

Gender, Work, and Zeal: Women Missionaries in Canada and Abroad

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REVIEW ESSAYS / NOTES CRITIQUES

Gender, Work, and Zeal: Women Missionaries in Canada and Abroad

Rosemary Gagan

Ruth Compton Brouwer, *Modern Women Modernizing Men: The Changing Missions of Three Professional Women in Asia and Africa, 1902-69* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press 2002)

Shirley Jane Endicott, *China Diary: The Life of Mary Austin Endicott* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press 2003)

Myra Rutherford, *Women and the White Man's God: Gender and Race in the Canadian Mission Field* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press 2002)

ON 30 DECEMBER 2002, a man clutching what seemed at first glance to be a sick baby rushed into the American Baptist Mission Hospital in Jibla, Yemen. The "baby" was a rifle, its owner a Muslim extremist. His rampage left three American missionaries fatally wounded, another seriously injured. One of the dead was Dr. Martha Myers. She had devoted 24 years to the medical treatment of women and children in Yemen where Islamic religion and culture require a public gender segregation that restricts women's access to male physicians and where a shortage of female practitioners, especially in rural areas, is an added impediment to women's health care. Myers was passionate about her mission. She spoke proudly of her commitment to "women's work for women," the very same validation that had opened mission fields to single women in the late 19th century, when Christian churches realized

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that Asian *mores* limited male communication with women, above all, upper-class women who were missionaries' preferred converts. Women missionaries were not bound by these constraints; by appealing to a universal maternalism, they reached out to non-Christian women who would hopefully then guide their families to Christianity. Another link to her missionary predecessors was Myers' personal summons — the time-honored “call” — to her vocation that came as “a special assurance from the Lord that this was where I would be and, single or not, I would be happy.”¹ Myers apparently was happy with her career choice, performing surgery, making hospital rounds, directing immunization programs, and keeping close watch on the wellbeing of a large rural population, gratifying ends in themselves irrespective of any religious incentive. This is yet another link with the Victorian roots of the women's missionary movement, settling for half a loaf — good works, social housekeeping — when the seeds of evangelism fell on barren ground or when volatile political conditions made it dangerous to broadcast the gospel message.

This was the situation in Yemen. As Jerry Rankin, President of the Southern Baptist International Mission Board, explained, “in ... Yemen our personnel over the years have been prohibited from presenting an overt Christian witness.”² Undeterred, the American Baptists “pray[ed] to the Lord ... to send folks out to help,” not proselytizers to distribute bibles and hammer home the gospel message, but experienced physicians like Myers, nurses, pharmacists, social workers, and teachers to heal, to educate, and to give economic advice and material aid to the Yemenis. Sometimes this sideways approach to missionary work is termed “tentmaking,” a reference to St. Paul's job while he spread the story of the risen Christ around the Mediterranean.³

The Southern Baptists' capitulation to political reality in Yemen, including Myers' sacrifice, is just the latest installment of a common history that Christian overseas missions in general, and women's missions in particular, have endured for at least a century. Stung by internal and external criticism of their missions' seemingly fruitless efforts to convert the heathen in Asia and Africa and a variety of indigenous peoples, and by diminishing financial contributions to sustain them, at the end of the 19th century, the major Christian churches were forced to reconsider and redefine their missionary goals, personnel, methods, and infrastructures. Winning souls for Christ by unwavering evangelization was soon relegated to secondary importance. Tentmaking — providing health, education, and welfare services to local populations whose dependence and gratitude might bring about conversion — became missionaries' stock-in-trade. The “Christianization of the World in our Generation” was a lost cause, all the more after 1918 for Christians disillusioned by the horror of World War I. A convenient benchmark for this process of redefining

¹<http://www.imb.org/urgent/story8.htm>

²*National Post*, 31 December 2002.

³David Van Biema, “Missionaries Undercover,” *Time*, 30 June 2003, 47.

Christian missions is the 1932 publication *Re-Thinking Missions* with its disparaging review of overseas missionaries' credentials and their Eurocentrism.⁴ This critique called for higher recruitment standards, professional specialization, and sensitivity to, not scorn for, unfamiliar cultures and beliefs. Meanwhile, in the 1920s and 30s as congregations declined, churches' financial woes prompted like-minded denominations to consolidate resources, set aside territorial rivalry, and espouse ecumenicalism in the interest of economy and a common purpose. Following World War II, missions' mandates and structures moved closer to those of international governmental and private agencies such as UNESCO and OXFAM that endorsed education, empowerment, and leadership as the realistic route to social and economic improvement, especially in Third World countries surging with nationalist fervour. To cite an example of this transformation, the United Church of Canada, inheritor of the Canadian Methodist, Presbyterian, and Congregational missions in Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, and across Canada, now co-operates with its "global partners ... together in God's mission for wholeness of life."⁵

Yet, as the manner of Dr. Myers' death shows, the missionary's western identity and Christian faith continue to invoke the spectre of colonialism and of cultural and political imperialism. Missionaries are assaulted, verbally and physically, not for what they do, but for what they represent. And the popular outrage generated by vicious attacks on missionaries and humanitarians has not diminished appreciably in the century since the hue and cry that erupted after the highly publicized massacre of 300 westerners — two Canadian missionaries among them — during the Boxer Rebellion.⁶ Even skeptics who look on the missionary enterprise as risky and erroneous meddling seldom say aloud "they had it coming" when harm befalls men and women who put into practice the unfashionable notion of "doing good." As Carol Shields' evocative novel *Unless*⁷ and Philippa Foot's philosophical treatise *Natural Goodness*⁸ (that challenges Nietzsche's view of kindness as an act of self-ish resentment, calculated to humiliate the recipient and bolster the donor's ego) make clear, altruism and self-sacrifice are still pillars of our value system; hence our western culture's historical fascination with the "romance" of missions.

Churches have always been quick to recognize that missionary derring-do and selflessness swelled coffers and increased membership. For their part, missionaries seem to live up to public expectations when they defy warnings about imminent danger and remain at their posts. Beginning with the Victorian press's idolization of David Livingstone, missionaries' temerity in confronting physical danger, their

⁴William E. Hocking, *Re-Thinking Missions: A Laymen's Inquiry after One Hundred Years* (New York 1932).

⁵<http://www.unitedchurch.ca/global/print/globalpartners.shtm>

⁶Alvyn Austin, *Saving China: Canadian Missionaries in the Middle Kingdom, 1888-1959* (Toronto 1986), 75-76.

⁷Carol Shields, *Unless* (Toronto 2002).

⁸Philippa Foot, *Natural Goodness* (Oxford 2001), 105-08.

determination to advance the cause of Christianity, and their unyielding faith in God as their protector have been conflated to give them an heroic status as divinely-sanctioned *übermenschen und frauen*. Missionary societies launched a vast body of flattering hagiography *pour encourager les autres*, especially Sunday school children who would benefit from close encounters with Adoniram Judson in Burma, Lottie Moon in Shantung, the Goforths in Honan, and their ilk. Religious and secular literature regularly juxtaposed the words missionary, romance, adventure, danger, and courage. Novels and films have portrayed the missionary as crusading adventurer: part Tomb Raider, part Mother Theresa, with a dash of Mary Poppins and, for good measure, a pinch of Madonna. *The African Queen*, *The Sand Pebbles*, *The Inn of the Sixth Happiness*, *Hawaii* — even *The Mission* and *Black Robe*, though more introspective and historically accurate — highlight war, violence, risk, raw emotion, and sexuality (think of Katherine Hepburn's character Rose Sayer in *The African Queen*), not the frustration that often reached despair, the distasteful tasks, the petty squabbling and gender disharmony, the homesickness, and the illness that filled missionaries' days. Fiction also dodges the soul-searching and the spiritual commitment that a secular society finds unnerving and intellectually distasteful. Gladys Alyward was appalled by a fictitious love interest incorporated into *The Inn of the Sixth Happiness*, the cinematic retelling of her harrowing rescue of Chinese orphans, to broaden its audience appeal.

