp is "thrilled to see the Labrador coastline again" (*Journey of Wonder* 68). (her draft version notes: "In a rush all my reluctance at leaving Nfld. left me & I knew that I was glad to be back on the Labrador"). Her return to Port Hope Simpson was "more lonesome than before, and for some time I had trouble with a twisted knee, which laid me up for some time" (*Journey of Wonder* 71). The occasional happy interlude, such as "many picnics on the ice up the river" (*Journey of Wonder* 71) with the (unnamed) Industrial Worker from the Grenfell Mission, is the only glimpse of happy moments.

6.8.5 *A Happy Interlude: St. Mary's*

The Port Hope Simpson section ends with a retrospective disclaimer—Jupp attempts to straighten the record—and her feelings of marginalization:

Looking back over the years spent at Hope Simpson, with its disappointments and failures, I can see much to be thankful for. Life had been very hard and difficult there, but it brought me neare[r] to God, and to my fellow men and women. I must admit that those years were not altogether happy ones for various reasons, and on leaving Port Hope Simpson, I felt a complete and hopeless failure. (*Journey of Wonder* 73)

Jupp does not detail the reasons for feeling a failure. Her disclaimer is a repetition of how she has been misunderstood:

I took up the post at Hope Simpson in all good faith, and with a firm resolve to do my best for God and His Kingdom. I had been warned of pitfalls—both real and imaginary—and above all of being proud and exerting a superiority complex. As before stated, I am, by nature, reserved and inclined to keep my thoughts and opinions to myself. Apparently, this was interpreted as pride and arrogance, and I was amazed when someone said that always I seemed to be only too ready to say what I think. I do not know whether it was meant as sarcasm or not, but it hurt like a knife. (*Journey of Wonder 73*)

Jupp carefully explains: told that she “was not friendly enough,” that she “should visit the people more—socially as well as medically,” she “put [her] fears and reserve in [her] pocket and did visit quite often; then [she] was told that the people did not like [her] visiting so often” (*Journey of Wonder 73*). This is a no-win situation, and her efforts to integrate backfire: “I was pretty miserable those days, and after much prayer and thought, I decided not to make an obvious effort to be less shy and reserved, and I felt it would come naturally if I did not worry so much about my position” (*Journey of Wonder 73-74*).

Jupp began at Port Hope Simpson with

some hard and fast ideas about religion and its application in daily life. Life on Labrador nearly destroyed any idea I ever had, and my outlook and theories changed rapidly; they had to, and I did not like it at all. All of us find that in the difficulties and hardships of life, something or someone turns up to give us a helping hand, and so it was with me. Two things helped to keep my sanity those days. One was the steadily growing conviction that one *cannot* stand alone when one is doing a job He has called one to do. I had tried to stand alone and work on my own, and with my own strength. Consequently I got lonely, dispirited, and discouraged. Gradually I came to see that God never meant one to walk alone. In times of great stress and desperation I found more and more strength in Him and in His Love. (*Journey of Wonder 75*)

The company manager gives “Christian help and friendship,” and the occasional prayer

meeting through which she found “solace and comfort,” and the realization that “spiritual things were of more value than temporal things” (*Journey of Wonder* 75). [Draft version: “So looking back over those years I saw nothing but failure to God & my Fellow-men & it was with a heavy heart that I set out for St. Mary’s. And yet, in spite of the times of trouble I was happy on the Labrador; I loved the country & its people & the life.”]

In the beginning Jupp is far from happy at St. Mary’s. She had hoped to take over the station when Dr. Hosmer retired, but disappointment comes in the form of a message asking her to go to Cartwright to replace the nurse there.⁶⁶ When confronted with this new disappointment and upheaval, Jupp responds that during this short time at St. Mary’s she was “restless and uncertain ... just drifting from place to place without doing anything worthwhile, and life seemed just one failure after another. I was very tempted at times to drop everything and go home to England” (*Journey of Wonder* 85-86). This seems to be Jupp’s defense mechanism when she is confronted with change⁶⁷ (Jupp makes inquiries about sailing but a potential lengthy wait for a passage dissuades her):

And yet, for some reason which at that time I could not see, I felt I ought to stay in Labrador. I went through great mental stress at that time; and it was only the Power and Love of God which made me keep my head and my sanity. There was no one with whom I could talk things over, and I felt absolutely and entirely alone in the world. (*Journey of Wonder* 86)

Frustrated with having her plans stymied, Jupp starts out for “this new adventure” of Cartwright in “a bad frame of mind”: “I really did not want to go; I had some misgivings about Cartwright although I did not know anything about it ...” (*Journey of Wonder* 87). The whole of one winter at Cartwright occupies one page in Jupp’s memoir.

I will not say much about that winter in Cartwright. It was a nightmare from beginning to end. Everything went wrong. It would be very unfair to give one side of the picture, but I will say that too many sensitive people were living together that winter, and it was like living on the edge of a volcano all the time.

While at Cartwright I had the misfortune to develop appendicitis, and was operated on.

The weather at Cartwright was very stormy; at times the snow was so thick that one could not see any further than the window itself.

As was natural, my thoughts often turned to the question as to what I was going to do when my short time at Cartwright was over. I had no plans at all, but still had an idea of going home.

Straight out of the blue came an offer to me to go as Nurse to Nain, in Northern Labrador, where the Newfoundland Government was planning to open a Nursing Station. I got into contact with the Government about it, but had a reply that the scheme had not yet got to the stage of appointing a Nurse; so that door was closed for the time being.

The winter dragged itself to a close, and in the spring of 1943, I had a message from Dr. Curtis, Chief of the Mission, asking me if I would take over the charge of St. Mary's River Station for the summer. I accepted this with alacrity, and during the first week of June ... I left Cartwright on the Grenfell Hospital boat [...]

When I got to St. Anthony, and after I had signed a contract with the Grenfell Mission, I received a message from the Government ordering me to Nain to take over the Station there. I regretfully informed them that I already signed a contract with the Mission, and could not go. Now I am glad that I did so. (*Journey of Wonder* 88-89)

A different Jupp emerges in this second St. Mary's portion. It is devoid of the plaintive comments about loneliness and threats of resigning that pervade the earlier Port Hope Simpson and Trout River portions. Jupp announces how "life on Labrador can be very lonely if one let oneself get into that state," adding, "Personally, I never felt lonely, mainly because I always found too much to do. Among my hobbies, one was weaving. I had two looms, one table machine, and one foot machine ... I read a great many books ... then there was philately and stool making. besides such necessary things as letter writing

and sewing; all this in the evenings when work was finished for a while” (*Journey of Wonder* 103). Coming after 100 pages saturated with loneliness the announcement of never feeling lonely is jarringly contradictory. This contradiction, however, alerts the reader to encoding.

6.9 *A Journey of Wonder: Part II*

From the first page of the memoir, Jupp constructs her identity as a traveller; part I, which opened with her departure from England not her arrival in Newfoundland, begins with a journey across England (then a journey across the Atlantic). Although the title of Jupp’s memoir *A Journey of Wonder* appropriates the journey motif, the reference is vague. Which journey is *the* journey of wonder? Is it a physical and/or spiritual journey? After Jupp has completed her world trip, another more important journey—a pilgrimage to the Holy Land—ends the memoir. The eight chapters of part II focus first on Jupp’s round-the-world trip (1958/59), then on a separate trip (1959) to the Holy Land. It is written in a different style than part I—it is an impersonal account, devoid of any traces of Labrador (except as a starting point). Although Jupp had announced in part I that she had “always been of a shy and retiring disposition, and fearful of meeting strangers and going new places” (*Journey of Wonder* 9), here she embarks on a world trip, alone.

My first impression is that it is a mistake to come on a trip like this alone. One needs someone to share things with; there seems so much to talk about, and so many impressions to exchange, but seeing there is no one here, I would like to share what I can with you who read this. (*Journey of Wonder* 147)

Jupp, the confident world traveller, not the timid, introverted social misfit of Curtis's account, has left Labrador far behind, and she shares her trip, in a detached reportorial voice, with her reader in the form of letters. This Jupp is a social being, enjoying being on her own, absorbed in the new experience of her trip—the trip accords independence and reveals a strong woman who acts on her desires.

Although these were the only trips that Jupp wrote about, they are the precursors to many trips—she later took a second trip to the Holy Land (1963), to Mexico (1969), to see the Passion play (1970), and to Labrador (1979) after her retirement to England. Was Jupp just “restless” (Paddon 108), and/or did travelling accord empowerment? Why did she write about her trip? Indira Ghose argues that the very act of travel “constituted a form of gender power for women,” that “[b]y entering the public world of travel, women transgressed gender norms that relegated them to the home. In addition, their autobiographical writings gave them further access to the public sphere and helped them shape an autonomous female identity” (12). Jupp's ‘letters,’ a “private, conventionally feminine sub-genre,” established “a close bond” with the readers through “its more direct form of address” (Ghose 75). Whether Jupp intended these letters for a specific audience is unclear.⁶⁸ She creates an intimacy with her reader by such phrases as “I almost forgot to mention,” as if she is talking to an eager listener.⁶⁹ By the time Jupp embarked on her 1958/59 journeys she had already written a manuscript version (cf. Curtis's 24 June 1952 letter to Seabrook, discussed in the next section) of the story of “her life and work,” stories for Grenfell Mission propaganda, articles, tales and reports for *ADSF*, as well as

her diary writing. Jupp considered herself a writer. As she informed Thomas just before her Palestine trip (and after receiving news from Curtis of Paddon's decree to be rid of her): "I have decided to leave the coast altogether next year, or before, if it seems better so. It took me a long time to come to that decision, but I think it would be better. I think I could get some sort of job at home, and I would like to take up writing, and earn a little that way" (29 May 1959).⁷⁰ Was her Palestine travelogue notes for a future article?

As seen in part I, as a nurse/missionary and as a traveller/writer, Jupp rebelled "against the constraints of gender norms." According to Ghose, "[w]riting accounts of their experiences is a form of public utterance that is premised on an autonomous and articulate narrative persona ... [and] constitutes a form of gender empowerment" (136).

Women's autobiographical writings

... provide a site for the production of a gendered form of subjectivity and identity. These writings enable women to produce a mythology of self as independent and in control.... Like other forms of autobiographical writing, travel writing produces a public self that transgresses the ideology of domesticity. But travel writing provides women with a twofold access to the public sphere: by giving women a public voice *and* by locating them in that highly public sphere, the world of travel.... by the very act of travel (as well as by writing about their travels) they implicitly reject gender norms. (Ghose 136)

Travelling and writing about her travel give Jupp a public identity (writer). According to Mary Suzanne Schriber, "Women's travel writing often offers personas who, in the act of freeing themselves physically from geographical constraints, free themselves from less tangible ideological boundaries hemming them in" (8). By writing, Jupp steps outside Grenfell discourse. Just as she had entered a male domain when she made forays into

politics, so too with travel: “Historically, men were the adventurers into foreign lands. Women travelers, particularly when they went abroad at their own behest and independently rather than ‘accidentally,’ made incursions into male territory and male prerogatives as they departed from their own. Women’s travel threatened the separation of spheres and the differences between the sexes” (Schriber 27).

