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A BROKEN WORLD: NEW PERSPECTIVES ON RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY IN THE
WRITINGS OF AMERICAN WOMEN REGIONALISTS

by

TARA DEBORAH CAUSEY

Under the Direction of Audrey Goodman, PhD

ABSTRACT

This dissertation considers how American women writers responded to the changing perceptions about feminine nature, to an increasingly modern society, and to the shifting religious landscape in nineteenth-century America. The complex relationship between nineteenth-century women and religion is firmly illustrated in the works of three writers who were widely read during their time and yet have a very limited readership today: Mary Hallock Foote, Sarah Orne Jewett, and Gertrude Bonnin, also known as Zitkala-Ša. Each figure held a prominent position in the high-literary establishment of the late nineteenth century, and I show how each experimented with regional and sentimental literary conventions in order to entertain and appeal to a readership largely dominated by urban, upper-middle-class women. I argue that each of these writers constructed shared regional spaces and articulated spiritual values of place

in order to dramatize differences between rural and urban cultures, to reflect concerns about America's increasingly industrial, materialistic, and cosmopolitan mainstream society, and to create an anti-modern argument for a society grounded in Christian beliefs and practices. Despite the variety of their religious backgrounds and experiences, these writers all depict nuanced versions of Protestant tradition that both reflect the malleability of cultural religious constructions and re-assert Christian values of love, equality, family, and community. Moreover, through their descriptions of place—of the beauty, grandeur, isolation, and inherent risk of the natural world—these writers reveal phenomenological experiences and illuminate intricate connections between religion, place, and culture that contemporary scholars of religion and geography have only recently begun to explore.

INDEX WORDS: American women regionalists, Religion, Spirituality, Sentimentalism, Native

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TARA DEBORAH CAUSEY

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

In the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

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Tara Causey

2015

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DEDICATION

This dissertation begins with a dedication to my mother and father, to my grandparents, and to my great-uncle—whose unwavering affection and support sustained me through this endeavor—and to all my other friends “whose names I say to myself lovingly, though I do not write them here.”

T.D.C.

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I am grateful for the support provided by my director, Audrey Goodman, who encouraged me and kept me focused at critical moments in the process. I will always be grateful for her benevolent leadership and the many fine professional opportunities she has given me. In addition, I would like to thank my committee members, Janet Gabler-Hover and Mark Noble, for their invaluable insight and careful reading, which were instrumental in the development of this project.

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women find religious knowledge? How did women's religious beliefs influence their lives and perceptions of gender and culture? What are the relations between religion, sympathy, domesticity, and morality?

This dissertation considers how American women writers responded to the changing perceptions about feminine nature, to an increasingly modern society, and to the shifting religious landscape in nineteenth-century America. The complex relationship between nineteenth-century women and religion is firmly illustrated in the works of three writers who were widely read during their time and yet have a very limited readership today: Mary Hallock Foote, Sarah Orne Jewett, and Gertrude Bonnin, also known as Zitkala-Ša. Each of these women writers comes from a different geographical and cultural background, and thus they allow us to explore alternate American experiences. Second, despite varied geographical and cultural experiences, each of these writers established herself in the high-literary establishment of late nineteenth-century America through her sympathetic literary portrayals of regional cultures. Because these women writers endeavored to share and to elevate the social status of local communities, they were able to enter into the competitive, high-cultural market of "quality journals," which, according to literary scholar Richard Brodhead, was represented by the Bostonian *Atlantic Monthly* and the New-York based *Harper's Monthly* and *Century Magazine*, formerly known as *Scribner's Monthly* (124). Publishing in prominent journals, these women created a fictional space whereby they could share local communities' concerns and insights with urban, upper-middle-class domestic readers, creating a dialog between cultural differences. Lastly, when read side by side, the fictions of these women writers reveal a provocative critique about American society's increasing materialism and cosmopolitanism and illustrate a possible solution: a renewed value of Christian beliefs and practices.

Let me begin by describing these three American women writers and illustrating how their works speak to each other in interesting ways. My first figure, Mary Hallock Foote, was raised on a Quaker farm in upper-state New York in the 1850s where she acquired a fondness for books and intellectualism at an early age. Her father, Nathaniel Hallock, was an avid reader, and he often quoted poetry and shared the great political debates of the day with his family in the evenings after dinner. In addition to her father's intellectual influence, Foote received a thorough education that began with her attendance at the family's weekly Quaker meetings and continued with her enrollment at Poughkeepsie Female Collegiate Institute, a female "seminary" school that followed the domestic training of Catherine Beecher. Encouraged by her Aunt Sarah Hallock to pursue her artistic career, at seventeen years of age Foote pursued her study of drawing at the School of Design for Women at Cooper Union in New York City. After graduation, she quickly made a name for herself as an artist, a wood-engraver, illustrating the works of writers such as Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, John Greenleaf Whittier, and Nathaniel Hawthorne. Her budding career, however, was interrupted by her engagement and marriage to Arthur Foote, a non-Quaker, whose work as a mining and irrigation engineer took them out west in the 1870s and kept them there for most of their lives.

As they traveled back and forth between California, Colorado, and Idaho, Foote took up writing in an attempt to supplement her family's income. Over the course of her life, she published twelve novels, four collections of short stories, and many stories, essays, and illustrations that appeared in prominent literary publications such as *Century Magazine*, *Scribner's Monthly*, and the *Atlantic Monthly* from roughly 1870 to 1920. What all of her works have in common is attention to regional places and communities. As many of her contemporaries noted, she excelled at describing rural settings, revealing cultural customs and

concerns, and evoking an emotional response from her reader. Influenced by her Quaker upbringing and the domestic and the sentimental ideals of seminary school, Foote often focuses in her writings on Christian values of family, self-sacrifice, and virtue, and she frequently invests the landscape with religious and spiritual significance. For an example, in her second to last novel, *Edith Bonham* (1917), Foote's heroine, an eastern woman who moved West to be a governess for her friend's children, stands at the edge of a bluff in Idaho and contemplates the Biblical account of God's creation: "And the evening and the morning were the sixth day," she observes, "I fancied I knew why evening came before morning in that stupendous record. Night is the constructive time when miracles are wrought" (159). In contrast to more typical masculine descriptions of the Idaho landscape, Foote emphasizes the creative, regenerative, and spiritual value of the place.

My second woman writer, Sarah Orne Jewett, grew up in rural South Berwick, Maine during the 1850s. The granddaughter of a sea captain and merchant, Jewett grew up in a leisured upper-class family and her grandfather's financial success allowed her to dedicate her life to her passion: writing. Known as a sickly child, Jewett spent much of her childhood traveling the local districts with her father, Theodore H. Jewett, who was a country doctor. She graduated from Berwick Academy in 1865, and at eighteen years old she published her first short story, entitled "Jenny Garrow's Lovers," in a Boston weekly periodical in 1868. By the time she was nineteen years old she had published various short stories and poems in prominent literary journals including the *Atlantic Monthly*, and she had made acquaintances with various New England elites such as William Dean Howells, Horace E. Scudder, and Annie Fields, the wife of Boston publisher James T. Fields, as well as multiple New England religious leaders including Swedenborgian Theophilus Parsons, Episcopalian Bishop William Woodruff Niles, Shaker

leader Elder Henry Green, and Transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson. At the urging of Howells, Jewett revised several of her Maine sketches and published her first book in 1877 under the title *Deephaven*. Jewett continued to publish numerous short stories and several collections of regional sketches such as *Country-Byways* (1881), *A Country Doctor* (1884), *A White Heron and Other Stories* (1886), *The Queen's Twin and Other Stories* (1899), and *The Country of Pointed Firs* (1896). Her literary career ended in the 1890s with a disabling carriage accident in 1902, which led to her death in 1909.

As recorded in her letters, Jewett was deeply impressed by the country peoples that she met on her excursions with her father. As she writes in the introduction to *Deephaven* (1877), Jewett made it her literary mission to translate cultural difference in a way that would prove to city peoples that they could learn new and profound insights from a class of Maine's country peoples "who preserve the best traditions of culture and of manners, from some divine inborn instinct toward what is simplest and best and purest" (32-33). Like Foote, Jewett often constructs regional characters who have a heightened sense of religious belief and spirituality, which suggests the influence of her multiple religious affiliations, in order to create a connection of shared religious knowledge with her readership. In her final and most famous book of sketches, *The Country of Pointed Firs* (1896), Jewett provides her urban reader with a widow, Mrs. Blackett, who exemplifies "the highest-gift of heaven, a perfect self-forgetfulness" (46), and Jewett shows us through the image of a worn, open Bible in Mrs. Blackett's bedroom that her benevolent morality is a result of her faithful religious practice. By constructing a female character with an elevated sense of religious morality and domesticity, Jewett aligns herself with New England's theological views on women's heightened religious sensibility, as demonstrated by Emerson's address.

My third woman writer was raised in a localized community, but this time her story is very different. Born in 1876, the same year as the Battle of Little Big Horn, Gertrude Simmons Bonnin, also known by her self-given Dakota name, Zitkala-Ša or “Red Bird,” was raised on South Dakota’s Yankton Reservation, the daughter of a Sioux woman and an unknown father who was purportedly a white man. She remained on the reservation, under her mother’s guidance and care, until she was eight years old. In 1884, when the missionaries arrived to recruit children from the reservation as part of governmental attempts for assimilation, despite her mother’s wishes, Bonnin chose to travel east with the hopes of grand adventures. She attended a Quaker boarding school in Wabash, Indiana, White’s Manual Labor Institute, for three years, and then she returned to the reservation and lived with her mother for a year and a half; however, her stay was full of anger, frustration, and anxiety as Bonnin no longer felt that she belonged on the reservation. In 1895, she enrolled at Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana, and in 1896, she won second place in a state oratorical contest, which sparked her literary career. At the age of twenty, she began writing various short stories and semi-autobiographical pieces, many of which were published in *Atlantic Monthly* and *Harper’s Monthly Magazine* from 1900 to 1902, that depicted the struggles of local cultures and the devastating effects of colonialism on indigenous peoples.