Churches erred in the other direction by representing their agents as holier than thou, certainly than me. Before "commodification" earned its cachet as a postmodern felony, missionaries, often maligned (especially by historians) for their part in commodifying indigenous people and immigrants by generating facile representations of the "heathen" and the "foreigner," were themselves "commodified" (packaged as it were) to suit churches' policies. Missionaries' correspondence, reports of their work, and furlough lectures were all carefully vetted and polished before being published as a way to construct a generic unsullied missionary for home folk to admire and venerate. Death in the ranks provided "value added," as Jerry Rankin recognized when he invoked the spirit of Martha Myers — "faithful to God — and to the Yemeni people" — to solicit ongoing aid for Baptist undertakings.⁹

Setting aside these stereotypes, over the past two decades, British and North American social and religious historians have meticulously searched for and [re]-constructed the archetypal missionary. Abandoning celebratory historiography, they "seek ... to analyze the multifactoral complexity of the missions and with a sense of critical fairness to identify the ambiguities of the work and the motivations of the people involved."¹⁰ Scholars have examined international missions' origins

⁹<http://www.imb.org/urgent/story8.htm>.

¹⁰C.T. McIntire, "Approaches and Themes in the History of Missions," in John S. Moir and C.T. McIntire, eds., *Canadian Protestant and Catholic Missions 1820s-1960s: Historical Essays in Honour of John Webster Grant* (New York 1988), 13.

and ideology and the personnel in the field to account for western societies' historical enthusiasm for Christian missions and to assuage our latter-day accountability and guilt for the harm inflicted worldwide on indigenous people. As A.N. Wilson has observed "[n]one of us can entirely detach ourselves from the Imperial experience and its consequences."¹¹

Beginning with John Webster Grant's *Moon of Wintertime: Missionaries and the Indians of Canada in Encounter since 1534*,¹² and followed by Alwyn Austin, Hamish Ion, and Ruth Brouwer's studies of missions in China, Japan, and India respectively,¹³ scholars have investigated Canadian participation in domestic and overseas missionary activities within an extensive framework of regional, national, social, economic, political, gender, religious, and denominational history. Their work has sited Canadian mission studies along a new trajectory, targeting topics — the interface of First Nations' people and missionaries, urban and rural missions to immigrant communities, missionaries as agents of cultural transmission, and gender relationships — that speak to contemporary issues. One of these themes is the centrality of Christian women's unique missionary experience.

Feminist historians, most significantly in English Canada, have extended the boundaries of women's history to include women and religion by positioning female missionary activism within the wide-ranging Victorian social reform imperative, by examining missionary vocations within the category of women and work, and by exploring the links among personal piety, evangelical religion, feminism, and religious careers.¹⁴ Ironically, these analyses have been frowned on for avoiding, like fictitious versions, the religious incentive prompting women to devote their lives to God's service and giving too much weight to missionaries' feminism, for failing to "deconstruct" (for want of a better word) women missionaries' elitism and Eurocentrism, and for blurring the lines between issues of class and race. If no longer a *tabula rasa*, Canadian women's integral part in late-19th- and 20th-century missionary ventures remains a scholarly field "white unto the harvest" for understanding the pervasiveness of religion in women's lives and how religion and personal spirituality informed their perception of the world around them. Missionary societies and their agents who were sanctioned to spread Christian ideals of

¹¹ A.N. Wilson, *The Victorians* (London 2002), 489.

¹² John Webster Grant, *Moon of Wintertime: Missionaries and the Indians of Canada in Encounter since 1534* (Toronto 1984).

¹³ Austin, *Saving China*; Hamish Ion, *The Cross and the Rising Sun* (Waterloo 1990); *The Cross in the Dark Valley* (Toronto 1999); Ruth Compton Brouwer, *New Women for God: Canadian Presbyterian Women and India Missions* (Toronto 1990). In this review essay, I make no attempt to include a comprehensive historiography relevant to Canadian mission studies. Myra Rutherford's notes to her introductory chapter and Brouwer's notes throughout her book provide excellent reviews of the most important sources.

¹⁴ Rosemary Gagan, *A Sensitive Independence: Canadian Methodist Women Missionaries in Canada and the Orient, 1881-1925* (Montreal and Kingston 1992).

womanhood captured the sympathy and contributions of thousands of Canadian women from the 1880s until the 1970s when second-wave feminism spelled the demise of voluntarism as an avocation. Belonging to a denominational woman's organization that sponsored family-oriented social reform was *de rigueur* as a symbol of Victorian respectability distinguishing the loosely-defined middle class from those below without the resources or the disposition to improve their spiritual, moral, and material circumstances. Sustained financially and emotionally by their female associates, devout, able, adventurous, and energetic women, often university-educated with medical training, teaching certificates, or other practical skills, chose missionary work, preferably overseas, as a potentially satisfying lifelong occupation.

By 1910, if missionary wives are included in the tally, women were in the majority in many missions as they were on most Canadian Protestant congregational rolls. Their visible presence in churches did not go unnoticed but it was not associated directly with the feminization of religion; the Methodist Church attributed this state of affairs merely to a slump in male attendance and campaigned to bring men, especially young ones, back to the fold — in effect to “remasculinize” the church and ward off the feminine threat to male authority.¹⁵ Some ministers acknowledged their female worshippers by substituting an emphasis on family values and motherhood for sermonizing about fiery Old Testament prophets. But filling the pews on Sundays did not give credence to women's voices or award them seats on church councils. Until at least the 1920s, most Canadian churches denied women ordination; as ministers, women's postings as hospital chaplains or assistant pastors left them at the margins of decision-making. The Church of England's patriarchal foundations withstood feminist assaults until the 1970s. Hence the appeal of missionary work to women seeking a career that validated their religious commitment. In the field, women missionaries, especially employed by female-directed societies, used their implicit maternal nature to full advantage. Belonging to the second sex could be a source of power that enabled them to launch educational, social service, and medical programmes, at first for women and children, but by the 1920s reaching out to the poor, needy, and dispossessed regardless of gender. In short, in a Canadian context, the “feminization of religion,” that Barbara Welter and Anne Douglas suggest, weakened theology and religious culture in the northeastern US in the 19th century¹⁶ seems most evident in mission fields where the “feminine” educational, medical, and social service initiatives represented by Martha Myers and her predecessors supplanted “masculine” evangelizing and conversion as the accepted way to reach indigenous populations.

¹⁵David G. Hackett, “Gender and Religion in American Culture, 1870-1930,” *Religion and American Culture*, 5 (Summer 1995), 128.

¹⁶See Barbara Welter, “The Feminization of American Religion: 1800-1860,” in B. Welter, *Dimity Convictions: The American Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (Athens, Ohio 1976) and Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York 1977).

Not everyone subscribes to this thesis. For example, in *Good Citizens: British Missionaries and Imperial States, 1780-1918*, a study of how Britain's imperial policy influenced missionary ventures, James Greenlee and Charles Johnston dismiss out of hand the validity of applying feminist (or colonial) analysis to their subject. They emphasize that British women missionaries had virtually no part in "decision-making or even medium levels of missionary administration" before 1918.¹⁷ "Gender, unquestionably, was a significant factor in many aspects of missionary life. But it should come as no surprise that, in that age, it had little impact on whatever passed for the official missionary mind as it confronted expansive imperial states around the world."¹⁸ Greenlee and Johnston summarily banish female — and it seems male — missionaries serving in the field — the proletariat so to speak — from the grand world of imperial diplomacy inhabited by Kipling's "[f]lannelled fools at the wicket and muddied oafs at the goal."¹⁹ Given the authors' caveat, it is indeed "no surprise" that they steer well away from the complex gender relations among missionaries. But they also avoid missionaries' interaction with indigenous people and the role of women in encouraging the growth of native churches and ecumenical undertakings that certainly stimulated colonized peoples' antagonism toward the British "other" and set the stage for the modernization of missions in the decades to follow.