The first chapter of part II has the same title as the memoir. Jupp begins her narrative in medias res, after she has achieved spatial (and psychic?) distance from Labrador. Jupp has lost track of time: she is outside time, in a temporal and spatial dream-like dimension.

Having completed the first lap of my journey around the world, I think it might be a good idea to tell you something of the trip from Nain, Labrador, to New York. [...]

I seem to have lost track of time, but I think I left Nain on September 14th, sometime around then anyway ... (*Journey of Wonder* 147)

Jupp’s reader is her surrogate companion as well as the recipient of her letters. Yet very little of her personal reactions and emotions are contained in her letters. All personal feelings are jettisoned—there are no complaints of the loneliness, pain, anguish, or fear that permeated part I. Part II is an impersonal travelogue, filled with a catalogue of Jupp’s observations: the sights, buildings, architecture, flora, fauna, statistics (of a kind from a tourist brochure), snippets of history, and colorful anecdotes. Jupp was, according to Schriber’s definition, following standard travel accounts of men and women, which “provide predictable itineraries, descriptions of modes of transportation, conventional responses to sacralized sites and monuments ... expatiations on religion and politics,

picturesque descriptions of landscapes, and accounts of the manners and habits of other peoples” (4). What pose did Jupp strike as a traveller? Schriber notes that

First transforming themselves into “womanly” travelers as defined by conduct books, women perform in womanly fashion on the stage of the world. They then transform the persona of traveler into the personas of travel writers.... women travelers strike a pose and construct a self for public consumption. Sometimes they introduce their gender into the text directly ... sometimes they hide it in fissures in the text ... Whoever they were and wherever they traveled, women performed their gender, drawing their long skirts ... through their texts as they drew them through the world. (6-7)

But it is her trip to the Holy Land (Palestine) which appears to be the real journey of wonder. Jupp’s round-the-world trip ended where it began, in New York, from where she took a convoluted route (New York-Boston-Stephenville-Gander-St. John’s-Gander-Prestwick) to England: “Having made up my mind to go to Palestine, the next thing was to get there” (*Journey of Wonder* 211). Jupp had attempted to see the Holy Land while she was in Egypt on her world tour but the borders were closed. This time she flew from London, using “some money ... earned by little ‘jobs’ on the ship on the world tour” (Jupp to Seabrook, 27 February 1959): “And so I started off for the Holy Land; the *Jerusalem that is set upon a hill*” (*Journey of Wonder* 210). This trip probably occurred in April or May 1959.

The last chapter of *Journey of Wonder* is thirty-seven pages long, longer than either of the other chapters. It is not dated or addressed to an absent reader. Jupp is caught up in the wonder of the Bible. Jupp is exuberant at seeing a landscape and a society that mirrors the iconography of her religious life. There is a sense of connection between the

past and the present as proof of the literal meaning of Scriptures. An “awe-inspiring” experience awaits Jupp in Palestine: “The rough, broken road was steep, but the view from the Mount [of Olives], and the peace up there was well worth any climb. We all sat on the side of the hill overlooking Jerusalem, quite close to the spot where Christ went over the city” (*Journey of Wonder* 218). At a Communion Service in the hotel chapel—their first in the Holy Land—Jupp has a mystical experience: “something happened which none of us could explain, but which we all saw and felt. It seemed so much a part of our Pilgrimage. As the wine was being dedicated, just at the identical second of the words ‘—*In remembrance of Me*—’ a bright light filled the Chapel and we felt a wonderful peace and restfulness” (*Journey of Wonder* 224). Jupp’s two fire experiences (Port Hope Simpson and St. Mary’s) were accompanied by an awareness of a divine presence. This experience engages her visual and tactile senses. Just as the star of Bethlehem was invoked in the first page of part I, so here there is that same sense of a timeless continuum: “It was wonderful to be there on the shore, and on the Lake where fish were jumping up and down in its clear blue waters, and to know that Christ Himself walked on these waters, and sailed in one of these typical boats, and taught the people from a small boat. Across the lake was the spot where the swine rushed down to the water’s edge ... At the place where Jesus waited for the Disciples ...” (*Journey of Wonder* 245). Steeped in the Bible, each spot Jupp visited in the Holy Land had a significance because of its Biblical antecedent.

Jupp ends her memoir with a view of the Holy Land: “Our last view, on looking

back at the Holy Land, and the Eternal city—the City that is set on a hill—was almost at sunset, and I felt that nothing mattered really; the truth of the Gospel cannot be shaken and ‘*God’s in His Heaven, and all’s right with the world*’ (248). This is the basis of Jupp—her spiritual faith. It is her strength, her *raison d’être*, despite the vicissitudes of her life. The phrase “nothing mattered really” has greater significance when placed in context against the events being waged regarding Jupp’s career while she is in the Holy Land (next section). Her life has had another upheaval, but it is a silence in her travelogue.

Is part II Jupp’s declaration of independence, an independence not reflected in her own life as a Grenfell nurse? Does it replace something in the first manuscript that Curtis read? Does it displace the painful experience of 1952? If Jupp had extended the time-line of her memoir she would have had to deal with 1952 (and 1959) and write them in. The patriarchal language permitted her no words to write about them. The result is silence.

6.10 Silences: II

Just as Jupp’s world was shattered in 1951 with the post-interview fallout, so in 1959, a similar fate awaited Jupp, this time with Paddon as the agent: Paddon wanted Jupp out of Nain, while Curtis was an ally and championed her cause. The upheavals of this new situation occur between Jupp’s world trip and the Palestine trip. Curtis (now Chairman of the Board of Directors) had decided that in “view of the differences of opinion” between Jupp and Paddon that it would be better for Jupp not to return to Nain, and writes to Jupp in England: “You have been a long-time experienced faithful and

conscientious worker with the Grenfell Mission and we want to find a post for you on the Mission" (Curtis to Jupp, 25 February 1959).⁷¹ This time Curtis "came up to scratch," and was "nice" to Jupp (Clark's complaints to Seabrook, 9 July 1952). Curtis wrote again 19 March 1959:

I saw Dr. Paddon in New York in November and he told me frankly that he didn't wish you back in Nain. Most of his reasons I thought were not justified ... [as long as Paddon was in charge of Nain "he and the nurse must get along well together"] As you said in one of your letters to me, you and Dr. Paddon did not agree.

It is perfectly evident from his letters and from the conversation I had with him in New York that it would be unwise for you to go back to Nain, much as I personally would like to have you go because I realize the hardships you underwent and the devotion you gave those people there when you lived in most inconvenient quarters. I told ... Dr. Paddon ... that when you were at St. Mary's River you did excellent service and also that you were a pioneer nurse under the most extraordinarily difficult conditions in the early days at [Port] Hope Simpson. I told Dr. Paddon frankly my opinion of you and told him that I would do everything to see that you had a station on this Mission ... (19 March 1959)⁷²

This time, unlike 1952, Curtis acknowledges Jupp's loyalty and devotion; Thomas (now Superintendent on the Coast) also realized Jupp's "value" and the "help" she had given the Mission "for so many years" (Curtis to Jupp, 19 March 1959). As Paddon now had charge of Nain, Curtis and Thomas scrambled to find an alternative placement for Jupp. As an interim measure to defuse the Paddon-Jupp situation, Curtis asked Jupp to go to Mutton Bay then St. Mary's River (both replacement positions), with promises of a permanent position depending on availability. Curtis expected Jupp to follow his orders, and be grateful for a job. This time Jupp considered it "a consolation" that Curtis still wanted her in the Mission (22 March 1959), but she raised the possibility of Port Hope

Simpson: "I found things pretty difficult, but I *would* like to go back there again, and start afresh; I have had a lot more experience since those days, and will be able to handle the situation differently, also I know just about all the people there; one thing I would like to have, however is a decent place to work in this time; I gather, from your letter, that the IGA would be in charge, I hope so anyway, as I am not very keen on working for the Government" (Jupp to Curtis, 23 March 1959). The Jupp of 1952 would not have dared to give Curtis suggestions ("you know he does not take kindly to 'suggestions' from anyone" [Jupp to Seabrook, 26 May 1952]). Seabrook advocates a mixture of passive acquiescence and fatalism (24 March 1959). Hardly a comforting sentiment to Jupp who, as in 1951, was being manipulated by the patriarchal organization.

This time Jupp expressed a need to establish roots. Mutton Bay and St. Mary's were stop-gap situations, and she wanted "to get some-where and settle down for a while, [she was] rather tired of wandering around" (Jupp to Seabrook, 25 March 1959). Jupp told Thomas that "[she had] got rather tired of shifting around, and would rather go somewhere and settle for a while" (29 March 1959).⁷³ Unlike 1951, a more assertive Jupp refused to passively accept orders. Jupp, however, was devastated by Paddon's underhanded attempts at undermining her: their last meeting (pre-cruise) was friendly, and Jupp had left Nain with no premonition of disaster. Now Jupp sensed that Paddon felt that she was "too independent," but, she pointed out, "I made up my mind to learn all I could by myself; and, as you know, in an isolated place, one has to be able to be independent; and one has to learn, and, I suppose, I know too much" (25 March 1959). It

was not Jupp's place to "know too much." If a nurse knew too much, then her opinion was as good as a doctor's, and threatened his authority. But, ultimately, despite her protestations, Jupp had no choice, no voice: "I *will* go to Mutton Bay and Mary's Harbour. I suppose there is not much else I *can* do now; I must add that I do not want to go to either place at all. I'd sooner go direct to Port Hope Simpson" (4 April 1959, Jupp to Seabrook). The discourse spells independence; the reality: no voice. Her life plan for Nain had now been destroyed.

The decision, to not let me return to Nain, is a great disappointment to me. I was fully prepared to give the rest of my life to our Eskimo people, that was why I tried so hard to learn the language, and to get to know and understand them. (Jupp to Thomas, 29 March 1959)⁷⁴

This did not kill Jupp's loyalty, however. She added: "However, wherever I go, I will always do the best I can, and I do not think I can [do] any more than that. I have worked with the Mission for 21 years now, and I would like, as long as I can, to remain with it."⁷⁵

Curtis informed Jupp that it was unwise for her to return to Nain or to talk to Paddon. He agreed that Paddon should have discussed the situation with Jupp before her world tour, yet he expected devotion: "Knowing your very valuable and devoted and excellent service to this Mission for many years, I insisted [to Paddon] that we wanted you to come back to work for us" (1 April 1959). Seabrook, too, targets Jupp's devotion: "you will be happier working in Southern Labrador, where ... there is still a tremendous amount of work to be done. The people are the poorest on the coast and need all the medical care we can give them ..." (6 April 1959). Seabrook's remarks were no doubt

calculated to stir Jupp. In contrast to 1952, both Curtis and Seabrook encouraged Jupp to stay, and a letter from Thomas makes Jupp feel essential: “let me assure you that both Dr. Curtis and I have the highest regard for you and your long service with the Mission. We both will see to it that there will always be a place for you on our staff” (20 April 1959).