When Bonnin started writing for high-literary culture, she believed that she had found a political platform through which she could call for change and reform in the treatment of Natives. Many of her early writings like “The Soft-Hearted Sioux” and “Why I am a Pagan,” however, depicted white peoples and Protestant educational assimilation projects in a negative light and thus they were not well-received. Over the next roughly fifteen years, Bonnin engaged in a variety of Native reform movements, founding a community center for the Ute Indians in

Utah and participating in the first pan-tribal organization, the Society of American Indians (SAI), in Washington, D.C. From 1916 to 1920, Bonnin worked as secretary and treasurer for SAI, and she published a variety of poems and political essays in SAI's journal, the *American Indian Quarterly*. When we compare Bonnin's early short stories and essays with her later works, we find a clear movement in her representations of Protestant Christianity. In her earlier work, Bonnin's rhetoric often illustrates the oppressive nature of Protestantism, yet in her later writings, her language reveals how she adapted Christian doctrines of equality and salvation for all people in order to create a viable future for Natives in modern America. In a 1919 address to the members of SAI, Bonnin exclaims, "God has given you life, he has given you minds to think with and hearts that we may be just to all, that we may be true to all mankind" (214). Her emphasis on religious doctrines of creation, truth, love, and justice coincides with the rhetoric of many Protestant women advocates and missionaries during this time.

Curiously, it has only been in the last twenty-five years that these writers have begun to receive the scholarly attention they deserve. Foote, Jewett and Bonnin's affiliations with regionalism and their adaptation of sentimental conventions including emotionally affective language and religious rhetoric caused them to be largely erased from the canon of American literature in the mid-twentieth century as literary tastes changed. However, when understood in relation to one another, these writers reflect a conversation about a growing culturally and regionally diverse modern American world, which played out in the pages of nineteenth-century's women's fiction. My argument is that each of these women constructed fictional regional spaces and produced alternate shared places in order to dramatize differences between cultures, to reflect concerns about America's increasingly industrial, materialistic, and cosmopolitan mainstream society, and to create an argument for a society grounded in Christian

beliefs and practices as an antidote to modernity's flaws. Despite the variety of their religious backgrounds and experiences, these writers all depict nuanced versions of Protestant tradition that both reflect the malleability of cultural religious constructions and re-assert Christian values of love, equality, family, and community. Moreover, through their descriptions of place—of the beauty, grandeur, isolation, and inherent risk of the natural world—these writers reveal phenomenological experiences and illuminate intricate connections between religion, place, and culture.

1.1 Protestantism, Women's Culture, and Literary Studies

As Peter Williams explains in his historical text *America's Religions From Their Origins To The Twenty-First Century* (2002), it wasn't long ago that America's "religious history was something of a family affair" and that the "master narrative" of religious history was based on the fact that the churches of reformation "provided the norm for the American Religious experience" (1). Yet, the nineteenth century witnessed multiple events that would shape the Protestant tradition, which stemmed from New England's orthodox theological past, and that would profoundly alter women's religious culture as well. Two religious events in particular, as literary scholar Mary McCartin Wearn notes, affected nineteenth-century Protestantism. First, in 1833 the disestablishment of church and state, which began with the American Revolution, reached its finale when Massachusetts ended its financial support of the Congregationalist Church, and this event marked the beginning of a wholly voluntary system of faith that led to a rise of numerous Protestant sects and creeds including Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, Disciples of Christ, Episcopalians, Quakers, Shakers, Lutherans, Pentecostals, to name only a few. The disestablishment of state-sponsored religion further contributed to a democratizing spirit of religious practice in America that liberated individuals

from following any one faith system. Next, the Second Great Awakening transformed religious culture by reviving the emotionally charged rhetoric of eighteenth-century Calvinist minister Jonathan Edwards while rejecting unconditional election. This shift further liberated Protestantism from the stern, dogmatic, and exclusive Puritan tradition of its past and ushered in a personally subjective, experiential, and inclusive faith through revivalist modes of worship. As Wearn explains, “The transformative powers of Christian conversion, imagined as an intimate spiritual encounter between God and believer, was open to all, regardless of race, class, gender, or educational attainment” (3). Women’s relationship with God, therefore, was no longer mediated by their husbands, or alternate male relatives, and this shift enabled women to be active agents in their own salvation.

The transformed Protestant tradition not only encouraged intellectual and experiential knowledge of God but granted believers complete assurance of their salvation, and thus the time and energy that would have been formerly dedicated to self-examination could now be turned to new pursuits: spreading the gospel and considering the state of modern America. As religious historian Gary Dorrien writes in his study of social Christianity, “Christian theology embraced a new understanding of its social mission during the very period when its doctrinal basis was strongly challenged by modern science, historical criticism, and Enlightenment philosophy” (1). Responding to national expansion projects, racial and gender inequality, industrial advancements and capitalist economies, Protestant organizations and members became active participants in national and international social reform projects, believing that their faith called them to testify by example, rather than mere word of mouth. The emphasis on lived faith through word and act would deeply influence women’s culture; many Protestant women found that religion not only elevated their roles as caretakers and teachers in the home but also offered them access to the

public sphere through prayer groups, Sabbath schools, missions, abolition groups, community health projects, and educational programs such as Indian boarding school curricula. As Wearn notes, “viewed as the natural employment of their motherly natures—the benevolent reform work of the era was quickly framed as a natural female vocation” (4). For example, nineteenth-century Protestant women including Catherine Beecher, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Susan B. Anthony employed their religious and domestic knowledge to fight for abolition and for women’s rights.

Despite the powerful influence religion had on culture in the nineteenth century, and still has today, literary scholarship has been slow to embrace the potential richness of a discourse that engages the relation between literature and religion. Building on Jenny Franchot’s theory that religion is “the invisible domain” in the study of literature, Roger Lundin argues in the introduction to his edited anthology *There Before Us: Religion* that because “intellectuals rarely regard as significant something they themselves neither practice nor profess, the neglect of the serious study of religion in American literary criticism ‘may reflect how unimportant religion is in the lives of literary scholars’” (xi). Critics tend to agree that the lack of scholarly attention to religious issues in literature is also due, in part, to Ann Douglas’s thesis in *The Feminization of American Culture* (1977): Douglas argues that the loss of a distinctly masculine Calvinist tradition in the nineteenth century led to feminized culture that was driven by sentimentalism. Although critics such as Jane Tompkins heatedly debated Douglas and argued that women’s sentimental writings performed an important “cultural work” (*Sensational Designs*), they still neglected to critique Douglas’s description of a feminized and commercialized religious landscape in nineteenth-century America. The scholars who contributed to Lundin’s anthology, including John Gatta and Lawrence Buell, endeavored to correct the omission and

misrepresentation of religion in literary studies, and thus they began a dialog about literature, religion, and culture that recent critics such as Mary McCartin Wearn, Tracey Fessenden, Randi Lynn Tanglen, and Claudia Stokes have built upon to illustrate the important role faith played in shaping society as well as women's culture. This dissertation continues recent scholarly attempts to articulate the multi-faceted role of religion in women's lives by foregrounding the religious concerns in the works of Foote, Jewett, and Bonnin.

1.2 Experimentation with Literary Form: Regionalism and Sentimentalism

In addition to focusing on their religious and spiritual representations, I show how these women writers draw from multiple literary genres such as regionalism and sentimentalism in order to mediate between their readers and different types of places, cultures, and religious traditions. Largely defined as American women regionalists, Foote, Jewett, and Bonnin each took advantage of the regionalist genre, as did many nineteenth-century women and minority writers, in order to create a niche for themselves in the literary market. However, as Stephanie Foote points out, the field of regionalism has only recently been considered a viable field for inquiry or research. According to mid-nineteenth-century judgment, regional realism or local color was a minor genre of writing that merely attempted to reveal the costume, customs, and dialect of a particular region and character for a largely eastern readership that enjoyed the exotic characters and unfamiliar places. More recently, regional writing has been read as a response to sociological changes and the expansion of a natural transportation network. As critics like Eric Sundquist, Amy Kaplan, and Richard Brodhead argue, the popularity of regionalism in the nineteenth century was due in part to the advancements in transportation that increased the internal migrations of men and women traveling to new urban areas and to the return of Civil War veterans who had traveled to various regions as part of their military duties and returned

more aware of other regions. These scholars demonstrate how regionalism operated as a form of “literary tourism” (252), to quote Kaplan, a form of spectatorship that united the nation through a remembered past of small town values and of a simpler way of life.

Although scholars in the mid-twentieth century often regarded regionalism as a minor form of writing, during the late-twentieth century, scholars began to take the genre more seriously as potentially offering a rich and provocative critique of America’s ideological beliefs. In particular, feminists Judith Fetterley and Marjorie Pryse furthered regional scholarship by arguing that regionalism, not to be associated with local color fiction, strives to resist dominant cultural ideologies and to reveal the social, economic, and political changes inherent to rural regions that are ruled by dominant powers. Moreover, they proposed that women regionalists, specifically, used the form to subvert national perceptions of gender and place-based systems of knowledge. These feminist scholars opened a critical discussion about women regionalist writers that illuminated connections between gender and place and between rural and urban experiences, and they laid a foundation for structures of feeling that recent critics have used to expand the field through a variety of methodological and theoretical frames.

