Mapping the self in the utmost purple rim: published Labrador memoirs of four Grenfell nurses
Mapping the self in the "utmost purple rim" : published Labrador memoirs of four Grenfell nurses


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.
operated from a cottage hospital in Indian Harbour, travelled throughout the region providing medical treatment, and surveyed public health conditions. The International Grenfell Association, having divested itself of all properties and operational responsibility for health and social services, boarding schools, hospitals then became a supporting association making grants and funding scholarships for medical training. For his years of service on behalf of the people of these communities he was later knighted by the King in 1927.