Paddon’s treatment of Jupp exposed her powerless position. He wrote to Jupp (2 June 1959) with a litany of excuses why he did not want her: he recommended to Curtis and Thomas that Jupp “take a refresher course in hospital procedure in Great Britain, or Canada, preparatory to returning to Nain”; that she spend six months at St. Anthony hospital for “refresher work” in hospital procedure; that she be “transferred to a smaller station.” Paddon felt “very decidedly” that Jupp’s main concerns were Public Health and Social Services, but his final jab came in the form of using her own strengths against her: because she “liked working alone,” she “would probably be unhappy with a second nurse at Nain, or indeed in Hospital although a very young, junior nurse might work out all right.” The subtext: Paddon wanted a more malleable nurse, and he made many excuses to Jupp to inform her of her undesirability. (Jupp was “very strong willed and very much used to being in complete charge” [18 August 1959].)⁷⁶ His exploitation of her own diction exhibited his lack of concern: “I expect leaving Nain is a wrench for you, but I think that, unless we can do something about Hospital training, we had better leave it as it is.” (A telegram from Paddon to Thomas [16 June 1959] stated that Jupp was leaving “for incompetence.”)⁷⁷

A defeated Jupp wrote to Thomas: “Dr. Paddon does not think much of my

ability.” Jupp, however, speaks her mind: “without wanting to boast in any way—I have worked hard since I have been on the coast, and have done so at Nain. I am interested in Social Welfare—but I think all of us in the Mission are—and I have only had 3½ hours off a week to help with the girls of the community—I do not think that is very much, and even then I have always been on call” (12 June 1959). What was Jupp to think except that “I think it better if I get off the coast as soon as I possibly can ... I cannot live in an atmosphere of unhappiness, and tension for long.”⁷⁸ Jupp explained: “I think you will realise that, after 23 years on the Coast, I do not feel like being moved from one place to another just for a month and three months and so on. I feel that, if I work anywhere else, except Labrador, I shall always feel that I am on trial, and I could not stand that, so if I can get—even to Makkovik—I can put my back to it, and try to prove that I *can* do something, and regain some of my self confidence; at the moment I have got rather an inferiority complex” (Jupp to Seabrook, 29 June 1959). Is she beginning to rant like Diack?

In addition to the stop-gap proposals of Mutton Bay and St. Mary’s, Jupp was also asked to fill in at Englee.⁷⁹ Jupp had planned to go to Mutton Bay, but the telegram from Thomas regarding Englee was the limit. Angered with the impermanency of these proposals, Jupp refused to go; she contacted the Welfare Department telling them that she was available for Hebron.⁸⁰ According to Paddon, Jupp was “applying to all possible government sources for employment in Hebron and embarrassing Moravians in their present controversy with government over Hebron” and he felt that Jupp was

“emotionally disturbed [and] likely [to] embarrass IGA [and] should either be employed away from Eskimo area or sent home at once.”⁸¹ The question of Jupp being an embarrassment occurred in 1949 and in 1951. This time the mission is different, but the accusation is the same. (In fact, there are many parallels between this situation and the one Jupp faced in 1952.) Thomas and Peacock agreed that Jupp should go to Hebron as public health nurse, with the Moravian Mission supplying the housing, and the IGA her expenses and salary (with the government reimbursing). If and when Hebron closed, Jupp would be transferred to Makkovik or Hopedale in the same capacity.⁸² Jupp was transferred to Makkovik September 1959, and could finally contemplate some permanency as “Nurse-in-charge at Makkovik, Labrador, for the Newfoundland Government.”⁸³ She told Seabrook: “I will be glad to get settled down, and get my treasures around me, and live again the trip around the world—especially the Holy Land” (Jupp to Seabrook, 25 September 1959). But it was not long before Paddon complained:

I mention this now, not with any recommendations that Dorothy Jupp be reprimanded or made any more resentful, than she already seems to be. I do not think that speaking to her is likely to influence her in the slightest degree, and I am perfectly sure that she is not aware that she leaves anything to be desired in professional acuity or enterprise. This is the sort of thing that has bothered me for some years with her. She is absolutely independent. She does not consider herself part of a medical team and she does not want any help or advice about cases. I am sure she thinks of herself as a Doctor rather than a Nurse, and that she is actively distressed when other doctors come poking into her district. [...]

I will go up and see her—as I have often done before—and I expect her reply will be to stick out her lower lip, scowl and make the usual complaints about the IGA, which she outspokenly dislikes, to various people ... and will not be the least bit chastened or that she will feel that she was in any way wrong. (Paddon to Thomas, 31 October 1959)⁸⁴

The fact that Jupp is “absolutely independent” and does not fit her cultural script is the problem. Paddon is the Doctor and because Jupp “thinks of herself as a Doctor rather than a Nurse” threatens his authority/control. Paddon’s public (memoir) account of Jupp focuses on her St. Mary’s work, and highlights, like Curtis in his 1945 article, her goats and her gardening, and ends with a false note.

The hospital [at St. Mary’s] had since become a nursing station, reigned over by Dorothy Jupp, who quickly became a close friend. An immensely capable woman who could almost have qualified for some surgical work, Dorothy would go on to take charge of the new Nain nursing station when it was built. A wonderfully resourceful woman, she kept a small herd of Toggenburg goats to provide milk—for St. Mary’s River was anything but cow country—and was a tireless gardener ... Being restless, she went to Labrador as company nurse for an abortive cordwood venture. After it collapsed, she applied to the Grenfell association and was accepted; the doctors knew a good thing when they saw it. (Paddon, *Labrador Doctor* 107-08)⁸⁵

Thomas, however, felt that Jupp was doing “an excellent job” at Makkovik, that she was happy there, and that she should be kept at Makkovik as public health nurse (Thomas to Curtis, 17 March 1960).⁸⁶ One of Paddon’s letters to Thomas regarding Makkovik had no complaints about Jupp: “Makkovik is a very busy station and doing a useful and important job, and I think Miss Jupp should have what is necessary to do it safely and well” (Paddon to Thomas, 17 March 1964).⁸⁷ In his “Report on Northern Stations,” Paddon raised the awareness that Jupp was close to retirement age, and “although she has done a splendid job for some 37 years at various stations, I think a younger person with more recent training will be good for Nain.”⁸⁸ Paddon wanted to excise the old faithful worker and bring in new blood.

After five years at Makkovik, Jupp herself wanted a change, and was keen to return to Nain. In 1965, Jupp went to Nain, and remained there until her retirement in 1974. With “her knowledge of Eskimo and of the needs of the people in the area,” Jupp was “admirably suited”⁸⁹ for the post of public health nurse in Nain.

6.11 Leaving Labrador

Jupp terminated her employment with the IGA 31 October 1974, and returned to England. She offered to speak for the Grenfell organization, with the hope that this would help financially. She stayed at the Convent of the Epiphany until she purchased a small bungalow on the cliffs of St. Agnes.⁹⁰ Jupp led a full life with Guides, Choral Society, Parochial Church Council, and Parochial Missionary Society (Jupp to Yates, 22 July 1975). In August 1976, Jupp (then 67 years old) was asked if she would be interested in working at “Churchill Falls Mary’s Harbour now to end October” (telegram from Yates, 20 August 1976). Jupp’s first reaction was to accept, but she decided against it as she had “‘pulled up [her] roots’ fairly recently and settled down,” and “to make a break again—even a short one—might not be good”; Jupp was also aware that she “might be asked to ‘stay on a bit longer’” as “these things have a way of ‘snowballing’” (Jupp to Yates, 22 August 1975). In 1974 Jupp was given an honorary membership in the Association of Registered Nurses of Newfoundland; this honour was accompanied by “a written acknowledgment of appreciation from the Minister of Health for her services to the people of Labrador down through the years” (*ADSF* January 1975, 19).⁹¹ In light of

Jupp's early career, this is not without its irony. Jupp has finally been awarded some recognition, despite Pottle and Paddon.

Jupp was one of a group representing the Grenfell Association who attended the garden party held 17 July 1980 at Buckingham Palace in honour of H.M. Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, on the occasion of her eightieth birthday, and Jupp had the honour of being presented to Her Majesty (*ADSF* October 1980, 21). Jupp died 7 July 1986, and was buried in St. Agnes. Her obituary, which appeared in *Along the Coast*, was sketchy:

In 1938, Miss Jupp came to Labrador as a District Nurse. Through the years, she worked in Nain, Hopedale, Port Hope Simpson and Mary's Harbour. She retired in 1974 after 35 years of service along the coast. In recognition of her "notable and selfless service in the field of nursing," the Association of Registered Nurses of Newfoundland made her an honorary member.

Miss Jupp lived her retirement years in Cornwall, England. She maintained her interest in Grenfell and the people of the North. In recent months, she was not well and was much comforted by her Grenfell friends and associates ... ("Long-time" 5)

A commemorative plaque which hangs in the Nain nursing station (date unknown) reads:

Dorothy Jupp joined the International Grenfell Association in 1940 and worked as the Nurse in Mary's Harbour, Port Hope Simpson, Makkovik and Nain until 1974 when she retired. For most of her career she was the only medically trained person available to the people she served. A quiet good-natured person, Dorothy was committed to her work and service in the field of nursing and steadfast in her Christian belief.

For more than 30 years, Dorothy Jupp gave self-less service to nursing and to the people of Labrador. She died in Cornwall, England on July 7, 1986.⁹²

But a tribute from Paulus Maggo, one of the elders of Nain—the people to whom Jupp

had dedicated her life—gives a more poignant and realistic glimpse of Jupp-the-nurse-for-the-people, not the carefully constructed legend maintained by the Grenfell discourse:

In former days before nursing stations were built, the first nurse we ever had was Miss Jupp. She was a very kind and helpful person. She took care of expectant mothers, people who were sick or injured, bedridden patients, and anyone who could not get around freely. She had a great personality and was understanding. She didn't speak Inuktitut but she could understand some words. She was greatly missed after she left because she was the first and very best nurse we ever had. Those who came after her were good, too, but none of them could match her greatness.