The turn of the twenty-first century saw continued expansion of the canon and a re-imaging of regional discourses with prominent literary scholars like Annette Kolodny, Krista Comer, Stephanie Foote, Philip Joseph, and Hsuan Hsu who further developed the notion of place-centered writing and advocated for its ideological work. Kolodny and Comer seek to move beyond traditional conceptions of spatial mapping by looking out west for alternate regional discourses. None of these scholars look only to nineteenth-century writers and works; but they also examine how regional texts and regional thinking is employed by writers of various groups and through various genres from Kolodny’s Norse sagas and Yaqui ‘Testamento to

Comer's popular culture surfer girl texts and Foote's environmental non-fiction and murder mysteries. Beyond the expansion of the field to include more writers and to stretch our understanding of the regional form, scholars like Joseph and Hsu have actively worked to redefine the critical language that we use to discuss prominent regional texts like Jewett's *The Country of Pointed Firs* to reflect regionalism's capacity to explore issues of globalism, economy, and democracy. Most recently, in his critical study *Geography and the Production of Space in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (2010), Hsu highlights tensions between local, national, and global scales of economic exchange in Jewett's Dunnett Landing sketches. Hsu writes, "Jewett shows how a community fused together by deeply 'rooted' feelings and daily interactions depends, both economically and emotionally, on commodities and experiences acquired abroad" (173)

With its emphasis on local cultures—communities, beliefs, customs, and concerns—literary regionalism provides an exceptional form through which to examine religious expression during this era. Although in the past fifteen years regionalist scholars have sought to reveal the complexity of regionalism by bringing out issues of race, class, gender, ethnicity, geography, and economy, critics have yet to take a religious approach to regionalist studies. Indeed, in the course of describing regional communities for an urban readership, we find that Foote, Jewett, and Bonnin illustrated a myriad of social power struggles, racial inequalities, and tensions between rural and urban communities. However, in addition to their characterizations of culture, society, politics, and place, we also find that these writers actively grappled with conceptions of religion. Their challenges, negotiations, and re-constructions of theological traditions, beliefs, and practices thread throughout their stories. By following this thread, we see how religious traditions shift over time—adapting theological and philosophical trends in order to fit a specific

community's needs and to offer a more complete image of truth—as well as how experiences with space and place influence faith. Thus we gain valuable insight into the types of local, national, and global exchanges that Hsu articulates. Moreover, like other regionalist writers who were “concerned with the relationship between writer and region” (Inness and Royer 10), between person and place, and between reader and text, Foote, Jewett, and Bonnin illustrate how religious knowledge and belief can bridge body and region.

In their attempts to translate cultural and geographical differences, each of these three writers also employed, albeit to alternate aims, the emotionally affective language that was associated with early to mid-nineteenth-century sentimentalists and that was criticized by Douglas. In *The Feminization of American Culture*, Douglas writes, “popular novels published by women in the mid-nineteenth century represent a fall from tough-minded, community-oriented Calvinism into ‘rancid,’ individualistic emotionalism” (256). Although recent scholars such as Laura Wexler, Amy Kaplan, and Marianne Noble have continued to illustrate the flaws in sentimentalism whereby it “flatters its readers with images of their own benevolence,” as Noble writes, and perpetuates a dominant class over a sympathetic other, they have also moved away from Douglas's overly simplistic representation in order to understand what made the literary genre so popular in the mid-nineteenth century, as evidenced by the success of writers like Harriet Beecher Stowe, Louisa May Alcott, and Rebecca Harding Davis. In her essay “Making this Whole Nation Feel: The Sentimental Novel in the United States” (2010), Noble writes, “Sentimentalism is an epistemological, spiritual, and political genre that has moral designs upon its readers. It strives to create communities...bonded through a shared experience of suffering and a shared concern to alleviate the distress of others” (171). Steeped in Enlightenment theories that espoused compassion and equality for all of humanity, sentimental

writers attempted to create emotional connections with their audience in order to induce empathy and action, rather than promote mere emotional affect.³ Additionally, many sentimental writers wove Protestant knowledge and teachings throughout their works to call for an increased value in true Christian faith and practice and to induce societal reform. Greatly influenced by their predecessors, Foote, Jewett, and Bonnin adapted sentimentalism's "core act of [sympathetic] identification," as Glenn Hendler refers to it, as well as its emphasis on religious expression and instruction, to meet their literary aims.

Although each of these three writers evoked sympathy from their readers through their emotional and religious rhetoric, they also adapted some of sentimentalism's more traditional conventions including flowery speech and elevated diction, moral didacticism, high-minded role models, or narrators, Christian values and practices, traditional gender roles, domestic spaces and duties, romantic plotlines, melodrama, and supernatural occurrences, but to varying degrees. We find that Foote employs these conventions most consistently throughout her work, even after the turn of the twentieth century, whereas Jewett and Bonnin move away from many of them in their later works, which might suggest their closer proximity to high-literary culture, their awareness of changing literary tastes, and their unique aims. These traditional sentimental conventions appear to be used as a means to entertain and appeal to readers, who were largely white, upper-middle-class, urban women, as well as to reflect, challenge, and remedy what they perceived to be social problems in modern America. By exploring how each of these women writers experimented with emotionally affective language and traditional sentimental literary

³ Sentimental identification theories began with eighteenth-century philosophers including David Hume, Adam Smith, Thomas Reid, Dugald Stewart, and Lord Kames. As Adam Smith in his 1879 *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* wrote, "By the imagination we place ourselves in his situation, we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him" (Noble 173-174).

conventions, we are in a better position to see how these two popular literary forms, regionalism and sentimentalism, functioned together to bridge difference and to elevate Christianity.

1.3 Approaches in A Broken World

I find the intersections between religion and culture to be a particularly viable mode of inquiry, and I am most interested in how women writers' religious beliefs helped them to generate literary expression. At times, these writers reveal both religious and spiritual insights, and therefore, for the purposes of this study, I will make a distinction between the terms "religious" and "spiritual," though they are innately slippery to define, because both were debated in the nineteenth century. I will take Wearn's lead in defining "religion" as broadly as possible, "denoting simply a belief in or worship of a higher, supernatural power" (12). One's religious beliefs, therefore, reveal her theology, and one's religious practices are actions that she performs in order to draw closer to a higher power, which can include prayer as well as long walks in nature. Religion can also be one's affiliation with a specific tradition of theological beliefs, doctrines, and practices. Spirituality, on the other hand, refers to a belief in a spiritual world that exists in close proximity to the physical world. Spirituality was popular in the nineteenth century, and many individuals, including the Fox sisters, Margaret and Kate, claimed to be clairvoyants.⁴ Spirituality was not necessarily opposed to religion, as Harriet Beecher Stowe believed, in that real spirituality, as opposed to lies and false testimonies of supernatural power, lead to a heightened awareness of the signs of the spiritual world in the physical.⁵ We find

⁴ According to Bridgett Bennett, Margaret and Kate's claims, which came to be known as the "Rochester rappings," that they could speak to spirits were disproven but led to an outpouring of spiritual interest in 1848 (5).

⁵ In an 1860 letter to Calvin Stowe, which appeared in Fields's *Life and Letters*, Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote, "One thing I am convinced of,--that spiritualism is a reaction from the intense materialism of the present age. Luther, when he recognized a personal devil, was much nearer right. We ought to enter fully, at least, into the spiritualism of the Bible. Circles and spiritual jugglery I regard as the lying signs and wonders, with all deceivableness of unrighteousness; but there is a real scriptural spiritualism which has fallen into disuse, and must be revived, and

evidence of Stowe's argument in the works of these writers in that often times their characters' spiritual awareness leads to a deeper religious faith.

Chapter 1 illustrates how Mary Hallock Foote's Quaker upbringing influenced her literary career in a multitude of ways. Although recent scholars such as Christie Hill Smith, Melody Graulich, and Sherrie Inness have paid much attention to how Foote illustrated an alternate, less masculinized, version of the American West as well as to how she reflected the social and ethnic diversity of western mining towns, no attention has been paid to how her Quaker upbringing influenced her engagement and imaginative response to American landscapes and cultures. I contend that Foote's Quaker short story "Friend Barton's 'Concern'" (1879) offers a frame through which to read her western works, including "Maverick" (1894) and *Edith Bonham* (1917). Through all three works, Foote employs sentimental conventions to help her readers relate to alternate cultures, whether pastoral Quakers or Western immigrants; however, when viewed side by side, the fictions reveal a dramatic shift in religious expression. The earliest story, set on a rural Quaker farm in New York, depicts a strong, healthy, religious family who embodies Quaker values—compassion, honesty, piety, and hard work—and resists mainstream culture's materialism. Written about fifteen years later, during a dark time in Foote's life, her Western story "Maverick" depicts a non-religious, psychologically damaged family, a hellish Idaho landscape, and a providential suicide, which leads us to reconsider the relations between religion, place, and culture. Foote continues to question relations between the Western landscape and the religious beliefs of her characters in her later novel *Edith Bonham*, but she moves beyond the regionalist themes in her earlier works to reflect on the flaws of

there are, doubtless, people who, from some constitutional formation, can more readily receive the impressions of the surroundings spiritual world. Such were apostles, prophets, and workers of miracles (Bennett 145-46)

modern American society—its commercialism, materialism, and intellectualism—and to offer Christianity as a possible solution.

Chapter 2 builds on the relationship between religion, place, and culture by exploring Jewett's coastal Maine sketches. Although literary critics such as Judith Fetterley, Joseph Church, and Hsuan Hsu have explored the role of women and matriarchal communities, the process of community building through social visitation and storytelling, the decline of New England's shipping industry, as well as the global influences evident in rural communities through the example of Dunnett Landing, little attention has been paid to Jewett's representations of religious or spiritual practices. Considering her affiliations with various Protestant denominations from Episcopalian to Transcendentalism, I reveal how Jewett experiments with a variety of religious and spiritual expressions in her first book, *Deephaven* (1877), in order to question where, and with whom, her characters can find spiritual and religious knowledge. By constructing a traveling narrative point of view, Jewett models for the reader how visiting with other cultures, even temporarily, can lead to personal reflection and to new wisdom. She continues this narrative technique in her most celebrated book, *The Country of Pointed Firs* (1896), and I argue that the spiritual and religious experimentation that is evident in *Deephaven* matures into a clearer vision of two types of Christianity: an exclusive faith based on doctrine and an inclusive faith rooted in Biblical scripture and the natural world. In *Pointed Firs*, the later of these two faiths serves to promote individual comfort, sustenance, and purpose and to cultivate community and thus comes to represent, as seen in Foote's work, a powerful tool for restoring spiritual and communal values to modern American society.