Three recent books, not coincidentally authored by women, Myra Rutherdale's *Women and the White Man's God*, Ruth Brouwer's *Modern Women Modernizing Men*, and Shirley Endicott's *China Diary: The Life of Mary Austin Endicott* compensate for Johnston and Greenlee's narrow interpretation of missionary politics as a male domain and for the generalized scholarly disregard of women's role and the meaning of gender in the modernization of missions. Using the analytical categories of class, race, gender, and religion in ways that are appropriate to their foci, the authors present fresh interpretations of Canadian women's participation as single professional women and wives in a missionary enterprise undergoing momentous change as the 20th century progressed, about their relationships with colleagues, friends, family, and those they served, and their personal interpretations of their roles, albeit usually as bit players, in the colonial mis/adventure.

Reworking a dissertation begun in the early 1990s, Rutherdale takes her immediate cue from Jane Hunter's *The Gospel of Gentility* (American women in China)²⁰ and Brouwer's *New Women for God: Canadian Presbyterian Women and India Missions, 1876-1914* to develop a perceptive analysis constructed from the experi-

¹⁷James Greenlee and Charles Johnston, *Good Citizens: British Missionaries and Imperial States, 1780-1918* (Montreal and Kingston 1999), xii.

¹⁸Greenlee and Johnston, *Good Citizens*, xiii.

¹⁹Wilson, *The Victorians*, 601.

²⁰Jane Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility: American Women Missionaries In Turn-of-the-Century China* (New Haven 1984).

ences of 132 English and Canadian-born women (the majority were British until 1920 when the Church Missionary Society withdrew from Canada) who as wives (they numbered 44) and missionaries represented the Anglican Church in northern Canada from the 1880s until the 1940s. The Anglican Church was tentative about hiring women as missionary agents but, by the 1880s, its patriarchal conviction that women should be subordinate within the institution was being challenged, Rutherford argues, by the example of missionary wives, and, presumably, by stiff competition from other denominations that increasingly recognized the advantages of employing women. Pressured by maternal feminists, the CMS began to accept female recruits: 172 women were hired between 1887 and 1894 to make up for lost opportunities. Typically, they had trained and worked as teachers, doctors, or nurses, although the women sent to northern Canada were less well-educated with just 1 doctor and 34 nurses in the group. Often ill-equipped emotionally and physically for what lay ahead, the women journeyed as far as Herschel Island, Pangnirtung, and Dawson to take up posts on a male-dominated geographic and professional frontier. Male missionary correspondence, written in "the language of lionization," extolled the northern masculine culture that embodied muscular Christianity. (14) In this intimidating situation, missionary women's status was, as Rutherford puts it, "ambiguous." Yet their uncertainty about belonging provided them an opportunity "to carve out careers in mission work and ministry that were both unofficial and creative." (27)

Rutherford's curiosity is directed particularly to the women's impressions and preconceptions of their work, the environment, and Aboriginal people and to accounting for the discrepancies between the public and private retelling of their experiences. Consequently she presents only a generalized overview of their qualifications and preparation for, and attraction to, northern missionary work. She does not adequately distinguish between British and Canadian-born recruits or wives when tweaking this dichotomy might have generated a more nuanced understanding of the differing responses of, for example, the Canadian-born Sarah Stringer and the British Selina Bompas, to similar circumstances. Rutherford's approach to the women's colonial discourse has been influenced by, among other perspectives, Edward Said's arguments about the ways in which writing by colonial elites, often ignorant about their subjects, "reinforce[d] the economic and political imperatives of empire," (xxiii) by Homi Bhabha whose work zeroes in on the "contact zone itself [and] provides a way to go beyond the colonized/colonizer dichotomy," (xxiii) and by Vron Ware, more popular perhaps a decade ago, and among the first feminist scholars to recognize the interconnectedness of race, class, gender, and imperialist ideology.

Rutherford perhaps dreamed the historian's impossible dream of uncovering indisputable evidence that these Anglican women underwent a miraculous metamorphosis through the conjuncture of self with wilderness and that they emerged better for it. What her evidence reveals is that on the missionary frontier racial barri-

ers might be crossed, but white missionary-Aboriginal relationships were also marked by ambiguity. Missionaries may, indeed, have been appreciative of Aboriginal culture — mostly for the practicalities of life such as moss bags for babies — but Rutherford concludes that much of the discourse “especially written by British missionaries, was very similar to that used to reflect class differences in Britain.” (49) The missionaries proved, in the end, to be the prisoners of their Anglican upbringing in an intolerant Christian imperialist society. There was plenty of the customary cultural baggage for the first generation to unpack, keep, or discard. As Rutherford puts it, “[d]ichotomies that juxtaposed civilized with uncivilized places popularized by imperialist supporters, as well as missionaries, left little middle ground between the colonizer and the colonized.” (29) Maybe so during the last decades of the 19th century, but it is interesting to note that Carole Gerson has conjectured that for an earlier generation of British women in Canada, represented by Susanna Moodie and her sister Catharine Parr Traill, “ideology of class over [rode] racial difference in [the] construction of social value.”²¹ Mrs. Moodie was bothered by Aboriginal men’s physical appearance and its sexual suggestiveness and by their sometimes childlike behaviour, but she generally portrayed Aboriginal people favourably, “as less Other than the lower classes of Great Britain (especially the Irish).”²² Moodie and Traill respected the courage and resourcefulness of Aboriginal women who had shared their food and fuel with the English women. The sisters, who still harboured much Eurocentric pretension, evidently socialized freely with their Aboriginal neighbours. Susanna Moodie may have held a “romanticized image” of indigenous people derived from early 19th-century travel writing that foretold the extinction of a unique culture,²³ but similar sentiments are absent from Anglican missionaries’ letters. There were no Rousseauians among missionaries who justified their business by underscoring the differences between white and indigenous cultures and probably agreed with Joseph de Maestre’s assertion that “savages” were not “great uncorrupted prototypes” but “the failure of God’s creative process.”²⁴ By the 1920s, kinder descriptions of Aboriginals had crept into some of the women’s public remarks; missionary wife Sarah Stringer referred to the Inuvialuit as “a very clever people in their own way,” adding that they “could quite easily do without us.” (46) But hers seems a minority voice.

²¹Carole Gerson, “Nobler Savages: Representations of Native Women in the Writings of Susanna Moodie and Catharine Parr Traill,” in Veronica Strong-Boag, Mona Gleason, and Adele Perry, eds., *Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women’s History*, 4th edition (Toronto 2002), 80.

²²Gerson, *Rethinking Canada*, 80.

²³Charlotte Gray, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Lives of Susanna Moodie and Catharine Parr Traill* (Toronto 1999), 108-09.

²⁴Isaiah Berlin, “Maestre,” in Isaiah Berlin, *Freedom and Its Betrayal: Six Enemies of Human Liberty* (Princeton 2002), 143.