I can say that Miss Jupp was as great as I say she was because when my wife was sick, Miss Jupp always came to care for her whether it was at any time in the day or night, or through deep drifting snow on foot in the middle of the winter. She came without hesitation and I know that well from fact. She treated her job with feeling, care, kindness, and dedication. I miss her and think of her often. She always seemed happy, although I'm sure she must have had some personal sorrows, too, but she didn't show it. She treated all of us with care, kindness, and happiness. Miss Jupp was a great, capable lady. (Maggo 128-29)

Nancy K. Miller advises that an appropriate strategy for revealing female subjectivity, given that women must veil their revelations because of “a culturally devalued femininity,” is the “*double reading*” of a writer’s autobiography with her other writings, a reading that “would provide a more sensitive measure for deciphering a female self” (*Subject to Change* 59). What Helen Buss calls “contextual reading”—“the research of the biographer, other documents related to the autobiographer’s life, the records of women in similar circumstances, as well as the information gleaned from unpublished correspondence”—provides a similar intertextual reading for female subjectivity (*Mapping* 35). As I tear at the web of Jupp’s writing, I “discover in the representations of writing itself the marks of the grossly material, the sometimes brutal traces of the culture

of gender; the inscriptions of its political structures” (Nancy K. Miller, *Subject to Change* 84). Such a contextual reading, as Buss advocates, of Jupp’s memoir reveals the gender inequalities of the patriarchal Grenfell Mission, or what Perry has labelled, the gap between Grenfell discourse and reality. It is in this gap that Jupp breaks silence. Jupp transgresses gender norms in her life, and writing and publishing her memoir, which subverts the myth of the Grenfell nurse, is a rebellious act. Jupp’s challenge of the gender ideologies of the patriarchal-approved “cultural script” (S. Smith 47) reveals the falsity of the carefully constructed legend of her. The central idea of Adrienne Rich’s poem, “Cartographies of Silence,” quoted in part in chapter 1, is particularly applicable in reading Jupp’s memoir: silence must not be confused with absence.

Notes

1. The basis of information about Jupp comes from the correspondence in her personnel file (PANL, MG 63, Dorothy Jupp personnel file). The correspondence begins in September 1947, five years after Jupp started work with the Grenfell Mission, and all quotations from this file are quoted by sender and date. I also quote from correspondence in the Gordon Thomas Collection, PANL, MG 372; these sources are cited in full.
2. Hereafter referred to as *Journey of Wonder*.
3. "I have not finished reading the ms. yet ..." (Seabrook to Jupp, 19 May 1959). There is no official documentation of any editorial advice. It is not clear if the manuscript that Seabrook was reading in 1959 included the 1958 trip, or if it was the same version of the manuscript that Curtis had read.
4. *ADSF* (July 1972): 7-10. Clegg later became President of the Association of Registered Nurses.
5. Jupp sent Yates a copy of her book, and gave her other copies which Yates distributed (Shirley Yates, letter to author, 26 August 1998).
6. PANL, MG 63, Business Office, Box 8, File: Miscellaneous Reports. Beeckman J. Delatour, "Report on St. Mary's River," November 1945.
7. See *Daily News* and *Evening Telegram* 21, 23 July 1945.
8. A similar article with basically the same text, entitled "Ordeal by Fire," appeared in *Newfoundland Quarterly* 59.4 (1960): 43-44.
9. PANL, MG 63, Business Office, Box 8, File: Miscellaneous Reports, Dr. Robert Miller to Dr. Curtis, 25 July 1945.
10. *ADSF* (October 1956): 80-82. A handwritten draft of this article (entitled "Newfoundland Epic") is in the Sir Wilfred Thomason Grenfell Historical Society Archives (GHSA), Dorothy Jupp Collection (DJC).
11. The "Black Book" manuscript version (GHSA, DJC) does not have this account.
12. This is similar to an earlier fire at Port Hope Simpson (3 February 1940), when the owner's son and his daughter were victims of a fire at the doctor's bungalow where they were staying: "By a strange miracle (or was it?), and coincidence, the Grenfell Doctor [Dr. Hosmer] and Dentist [Dr. Arkle] had arrived in the Settlement the day before, being on their medical and dental trips to the coast" (*Journey of Wonder* 51), and were staying

in the staff house. Jupp and Dr. Hosmer (female) watched the men fighting the fire. The dentist (male) joined the men fighting the fire.

13. At the 1952 Annual Reunion (London), Jupp was introduced as “one of the oldest helpers of the Mission on the Coast,” where she is “in charge of St. Mary’s River, where she inspired all those around her with her courage, resolution and skill, especially during the two [?] forest fires that had occurred at St. Mary’s River” (*ADSF* [July 1952]: 58-59). What about her part in arresting the famine in 1949?

Seabrook informed Barbara Nelson, the new Director of Nursing Services (13 December 1965) that “You will see from the October Magazine [*ADSF*] 1945, the splendid service [Jupp] gave during the appalling fire at Mary’s Harbour, and the fine tribute paid to her by Dr. Robert Millar [sic]” (PANL, MG 63, Dorothy Jupp personnel file). Jupp and the fire have become fused twenty years after the fire!

The report of the 1948 Reunion plays up a different incident, another which seemed to be part of the Jupp legend. In her own speech to the gathering, Jupp, after giving a vivid description of her life at St. Mary’s told of her first meeting with Grenfell in 1939; “it was for only a few minutes in the little cabin that served as a hospital on the *Maraval*,” how “Sir Wilfred made her feel she was just the one person he wanted to see; as the boat left he called to her ‘Maybe one day we shall see you in the Mission.’” In her memoir, this meeting with Grenfell is of no particular significance: “In those days [1942] I did not know much about the Mission, although I had met, heard, read about and admired Sir Wilfred Grenfell” (*Journey of Wonder* 79).

14. In introducing Jupp at the annual reunion 10 March 1948, Colonel Grenfell reminded the audience of her role in the 1945 fire at St. Mary’s River, and quoted Miller’s published tribute to Jupp. This was repeated in the 1951 Reunion (without the *ADSF* tribute). It had become inscribed in the discourse.

15. This is reiterated by the *Evening Telegram* in 1952: Jupp “was chiefly responsible for securing planes and the services of the icebreaker *Sorel* [sic] to take emergency supplies to the ice-beleagured coast” (“Moravian Report” 1).

16. Jupp is referring to the Rangers. The Ranger Force were responsible for the issuance of relief (able-bodied and sick), the reporting of relief conditions, reporting on health conditions, etc. (under the Department of Health and Welfare). See Harold Horwood, *A History of the Newfoundland Ranger Force* (St. John’s: Breakwater, 1986), 173-174. According to the *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador*, “[m]odelled after the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Ranger Force also provided many other government services. From 1935 some 204 men served in detachments throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. Following Confederation, the Newfoundland Ranger Force was disbanded and most of the Rangers joined the R.C.M.P.” (“Ranger Force, Newfoundland”).

17. The Doyle Radio News went on the air 18 November 1932, and ran daily for thirty-four years. It was “the longest aired radio programme in Canada, and the most popular in Newfoundland.” The format for the programme included “news and public service announcements” (*Doyle News*).

18. The next day (8 April 1949), a notice on the front page of the *Evening Telegram* (“Labrador Food Shortage”) pointed its readers to page 3, where the headlines read: “Labrador Food Shortage Weeks Old / Shortage Due to Small Supplies Being Brought in Last Autumn / Battle Harbour Centre of Starvation-Threatened Area, Northern Points Have Plenty of Food / Drop in Prices Anticipated on Union Caused Hold-Off in Buying —Previous Reports of Shortages Ignored.”

19. See 9-12 April 1949 *Evening Telegram*; see also 8-12 April 1949 *Daily News*. Following the week-long coverage of the famine, attention shifts to another part of Labrador: see *Daily News* 13 April 1949: 3 (“Influenza Epidemic Follows Famine in Labrador / Forty-Seven Cases In Hebron Reports’s Missionary’s Wife”); 14 April 1949: 3 (“Sixty-Two Cases Have Now Been Diagnosed on Labrador”); 16 April 1949: 1 (“Appalling Living Conditions Discovered in Labrador / Half of Hebron Is Now Suffering From Influenza”). It is interesting that the wife of the Moravian missionary [Marjorie Grubb] wired the Premier with the report of influenza. Grubb appears to be following Jupp’s lead in appealing to the premier. Such requests also make the premier look good.

20. As for Jupp’s role in this event, Thomas notes in *From Sled to Satellite* that “Dorothy Jupp, our nurse at St. Mary’s Harbour, sent an urgent appeal to Joey Smallwood stating that people would starve if authorities did not act soon” (48).

This was my first direct contact with the new premier, and it came at a good time for both of us. He had barely scraped into office, campaigning on what Confederation could do to relieve desperate conditions in the outports. Now he had a drama worthy of his talent for media grandstanding, and he played it to the hilt. An editorial from the *Ottawa Evening Journal* [reprinted in Thomas’s memoir], ten days after Confederation, gives the flavour of the attention this incident drew. (*From Sled to Satellite* 49)

21. What prompted Clark’s letter? The “Canadian problem” had its genesis with Curtis; according to Seabrook, at the beginning of 1950, Curtis, “in one of his rather anti-British moods,” wrote to Sir Henry Richards “on the lines that now Canada had taken over the people would be, and in fact were, well off and that there did not appear to be the same need for the Mission.” According to Curtis, “Canada was pouring money into the

country.” If this was the case, a policy change would be needed. As Curtis’s statement on the ‘wealth’ of the people in the coast did not tally with the reports the Association (London) received from nurses and workers on the coast, they wrote to Forsyth, Paddon and Jupp for “their confidential opinions” (Seabrook to Fyfe, 5 October 1950). Betty Fyfe was the secretary of the Scotland branch of the Grenfell Association (PANL, MG 63, Business Office, Box 8, File: Miss Betty Fyfe Correspondence 1950/5).

22. PANL, MG 63, Dorothy Jupp personnel file, Jupp to Denley Clark, 10 March 1950.

23. PANL, MG 63, Box 8, File: Mr. Denley Clark FRCS.

24. From “Information and Instructions for Workers.” See n.11 of chapter 3.

25. PANL, MG 63, Lesley Diack personnel file.

26. See *Proceedings of the House of Assembly* 1951, pp. 154-55. The text of Pottle’s address given in the House of Assembly, signed 31 October 1951 and entitled “Statements in the Local Press Regarding Conditions on the Labrador,” is also in PANL, MG 372, Box 1, File: Dr. Thomas - Personal 1949-1953.

27. PANL, MG 372, Box 1, File: Dr. Thomas - Personal 1949-1953, copy of letter from G.I. Pieroway, Welfare Officer, to Department of Public Welfare dated 15 November 1951.

28. In a letter to Seabrook (4 March 1952), Jupp mentioned that she had given twenty-one talks/lectures—ranging from the International Friendship League to King’s College Cambridge (PANL, MG 63 Dorothy Jupp personnel file).

29. “The B.B.C. is broadcasting about Grenfell in another programme called “Pioneers of Medicine”... They are now asking for any papers or records of individual case histories which could be made available to their scriptwriter, as a basis for a short dramatic episode to illustrate the value of the work. The sort of thing they have in mind is the extract from the report by Miss Luther entitled “Work as Medicine” which is included in Grenfell’s autobiography, I ... wondered if you had any material that would be suitable ... you may have some ideas. It seems a pity not to take every advantage we can to make the work known” (Seabrook to Jupp, 24 April 1952).