Chapter 3 argues that Gertrude Bonnin's Protestant Indian boarding education led her to challenge and re-construct orthodox Christianity in order to create a place for indigenous peoples

within the Protestant faith system. Although Bonnin's early works— including her school essay “Side by Side” (1896), her semi-autobiographical essays (1900-1902), her short story “The Soft-Hearted Sioux” (1901) and her essay “Why I am a Pagan” (1902)—can be read as rejection of Christian religion, I illustrate how she also re-imagined the Christian faith by melding Biblical doctrine and Christian values with specific elements of pan-tribalism such as vision quests and connections to place and time, creating a mosaic of faith and illustrating the malleability of faith systems. Through her reconstruction of Christian faith, Bonnin was able to separate the hypocrisy of institutionalized religion, which forced Native assimilation, from Christian teachings of compassion and human equality, and we find evidence in her later works—“The Indian's Awakening” (1916), “The Red Man's America” (1917), and her political speeches (1916-1920)—to suggest that her religious beliefs contributed to her vision for social change in America. Working from a similar vein as other nineteenth-century Protestants who believed that the only true faith was a faith of works and action, Bonnin used her religious rhetoric to call for justice and equality for Native Americans.

In the conclusion, I take up the connections between religion, place, and culture more directly by looking to the budding field of humanist geography in order to position these three writers within an ongoing discussion about the phenomenological experience of place. In *Space and Place*, humanist geographer Yi-Fu Tuan illuminates the multiple variants of how we experience space—mythic space and place, architectural, time, homeland—and he explains that space becomes a place once people attach meaning to it. Through their descriptions of the land, their sense of place and of spirituality in the natural world, and their emotional attachments to place, these writers reveal how place can be experienced in profoundly intimate and religious ways. Additionally, I pull from American religious scholar Belden Lane, whose 2002 critical

study entitled *Landscapes of the Sacred* offers three paradigms through which to understand American sacred space: ontological, cultural, and phenomenological. Lane illustrates how people experience place by participating, knowingly or unknowingly, in the histories and stories of the lives of those who have lived there and made it their home as well as by engaging sensorially with region-specific geographical features. By employing humanist geographers' theories, I show how the works of Foote, Jewett, and Bonnin articulate spiritual and religious values of place.

2 CHAPTER 1 RELIGION AND SENTIMENTALISM IN THE REGIONAL WRITINGS OF MARY HALLOCK FOOTE

Writing in her seventies, Mary Hallock Foote began her autobiography reminiscing about her childhood and the Quaker family farm located on the Hudson River in Milton, New York.⁶ She fondly describes the old Friends' Meetinghouse and the elders who sat quietly on the benches as well as the "dark winter mornings" when she would wake early to go with her father to "feed cut-turnips to the yearling lambs" (48-51). Within her memories, there seems to be a special place for the "Quakeresses" whom she knew in her childhood. Her father's sisters, Foote states, "were not of the lily type" but "strongly made women with faces interesting and full of character but not beautiful" (108-09). The "dominant influence in [her] life," these faithful, "humorous," "witty," and wise women are reoccurring figures in her autobiography.⁷ Although recent

⁶ Written in the 1920s, *A Victorian Gentlewoman in the Far West: Reminiscences of Mary Hallock Foote* was published posthumously in 1978 with an introduction by editor Rodman W. Paul.

⁷ In *A Victorian Gentlewoman in the Far West*, Foote refers to several women who were critical to her early development including her mother, a "sensitive gentle woman of the forties, who kept her Quaker speech but could not rule the color that would rise in her cheek instead of the hasty retort she had learned to suppress," and her Aunt Sarah, an avid activist for anti-slavery and women's rights. (97) Brief anecdotes often appear in her autobiography and reflect the integrity of these women. For an example, in one passage Foote narrates a trip she took with her father when she was eight years old to visit the Townsend cousins and their father. Having enjoyed her time at their farm so thoroughly, Foote remembers how she was "in a dream of content" all the way home; however, once she

scholarship has striven, as Christie Hill Smith writes, “to reintegrate [Foote] into an appropriate historical and literary location in American letters,” (9) critics have neglected to fully consider how her Quaker upbringing influenced her literary career. Her time spent on the Hallock farm and her strong relationship with the Quaker women in her family, I argue, deeply influenced her writing, leading her to focus on rural and domestic settings, familial and romantic relationships, and female characters who embody a variety of Quaker ethics and values.

Although recent scholarship has attempted to draw awareness and appreciation to Foote’s western fiction, arguing that her depiction of life as an immigrant in the West realistically reflects social class struggles, challenges for immigrants in the West, and growing environmental issues, it has failed to recognize the important role that her Quaker upbringing played in guiding her authorial choices. Having been raised in a pastoral Quaker family, Foote was more than familiar with country domestic life as well as Christian ideologies that emphasized the importance of biblical and spiritual knowledge, of the nuclear family and equality among its members, and of strong moral and ethical codes, and these beliefs are reoccurring themes in her work. Domesticity and religion are also common themes in the works of women writers of the mid-nineteenth century, particularly within the works of sentimental women writers such as Harriet Beecher Stowe and Louisa May Alcott, to name only a couple. Thus far, scholarship has attempted to position Foote within various literary genres including local-color, realism, and regionalism; yet, considering how Foote consistently employs emotionally affective language, constructs romantic and melodramatic plotlines, focuses on familial relationships, and incorporates religious rhetoric and Christian morals in her fiction, I argue that Foote should also

reached home, her mother pointed out that Foote had made the visit with mismatching shoes and stockings. The “truth was made plain,” she notes, and continues to say, “these little ladies of Marlborough had contrived to appear as if they had not seen: there had not been a spot on the sun of my happiness” (191).

be seen as a sentimentalist who employs, and often revises, sentimental conventions to entertain her eastern readership while at the same time creating an emotional affect that would allow her readership to identify with her regional female characters.⁸

In her writings of the rural West, Foote claimed, in a letter to her close friend Helena de Kay Gilder who was the wife of *Century Magazine* and *Scribner's Monthly* editor Richard Watson Gilder, that her goal was to depict “the sorrows and the wrongs of some of the settlers [there],” and she continued to state, “not [that] I’d take it up in partisan spirit but if possible in a spirit of human sympathy.” In particular, she notes that the “life of women,” and “valley farmers” appeared to her as “great poetry” and that the “dignity of lives of people who [were] building up their little fortunes,” against “entirely new risks,” deserved the upmost attention and respect (*A Victorian Gentlewoman* 30). Clearly, sympathetic representation was important to Foote, and looking at the critical reception of her work in the late nineteenth century, it is clear that critics appreciated both the sentimentalism and the realism of her work. One reviewer for the *Overland Monthly and Out West Magazine* wrote in 1896 that Foote’s collection of four Idaho stories, entitled *The Cup of Trembling* (1895), not only vividly illustrated the “romance of Idaho” and its “color, life” and “peculiarities,” but its “title story offered a sad, strong picture of an elopement and life among the Coeur d’Alenes” (237). The reviewer continued to praise the heart-felt emotion of Foote’s narrative: “The interest in the story does not depend on the

⁸ In an attempt to re-map the literary history of the West, Melody Graulich suggests that that Foote should be considered a founding western realist writer across Idaho, Colorado, and California with her fifteen novels and short story collections (“Western Biodiversity” 48). She argues that “the West gave Foote her subject matter as a writer” (50). In addition to Graulich’s discussion of Foote as a realist, in his essay “Romance, Realism, and Late Nineteenth-Century Fiction,” Gary Scharnhorst argues that Foote is “the most unjustly neglected western realist” of the nineteenth century. He quotes Charles F. Lummis’s 1898 review of Foote’s fiction; Lummis wrote that Foote’s work was “Western in truth of scene and ‘color’ and outlook” (292). Scharnhorst also quotes from a 1951 review by literary historian Arthur Hobson Clemens who praised Foote’s work, writing that she was “more realistic than either Harte or Clemens in portraying the life of the mining areas...In the history of fiction dealing with the Far West she may claim attention as the first realist of the section (293).

sensational plot, but rather on the clear, sympathetic study it contains of two human hearts that have given up the world for their love” (237).⁹ This review serves as an example of how nineteenth-century readers responded to Foote’s strong, descriptive, and emotionally charged language and imagery.

Even though Foote’s readership appreciated her romance and sentimentality, contemporary scholarship has failed to recognize Foote’s employment of these conventions, and I believe this is in part due to the persistent view of sentimentalism as a minor literary genre. Because of the genre’s low status, some scholars have even tried to distance Foote’s fiction from such classification. In her critical study *Social Class in the Writings of Mary Hallock Foote* (2008), Smith writes that Foote’s attention to realistic detail marks a clear movement away from the sentimental literature of writers like Harriet Beecher Stowe and Louise May Alcott (13, 18). Yet, realism and sentimentalism are not necessarily opposed; in fact, as Nina Baym notes in her seminal work *Woman’s Fiction* (1993), most women writers who practiced the sentimental genre were also realists, writers “responding to the demands of those like Ralph Waldo Emerson who were calling for a literature faithful to the national experience” (34). Moreover, although prominent scholars of nineteenth-century American women’s fiction such as Baym and Tompkins often refer to the period of roughly 1800-1870 as the highpoint of literary sentimentalism (whereas Foote didn’t begin publishing until the late 1870s), they also agree that “a literary type does not disappear in an instant” (Baym 276). Concentrated analysis of Foote’s employment of sentimental conventions reveals how she was not only influenced by her predecessors and contemporaries but how she adapts these conventions to illuminate the challenges inherent to women’s lives and invests these challenges with spiritual significance.

⁹ For the complete review, see *The Review of Reviews*, edited by Albert Shaw. Vol XIII (Jan.-June 1896).

I am especially interested in the affective register of Foote's language as well as the social and religious dimensions found in her fictions. In this chapter, I claim that Foote, like other nineteenth-century women writers, not only adapts traditional sentimental literary conventions but stages sympathy to create a compassionate response from her audience. By staging sympathy, Foote not only breaks down readers' expectations of regional characters and places, making them accessible, relatable, and empathetic, but also subverts notions of urban and rural as well as East and West. A deeper understanding of how Foote uses sentimental conventions to construct regional identities, and more specifically female identities, in her fiction will further scholarly debates on Foote's role as a regionalist writer. Although some critics have argued that Foote cannot be considered a regionalist writer because she writes about the West from an easterner's perspective, I understand the definition of regionalist more broadly, as do scholars like Sherrie Inness, Diana Royer, and Hsuan Hsu, to include writers whose work reflects and interrogates connections between self and community as well as between rural and urban.¹⁰ This chapter, therefore, illustrates how Foote's work reveals a remarkable infusion of two popular nineteenth-century forms: sentimentalism and regionalism.