Selina Bompas, wife of William, the first Anglican Bishop of Selkirk, appears typical of those white women who had to work at squaring the dictates of their social conscience with their revulsion at Aboriginal peoples' appearance, their appalling filth, and a multitude of character flaws. Once, Bompas held a Christmas dinner at Fort McPherson for "twelve old Indian wives." They were, in her words, "[d]ear old things! [who] did their best to get themselves up for the occasion, and some of their leather dresses were quite smart.... I had dinner prepared in the school room, the cloth spread and knives and forks etc. But these proved useless for though some of the women did try to use them to please me, their efforts were quite ineffectual and they were soon forced to lay them down and take to nature's implements." (40) Rutherfordale suggests that the Aboriginal women "could not meet Bompas's expectations of cleanliness and, despite their efforts to behave in a civilized fashion, they failed. In Bompas's view, they were too close to nature and not elevated enough to use another culture's eating implements." (41) Rutherfordale's assumptions may be valid within the broader context of Bompas' contact with Aboriginal women over her forty years in the North but her take on the incident also serves as a reminder that the "deconstructive" analysis she practises is contingent on her own subjectivity. On balance, Rutherfordale offers compelling evidence that sisterhood was hardly a dominant feature of interracial relationships in the north. Usually it was a no-win situation for Aboriginal women whom missionaries held in contempt for their appearance, customs, beliefs, and suspicion of western medical care, and mocked when they tried, imperfectly, to adopt European habits.

Women missionaries' relationships among themselves — complicated by distance but an essential support for women away from family and friends — and with male colleagues, as well as preconceived notions of appropriate masculine and feminine behaviour in the North, also come under Rutherfordale's careful scrutiny. There were no mocking remarks when Anglican missionaries changed their gendered ways to suit a frontier environment. Married and single men sometimes did "what might be traditionally considered women's work while women often had to go beyond what Victorian society would have construed as appropriate womanly behaviour." (54) As moral guardians of society, women had less leeway than men to step outside the parameters of acceptable conduct; even in inhospitable surroundings they were expected to be feminine role models for their female charges although there was no similar compulsion to impose gentlemanly ways on Aboriginal men. Over time, Rutherfordale suggests, gender categories became less rigid and impractical, especially in situations — discussions of syphilis, for one — where the ideology of true womanhood was rendered meaningless. Anglican women in the North, like their Methodist counterparts, found independence that would have been denied them had they remained at home. After they left the mission field, Rutherfordale's women continued to stretch "the boundaries of gender convention" by lecturing about their northern adventures. (71) But Rutherfordale tries too hard to turn her missionaries into "new women." Furloughed missionaries were routinely

expected to make public appearances to raise money, most often among Women's Auxiliaries where there were no gender boundaries and where missionaries were admired for their self-sacrifice, not as trail-blazers for feminism in the North or anywhere else.

The ideal of domesticity may have lost some of its meaning in a frontier setting, but Rutherfordale's research demonstrates that the time-honoured portrayal of missionary women — especially childless single women — as mothers and guardians proved especially useful in the North. "It allowed women more freedom," says Rutherfordale, "to practise their ministry than they would have had in either southern Canadian dioceses or in England." (98) She suggests that some of Anglican women's finest moments were as mentors to young Aboriginal women who were more deferential to missionaries and more accepting of Christian morality than their elders. Many women "delighted in mothering the children in [their] village." (100) Although missionaries removed children from their families to residential schools where only English was spoken and strict discipline was enforced to counter the easygoing Aboriginal lifestyle, Rutherfordale contends that their care for children "appeared to be based on close, intimate bonds." (106) Congruent with colonial perceptions of Aboriginal abilities and missionaries' fears about the intentions of white miners to Aboriginal women, female education was simply preparation for marriage, preferably to a Christian Aboriginal, and motherhood or, if all else failed, for domestic service. Under the aegis of a maternal identity, single women were dispatched to stations with no resident male missionary where they proved their mettle. Their experiences in the field were, like their male colleagues' adventures, described in "the language of 'Christian heroism'." This distinctive "heroic identity" and the "safety of the maternal metaphor" afforded single women missionaries the autonomy "to act on their own without the immediate directive of male missionaries." (116) But, of course, these women, whose own careers had provided them the emotional and financial independence to remain single, did not advocate that Aboriginal colonized women similarly make their own way.

Rutherfordale wisely avoids trying to evaluate the success or failure of the Anglican enterprise in the North. The widespread evidence of missionary abuse and insensitivity towards Aboriginal people undermines any attempt at a positive conclusion. Her concern in this regard is directed at the missionaries' perceptions "of how their message was received." (119) Missionaries repeatedly expressed frustration with Aboriginals' failure to wholeheartedly embrace Christianity and about their converts' precarious position as Christians; many converts were marginalized men and women — the equivalent of the British underclass — who saw in Christianity a way to belong. At the other end of the social scale, chiefs sought to secure their status in an uncertain world through conversion. The Stringers were stationed at Herschel Island for five years before their first convert came forward. Under even the best of circumstances and to missionaries' dismay, converts seldom gave up all the accoutrements of Aboriginal spirituality. As

Rutherford puts it, missionaries' faith "limited their recognition of the syncretic nature of the mission process" (127) and they did not understand that "syncretism was the most they could expect." (124) Moreover, missionaries generally were unable to grasp that, as John W. Grant has so well explained, even when Aboriginal people were "eager for Christianity ... they were allowed to receive it only on terms destructive to their culture and humiliating to their pride."²⁵ Hence, Canada's Aboriginal people took the aspects of Christian belief that were useful to them, accepting ideas and codes that could be juxtaposed without harm with their own spirituality and values. Anglican missionaries remained tormented by the merger of beliefs that represented failure on their part.

More than Anglican theology and ritual, the evangelical Church Army in northern British Columbia (not to be confused with the Salvation Army) appealed uniquely to Aboriginal people and was, Rutherford asserts, "a notable example of Aboriginal domination of the Anglican experience." (144) In 1927, the Army's conference in Prince Rupert attracted 300 Aboriginal participants who responded enthusiastically to the evangelistic ministry. Their high spirits annoyed veteran missionaries who argued that Aboriginals should have a "deeper sense of Christian tradition" than a camp meeting provided. Unhappy that Aboriginals, who were now directing the Church Army in their own interest, had not relinquished "heathen" practices, missionaries argued forcefully for an ongoing role in northern missions. Women's Auxiliaries did not generate similar concerns because typically they were controlled by white women and missionaries who used them as venues for proselytizing among Aboriginal women who, in turn, directed their energy to the production of revenue-generating crafts for the Auxiliaries. In the 1930s the majority of Pangnirtung's 150 WA members were Aboriginal but almost everywhere else the WA was predominantly, or, as a photo of the Dawson WA confirms, exclusively, white. Because "[t]heir perceptions of Christian charity were cast in terms of an imperial discourse which saw Aboriginal peoples as impoverished and backward," (136) white Anglican women largely excluded Aboriginal women from the WA. In all of this, there seems slim evidence for Rutherford's contention that Church Army and the WA represented "a contest for control over Christianity." (131)

In the final analysis, Rutherford accepts Anglican women missionaries' well-meaning attempts to impose the White Man's God and imperial ideals on Aboriginal people as "the misplaced benevolence of colonizers who tried too hard to deliver the message of Christianity." (152) In the course of carrying out their Christian responsibilities, they perpetuated racial stereotypes that highlighted Aboriginals' faults, for the home audience. As their written discourse reveals, some women pondered the "deeper meaning of difference" but contemplation of racial questions only strengthened their sense of superiority and power in the mission field in opposition to Aboriginal peoples. (152) Selina Bompas believed that her

²⁵Grant, *Moon of Wintertime*, 263.

authority over Aboriginal women was a God-given right. Distance from central Canada or Britain reinforced missionaries' conviction that their work as God's agents was absolutely unassailable and that their western presence would transform indigenous life. Nonetheless, Rutherford maintains, "their main objective was to improve Aboriginal peoples and cultures." (155) In their daily routines and their work as teachers and nurses, women missionaries came in close contact with the "other" with whom, over time, they might develop informal, if distant, relationships, based on Aboriginal expertise and lore. And, in return, enough Aboriginals accepted Christianity for missionaries to justify their calling.