30. There is no extant script of Jupp’s talk in her personnel file, nor in the BBC Scripts file. Margot Davies, however, noted that “It was very nice to see Miss Dorothy Jupp again. She is here with us in the studio today to tell you about the meeting [reunion], and to send her kind remembrances to Newfoundland, especially to the people of Mary’s Harbour.” Betty Seabrook, also one of the speakers, noted, “we ... have so enjoyed having

Dorothy Jupp with us this winter. She is such a modest person, but we all know what a great work she is doing and how deeply it is appreciated on the Coast.” The image must be maintained for the public (PANL, MG 63, Great Britain and Ireland, Box 10, File: BBC Scripts).

31. PANL, MG 63, Great Britain/Ireland, Box 8, File: Miss Ethel Graham, Correspondence 1949-1952.

32. Curtis’s 24 June 1952 letter to Seabrook referred to a similar incident (possibly the same one): “Last winter I received second-hand information that Miss Jupp had written to some Anglican clergyman in Halifax regarding the spiritual condition of the people in her district.” Had Curtis’s information come from Graham, or vice versa?

33. It seems surprising that the Mission did not insist on an annual medical examination; at the very least, a chest x-ray (as tuberculosis was still very much in evidence). Who was responsible for ensuring that the health of the medical staff was looked after?

34. “As I believe you were appointed more or less on the Coast you seem to have escaped this” (Seabrook to Jupp, 16 April 1952).

35. PANL, MG 63, Box 8, File: Mr. Denley Clark, FRCS.

36. Curtis suspected “some nervous and mental angle from her own letters to him” (Cushman to Seabrook, 24 June 1952), yet he did not answer Jupp’s letters.

37. Seabrook makes an error here: at the most Jupp had spent 10 years at St. Mary’s. Seabrook is conflating Jupp’s Labrador Development Company (Port Hope Simpson), Trout River, and Grenfell experiences. It had been fourteen years since Jupp had first sailed to the coast in 1938. She makes the same error in her letter to Denley Clark (8 July 1952).

38. PANL, MG 63, Box 8, File: Mr. Denley Clark, FRCS.

39. PANL, MG 63, Box 8, File: Mr. Denley Clark, FRCS.

40. The religious question was one that Denley Clark raised in his 21 May 1952 letter to Seabrook: “it does seem that she may be heading for a nervous breakdown.... it may be that her faith needs encouragement [Clark felt that a psychiatrist would most help Jupp] ... People often require a prop of some kind and the religious prop is often very satisfactory—certainly to those who have religion anyway.” Seabrook’s reply (26 May 1952): “I think you are probably right about her faith needing a little support, or stimulation from a fresh angle” (PANL, MG 63, Box 8, File: Mr. Denley Clark, FRCS).

41. "These Moravians: What Do They Teach?" Centre for Newfoundland Studies (CNS), "Moravian Church" file.
42. This letter is copied into Jupp's "black book" (GHSA, DJC).
43. "Most of the work is done in wintertime here, and being a Moravian myself, I like to be around when most of our people are here" (PANL, MG 372, Box 32, File: Nain: 1954-1961, Jupp to Thomas, 10 January 1957).
44. *Periodical Accounts Relating to Moravian Missions* (Nain) 1956.
45. MG 63, Business Office, Box 8, File: Dr. Charles Curtis 1958.
46. This is echoed in Jupp's own letter to "My dear friends" in England, a handwritten draft of which is in GHSA, Dorothy Jupp Collection:

To those who may be used to [a] big Hospital with crowds of nurses and doctors this [3 babies born in one week] may not sound very much but when you take into account that the Nurse here has to be Doctor, Nurse, Housekeeper, Minister, "Boss" of the Settlement and as such has to arrange services, social activities, etc. decorating, look after mail, visit distant settlements, keep the accounts and a thousand other things, three babies constitute an extra strain ... (n.d.)
47. This two-part article outlines the nurse as heroine; the first article is mostly about Dorothy Jupp, and tells the story of one of her difficult trips.
48. From *Woman's Journal* January 5, 1884, p. 6; author's italics.
49. See Linda White, for a discussion of a similar event in the St. John's General Hospital: the battle between Dr. Keegan and Nurse Southcott.
50. In her memoir, *For the Love of Labrador—My Story* (np, [1999]), Acreman notes: "The nurse at St. Mary's Nursing Station, Miss Jupp[,] was trained in midwifery but could not save the baby. The problem was placenta previa. Two years later the same nurse delivered a healthy baby boy for us" (36).
51. Thomas John Barnardo (1845-1905), philanthropist, social reformer, friend of homeless children. Through him thousands of children were brought into the emerging nation of Canada. "Thomas Barnardo proclaimed his unalterable belief that all children have an inalienable birthright to kind treatment, decent surroundings and a good education. He devoted his life to fighting for that right. He aimed high within the confines

of his vision and in so doing, he created an organisation which has made his name synonymous with a great tradition in childcare" (Wagner 314).

52. "I had spent almost twenty years living by the sea"; "The visit to my old home town of Hove, in the south of England" (*Journey of Wonder* 9, 133).

53. This is from a chronology on the back of a typewritten mimeographed page entitled "Dorothy Jupp 1909-1986" (author and compiler unknown) (GHSA, DJC).

54. In his book, Anson notes that in the convent grounds of the Convent of the Epiphany were "two houses, one of which, St Michael's House, was for a period of sixty-four years (1884-1948) a centre for moral welfare work, from which hundreds of girls have been sent out into the world, with renewed hope and strength, to meet the difficulties of their lives" (461). He also notes that "The idea of helping Foreign Missionary work had been in the minds of the founders from the early days" (462).

55. Mrs. P. Allen (letter to author, 1999) provided me with a page of written reminiscences from Jean Orwell, a friend of Jupp's in Jupp's last years, from which this extract is taken.

56. A notation in the chronology reads: "DuBarry Scent Factory, Hove, Brighton 1924-1925 employment." If this is the factory referred to, Jupp would have been 15 not 12.

57. St. Brigid's was a preparatory training centre for girls who required further education and an opportunity to test this vocation for the missionary of the church (from the cover of an annual report of St. Brigid's) (PANL, MG 63, Dorothy Jupp personnel file). The Annual Reports gave news of ex-students.

58. According to the *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador*, this was a "timber export business started in 1934 by J.O. Williams of Cardiff, Wales. Williams secured a loan from the Commission of Government to cut lumber in Labrador for use as pit props in British mines. In the first year of operation 600 people were hired to cut wood at Alexis Bay, St. Michael's Bay and Lewis Bay ... In 1941 the settlement was named Port Hope Simpson ... the company went into liquidation in 1947 and the scaled down operation was divided and taken over by local businessmen" ("Labrador Development Company").

For a personal story see Albert Coish, "The Labrador Development Corporation Port Hope Simpson," *Them Days* (December 1982): 30-37.

59. A letter from H.M. Mosdell, Secretary for Public Health and Welfare (Department of Public Health and Welfare) 25 March 1941, to Jupp, praising her "capable leadership": "Magistrate Russell of Bonne Bay has written informing the Department of the movement

for the provision of a local nursing dispensary at Trout River. It was a great pleasure to learn that this undertaking had aroused so much local interest and support. Please accept our very sincere thanks for your interest and your efforts in this respect. Our people usually respond very well in capable leadership, and this you obviously gave them in the connection mentioned" (GHSA, DJC).

60. Jupp also sent articles to The Medical Missionary Association (London). A letter from editor, H.H.W. Bennett (28 October 1954), thanked Jupp for the articles she sent. "I have selected 'Labrador Epic' about the boy you fetched through the slob ice and I hope to publish that in the December number of *Conquest by Healing* [quarterly magazine]" (GHSA, DJC). I have been unable to trace this magazine.

61. Most of these are short; for example: [8 Sept.] "Back at PHS"; [17 Sept.] "Inoculating children against diphtheria"; [21 Oct.] "First snow."

62. It reads: "Extraordinary thing is life; glorious adventure & opportunities."

63. The version in Jupp's "Black Book" is a little shorter: "It is a great & solemn responsibility for any-one to undertake the position as a Missionary either at home or abroad. A Missionary's attitude to God, Life, & Fellow-men is watched by those with whom he comes in contact."

64. According to Joan Orwell, Jupp "wanted to be a missionary in Africa. She was quite unaware of where Newfoundland was when she accepted the post and happily started on her voyage equipped as she thought for the tropics" (P. Allen, letter to author, 1999).

65. There are no other references to Norah; her identity remains a mystery. Probably a CMS worker?

65. Patricia O'Brien refers to Jupp's "first, unhappy winter with Dr. and Mrs. Spicer at Cartwright while the Forsyths were on leave" (*Grenfell Obsession* 136).

67. When faced with Trout River, Jupp was "strongly tempted to resign" (*Journey of Wonder* 62); at Cartwright she "had an idea of going home" (*Journey of Wonder* 88). This is also evident in her post-interview ambivalence and eventual resignation.

Dr. Chris Rolton relates how one American doctor at North West River (during Rolton's time of 1967-89), who had an "appalling" attitude towards nurses, lodged a written complaint with Paddon about Jupp, "criticizing her medical methods, station management, patient care, etc." This doctor finally got "a severe talking to" from Paddon, and ended up quitting. Jupp, however, heard about the complaint and was "dreadfully upset." She wrote to Rolton, "saying that her life's work was a waste, she was no use to anyone and had better quit before she was fired." Rolton showed Jupp's letter to Paddon,

who “promptly went to Nain to sort things out.” Paddon took with him a letter from Rolton, detailing some of the problems she had had with the American, “hoping it would make her feel less isolated; which I gather it did.” Rolton concludes, “She stayed, the doctor left and we all settled down again” (letter to author, 12 August 1998).

68. One possibility, though inconclusive, is that she wrote them as “round robin letters.” While in Labrador, Jupp wrote “round robin letters”—she sent out seven letters a month to different parts of England. “By arrangement each letter goes to at least 8 people besides the original addressee” (Jupp to Seabrook, 11 December 1948).

The first 3 chapters do not have dates; chapters 22 through 26 have the following: [22] “In the Pacific, November 23, 1958”; [23] “Pusan Korea—December 10, 1958”; [24] “In the South China Seas, Off Vietnam December 18, 1958”; [25] “At Sea, Off the Coast of Saudi Arabia February 13, 1959”; [26] “In the Mediterranean January 30, 1959” [these last two are not chronological; chapter 25 should possibly read January 13, as it came before the Mediterranean in her itinerary].