My second claim in this chapter is that by rereading Foote's work with an eye for social and religious issues, we find a connection between Foote's Quaker upbringing and her religious beliefs and her literary representation of place and community. If we read work she published in the late 1870s alongside work from after the turn of the twentieth century, we find that Foote's religious beliefs infiltrated her work in interesting ways: not only do many of her characters

¹⁰ In their introduction to *Breaking Boundaries* (1997), Inness and Royer postulate that "regionalist conventions are not always used to benefit the peoples and lands that they describe. In addition, they confirm Foote's position as a regionalist by noting how she utilizes "geographical settings as a way of sharing more than the physical appearance of a region, and they continue to note that in Foote's writings "land conveys [her] deep emotion about a physical region" (4).

embody the Quaker values and ethics of her pastoral Quaker ancestors, but her illustrations of western landscapes depict a heightened spiritualization. For Foote, the initial move west was full of physical, psychological, and emotional challenges, and thus we find that her early western stories often invest the landscape with divine, redemptive, and even demonic qualities. In her later life, after establishing a more stable and comfortable lifestyle in California, Foote's fiction shifts in tone to reveal how the natural beauty and hardships of the West can serve to be a source of spiritual rejuvenation and a place removed from the urban, fast-paced, materialistic society of the East.

In order to provide a biographical foundation for Foote's authorial choices, I begin this chapter with a brief discussion of her childhood, education, and artistic aspirations as well as of her journey to the West. After examining how her early life influenced her writing career, I look to one of Foote's most neglected short stories, a story published in the July 1879 issue of *Scribner's Monthly*: "Friend Barton's 'Concern.'" Set on a fictional Quaker farm in New York State, "Friend Barton's 'Concern'" narrates the life of nineteen-year-old Dorothy Barton, the daughter of a Quaker farmer, and illustrates the unique challenges that this up-bringing posed for a young, nineteenth-century woman. In writing about a pastoral Quaker family, Foote was reworking her own concept of home. Her desire to portray the family empathetically required that she find a literary mode that would help her primarily urban eastern audience move past their initial expectations of Quaker believers as strange or extreme to discover their individuality and humanity. Thus, in the story, Foote employs popular sentimental conventions such as melodrama, biblical values and scripture, virtuous and self-reliant heroines, and romance plots in order to make Dorothy's life and values comprehensible and meaningful to contemporary readers.

Using “Friend Barton’s ‘Concern’” as a framing piece, I look to two of Foote’s most under-studied western stories to demonstrate how Foote employed and adapted sentimental and regional conventions to construct western landscapes and to help her readers emotionally identify with both women who grew up in the West and those who emigrated there: a short story entitled “Maverick” (1894) and a novel entitled *Edith Bonham* (1917). Read next to “Friend Barton’s ‘Concern,’” “Maverick” and *Edith Bonham* illustrate how Foote’s religious beliefs influenced her writing profoundly, shaping her perceptions of morality, family, society, and place. Comparing Foote’s earlier short stories to her later longer fiction reveals a shift in Foote’s employment of regionalism that coincided with a larger movement in twentieth-century regionalisms. According to Hsu, “if reading difference and resistance to the level of culture characterizes most nineteenth-century regionalists, twentieth-century regionalists wrote in a different atmosphere, where regionalism had become a political tool as well as a cultural discourse” (223). In “Friend Barton’s ‘Concern’” and “Maverick,” Foote creates sentimental identification with her readers in order to close the cultural gap between eastern and western women. Yet, in *Edith Bonham*, Foote moves beyond merely creating a dialogue between the West and the East in that she uses regionalism to reveal problems in modern urban American society that stemmed from the rise in industrial capitalism.

By foregrounding Foote’s literary depictions of place and religion, we find that her views on nature and faith shifted dramatically from “Friend Barton’s ‘Concern’” to “Maverick” and, lastly, *Edith Bonham*. The rural Quaker farm that she constructs in “Friend Barton’s ‘Concern’” reflects a familiar, domesticated way of life that might represent civilized eastern society and religious traditions including Quakerism. When Foote moved to the West, she encountered a very different version of the natural world from the rural countryside of the Hudson River, and

her encounter with the wild, grand, and lonely western landscape seems to have promoted an evolution in her spiritual and religious views. As Foote writes in her memoirs, the time her family spent in Idaho was the darkest period in her life due to financial and relationship struggles and to her sense of estrangement from family, friends, and eastern society, and these frustrations and hardships seem to play out in many of her western fictions. In “Maverick,” Foote replaces the domesticated farmland of “Friend Barton’s ‘Concern’” with a barren and desolate western landscape that is both demonic and divinely inspired. The heightened spiritualization and dramatized religious symbolism of the West continues in *Edith Bonham* except in a very different manner. Instead of a hellish place, the Idaho landscape depicted in *Edith Bonham* offers a renewed sense of spirituality and religious conviction, and the optimistic view that Foote takes on nature and religion may reflect her family’s move from Idaho to California as well as her own growing Christian faith. Interestingly, in *Edith Bonham* Foote seems to argue that the East represents traditional Quakerism and urbanized and domesticated places, whereas the West illustrates a rejuvenated Christian faith and wild and open spaces.

2.1 Mary Hallock Foote: Childhood, Education, and Literary Aspirations

Foote was raised on a farm in Ulster County on the west side of the Hudson River, four miles south of Poughkeepsie and a half-mile from the village of Milton. In her memoirs she writes that the Hallock farm was settled by Quaker Edward Hallock, his wife, and their eleven children in 1762, and she describes a burgeoning family tree that in later generations connected her family to most, if not all, of the participants of the Society of Friends’ New York Yearly Meeting (Miller 6). The family, Foote notes, largely kept to itself: “I don’t remember that we took part in the village life, certainly not in its social or churchgoing life” (48). Yet, despite the family’s distance from town life, Foote was not lonely as she had her siblings (an older brother and two

older sisters) and her Quaker cousins, who lived in New York City and visited the farm often, as playmates. Frequently she reminisces about how they went “ice skating in the winter” and horseback riding after dinner in the summer (92-93). According to Foote biographer Darlis Miller, due to the Quaker emphasis on gender equality and education, at an early age, Foote attended the Friends’ school, which was in the meetinghouse on the family’s property. Despite the Hallock connections to Quakers outside of Ulster County, however, Foote writes that her family did not participate in any Quaker functions outside of the families’ due to an old conflict between her Uncle Nicholas, a “remarkably gifted preacher,” and the Society of Friends. Having gone to the Yearly Meeting and spoken out against slavery, Nicholas Hallock was “laid down” by the general conference who disapproved of his powerful and inflammatory rhetoric. Foote writes that his “language was too strong for those shrinking times,” and the fissure remained even after his death, isolating the family from other Quakers and leading many to adapt other denominational practices and values into their Quaker traditions.¹¹

Although Foote’s early upbringing was largely contained to the family farm, she was widely exposed to multiple literary, social, religious, and political issues. Her father, Nathaniel Hallock, was an active reader and provided his daughter with an endless supply of literary materials from the *Atlantic Monthly* and *Harper’s Weekly* to poetry and fiction from prominent writers like Sir Walter Scott, Charles Dickens, Lord Alfred Tennyson, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Nathaniel Hawthorne, to name just a few. Not just concerned with literary aesthetics, Foote’s father was also greatly interested in social and political matters, and she remembers that it was her “father’s custom in the evening to read aloud to the family assembled the

¹¹ Foote details these incidences in her memoirs; she writes that after the disagreement the “stiff-necked Hallocks...had no one but one another to preach to.” “They were now on the open roads of thought and they did not lack company nor great allies...the character of the meetings changed...there was reading aloud from the Bible and printed discourse by men of note who filled the Unitarian pulpits of the day” (50).

Congressional debates and the editorials in the *New York Tribune*” (52). She offers many examples of editorials that stood out to her as a child including the news of the Fugitive Slave Bill, the Dred Scott decision, as well as William Lloyd Garrison’s challenge to the Supreme Court’s ruling, an essay entitled “Dred Scott and Disunion” which appeared in an 1858 issue of *The Liberator* (53). Although a conservative family of Free Soil Republicans, as Foote notes, many of her family members, dating back to Uncle Nicholas, spoke freely of their faith and convictions instead of avoiding confrontation like many more orthodox Quakers. In addition to her father’s influence, Foote writes that her Aunt Sarah frequently invited members of the New York Anti-Slavery Society and activists of the Women’s Civil Rights movement to visit the family farm. Frederick Douglas and Susan B. Anthony are two of the many prominent figures who dined at the Hallock home. It appears that Foote recognized the great privilege she was offered in witnessing such prominent debates and figures. In her memoirs, Foote writes, “I have always regarded this phantasmagoria of idealists and propagandists and militant cranks and dreamers as one of the great opportunities of our youth, shut up as we were and cut off and ‘laid down’!” (54).

Considering the Quaker emphasis on education, it is perhaps little surprise that Foote’s parents felt it important that their daughter receive a more formal education. While a student at the Poughkeepsie Female Collegiate Institute, Foote showed a tremendous talent for drawing, and with the help of her Aunt Sarah, she began her formal art training, at the age of seventeen, as a student at the School of Design for Women at Cooper Union in New York City during the 1864-65 school year. Although the transition from the Hallock farm to New York City was a drastic one for Foote – she writes “the change from autumn temperatures in the country to city warmth and luxury indoors was softening to my hardy habits” – she states that she can only

remember those months as “being absolutely well and gloriously happy” (66). She spends several sections describing her first winter in New York, and although she writes that “her progress in art that winter [was] not worth speaking of,” the education she received on city Quaker life apparently made a significant impression on her. During this time, Foote became acquainted with what she refers to as the “rich Quaker set of Brooklyn Heights,” who in 1864-65 had their own “little clique” and “enjoyed most of the gaiety of the time;” they not only “danced” but “went to theatre” and “dressed as the World did, only better, with a chastened taste much needed in a misguided period when the fashions required the sternest of editing” (67). When viewed alongside the influence of her Aunt Sarah, these city Quakers may have come to represent for Foote a very different type than her country relatives. The difference between the out-spoken, worldly city Quakers and the conservative, simple rural Quakers of her childhood is important to note because it illustrates a lack of religious coherence and unity in Quakerism during the nineteenth century that may have shaped Foote’s own perceptions of religion, views that emerge in her later writings.