The outcome of Rutherford's attempt to scrape the veneer from missionary discourse is not always flattering to her women who, in pursuit of their personal and professional goals, often seem a smug and self-serving bunch, an impression attributable, in part, to the dominance of a few strong voices. Whereas Rutherford's group includes 132 women, fewer than 50 are cited in the text. Only the elite pair, Selina Bompas and Sarah Stringer, opinionated women married to the most distinguished Anglican clergymen in the North, are heard from consistently. The attention to the undervalued missionary wives is a welcome addition to missionary studies, though their inclusion would be the more significant had Rutherford probed further into gendered marital relationships and questioned the extent to which missionary wives' views of Aboriginal people and their colonial discourse were shaped by their husbands, some of whom resided in the North before marriage and served as wives' mentors and teachers about Aboriginal matters. Other questions about missionary marriages come to mind, among them, whether living in the North with the "other" was a source of marital conflict. As for single missionaries, with more choices about staying or leaving: was there any correlation between career length and flexibility? Simply put: were women who shunned Aboriginal contacts or women who seemed to appreciate the personal and professional advantages of Aboriginal friendship more liable to have satisfying and extended careers?

That said, Rutherford's thoughtful exploration of how "[n]otions of race, of both Whiteness and Aboriginality, were constructed and reconstructed in Anglo-Canadian missionaries as relationships were forged and varying needs were met"(xiv) is a valuable contribution, not only to Canadian women's, First Nations', and northern studies, but, within an international framework, to gender and post-colonial analyses. It remains personally perplexing and frustrating that Rutherford does not validate the book's title by elucidating Aboriginal and Anglican women's connections to the White Man's God. Or is the title meant to remind readers of the many ambiguities that complicated the experience of women caught, as was Selina Bompas, "between two cultures," never quite adapting to the North but missing it "desperately" when she left? (95)

Ruth Brouwer's *Modern Women Modernizing Men: The Changing Missions of Three Professional Women in Asia and Africa, 1902-69* comprises studies of three women, Choné Oliver, Florence Murray, and Margaret Wrong, whose re-

spective work in India, Korea, and Africa, broadly defined, consigns them to the missionary camp. Choosing to develop only one aspect of each woman's career, Brouwer uses a narrower focus but a wider lens than Rutherford. Despite her argument for the book's place as religious history, it is also positioned firmly in the niche of Canadian women's history that focuses on women's entry into male-dominated professions and the consequent gender-related problems that shaped their careers. For women seeking professional opportunities in post-World War I missions, Brouwer argues, "the once dominant paradigm of separate spheres had lost its salience as changing Western and colonial contexts, and new personal and professional ambitions, coalesced in a modernizing project that allowed (indeed, bade) women like Oliver, Murray, and Wrong to enter work worlds where their colleagues and clients were mainly male."⁽⁸⁾ These women moved into the administrative structure of male-dominated organizations such as the International Missionary Council — although Brouwer admits that women's lower salaries, not their skill or any consideration of gender equality, may have been the deciding factor in the selection. They sat on key international mission committees and were assigned to major medical and educational projects that took them well beyond women's work for women and into the thick of the problems and achievements of the modernizing ecumenical missionary enterprise.

In the 1920s and 1930s, and especially after the landmark critique, *Re-Thinking Missions*, had been digested, concern about the quality of missions' medical and educational work and about their institutional training grew among westerners and "[m]odernizing [indigenous] young men with personal and/or national ambitions [who] looked to such institutions to further their goals."⁽¹⁹⁾ The casualties of the pressure to modernize included some, but not all, female educational facilities. Mission administrators, recognizing the financial benefits of gender integration and consolidation, also questioned the wisdom of funding exclusively female education. Veteran women missionaries, especially in India, who felt threatened by the incursion of modernity and the disapproval of their women's work for women, turned to the familiar dialogue about downtrodden womanhood to support the *status quo*. The public, too, Brouwer notes, had difficulty with these new directives; the result was that "old patterns" prevailed in most mission fields and in the interwar years "as missionary personnel and as the missionized, women remained the second sex."⁽³³⁾ Given women's own intransigence, it is hardly surprising that the modernization of missions became a male-directed initiative. But it did have "the enthusiastic cooperation of some able professional women," among them Oliver, Murray, and Wrong, who deliberately distanced themselves from gender-segregated women's work for women to pursue their careers and personal goals in male-dominated working environments. ⁽³³⁾

Brouwer introduced us to Choné Oliver (1875-1947), a Canadian Presbyterian missionary in India, in her *New Women for God*. Now she has moved on to Oliver's role in the transformation of the women's Christian medical school in Vellore,

south India, into the co-educational Christian Medical College, a challenge that marks her as one of Brouwer's modern women. There was little in Oliver's background to foretell a missionary career; hers was a broken family and her unhappy situation may have stimulated the religious enthusiasm that became focused on a future as a medical missionary. She taught for a few years to finance her studies at the Toronto Woman's Medical College, interned at the Woman's Hospital in Philadelphia, and in 1902 was accepted by the Presbyterian Church for service in India. Keen to practise medicine and win souls, Oliver faced a crisis over the emotional demands of the proselytizing that constituted a large part of her job. After a furlough to consider her future, she "developed a new understanding of the place of medical work in modern Christian missions that gave her both greater personal peace of mind and the ability to play a leadership role in formulating a new theology and praxis for medical missions." (37) For over a decade Oliver had charge of a general hospital at Banswara. Her work there provided an entrée to her growing involvement in missionary planning at the national level and in the drive to improve medical education in India. Convinced that woman's work for women hampered effective medical training and care, Oliver rejected the separate spheres' paradigm and established new contacts with the modernizing men of the Christian Medical Association of India (CMAI) which had begun to admit Indian doctors to its ranks. In 1929, the CMAI requested that the United Church make Oliver's services available fulltime; four years later she became a permanent employee, serving as secretary-treasurer and writing for its journal.

What most engaged Oliver was the CMAI's proposal to create a reputable medical college for Indian men who, Brouwer argues, "more than Indian Christian women ... suffered, as Christians, from an 'image problem' and ... needed the leverage that proper professional training could give." (48) Brouwer meticulously details Oliver's quest to find a suitable location for the college and to raise funds. The project apparently had the support of American philanthropists and Indian doctors but the Depression dried up resources; the plan ground to a halt with the many-sided opposition of the International Missionary Council's William Paton who favoured evangelism over humanitarianism and was unenthusiastic about what he considered a vague and expensive proposal. Determined to defend her work against Paton's charges, Oliver used the CMAI journal to keep the college before the medical community. In due course with the help of Dr. Edward Hume, a friend of the Nehru family and an expert on medical missions, the scheme was revived as a co-ed institution. Citing the need for indigenous doctors to direct Christian medical work in India, Hume indicted missionary societies for not following China's lead in initiating more progressive medical training facilities. Hume recommended the well-known American-sponsored Missionary Medical School for Women at Vellore as the most suitable venue. But the school required a complete administrative overhaul to accommodate a modernizing agenda. Established in 1918 by Dr. Ida Scudder, Vellore was reluctant to abandon its historical role as an institution

that trained and treated women exclusively. The situation turned around in the 1940s when Vellore was forced to upgrade or lose its affiliation with the University of Madras. World War II and the “new sense of urgency about modernizing and Indianizing Christian medical education” at last galvanized the plans for the long-anticipated medical school. (62) With the CMAI’s and Vellore’s co-operation, upgrading Vellore to a co-ed institution commenced in 1943. Dr. Hilda Lazarus, an Indian Christian, was appointed as the first principal, a post she finally assumed in 1948. On retirement in 1944 Oliver returned to North America where she campaigned on Vellore’s behalf until she died in 1947, three years before Vellore gained affiliation with Madras. Though often caught up in situations beyond her control and sometimes too unbending about God’s will, Oliver was, Brouwer concludes, a modern woman and an able administrator who handled visionary proposals and daily routines – and, I might add, rejection and adversity — equally well. Her private life of wide-ranging literary interests and female friendships also identified Oliver as a modern woman and a feminist who “could pursue an agenda that transcended exclusively women’s concerns in response to larger societal changes.” (65)