Seabrook informed Jupp that “we shall all want to hear about your fascinating journey” (12 December 1958), and Jupp “look[ed] forward to telling [Seabrook] about it” (24 December 1958). Was she writing the letters to Seabrook? If so, there is no hint of them in the personnel file. Seabrook was, in 1959, reading Jupp’s manuscript.

69. She ends one chapter with: “So I end this letter as the serials do—to be continued shortly”; “As I said at the beginning of this letter”; “I had to open this letter with an apology for a gap in the letters. I was unfortunate enough to pick up some sort of a virus, and was laid up for three or four days”; “I had intended to write again from Naples, but I was told there was a strict censorship on mail from Egypt” (*Journey of Wonder* 155, 175, 186, 195).

70. PANL, MG 372, Box 32, File: Dorothy Jupp 1959-1961, Jupp to Thomas, 29 May 1952.

71. PANL, MG 372, Box 32, File: Dorothy Jupp 1959-1961.

72. PANL, MG 63, Dorothy Jupp personnel file.

73. PANL, MG 372, Box 32, File: Dorothy Jupp 1959-1961.

74. PANL, MG 372, Box 32, File: Dorothy Jupp 1959-1961.

75. Jupp herself takes some liberties with chronology here, and conflates all her Labrador experiences into one. It had been twenty-one years since Jupp had come out to the Coast (in 1938), but she had not spent those years solely with the Mission. Jupp does not mention her LDC nor her Moravian Mission experiences here.

76. PANL, MG 372, Box 32, File: Dorothy Jupp 1959-1961.
77. PANL, MG 372, Box 32, File: Dorothy Jupp 1959-1961.
78. PANL, MG 372, Box 32, File: Dorothy Jupp 1959-1961.
79. PANL, MG 372, Box 32, File: Dorothy Jupp 1959-1961, telegram from Thomas to Jupp, 20 June 1959.
80. PANL, MG 372, Box 32, File: Dorothy Jupp, 1959-1961, telegram from Dr. Leonard Miller, Deputy Minister of Health, to Thomas, 30 June 1959.
 On the way south Jupp had heard that “the Government’s plan to close Hebron had been shelved for this year, but that the people demanded a nurse and teacher in the face of the fact that the Missionary was leaving; as I had decided to leave the Mission, and had told Dr. Thomas so before I left for Nain [to retrieve her belongings], I wired to St. John’s offering my services if required ...” (Jupp to Seabrook, 29 June 1959).
81. PANL, MG 372, Box 32, File: Dorothy Jupp 1959-1961, telegram from Paddon to Thomas, 30 June 1959.
82. PANL, MG 372, Box 32, File: Dorothy Jupp 1959-1961, Thomas to Rev. William Peacock, Moravian Mission, 11 July 1959.
83. *ADSF* (October 1959): 75.
84. PANL, MG 372, Box 32, File: Dorothy Jupp 1959-1961.
85. See chapter 1, pp. 14-15 for other references to Jupp in Paddon’s *Labrador Doctor*.
86. PANL, MG 372, Box 3, File: Curtis, Dr. Charles 1960. See also chapter 1, p. 14 for Thomas’s references to Jupp in *From Sled to Satellite*.
87. PANL, MG 372, Box 3, File: Makkovik 1960-1965.
88. PANL, MG 63, Box 13, File: IGA Executive Director’s Report to the Board of Directors April 1970.
89. *ADSF* (April 1972): 7-10.
90. Delma Byron, Administrator, Convent of the Epiphany, Truro, Cornwall, letter to author, 11 August 1998, 7 May 1999. The Sisters of the Convent remember Jupp as a serious, private person who spoke very little of her experiences.

91. In 1978 there were ten honorary members. *Association of Registered Nurses News! News! No. 11 (January 1978): 3.*

92. My thanks to Maggie Webb (Nain) who sent me the text of this plaque (email, 21 August 1998).

Chapter 7

Breaking the Silence of Hidden Herstories

On their silence depends the flourishing of an empire. (Leigh Gilmore Autobiographics 53)

*For it is a perennial puzzle why no woman wrote a word of that extraordinary literature when every other man, it seemed, was capable of song or sonnet. What were the conditions in which women lived, I asked myself ... fiction is like a spider's web, attached ever so lightly perhaps, but still attached to life at all four corners. Often the attachment is scarcely perceptible ... But when the web is pulled askew, hooked up at the edge, torn in the middle, one remembers that these webs are not spun in midair by incorporeal creatures, but are the work of suffering human beings and are attached to grossly material things, like health and money and the houses we live in. (Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, 43-44)*

Women's personal narratives, Jeanne Braham declares, cannot be "homogenized, distilled into a unitary, woman-identified iconography. Beyond the commonalities of gender, historic time and place, and the capacity for artistic recollection, these are stories that celebrate diversity" (4). While the writings of Burchill, Banfill, Diack and Jupp cannot be homogenized into "a unitary, woman-identified iconography," these nurses did, however, share the commonality of their exceptional work experiences in their nursing for the patriarchal Grenfell Mission. With the exception of token acknowledgments and occasional praise for these adjuncts to the Great Man and his Mission, these nurse-writers have traditionally been ignored by male writers of Grenfell history. Jill Perry, the first historian to study the significance of Grenfell nurses' contribution, notes that Grenfell nurses themselves considered that their experience was "an adventure worth sharing": only "a handful of Grenfell nurses published their memoirs, and dozens wrote articles for,

or were interviewed in, periodicals and newspapers throughout the British Isles and North America” (Perry 171). As this dissertation demonstrates, a body of heterogeneous writing by Grenfell nurses does exist, from the reports and propaganda writings of the first nurses, followed by others’ fictional sketches and various periodical articles, through to the “handful” of published memoirs of the later nurses. Writings by nurses, Grenfell Mission or otherwise, have received little attention, and the bibliographic outline offered in Appendix II is collated here for the first time. The woman-centered component of the Grenfell literary tradition, also identified for the first time in this dissertation, has never been fully acknowledged or examined. A new literary climate, evidenced in Meese’s call for a broader (re)definition of literature to include “all instances of creative verbal expression” (“The Whole Truth” 16), now makes this study possible.

To write autobiography, a form which encourages “the construction of a separate self and a recording of personal achievement” (Buss, *Canadian Women’s Autobiography* 10), was a risky business, for women in general, and particularly for Grenfell nurses. The patriarchal Mission maintained strict control of all staff writing; it did not encourage the (uncensored) publication of any autobiographical writing. Mission workers, nurses included, had to comply with the stringent rules of the organization. The Mission’s official discourse permitted only a benevolent image, and autobiographical writings remained the province of one man, the hero-founder, Wilfred Grenfell. Other “heroic” narratives would have undermined Grenfell’s own heroic stance. History reflects this gendered exclusivity. The memoir, a different kind of autobiography, is a form in which

the self is shown in relation to the community, in this instance, the Grenfell Mission. The memoir-writer realizes that her experience has been located “on the cusp of a great historical, intellectual or social change and that in recording her personal life, and her vision of the world that life has created, she also records her times” (Buss, *Canadian Women’s Autobiography* 10), and since Grenfell’s arrival in 1892, the Grenfell Mission has had a considerable impact on Labrador and Newfoundland.

How, then, did these nurses inscribe themselves within their memoirs, stories that were affected by patriarchal language and the Grenfell Mission’s official discourse? What were the patriarchally approved “cultural script[s]” of these nurses? How to uncover their voices within these scripts? Nancy K. Miller suggests “overread[ing]” such silenced texts through arachnology, “a critical positioning which reads *against* the weave of indifferentiation to discover the embodiment of writing of a gendered subjectivity; to recover within representation the emblems of its construction” (*Subject to Change* 83, 80). This other text is “hopelessly entangled” with the material of its construction (*Subject to Change* 77). The production of Grenfell nurses’ writings is entangled with the matter of propaganda and official Grenfell discourse which itself was, as Perry concludes in her study of maternalism and moral reform, problematic. We must confront and reappraise, to quote Billson, the memoirs of Grenfell nurses, these stories “that deploy[] the interwoven structures of power, gender, and identity inherent in the production of mimetic art” (Miller, *Subject to Change* 81). It is “[w]hen we tear the web of women’s texts we discover in the representations of writing itself the marks of the grossly material,

the sometimes brutal traces of the culture of gender; the inscriptions of its political structures" (*Subject to Change* 83-84).

In considering the literary achievements of these nurse-writers, we cannot use traditional literary standards. By conventional literary standards, the memoirs of Burchill, Banfill, Diack and Jupp are flawed ("naive") texts. Until recently, "the standards of the novel have been hegemonic in prose critical considerations" (Buss, *Canadian Women's Autobiography* 12). But when the surface intention is subverted, and we read their memoirs for female self-inscription, for autobiography, Burchill, Banfill, Diack, and Jupp can be seen as complex individuals negotiating their self-inscriptions through the translation of the material of their new experiences on the Coast. As Buss suggests, when we read for self-inscription we no longer need to seek

the unity of the narrative of these works, nor even a novelistic hierarchy of characters, but rather we can discover the autobiographer through the plethora of significant others to whom she chooses to show her figure joined, and more important, we can examine how she undermines the "master narratives" of patriarchal tradition with "mechanisms ... employed strategically and tactically in the effort to construct other forms of coherence, to shift the terms of representation, to produce the conditions of representability of another—gendered—social subject." (*Canadian Women's Autobiography* 12-13)

Although there is unevenness in my contextual reading of these four memoirs—a factor primarily contingent on the availability of archival material (there is considerably more material on Diack and Jupp than Burchill and Banfill)—the following readings are clear. Burchill's valorization of Grenfell and her association with the Grenfell Mission, as well as her use of the travel genre, allows her to position herself and her adventure within

a patriarchal framework; with this act she positions herself firmly in an established tradition. With her humorous and often ironic descriptions, Banfill undercuts the romanticism of official Grenfell discourse, and presents a self eminently capable of confronting the realities of the tragedies a nursing station nurse had to face. Despite the vicissitudes of her Mission placements, Diack's self is rooted in a spiritual dimension, and at the end of the narrative she emerges transformed by her spiritual testing. Diack's spiritual message is skillfully inserted in her memoir. The journey motif saturates Jupp's narrative, and provides a *raison d'être* in a seeking life; her travel writing is a form of gender empowerment. In her life as well as in her writing, Jupp rejects gender norms.

My reading of these four Grenfell nurses' memoirs reveals that they are remarkable stories of courage, service and adventure; tearing the web of these writings, however, reveals that they are acts of rebellion. However, acts of rebellion are not enough. These hidden herstories need to be lifted from the invisibility of history and a space created for them in the silent pages of literary and cultural history. Inserting these women's personal narratives into the Grenfell myth—the “long-accepted public history” (Buss, “Settling the Score” 175)—is an attempt to establish a powerful counter-narrative, and to break the silence. I wish to rekindle interest in these neglected texts, and draw attention to the contribution these women have made to Newfoundland literature.