Despite living amidst wealth and “the most brilliant and fascinating young people of [her] time,” (103) Foote seems to have been determined to succeed in her artistic efforts. She quickly created a name for herself as an artist, illustrating the works of writers like Longfellow, Whittier, Hawthorne, and Tennyson. Her illustrations received an abundance of praise from some of the most prominent literary critics, and William Dean Howells included one of her illustrations in a special edition of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *Scarlet Letter* (Miller 37). Yet, her career as an illustrator was interrupted by her engagement to irrigation engineer Arthur Foote, a first cousin of Henry Ward Beecher, whom she met at a New Year’s party in New York City. After their meeting, Arthur traveled West in pursuit of work, and while he was away, he began writing her

letters. The letters soon turned into an engagement, although Foote was reticent to his advances at first. Taking leave from his work, she writes, in what could be a scene from one of her many romances, Arthur arrived with a “great hooded ulster belted around him” and “laid his pipe and pistol on the bureau where her chaste neckerchiefs had been,” “as if he had been a Viking himself.” She continues, “He came armed with a decision where indecision awaited him, and of course he carried the day” (104). They were married, in a Quaker ceremony, shortly after, despite her family’s objections to a marriage “out-of-meeting.”

After their wedding in 1876, Arthur Foote’s work took them West and kept them there for most of their life, traveling back and forth between California, Colorado, Mexico, and Idaho. Hesitant to go West, Foote writes in her memoirs that “no girl ever wanted less to ‘go West’ with any man, or paid a man a greater compliment by doing so” (58). Despite her reluctance, Foote came to appreciate life in the West, and as Melody Graulich explains, “the West gave Foote her subject matter as a writer” (50). Indeed, as Foote explained, “There appeared to be a demand for such stories as mine, and the impulse was on me of the unseasoned traveler to set down things about places new to me which now had the magic of perspective and like other vanishing things began to shine and call” (155). Thus, encouraged by her close friend Helena, whom she met at Cooper Union, and Helena’s husband, Richard Watson Gilder, Foote began using her experiences in the West to create fiction. Howells accepted her first story, “In Exile,” for publication in the *Atlantic Monthly* after asking her to revise the story ending so that it would be less “gloomy” (155). Over the next forty years, she published twelve novels, four collections of short stories, and many of these stories, essays, and illustrations appeared in prominent literary publications like *St. Nicholas Magazine*, *Century Magazine*, *Scribner’s Monthly*, and *Atlantic Monthly*.

“A Peculiar Faith”: Quakerism and “Friend Barton’s ‘Concern’”

In the spring of 1878, after living in New Almaden and Santa Cruz, California for a total of two years, Foote returned to Milton to stay with her family and to tend to her newborn child while her husband looked for work in South Dakota and Colorado, and while she was home she wrote three short stories: “In Exile,” (1881) “Friend Barton’s ‘Concern’” (1879), and “A Story of the Dry Season” (1879). Foote biographer Lee Ann Johnson claims in her 1980 critical study of Foote’s life and works that the trip back home refreshed Foote and caused her to “return to material she could treat with familiarity and confidence” (37). Set in 1812, “Friend Barton’s ‘Concern’” narrates the life of a nineteen-year-old Quaker girl, Dorothy Barton, who struggles to tend to the family farm, her frail mother, and her younger brothers while her father is away at the yearly meeting of Philadelphia and Baltimore Society of Friends. During her father’s departure, Dorothy manages the household chores and the care of their livestock, but when a September rainstorm threatens to destroy the family home and millhouse, she is forced to accept the aid of Walter Evesham, a neighbor who runs his own mill and rents the Barton’s ponds. As the narrator tells us, there is only “one ewe-lamb” that Evesham “covet[s] out of Friend Barton’s rugged pasture,” and the young man’s repeated attempts to win Dorothy’s affections constitutes much of the narrative. Upon Friend Barton’s return, he is faced with his wife’s request to allow Dorothy to marry Evesham, “out of meeting,” and despite his reservations that Evesham’s family lives according to a different and, according to Barton, an inferior system of values, he acquiesces.

Until now, scholars have ignored this regional story, and I can only surmise that it is because Foote’s Leadville novels have largely dominated scholarship, overshadowing Foote’s other literary accomplishments. In a brief summary of Foote’s work during her trip home in

1878, Foote biographer Darlis Miller writes that Foote's attention to dialect and authentic portrayal of customs, scenes and characters in "Friend Barton's 'Concern'" "showcases her talent for descriptive writing" (67). Indeed, the vivid descriptions of farming life reflect Foote's literary skill, yet I believe a closer examination of the story will both reveal how Foote incorporates and revises sentimental conventions in her fiction to appeal to her audience and position Foote within the category of American women regionalists. Not only does the story offer realistic descriptions of life on a Quaker farm in Milton, New York, but it sympathetically reflects the life of a Quaker girl who, despite her pride in independence, family, and heritage, decides to marry "out-of-meeting." Foote's sensitive reconstruction of rural Quaker life, of the humanness of Quaker believers, and of female adolescence aligns with Fetterley and Pryse's definition of American literary regionalism. In the introduction to their anthology *American Women Regionalists 1850-1910*, Fetterley and Pryse write that in a regionalist text "reading becomes a synonym for listening; regional writers create regional characters in order to enlarge the hearts and perspectives of their readers, not to reinforce the reader's sense of superiority" (xviii). Foote's fiction teaches the audience to appreciate and respect the life and struggles of a girl with "a peculiar faith" ("Friend" 71).

Part of what makes Foote's representation of Quaker life remarkable is how she works against common stereotypes about Quakers that were prevalent in nineteenth-century fiction. In his study *Imaginary Friends* (2009), James Emmett Ryan analyzes the works of several nineteenth-century writers including Nathaniel Hawthorne, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Rebecca Harding Davis, and Louise Amy Alcott in order to illustrate how Quakers "have stood as an ongoing query about the rightness of American morals" (26). Ryan reveals how many non-Quaker writers juxtaposed Quaker culture with mainstream American culture to illustrate the

latter's materialism, racism, and overall moral corruption.¹² In his reading of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, a text Foote would have been familiar with, he argues that Stowe's depiction is representative of how Quakers were perceived as "moral exemplars in American fiction":

Temperate and serene, the men, women, and children in Stowe's Quaker settlement exude Christian virtue, moral gravity, robust health, and personal strength; for them social justice begins at home, and the Quaker doctrine of an 'Inner Light' for each believer manifests itself in an environment of mutuality, candor, and dignity. (160)

Quakers' frequently admired religious views and model behavior, however, led to their dehumanization in that, as Ryan argues, they "usually appear[ed] to comprise a preternaturally gifted subset of humanity-ethereal saints of benevolence" (169). Quakerism, he continues, becomes a "fantasy" social model, a religion so extreme that it is inaccessible to mainstream Americans, yet also an ideal to which society could aspire.

In her memoirs, Foote shows that she was aware of the frequent employment and misrepresentation of Quakers in American fiction, and she exclaims that she was "so bitter of other people's Quaker stories" that she wanted to write one of her own in order to more accurately portray the religious community that she grew up in. "Friend Barton's 'Concern'" illustrates many of the basic tenets and values of Quakerism that many non-Quakers admired such as strict adherence to religious beliefs, plain dress and speech, kindness and love towards others, and honest, rigorous, and thrifty livelihood, as well as to a full rejection of worldly, materialistic, and self-indulgent habits. When the narrative opens, Dorothy's father is "troubled" by "the turnings of the Lord's hand upon him," and he comes to believe, after many sleepless nights, that the Lord has called him to "open the concern" before the Society of Friends at the

¹² Ryan notes that Ralph Waldo Emerson enriched his religious and philosophical views by "immersing" himself in the study of English and American Quakerism. He discusses Emerson's lecture of George Fox, delivered in 1835 at Boston's Masonic Temple, and he quotes a passage from Emerson's letter where Emerson writes, "I am more a Quaker than anything else. I believe in the 'still, small voice,' and that voice is Christ within us" (167).

yearly meetings of Philadelphia and Baltimore (59, 66). Friend Barton's "calling" illustrates a foundational principle that differentiates Quakerism from other forms of Christianity: the belief in God's "Inner Light" in all of us.¹³ Through his "calling" to preach, Friend Barton represents a conservative pastoral Quaker who prioritizes religious observance over any and all other worldly pursuits. The narrator tells us that "vain compliments, such as worldly titles of Mr. and Mrs., were unacceptable to Thomas Barton, and he was generally addressed as 'Uncle Tommy' by the world's people of a younger generation" (62). In addition to disregarding mainstream societal conventions, he also rejects material wealth and success. In a conversation with a neighbor who surveys the poor condition of the Barton farm and comments "Wal, the Lord calls most of us to stay home and look after things" (62), Friend Barton states, "It is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps, neighbor Jordan. I am getting myself in readiness to obey the Lord, whichever way He shall call me" (62).

Friend Barton's "concern" is only one example of the many aspects of Quakerism that Foote incorporates into her narrative to help her audience understand what a Quaker faith might look like in everyday life. She pays particular attention to the loving and nurturing manner of the family members towards each other as well as toward other living beings. Baym explains that sentimental fiction "excoriate[s] an unhappy home as the basic source of human misery and imagines a happy home as the acme of human of bliss" (27).¹⁴ Perhaps Foote constructs a harmonious Quaker family in order to show how religious practice can create a supportive, loving, and emotionally stable home. For example, she notes how Friend Barton stocked up on

¹³ Building on the work of literary and religious scholar Dan McKanan, Ryan asserts that although many nineteenth-century American authors like Stowe wrote about Quakerism they often avoided referencing "an inner awareness of spirituality" (42). Thus Foote moves beyond the portrayal of stock characters to illustrate realities of Quaker faith.