If Choné Oliver was “a product of an earlier, women-focused culture of professional preparation,” another of God’s new women, Florence Murray, (1894-1975) twenty years younger than Oliver, was imbued with “the new professional ethos ... from the beginning.” (67) Brouwer’s concise study of Murray is directed towards the doctor’s commitment to “‘science’ and ‘standards’ over sisterly service and female mentorship” as borne out by the growth, under her guidance, of Hamhung hospital in Korea from an unsanitary ill-equipped facility to a modern western-style teaching hospital. (69) Trained at Dalhousie University in Halifax, an up-to-date co-ed institution that had heeded the 1910 Flexner Report’s stinging criticism of the quality of North American medical education, Murray was motivated by a “desire to be fully professional, to achieve the highest possible level of efficiency in scientific medicine within the context of an Asian mission.” (76)

Florence Murray opted for a missionary career partly to satisfy her minister father’s unfulfilled desire in that regard. But a missionary vocation was also a predictable choice given her family background and her involvement in the Student Volunteer Movement during her college years. In 1921 she took up her assignment with the Presbyterian mission in Hamhung, north Korea, where a strong indigenous church was evidence of Christianity’s success. As Brouwer points out, some Korean Christians expressed irritation at the missionary paternalism that inhibited Korean nationalism, but another group of ambitious Korean Christian men accepted Japan’s colonial rule and regarded missionary institutions as the source of “upward personal mobility and national recognition.” Murray empathized with the latter group whose “values and pragmatic strategies were consonant with the way she practised and taught medicine in Korea.” (70) From the outset, Murray, who knew she was a gifted surgeon, found fault with her western female medical colleagues,

especially for their failure to keep abreast of new medical techniques and procedures. In time and with maturity, she became less judgmental of her co-workers and worked intensively to upgrade the equipment and improve the training at Hamhung where she established a nursing school. Its problems bear a remarkable similarity to those of Canadian schools that faced parental resistance to daughters' decisions to embark on a not quite respectable nursing career. For a modern woman Florence Murray held contradictory views about women's place in the work force and the professions. Like a majority of Koreans and Westerners at the time, she "regarded nursing as normally women's work and the role of physician as normally a man's vocation." In her correspondence, Murray contended that "every girl in Korea gets married."⁽⁸²⁾ This rationale served her well by justifying her opposition to female medical education and leaving her free to direct her attention and surgical expertise to male interns. But Murray's high standards and her perceptions of Asians' poor academic ability made her teacher-student relationships quite uncomfortable at times. As she adapted to her Korean situation, Murray's abrasive dealings with colleagues and students became more mutually respectful, a change that Brouwer attributes in part to the prestige accruing from her appointment as first female president of the Medical Missionary Association of Korea, a society of western doctors, but an honour that would not go unnoticed by the Korean medical community.

Murray remained at Hamhung hospital for 21 years to oversee its growth from ten beds with two doctors to a 100-bed institution with six Korean doctors. During the 1930s with war between Japan and the west threatening and fearing that missionaries would have to leave Korea, Murray loosened her grip on the hospital's reins and in 1941, with her departure imminent — she was repatriated in June 1942 — she asked a Korean surgeon to take over. After the war, Murray returned to Seoul where she joined the faculty of Ewha College as it prepared to instigate a new medical curriculum for women. Showing consistency, she apparently did not support the plan, advocating instead study abroad or a joint programme with Severance Medical College. In 1950 Murray left her position as associate dean of Ewha's medical department; during the Korean War she returned briefly to Canada until she was allowed back for refugee work in Pusan. By 1952 she was again in Seoul on the staff of the now co-educational Severance College but her role became more restricted as her medical abilities were eclipsed by younger western-trained specialists. Her attachment to Korea remained strong and, after her official retirement in 1961, Murray returned on a voluntary basis to direct a leper clinic, organize Severance's medical records, and set up a training program for hospital record keepers, a personal commitment consistent with her lifelong desire to improve Korea's medical system. Maybe there was nowhere else for her to go.

More comfortable with male colleagues, Murray had, according to Brouwer, cultivated friendships with male and female Koreans alike. Eventually she acknowledged the difficulties that Korean female physicians faced in pursuit of a

career. Though Brouwer surmises that “she would probably have deplored the term,” Murray was not without a “feminist consciousness.” (93) Still, she remained convinced that “integration rather than gender separation [was] the way forward, professionally.” (76) Committed to extending western-based professional medical practices, Murray nonetheless denied that she had ever put medicine first; she hoped to have been both a doctor and a missionary. She began each workday at Hamhung with a worship service and proudly told her patients of her Christian faith. Murray’s own protestations notwithstanding, Brouwer ultimately perceives Murray as “first and foremost, a medical professional” who was enabled by the flexible circumstances of the interwar era and shifting gender relationships to follow her inclination to be “a doctor first and an evangelist second.” (94)

Margaret Wrong (1887-1948) took a more secular route than Oliver or Murray to her career as secretary of the International Committee on Christian Literature for Africa (ICCLA) that brought her into proximity with both the needy and the elite of sub-Saharan Africa. As the most privileged of Brouwer’s three women, Wrong attended a private girls’ school before several years at Oxford. She returned to Toronto to work variously as a YWCA secretary, part-time instructor, and residence supervisor. Family connections opened up a position in Geneva as traveling secretary for the World Student Christian Federation from 1921 to 1925; from there she moved to London as a mission’s secretary for the British Student Christian Movement. Wrong became involved in the SCM’s “Africa Group” and, after a six month tour of Africa, she applied to teach at the Gold Coast’s Achimota College. Personal circumstances — the death of a brother — intervened but Wrong stayed in touch with interracial issues. Though she lacked experience with missionary work *per se*, when the International Missionary Council launched its International Committee on Christian Literature for Africa in 1929 with a mandate for “the preparation, publication, and distribution of literature for use in connection with missionary work in Africa,” Wrong was appointed as secretary; it was a wide-ranging job that she held until her death in 1948. (96) To identify how the ICCLA’s literary campaign could most benefit missions, Wrong traveled throughout sub-Saharan Africa for about six months every three years; she often visited North America to publicize and solicit funds for the ICCLA’s projects.

In contrast to Oliver, Murray, and Rutherdale’s Anglican missionaries, Wrong did not seem to have a “sense of religious calling” although “the challenges and responsibilities of the larger Africa job, which would draw on her previous experience in ‘co-operative’ and ‘pioneering’ work” loom large as factors in her career choice. Distanced in appearance, attitude, and personal interests from the customary depiction of a woman missionary as a homely narrow-minded religious zealot, the very attractive Margaret Wrong was, nonetheless, taken seriously by “people in authority” who recognized that “her interest in social issues was linked to an intense if generally un verbalized Christian faith.” (100) Changing mission and colonial policies towards Africa facilitated Wrong’s transition beyond the customary

women's work for women — though one wonders whether Wrong's acceptance in a male professional world could be explained by her outgoing personality and her good looks. She seemed well suited for making contacts in Africa, a rewarding perquisite that put her in touch with Africa's predominantly male literary and artistic community. For example, in 1936, she attended the first congress of black South African writers where she became acquainted with playwrights, poets, musicians, and visual artists. More crucial for her work were the journalists and teachers — examples of modernizing African men — responsible for spreading Christian literature to the masses.