Whatever the original circulation and readership of these memoirs, these women's voices have largely been erased within a masculinist historiography. By this examination of the published memoirs of four Grenfell nurses, I am attempting to break “silence,” to carry

out the feminist mandate that Leigh Gilmore describes, “to claim, with authority, the very grounds of identity that patriarchal ideology has denied women: a self worth its history, a life worth remembering, a story worth writing and publishing” (51). Gilmore was talking of public autobiographical writing, but this dissertation proposes that we must also “claim authority” for the rescue and reconstruction of the voices that speak from unsanctioned private and archival documents:

The discovery, publication, and analysis of women’s archival materials are a necessary beginning to the reassessment of women’s place in the literary canon and of the canon itself. (Meese, “Archival Materials” 37)

We, as scholars, need to break the silence, and bring the private world into public discourse. Reading Grenfell nurses’ memoirs reveals the full unfairness of the gender inequalities of nursing for the Grenfell Mission. It also demonstrates the desire of these nurses to write in opposition to the ideology of the official Grenfell discourse. These voices are necessary in “the balance of equals and opposites” (Sarsfield 204)—for women, and for nurses of the Grenfell Mission.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I

Important Dates in the Grenfell Mission

- 1892** Hospital ship, *Albert*, sails from England with Dr. Grenfell in charge.
- 1893** Battle Harbour hospital opens. *Princess May* motor launch brought over from England.
- 1894** Indian Harbour hospital opens.
- 1896** Co-operative store starts at Red Bay.
- 1901** St. Anthony hospital starts. Co-operative Lumber Mill opens.
- 1902** New wing on Battle Harbour hospital.
- 1903** New outbuildings at Indian Harbour hospital. More co-operative stores start. Inception of the quarterly, *Among the Deep Sea Fishers (ADSF)*.
- 1905** Doctor appointed to Harrington at the request of people on Canadian Labrador.
- 1906** Harrington Hospital built. St. Anthony orphanage starts. Industrial work starts at St. Anthony by Jessie Luther.
- 1908** Cottage hospital erected at Forteau, Labrador.
- 1909** Temporary hospital opens at Cartwright, Labrador.
- 1913** Spotted Islands station opens. Emily Chamberlain hospital building at North West River opens.
- 1914** International Grenfell Association registered in St. John's, Newfoundland, as a corporation under the Companies Act, 1899.
- 1915** Emily Beaver Chamberlain Memorial Cottage Hospital, North West River completed.
- 1919** Flowers Cove co-operative store opens.

- 1920** Flowers Cove nursing station opens.
- 1921** Muddy Bay nursing station opens. New St. Anthony orphanage opens.
- 1922** New wing added to Emily Beaver Chamberlain Memorial Hospital, North West River.
- 1926** Cornerstone laid for new St. Anthony hospital. Yale School, North West River, starts.
- 1927** Mutton Bay nursing cottage opens.
- 1929** St. Mary's River hospital construction starts.
- 1930** Battle Harbour hospital burns down. St. Mary's River hospital opens, replacing Battle Harbour.
- 1936** New medical station at Cartwright given by the MacLay family, to be known as the Lady MacLay Hospital. Englee Cottage Hospital given by Louie Hall of Rochester, New York.
- 1940** Dr. Grenfell dies 9 October 1940 in Charlotte, Vermont.
- 1946** Dr. Curtis awarded CBE.
- 1949** New hospital at Harrington starts. New nursing stations at Flowers Cove and Forteau in operation. Dr. Curtis awarded OBE.
- 1950** Harrington hospital completed. Nursing station at Englee purchased (with government funds). Construction of TB sanatorium at St. Anthony approved.
- 1951** Englee nursing station in operation. Happy Valley (Hamilton Village) nursing station opened.
- 1953** TB sanatorium at St. Anthony completed and in use.
- 1954** New North West River hospital begun.
- 1955** Government requests IGA to build nursing stations at Roddickton and Nain. New North West River hospital dedicated and in operation.

- 1956** Nain Nursing Station (\$81,565.83) completed in ninety-seven days.
- 1957** Roddickton nursing station built and occupied.
- 1959** Dr. Gordon W. Thomas appointed superintendent. Dr. Charles S. Curtis becomes chairman of the board of directors.
- 1960** Conche nursing station begins. Flowers Cove station renovated and enlarged.
- 1961** New nursing station at Conche opens 22 January. Nurses' residence and dispensary at Harbour Deep opens. Makkovik nursing station (\$22,485.13) opens 16 October.
- 1962** Dispensary and nurses' quarters at Hopedale built and opened in October. Small station at Harbour Deep established with a nurse in charge.
- 1963** Dr. Curtis dies 13 March. New Happy Valley hospital begun in May. Dispensary and nurses' quarters opened at Port Saunders 9 December.
- 1965** The Harry L. Paddon Memorial Hospital at Happy Valley officially opens, named by the premier of Newfoundland, 22 June. Construction of new St. Anthony hospital begins in May.
- 1968** Occupation of new St. Anthony hospital begins. On 30 May the Charles S. Curtis Memorial Hospital officially opened by Premier J.R. Smallwood.
- 1969** New Churchill Falls hospital opens in February. Extension to North West River hospital and renovations to hospital completed.
- 1970** A small clinic at Black Tickle, financed by an English donation, opens. Dr. Thomas awarded Order of Canada (officer).
- 1971** Quebec government authorizes a capital grant of \$50,000 for renovation of Harrington hospital. Construction of new dispensary at Davis Inlet is proposed. Betty Seabrook, secretary of GAGBI, retires. Shirley Yates takes over London, England, office.
- 1977** Doctors Thomas and Paddon given honorary degrees at Memorial University of Newfoundland.
- 1979** New Flowers Cove clinic is opened.

1981 Final issue of *Among the Deep Sea Fishers* is published. Dr. Paddon is Lieutenant-Governor of Newfoundland and Labrador from 1981 to 1986.

[Modelled on, with extracts from, “Important Dates in the Life of the Grenfell Mission” (Gordon Thomas, *From Sled to Satellite*, pp. 11-125).]

Appendix II

Bibliographic Mapping of Writings by Nurses: Newfoundland/Labrador

Although this is not an exhaustive list, other writings by both Grenfell and non-Grenfell nurses include: Mary Williams Brinton, *My Cap and My Cape: An Autobiography* (Philadelphia: Dorrance & Company, 1950): see pp. 78-122 for Brinton's account of her assignment as volunteer nurse with the Grenfell Mission to Battle Harbour; Ilka Dickman, *Appointment to Newfoundland* (Manhattan, Kansas: Sunflower UP, 1981): Dickman was a refugee doctor who was employed as an outpost nurse in Rencontre in World War II; Viola Alfreda (Smith) Marsh, *A Small Town Nurse* (Owen Sound, ON: Stan Brown Printers, 1986): Marsh nursed at Burgeo Cottage Hospital in 1945; Margaret Giovannini, *Outport Nurse* (St. John's: Faculty of Medicine, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1988); Millicent Blake Loder, *Daughter of Labrador* (St. John's: Harry Cuff, 1989); Celesta Gerber Acreman, *For the Love of Labrador—My Story* (n.p., n.d. [1998]); Janet Penney Winsor, *Newfoundland Nurse: A Memoir* (Portugal Cove, NF: ESP Press, 1998). See also Florence Michelin's story of being a Grenfell nurse, in *Not Too Long Ago*, comp. Garry Cranford (St. John's: Senior Resource Centre, 1999) 138-39.

For periodical articles: see Clayre L. Ruland (later Forsyth), "A Nurse's Winter Trip on the Canadian Labrador: Extracts from a Diary," *ADSF* 33.2 (July 1935): 51-53. *ADSF* (October 1971) announced that Forsyth had written an autobiographical account of her Labrador experiences entitled *Lamp Over the Snows* (60). I was unable to locate such a book (it is possible that it was never published). See also Catherine Cleghorn, "From Mutton Bay to Forteau in December: Extracts from a Diary," *ADSF* 33.3 (October 1935): 94-96; Anna May Jowsey, "Nursing in the Canadian Labrador," *Canadian Nurse* 30.6 (June 1934): 264-268 [Jowsey spent time at Harrington Harbour before going to Mutton Bay, where she spent a total of 13 months]; E. G. Graham, "Miss Mary's Took Bad," *Canadian Nurse* 35.9 (September 1939): 515-516; Louie Brice, "On the Trail of Adventure," *Canadian Nurse* 31.8 (August 1935): 352-354.

Although there is no published text of Myra Bennett's autobiographical writings, she has left considerable personal writings. See Linda Kealey, "Herstories: Nurse Bennett" in *Spokeswomen: St. John's Women's Centre Newsletter* (March 1997): 7. See also, Victoria Page Sparkes Belbin, "Midwifery and Rural Newfoundland and Health Care 1920-1950: A Case of Myra Bennett, nurse midwife," hon. diss., Memorial University of Newfoundland, April 1996.

See also Anne E. Carney, *Harrington Harbour... Back Then ...* (Montreal: Price-Patterson, Ltd., 1991): Carney was in charge of the Hand-Crafts Unit of Harrington, and her account, which gives a brief glimpse of the life of the Grenfell nurse, evolved from

letters she wrote to her mother during 1952/53.

For a different kind of nursing in the late 1930s, see Mary (Green) Guzzwell, "S.S. Kyle Nurse," *Them Days* 13.1 (September 1987): 39-44.

For archival accounts, see Centre for Newfoundland Studies Archives (CNSA), Joyce Nevitt Collection (JNC) #177, 12.01.021, a collection of letters written by M.P. [Penelope] Barnard to her mother in 1938 from St. Mary's River; and 12.01.028, Helen Kirby's account of a year at North West River in the late 1930s/early 1940s. See also, Penelope Barnard's "Labrador. An Account of a Summer Spent at a Grenfell Mission Station," PANL, MG 63, Penelope Barnard personnel file.

Of interest are also biographies; see H. Gordon Green's biography of Myra Bennett, *Don't Have Your Baby in the Dory!* (Montreal: Harvest House, 1973), which uses extensive quotes from her diary; also Judith Power, *Hazel Compton-Hart: Angel From the North. A Story of Courage, Devotion and Humanitarianism* (St. John's: Jespersen 1995).

Fiction: Edith Tallant, *The Girl Who Was Marge* (Philadelphia: JB Lippincott Co., 1939); Edith Tallant, *Danny and Prue* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Co., 1939); Robina Salter, *Hannah: A Midwife's Tale* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986; reissued by Breakwater Books, 1997).