¹⁴ Baym writes that "home life is presented, overwhelmingly, as unhappy. There are few intact families in this literature, and those that are intact are unstable or locked into routines of misery. Domestic tasks are arduous and monotonous; family members oppress and abuse each other; social interchanges are alternately insipid or malicious. Domestic setting and description, then, do not by any means imply domestic idyll" (27).

chopped firewood prior to his departure to make his family's life easier in his absence, and when Dorothy sees the chopped wood after he leaves, she cries out, "Dear father! How he has worked over that wood, early and late, to spare us!" (71). Foote reveals how his caring actions are grounded in the values of their faith: hard-work, self-sacrifice, and love. Foote heightens the benevolence of the family by also emphasizing their interactions with other living creatures through a "hospital tent" set up near the kitchen chimney that was "seldom without an occupant—a brood of chilled chickens, a weakly lamb, or a wee pig (with too much blue in its pinkness) that had been left behind by its stouter brethren in the race for existence" (60). Later in the narrative, Dorothy carries around a basket of chicks that were abandoned by their mother, even attempting to save them in the flood, and Evesham comments that she is "a special providence" (106). Each of these examples serves to reveal a family whose system of values is focused on caring for others, modeling a social system that mainstream America had lost in its pursuit of industry and progress.

Moreover, the conversations between husband and wife, mother and daughter, and sister and brothers further illustrate the strong bonds that Quaker families and communities cultivate. Not merely focusing on the hardships of farm life, Foote reveals the humor and joy that comes from close-knit familial bonds and that serves to comfort them during hardships. In a scene where Rachel is reading to her children the letters that their father wrote to them while in the city—an example in itself of paternal affection—the narrator repeatedly interrupts Rachel's recitation to show the playful interactions of Shep, Reuby, the eldest sons, Jimmy, the youngest son, and Dorothy. Mid sentence, Rachel pauses to ask Reuby "What's thee doing to thy brothers?" The narrator fills us in on the boys' behavior: "Shep and Reuby, who had been persecuting Jimmy by pouring handfuls of corn down the neck of his jacket until he had taken

refuge behind Dorothy's chair, were now recriminating with corn-cobs on each other's faces." Rachel responds, "Dorothy, can't thee keep those boys quiet?" and Dorothy counters, "Did thee ever know them to be quiet?" The family's banter continues until Dorothy states, "How did thee ever come to have such a graceless set of children, mother?" Rachel answers, "I'm very well satisfied" (85). Despite the father's absence, the family stays united, and the naturalness of their intimate playfulness and joking is suggestive of their love for one another and illustrative of their faith. Foote's story stands in stark contrast to the many stories about family dysfunction that pervade nineteenth-century sentimental literature such as Maria Susanna Cummins's *The Lamplighter* (1858) or Helen Hunt Jackson's *Ramona* (1884).

In addition to the emphasis on loving familial relations, through Rachel and Dorothy, Foote reveals the Quaker emphasis on gender equality and strong womanhood. Although Rachel is in frail health, which runs counter to the stock female Quaker character whom Ryan states is always physically healthy, she demonstrates wisdom, patience, and endurance, and at times, appears to be the spiritual backbone of the family. Despite the additional burden that her husband's absence would place upon her, she is the first to accept his calling, encouraging him by stating, "If the Spirit is with thee, do not deny it for our sakes, I pray thee" (64). She is also the first to speak about Dorothy's happiness and marriage, even reminding her husband that he was not her father's first pick either. In both scenarios, she illustrates that a woman can offer insight and wisdom and that she is not tied to her husband's beliefs. Moreover, Dorothy runs the family farm while her father is away, not her younger brothers, and her ability to handle both outside and inside chores subverts traditional divisions of labor based on gender. Foote even makes a point to incorporate a woman preacher into Friend Barton's letters; he shares with the family how Hannah Husband "was much favored" at the meetings, "lift[ing] up her voice like the

song of an angel,” and when Dorothy inquires as to who Hannah Husband is, Rachel replies that she is a family relative who “has a great gift for the ministry” (83). Just as Dorothy subverts the traditional women’s/men’s spheres of work, Hannah Husband subverts traditional opinions of biblical doctrine that deny women the ability to preach.

With its emphasis on a strong, religious, nuclear family, Foote’s narrative might be read as an idealized representation of a harmonious, pastoral Quaker family, yet she moves beyond such a simplistic image by revealing multiple tensions between religious observance and worldly aspirants. Unlike the stock characters found in other American authors’ works, Friend Tom Barton does not immediately accept his calling. The tension Foote creates between what he feels his duties are towards God versus his family reveal that his faith is a choice, at times a difficult one, not an inborn elevation of humanity. At times he even questions his responsibilities, and in a prayer, he cries out, “Lord, strengthen my patience...I find daily bread is very desirable; want and necessity are painful to nature; but shall I follow Thee for the sake of the loaves, or will it do to forsake Thee in times of emptiness and abasement?” (64). It’s possible that Foote wanted to show the reader how difficult Friend Barton’s decision was to make in order to erase any preconceptions about Quakers being divinely inspired or being super-spiritual beings.

Friend Barton is not the only one who doubts his calling; Dorothy also questions her father’s spiritual mission in light of the farm’s impoverished state and the family’s physical needs. We are told, “Dorothy put her hands on her father’s shoulders: she was almost as tall as he, and could look into his patent, troubled eyes. ‘Father, I know what thee is thinking of, but do think long. It will be a hard year; the boys ought to go to school; and mother is so feeble!’” (63). Although the narrator informs us that Dorothy comes to a “fuller realization of [her father’s] struggle” when she sees the tears on his face as he leaves, she does “not succeed in bringing

herself into unity with [his] call” (70). Dorothy’s objection to her father’s absence seems to undercut his mission and might suggest Foote’s own ambivalence towards a religious calling that would leave a family deprived as she frequently uses comments made by the neighbors to emphasize Friend Barton’s neglect of the farm. For an example, Farmer Jordan states, “Queer kinks them old Friend preachers gits into their heads...what do you s’pose took Uncle Tommy off right on top of plantin’, leavin’ his wife ‘n’ critters ‘n’ child’en to look after themselves? Mighty good preachin’ it ought to be to make up for such practicin’ (98). Farmer Jordan’s judgment reflects a tension between Friend Barton’s call to public ministry and his responsibility to family. The fact that both Dorothy and Farmer Jordan note what they perceive as an injustice in Friend’s decision further suggests Foote’s own ambivalence, and considering that Foote seemed to admire most the Quaker women who stayed home and cared for their families, the emphasis that Foote places on staying home and caring for family, may serve to elevate domestic duties in relation to public service.

By weaving Quaker values into the fabric of her narrative and illustrating religious tensions within and between characters, Foote offers her readers a realistic view of what living in a Quaker family in America during the War of 1812 might have looked like. Yet, Foote’s strongest appeal to her readers’ sentiment comes through the central character: Dorothy. In her memoirs, Foote states that she wanted to write a story about “the girl of today with a will and a mind of her own” (188).¹⁵ Dorothy’s independent, opinionated, and assertive character is exactly the kind of Quaker heroine Foote wanted for her narrative because she shows what a young girl raised in a religious family might want to do and say instead of always what she is expected to.

¹⁵ Foote’s portrayal of an assertive Quaker girl was met with disapproval by her father. In her memoirs, she writes that her Mr. Hallock claimed, “no daughter of a Friend preacher in 1812 would have been pert enough to question her father’s choice when it came to a conflict between family claims and the call of the Inner Spirit” (188).

As a young woman, Dorothy lacks her mother's maturity, quiet reserve, and patience, and she struggles to keep her tongue and her pride in check. Even Farmer Jordan notes, "She's a proud little piece" (98). Yet, as the heroine, young Dorothy would have appealed to an eastern, Protestant readership through her honesty and humanness as well as work ethic and her moral firmness. All of these characteristics, according to Baym, are common to heroines of sentimental fiction, a fiction, she notes, strongly influenced by the morality and Christian faith of Calvinist evangelical re-form. Moreover, she argues that sentimental women writers often illustrated a "pragmatic feminism" that emphasized "duty, discipline, self-control, and sacrifice" as not only "moral but actually useful strategies for getting through in a hard world" (xxiv, 18). This "pragmatic feminism" can clearly be seen in Dorothy's response to her father's absence. In addition to the household chores, she takes on the role of her "father's eldest son" by washing sheep until "her stout arms ached" and working in the hot fields until "her eyes were darker and shyer, and her voice more languid" (70, 100-01). The trials and tribulations Dorothy faces, and overcomes without complaint, would have demonstrated the integrity of her character and earned the respect of her readership even if they could not relate to the particularities of the Barton's Quaker faith.

Although Foote's readership would have respected the integrity of her Quaker heroine, they would have also responded to the moral growth and maturity that she demonstrates throughout the story. As Dorothy struggles to fulfill the physical requirements of taking care of the farm, she repeatedly finds herself in situations that cultivate her moral development, teaching her self-sacrifice, self-control, and discretion. Early in the story, when Dorothy and her mother discuss the future of the farm in light of Friend Barton's absence, Dorothy exclaims, "I don't know, mother, what I want for myself; that doesn't matter; but for thee I would have rest from all

these cruel worries thee has borne so long.” Putting her own desires aside, Dorothy focuses on her mother’s misfortune instead of imagining the intense physical work that she will have to perform while her father is away, demonstrating the Quaker value of self-sacrifice that she’s grown up with. Not only does her father demonstrate this self-less act when he leaves his own family to preach to others but her mother illustrates the same lesson when she willingly gives up her husband’s presence to a greater “calling.” After her fervent speech, Dorothy “bur[ies] her face in her mother’s lap,” and Rachel responds, “There, there, dear. Try to rule thy spirit, Dorothy...Go downstairs and fetch in the clothes and don’t hurry; stay out till thee gets more composed” (70). The time outside, although it doesn’t make her agree with her father’s choice, alters her state of mind by putting events in perspective, and when she returns, she busies herself preparing “a great pot of mush” that will sustain the family for several meals. In this example, as in many others in the story, work becomes a form of self-control, a distraction, and a useful means for re-focusing her emotions and energies.