Throughout her career, Wrong supported feminist causes, in particular, African women's education that was tied to her literacy efforts, but, at the same time, her work for the ICCLA disconnected her from the women's work for women and the separate spheres' ideology that had impinged on Oliver and Murray's professional lives as doctors. Because most ICCLA publications were written in English, its literacy projects did not reach African women who could barely read indigenous languages. Wrong apparently endorsed African contributions to the ICCLA's periodicals, *Books for Africa* and *Listen*; *Listen* sometimes printed articles by African women but most of its 'women's' articles — about nutrition, childcare, and farming — were penned by westerners, and then translated into the African vernacular. Brouwer finds no evidence that Wrong solicited women writers' participation in literacy programs or that she moved beyond "missionaries, African male teachers, and 'elderly pastors' or traditional leaders" for advice about what women ought to read. (114) The 1940s drive for literacy in countries verging on self-government also failed women, although, in the Gold Coast at least, Wrong emphasized the importance of providing women with readily accessible vernacular materials. Wrong encouraged modernizing African men to write in their own languages and thus help establish a solid base for self-government but African women were not similarly targeted, perhaps because Wrong recognized the futility of the quest. In Africa where it has been argued the Christian church "reinforce[d], in most of its central concerns, the traditions of male primacy,"²⁶ literature continued to be written for men, about men, and by men. No women were nominated for the Margaret Wrong Prize in African Literature, set up in 1949, until 1963. Perhaps their exclusion was fitting for an award to honour Margaret Wrong, a woman committed to avoiding "a premature disruption of existing gender systems" in Africa where, she believed, women's place was the domestic sphere and their education should benefit the community, not women's personal concerns. (97) Whether Wrong's stance towards women helped perpetuate African gender roles hardly matters. If Precious Ramotswe, the engaging heroine of Alexander McCall Smith's captivating stories

²⁶ Adrian Hastings, "Were Women a Special Case?" in Fiona Bowie, Deborah Kirkwood and Shirley Ardener, eds., *Women and Missions: Past and Present Anthropological and Historical Perceptions* (New York 1993), 121.

about Botswana, is a trustworthy observer, more than 50 years after Wrong's death, too many African women remain the victims of a male-dominated society.²⁷

Feminists they may have been, but Oliver, Murray, and Wrong did not adopt a strong feminist agenda on behalf of the indigenous women around them. Brouwer does not try to construct an argument to the contrary. In common with other women of their generation, class, Anglo-Celtic birth, and education, Oliver, Murray, and Wrong advocated domesticity for colonized indigenous women while following independent career paths themselves. In Korea, India, and in sub-Saharan Africa, the trio worked in a less gendered space than they might have occupied in Canada. Positioned outside women's sphere amid modernizing men, they wasted little professional energy on Third World feminist issues — Indian suttee, African wife-fattening and female circumcision, polygamy, wife-beating, and child marriages — that had engaged an earlier generation of women intent on their work specifically for women. Brouwer is forgiving because it still is not clear “that there *were* realistic alternatives to the paths they took,” or “whether an updated version of the ‘women's work for women’ paradigm” would have improved indigenous women's circumstances. (130) Nor, as their humanitarian efforts and their acceptance by non-western colleagues demonstrate, were they “pawns in the imperialist game.” To the contrary; according to Brouwer, Wrong, “in a low-key, Fabian way ... further[ed] moves towards decolonization.” (131) By contrast, Murray seemed accepting of Japan's domination of Korea. Taken together, Brouwer argues, the careers of Oliver, Murray, and Wrong offer palpable evidence of a decline in missionaries' ethnocentrism (again, Murray, who clung longer to her protective shield of racial superiority, seems an anomaly), of their willingness to educate indigenous people to direct missionary institutions, and a heightened awareness of the “goals of modernizing and nationalizing elites in colonialized and missionized societies.” (121)

By reading against the grain and drawing on postcolonial philosophies — Edward Said's comments about the “overlapping experience of Westerners and Orientals, the interdependence of cultural terrains” resonate with meaning for Brouwer's women coping with the shifting margins of imperialism — and feminist scholarship, Brouwer expands our understanding of women's roles in consequential international missionary and humanitarian endeavours. (118) But her analysis also raises questions about the direction of feminist activism in the 1920s and 30s. How representative of interwar feminists were Oliver, Murray, and Wrong who “felt no need to justify their participation in the public sphere in terms of women's work for women and children?” (121) Sometimes the screen is just too broad and the narrative too concise to capture Oliver, Murray, and Wrong's own sense of how far they had traveled in pursuit of their professional goals, or, though Brouwer might argue that it is peripheral to her topic, to explore the personal piety and Chris-

²⁷ Alexander McCall Smith, *Tears of the Giraffe* (New York 2000).

tian principles that nourished their careers and were sorely tested by what the women encountered on their journeys. If nothing else, did they envision themselves as Christian feminists?

Heeding her own advice, Brouwer goes some distance towards “transcending the ‘unacknowledged quarantine’” and establishing religion as a category crucial to English-Canadian women’s history.²⁸ But she founders over the religious conviction that sustained the two Presbyterians and an Anglican in the field. It may not have mattered much to missionaries’ ongoing work but surely the 1925 creation of the United Church — a ubiquitous hybrid of Methodist, Congregational, and a majority of Presbyterian churches — had an impact on Oliver and Murray whose religious affiliation shifted to the new church. Was the United Church, a denomination with a comparatively broadminded ecumenical approach towards missions and which supported the work of all three women, at all responsible for their transformation into modern women at ease in the professional world of modernizing men? As readers we must remain content with Brouwer’s final affirmation that Oliver, Murray, and Wrong were “women of faith, their humanitarianism and international vision sustained and energized by a belief in the social relevance of Christianity.” (131)

Brouwer’s words are an apt epitaph for Mary Austin Endicott, who, in 1925, married United Church missionary James Endicott and spent many years with him in China. *China Diary: The Life of Mary Austin Endicott*, written by Shirley Endicott, from her mother’s letters, unpublished memoir, and personal memories, is a revealing account of Mary Endicott’s struggle to find a satisfying personal faith and of her relationship with James Endicott, the legendary “Rebel Out of China,” who was an unfaithful and emotionally unstable husband.²⁹ Shirley Endicott has overcome her reticence about allowing the public to enter her parents’ private, often angst-ridden world, to observe, at first hand, their gendered relationship in the mission field. The result of her openness is a valuable addition to Wilfrid Laurier University Press’s Life Writing Series that focuses on accounts of “ordinary people.” Judged by her adventures in China, her marital problems, political activism, and her writing, Mary Austin Endicott was far removed from the ordinary.

Even more than Murray, Oliver, and Wrong, Mary Austin Endicott exemplified the well-brought-up young woman seeking to validate herself in the wider world. Born in 1897, a decade later than Brouwer’s trio, Mary Austin grew up in a privileged atmosphere in Chatham, Ontario, where her grandfather was a Methodist minister and her father a wealthy entrepreneur who became the city’s mayor. Befitting her social standing, Mary’s mother belonged to the Methodist Woman’s Missionary Society and the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union; as further evi-

²⁸Ruth Compton Brouwer, “Transcending the ‘Unacknowledged Quarantine’: Putting Religion into English-Canadian Women’s History,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 27 (Fall 1992), 47-61.