Appendix III

Sketches/Articles by Maud Bussell (later Simpson)

Toilers of the Deep

- "Christmas in Labrador." (May 1901): 121-122.
- "A Hospital Story." (October 1901): 258-259.
- "The Man of a Thousand Promises." (January 1903): 24-25.
- "Christmas in Labrador." (May 1903): 121-122.
- "Hospital Life in Labrador: A Word Sketch." (November 1903): 244-245.
- "Strangely Tested." (October 1904): 217-218.
- "Father Christmas in a Trunk!—A Story of How He Visited St. Anthony Hospital, Newfoundland." (July 1905): 161-162.
- "A Labrador Hospital Sketch: 'The Disagreeable Woman.'" (December 1905): 269-271.
- "'Till Death Us Do Part': A Labrador Sketch." (May 1906): 120-121.
- "Jennie Hallier's Baby: A Labrador Sketch." (April 1907): 92-93.
- "Jake's Courtship: A Romance of the Labrador." (December 1907): 266-268.
- "In the Next Bed." (June 1909): 137-138.
- "Passed with Honours." (June 1910): 140-141.
- "A Stitch in Time." (August 1910): 193-194.
- "A Triumph of Trust." (September 1910): 229-230.
- "A Rough Night's Work: A Story of the Royal National Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen on the Labrador" (from the *American Journal of Nursing*). (May 1911): 114-115.
- "Peter: A Tragedy of the Labrador." (March 1912): 62-63.
- "Sister Margaret's First Case." (October 1913): 254-256.
- "The Old Bonnet." (March 1915): 58-60.
- "Taken in Tow." (January 1916): 15-17.
- "A Life for a Life." (August 1916): 95-97.
- "'Deacon Jake.'" (June 1917): 69-70.
- "Joe Candler's Boy." (February 1918): 21-23.
- "The Vanishing Trick." (February 1920): 28-30.
- "Aunt Lizbeth's Photograph." (April 1921): 52-54.
- "Cure by Suggestion: A Story of Labrador." (February 1923): 33-35.
- "Old Focus." (August 1924): 148-150.
- "'Ahind' the Curtain." (February 1926): 41-43.
- "How it Happened." (May 1929): 73-75.

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"A Hospital Story." (April 1903): 11-13. (same as "The Man of a Thousand Promises")

"A Little Child Shall Lead Them." (October 1903): 24-28.

"Abe—A Hospital Sketch." (January 1904): 26-28.

"A Hospital Story." (April 1904): 16-19. (same as *Toilers* October 1901)

"Little Phyllida's Fortune." (April 1908): 26-28.

"A Triumph of Trust." (April 1909): 34-36. (same as *Toilers* September 1910)

"A Stitch in Time." (May 1910): 29-32. (same as *Toilers* August 1910)

Appendix IV

Sketches/Articles by Cecilia Williams

Toilers of the Deep

"A Labrador Funeral." (November 1904): 244.

"A Labrador Dog Story—Told by Herself." (February 1905): 42-43.

"Sick and Ye Visited Me: A Labrador Sketch." (July 1907): 57-58.

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"Sick and Ye Visited Me." (July 1907): 17-20.

"Letter From Sister Williams." (October 1907): 29-31. (printed in *The Canadian Nurse* as "May in Newfoundland")

The Canadian Nurse

"The Deep Sea Mission at St. Anthony." (September 1907): 474-475.

"Sick and Ye Visited Me." (January 1908): 1-5.

"May in Newfoundland." (May 1908): 214-215. (same as *ADSF* October 1907)

Appendix V

Articles/Reports by Lesley Diack

Among the Deep Sea Fishers

- “The season of Mummers ...” (April 1952): 7.
- “Forteau Diary. Winter 1951-52.” (July 1952): 40-43.
- [“In November we had 180 hospital days ...”] in “Coast Chronicle.” (April 1953): 10.
- “Childish Things.” (October 1953): 78-9.
- “Coronation Day.” (April 1954): 21.
- “June and July ... Salmon-fishing” in “Visitors.” (July 1954): 39.
- “Community Fish Stage at Forteau.” (July 1954): 51.
- “The *True* Story of Our ‘Siamese Twins.’” (April 1955): 5-8.
- “The Hare and the Tortoise—*Modern Style*.” (January 1958): 107-11.
- “Log of the *Star*: 1957 Season.” (April 1958): 18-21.
- “Log of the *Star*: Part 2.” (July 1958): 41-51.
- “Portrait of the ‘Wheels of a Nursing Station.’” (January 1959): 114.
- “‘The Stork’ Won’t Wait.” (July 1959): 40.

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- Diack, Lesley M. “District Nursing with a Difference.” *District Nursing* (February 1959): 260-262.
- Diack, Lesley. “The True Story of Our “Siamese Twins.” *Atlantic Guardian* 12.4 (April 1955): 5-10. [reprinted from *ADSF*]

Appendix VI: Poem by Lesley Diack [Untitled]

Now, listen, to my sad, sad tale
 Of Mary 'cross the sea,
 Whose only contact with the world
 Is through a small R.T. [radio telephone]
 Reception's bad, but hope springs high
 Each day, she thinks "I'll have a try
 Perhaps there's some-one standing by
 Prepared to talk with me."

She strains her ears, she cracks her voice,
 She shouts across the sea,
 "Three Five, Three Five," she cries aloud
 "Please, are you reading me?"
 Faintly at last she hears reply,
 A sharp command to please stand-by
 "We'll call you later." Her hopes die,
 "By then you won't read me."

She begs, she pleads, she cries in vain,
 She wheedles and implores;
 She asks for drugs and medicines,
 An organ and new floors.
 They seem to hear her more or less,
 Or was it Echo answered "Yes!
 We'll send it by the next express?"
 For nought reached Mary's shores.

Christmas came, that silent night,
 And, too, a silent day,
 For no-one noticed Mary's plight
 Nor had a word to say.
 No word of greeting reached her ears,
 No doctor's help in her worst fears,
 "Oh, D -!" she said and dried her tears,
 "There'll come a better day."

And then a better day did dawn,
 And then the fun began,
 And even at the noon-day sched
 She was an "also-ran";
 It actually seemed that they
 Could hear just what she had to say
 And even ask her to re-lay
 What messages she can.

The better day was here at last,
 The end of all her blues,
 She caught up with the gossip now,
 And she could hear the news;
 There were *more* days when silence reigned
 When voice and ears and lungs were strained,
 But, Oh, what joy was hers unfeigned
 When she could air her views.

And then a whisper came to her
 It thrilled her through and through,
 Of great far-reaching, powerful sets,
 And one for her, brand new.
 "Oh, Yes!" they said, one day at noon,
 "We're going to send it over soon,
 We think you'll find it a great boon."
 'Twas too good to be true.

And that's exactly what it was,
 Just too good to be true,
 'Twas Cartwright got the powerful set,
 The one that was brand new.
 Their cast-off one they kindly sent
 To Mary in her banishment,
 Expecting her to feel content
 "That's good enough for you."

It *looked* a bigger, better set
 Than the one she had before,
 She could receive all stations now,
 Transmit on channels four,
 And for one glorious, happy day,
 With knobs and wave-lengths she did play,
 Imagination had its sway,
 Cut off, she'd be, no more.

Alas! 'Twas but a single day
 Ere gloom set in once more,
 Only two channels could be worked
 Instead of channels four;
 Then channel three could not be read,
 "Try channel two" they cried, "Instead,"
 But none could read what Mary said,
 Then she could read no more.

Sadly she picked the pieces up
Of the old set off the floor,
And fixed it on the wall again
Where it had been before.
Her hopes are dashed, her spirits low,
Her engine here is far too slow
To make a set that's powerful go
She will be heard no more.

They *say* they'll send an engine too,
But that she's heard before,
For all that has been promised her
Not much has reached her shore;
She knows for her, no engine new
Will ever come from out the blue,
Some cast-off junk for her must do,
There's no doubt on that score,
No hope for her in store,
She will be always poor,
And *then*
They wonder
Why
She's
SORE.

Appendix VII

Articles/Sketches/Reports by Dorothy Jupp

Among the Deep Sea Fishers

- "Doctor's Visit." (April 1945): 9.
- "Uninvited Guests." (April 1945): 19.
- "Holocaust at St. Mary's." (October 1945): 68-69.
- "Autumn." (October 1945): 72.
- "Labrador Winter." (January 1946): 99.
- "Summer." (July 1946): 37.
- "Christmas at St. Mary's River." (July 1947): 43-44.
- "An Old Friend Retires." (January 1949): 116-117.
- "Crossing the 'Run.'" (April 1949): 18-20.
- "Christmas at St. Mary's." (April 1949): 14.
- "Freeze-up Travel." (October 1949): 77.
- "Five Babies in Six Days." (January 1950): 115-116.
- "Coast Chronicle: Report from D.M. Jupp, St. Mary's River." July 1950: 50.
- "Winter Chronicle 1950-51: From Letters From Staff Members." [Letter from D.M.J.] (April 1951): 3-4.
- "Women's Work." (April 1951): 9-12.
- "Iron Men of Labrador." (October 1951): 81-85.
- "Archie." (January 1953): 119.
- "Autumn on Labrador." (October 1955): 89.
- "Winter on Labrador." (January 1956): 129.
- "Labrador Epic." (October 1956): 80-82.
- "The New Nain." (April 1957): 9-11.
- "The Friendly *Trepassey*." (October 1958): 87.
- "Christmas Eve at Makkovik." (April 1960): 18-19.
- "Line's Busy." (July 1964): 50-51.
- "Christmas in Makkovik." (October 1965): 82, 83-86.
- "The 'Run' Goes Through." (October 1966): 88-89.
- "Deer on the Doorstep." (January 1968): 109.
- "First Eskimo J.P., 1968." (October 1968): 80-81.
- "Reaching for the Stars." (January 1969): 109.

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- "Iron Men of Labrador." 59.2 (1960): 21-22.
 "A Trip Up the Coast of Labrador." 59.3 (1960): 40-41.
 "Ordeal By Fire." 59.4 (1960): 43-44.
 "Overboard!" 60.1 (1961): 31.
 "The Run Goes Through." 60.2 (1961): 47.
 "Heart of Oak." 60.3 (1961): 33.

Other Periodicals

- "First Impressions." *Moravian Missions* 51.10 (October 1953): 115-117.

[Written by a Grenfell Mission Nurse Stationed at Labrador]. "Northern Lights of Labrador." *The Happy Warrior* (January-February 1946): 16.

Stories (possibly unpublished) (PANL, MG 63, Miscellaneous Grenfell Material, Box 4
 File: Stories, Essays, Poetry, etc.):

- "The Green Thumb." 2 pages.
 "Winter Storm." 4 pages.

Anthologized selections from A Journey of Wonder:

- "A Long Winter." *Doryloads: Newfoundland Writings and Art Selected and Edited For Young People*. Ed. Kevin Major. St. John's: Breakwater Books, 1974. 89-92.
 "They came From Everywhere." *The Grenfell Obsession: An Anthology*. Ed. Patricia O'Brien. St. John's: Creative, 1992. 136-137.
 "It Never Entered My Head." *The Grenfell Obsession: An Anthology*. Ed. Patricia O'Brien. St. John's: Creative, 1992. 143-144.