²⁹See Stephen Endicott, *James G. Endicott: Rebel Out of China* (Toronto 1980).

dence of Mrs. Austin's feminism, she hosted Mrs. Pankhurst when she stopped in Chatham on her Canadian tour. Mary's early life was not necessarily carefree: she suffered from a severe stammer that undermined her self-confidence and led to a variety of treatments, including Freudian techniques, to effect a cure. During her teenage years she embarked on a lifelong quest for a personally satisfying religious belief to replace the Biblical literalism of her parents' generation. Along the way Austin encountered Samuel Hooke — also a friend of Margaret Wrong — who admonished her to follow “the supreme example of Jesus who gave himself to the cause,” in effect, to embrace the Social Gospel message. Austin attended Victoria College, and then moved to New York City to train as a dietician; but she lost interest and returned to Chatham where her father's affluence enabled her to engage in volunteer work. Early in the 1920s, she became very involved with the newly-founded left-wing Student Christian Movement that seems to have facilitated her personal religious search. After a seminar led by H.B. Sharman, Mary “came away with a concept of God as ‘a Power waiting to be used’ and a belief that Jesus had discovered the means of ‘drawing upon that Life-giving Power.’” (21) Though her soul-searching continued throughout her life, she came to terms with “church observances” and began to consider overseas missionary work as a future vocation or perhaps to escape spinsterhood in Chatham. (23)

Any career plans were permanently set aside in June 1925. After a hasty courtship Mary Austin married James Endicott, whom she had met at the Washington International Missionary Conference earlier that year. In the fall Mary accompanied her husband to Szechwan where he took up his post with the United Church of Canada during turbulent times for China and its western missionary residents. *China Diary* lacks a sufficient context for comprehending China's xenophobia, but it convincingly conveys one woman's personal anxiety about travel, learning the language, giving birth, and possibly being murdered by servants, as she recreated a “Chatham-in China” from the 39 crates of household goods that accompanied the young couple. Mary Endicott also worried about her husband who began to entertain serious doubts about his missionary career. James Endicott wondered if missionaries in China would “show up as badly as the crusaders, the egoists of the white race seeking to conform [sic] all people to our ways of thinking, as a sort of insurance that our ways will survive.” (77) Perhaps to overcome his misgiving, he began, like others in the mission community, (but not Mary) “to explore the value of extramarital ‘intimate friendships’” that, if not sexual, offered “an emotional attachment to a member of the opposite sex with whom you shared a common interest.” (72)

Mary Endicott apparently excused her husband's infidelity. In her private world she seems to have been relatively happy. A welcome furlough in 1933 in Toronto offered her the opportunity to study anthropology and poetry. She was attracted to the Oxford Group and Moral Rearmament, though her left-leaning husband condemned Moral Rearmament's failure to confront socio-economic is-

sues. Her time away from China seemed to make Mary self-confident and she returned to Szechwan prepared to "accept the inevitable to a degree I never had before." (114) She bunkered in, became involved in her four children's activities, wrote poetry, and was foster mother to three Chinese boys. Meanwhile James Endicott turned to fulltime teaching to avoid "the prayer and word business" where he felt increasingly uncomfortable. As Mary revealed in 1937 to a friend, "He has gone through disillusionment and dissatisfaction with things he felt quite confident about earlier. The result is, I am the happier personality now, whereas he used to be." (125)

The Endicott family left war-torn China in 1941. Mary would go back only briefly. In Canada she joined the CCF and she was elected to the Toronto Board of Education where she actively fought for married women teachers to retain their pre-marriage salaries. Towards war's end, James returned to China for an assignment with General Stilwell, now an advisor to Chiang Kai-shek. The project was cancelled. Depressed and doubtful whether "theology had any significance for his life," Endicott had another affair. (178) This time, so did Mary who became "better acquainted" with a Board of Education colleague. Her own infidelity may explain her vow that when they reconciled in Shanghai, where she nursed James through another bout of depression that brought him close to suicide, she would not ask "what joy gave you blue skies when clouds hung low." (184) From this misery, Shirley Endicott contends, emerged a strong relationship that helped the couple through the next decade of turbulence, the consequence of James Endicott's sympathy for a Chinese Communist government that made him a pariah within the United Church, and his accusations in 1952 that the United States had deployed biological warfare in Korea. Mary too was attracted by Communism, in particular, by Stalin's brand of socialism. While she could, she remained active in the peace movement but premature aging, Parkinson's disease, and finally, Alzheimer's, took their toll. Mary's strong voice fades in the last years of her life. She took a curious interest in seeking parole for a murderer whom she had known earlier and she continued writing, but the *Life with Jim* manuscript that is the basis for *China Diary* remained unfinished at her death in 1967.

China Diary is a notable testimony to a missionary wife who tested her limits, as she cared for her family in dangerous and trying situations and supported her egotistical husband's idealistic but personally destructive causes. Mary Endicott's story adds unquestionably to the evolving social history of missionary activity in China during the interwar period. But without a more constructive historical framework, *China Diary* cannot offer unique insight about the changing nature of missionary work, specifically, the United Church's extensive missionary operations in Szechwan, or about the so-called Endicott Affair that "highlighted the collision of the United Church's traditional Christian socialism with dialectical Marxism."³⁰

³⁰ Austin, *Saving China*, 316.

This is hardly Mary Endicott's fault, especially during her early years in Szechwan where she was a "little brown bird" who rarely ventured from home and may hardly have understood the complexities of the missionary business that had brought her to China. (167) She learned quickly and moved on from pampered young woman to self-sufficient wife, mother, humanitarian, socialist, and fellow traveler. Yet, sometimes in spite of her evolving sense of independence, Mary Endicott seems, in sharp contrast to Brouwer's professionals and Rutherford's single women and northern wives who sought and sometimes found their own niches, a woman whose experiences and reactions, in the mission field at least, were very much determined by *Life with Jim*.

For the first time in more than a century, missionaries are again front-page news as they flock to the latest hot mission fields in the Mideast. The number of missionaries to Islamic countries has almost doubled in the past two decades. There are now approximately 27,000 men and women, half of them American, working to subvert Islamic religion, and its analogous culture. The domino effect of September 11, 2001 has only strengthened missionaries' enthusiasm to wage their own war against what Franklin Graham has famously branded "a very evil and wicked religion."³¹ The debate goes on about missionaries' best line of attack against Islam: direct proselytizing, distributing Bibles and tracts, humanitarian aid, "tentmaking," and even Dr. Martha Myers' preference — women's work for women. Rutherford, Brouwer, and Endicott have demonstrated that these approaches, alone or in combination, have historically produced negligible results if measured in terms of converts. In the light of the reawakening of missionary zeal, their books implicitly raise serious concerns about what Renato Rosaldo labels "'imperial nostalgia,' the kind that makes racial domination appear innocent through elegance of manners" that has been a continuous theme in the history of missions and colonialism.³² Literary theorist Linda Hutcheon points out this style of nostalgia put us, as observers, "into the same position as the very agents of empire, [who] have documented at length their paradoxical nostalgia for the cultures they had colonized — in other words, the ones they had intentionally and forcefully altered. This is the nostalgia of those who believe in 'progress' and innovation, a nostalgia (again, paradoxically) for more simple, stable worlds — such as those of the putatively static societies they destroyed."³³

³¹ Van Biema, "Missionaries Undercover," 50.

³² <http://www.library.utoronto.ca/utel/criticism/hutchinp.html>, 6.

³³ <http://www.library.utoronto.ca/utel/criticism/hutchinp.html>, 6.