Dorothy’s struggle for self-control continues in the narrative as she slowly develops romantic feelings for Evesham, and her lessons in discretion often come out of one of their meetings. For example, in a scene following her father’s departure, Dorothy attempts to complete the annual spring sheep washing, and Evesham, unaware of Dorothy’s preoccupation, shuts down the mill and raises the lower pond gate, causing a rush of water into the pond where Dorothy is actively scrubbing an old ewe. Realizing his mistake too late, he rushes to the pond, almost jumps in to search for Dorothy, but finds her in the willows on the bank, soaked to the skin with a bloody cut on her forehead. In this scene, Dorothy is more than a little aware of her immodest appearance, and she refuses Evesham’s request to walk her home. The narrator tells us, “She was blushing now, because Evesham would think it so strange of her to stay, and yet

she could not rise in her wet clothes, that clung to her like the calyx to a bud (77). Concerned with concealing and protecting her feminine form from Evesham's sight, Dorothy tricks him into leaving to get her a coat, but as soon as he leaves, "she [springs] to her feet and [flees] like a startled Naiad to the house" (79). By using flower imagery to suggest Dorothy's "bud[ding]" womanhood and by comparing her to the female water spirits of Greek mythology, Foote heightens both her developing sexuality and her innocence. Dorothy's determination to retain her modesty aligns with nineteenth-century codes of proper womanhood and therefore readers would have respected and commended her need for discretion.

Dorothy's struggle to retain discretion and to behave according to the conservative values of her family by resisting her own desires and emotions reaches its peak in an extended scene half way through the story: the scene when Dorothy watches a local barn dance and finds herself emotionally and physically distraught at the sight of Evesham who is dancing with another girl. In order to develop Dorothy's inner struggle, let me briefly describe the scene: In an attempt to protect the younger boys from the sight of Slocum's barn dance and all of its "frivolity," Rachel asks Dorothy to turn out their gelding, and Dorothy agrees, but inquires as to whether she would be allowed "to look at the dancing a little while?" Rachel responds, "Thee's old enough to judge for thyself...but do not tamper with thy inclinations through heedless curiosity. Thee knows thee's more impulsive than I could wish for thy own peace" (88). As Dorothy draws close to the barn, the entire scene is filled with descriptions of the "strange," "grotesque pantomime" (89) of her neighbors dancing and the thrilling effect the sight of it has on the young, innocent Quaker girl: "They were marching, and the measured tramp of feet keeping solid time to the fiddles set a strange tumult vibrating in Dorothy's blood; and now it stopped, with a thrill, as she recognized that Evesham was there" (90). Evesham, with his "light, firm step, formidable in evening dress,"

and with “his smile of subtle triumph” sends Dorothy into a “senseless whirl,” and the narrator tells us that the “she was thrilling with a new and strange excitement too near the edge of pain to be longed endured as a pleasure” (91). Making a mad run back to her house to escape her feelings, Dorothy is pursued by Evesham who teases her for watching the dance and says he’s “going to take [her] home to her mother,” but Dorothy once again rejects him by telling him that she doesn’t want him there and that “he may go back to [his] fiddling and dancing” (92).

Although Johnson has argued that Foote’s lovers are often passionless (39), this passage proves the contrary and further reveals the intense inner struggle that Dorothy faces to control her awakening desires, a struggle that Foote’s readers would more than likely have been able to relate to. As a conservative woman writer, Foote never actually discusses sex; however, the passionate, “thrilling,” language alludes to such physical desires on both Evesham and Dorothy’s part. When she returns home, “damp” on the forehead and out of breath, Dorothy asks her mother about the scriptural reference of Ephraim and his idols. Her mother responds with the line, “Let him *alone!*” which Dorothy repeats before heading to bed. The reference to Hosea 4:17 creates a parallel between Evesham and the barn dance and Israel’s idolatry and debauchery and suggests that Dorothy recognizes that Evesham’s participation in the dance aligns him with secular forms of entertainment that oppose her family’s religious belief system. Dorothy’s misery does not end there, however, and in the next scene, we find her “crying to herself that she was not the child of her mother any more...that she had lost something, that in truth had never been hers.” The narrator clarifies Dorothy’s overwhelming feelings and tells us, “it was but the unconscious poise of her unawakened girlhood which had been stirred.” Foote’s focused attention to Dorothy’s physical and emotional reaction to the dancing, and in particular, Evesham’s dancing, suggests that she may have wanted to heighten the romantic passion in order

to reveal to the reader Dorothy's victory in controlling her emotions. By the end of the passage, Dorothy prays that the "'grave and beautiful damsel called Discretion' might take her by the hand and lead her to that 'upper chamber, whose name is Peace'" (96). Thus discretion becomes more than a desirable religious or familial value; it is a conscious, pragmatic choice to stay away from factors that have the potential to harm or complicate her life. The chapter ends with Dorothy choosing to put any more thoughts of dance, excitement, or a certain handsome man firmly out of her thoughts.

Dorothy's honest manner of speech, her love and responsibility for family, and her strength and independence are all elements of her character that Evesham is attracted to. In fact, the more opinionated and independent Dorothy is, the more he seems to be drawn to her. Towards the end of the narrative, in utter frustration, Evesham even says to Dorothy, "I'm all ready to be a hero, but you won't be a heroine," and she responds, "I'm too practical for a heroine" (113). Such a statement suggests that Foote may have been aware that her heroine did not fit the frail, incompetent, weak-minded heroines of more sensationalized fiction of the time. A practical heroine, however, is exactly the type that many sentimental women writers, according to Baym, attempted to create and thus Foote's protagonist fits with the strong, virtuous, self-sufficient heroines that populated the texts of women writers who wanted to offer their readership a model for proper womanhood. By focusing on Dorothy's many capabilities, Foote reveals that values and behaviors are more important than physical looks. Interestingly, although Evesham says that Dorothy is "pretty" and Farmer Jordan says that he "never [saw] a hulsomer-lookin'gal," Foote appears to avoid offering any specific details about Dorothy's appearance except a few brief descriptions of her style of dress or general comments about her looks. We hear about the "calico short gown" she wears while spinning wool and the

“petticoats” and “moccasins” she wears while sheep-washing, and we find an occasional reference to her “white neck,” “brilliant eyes,” or “bright hair” (67, 88, 96). Evesham, too, lacks any substantial description of details outside of his “brown lock” and “hazel eye” (91-2). Thus, Foote illustrates an alternate means for envisioning people by describing personal character and behavior over body.

Having established the integrity and independence of her heroine, Foote constructs a minor natural disaster in order to bring Dorothy and Evesham together without diminishing Dorothy’s character. Up until now, the natural world serves as a familiar and fundamental backdrop to the story, and the narrator frequently notes how Dorothy looks to the natural world as a form of comfort as when Dorothy runs away from the barn dance and pauses next to a tree, “press[ing] her hot cheek to the cool, rough bark” and “long[ing] for the stillness of the starlit meadow” (92). However, as the narrator tells us, “Nature sometimes strikes in upon the hopeless monotony of life in remote farmhouses with one of her phenomenal moods” (101). The September rainstorm that brings together Foote’s lovers is one of a few disasters that the Barton family has survived, along “with the hard winter of 1800, with the late frost that had coated the incipient apples with ice and frozen the new potatoes in the ground in the spring of 97, and with the year the typhus had visited the valley” (102). Although these natural events “come like besoms of destruction,” the narrator further notes that they also “scatter the web of stifling routine; they fling into the stiffening pool the stone which jars the atoms into crystals” (101). In this case, the “atoms” seem to be Dorothy and Evesham. Just as Dorothy notices the “roar of water from the hills,” Evesham appears on her doorstep and explains that he wants to take the entire family, and their livestock, back to his home for safety. Thus, Foote’s natural disaster re-arranges Dorothy and Evesham’s relationship by allowing Evesham to play the role of a hero.

Additionally, through the flood, Foote develops the integrity of Evesham's character, making him a worthy suitor for Dorothy. Although Evesham isn't part of the Quaker society, Foote ensures that his character still fits that of a conventional sentimental hero. For Baym, "the conventional hero of woman's fiction is solid, ethical, generous, frank, hard-working, energetic, an admirer and respecter of women who likes the heroine as much or more than he lusts for her" (41). Evesham fits her definition to a tee. Although he is often described in an overtly virile, masculine manner—he is "strong," "savage and restless," and "obstinate[e] and aggressive"—he also proves to be a successful businessman, a strong and capable farmer, and a benevolent man towards both his own family as well as the Barton's. Additionally Foote crafts the remainder of the narrative to keep Evesham in the role of a hero, illustrating his kindness as well as his ability to care for and financially support a family. As a result of the flood, Dorothy's mother becomes very sick, and so the entire family stays at the Evesham home until Friend Barton returns from his journey. Despite his growing attachment to Dorothy, and all of her "girlish, unconscious beguilements," we are told that Evesham "strive[s] against her sweetness, while help[ing] her to bear her burdens" (114).

Although Dorothy and Evesham's engagement and marriage comes as no real surprise, what is remarkable is how Foote immerses Evesham into a female space of domesticity prior to their engagement to teach him about the act of selfless love, the pinnacle of Quaker and Christian faith. Although Evesham has worldly knowledge of business, agriculture, and societal customs, he lacks experience in giving of himself – physically and emotionally- to another person. Foote uses Rachel's sickness to cultivate the couple's relationship by emphasizing Dorothy's capability to nurture and to provide for her mother's most intimate needs. While Evesham and Dorothy

care for Rachel in her illness, the narrator tells us that Evesham comes to more fully appreciate Dorothy's character:

The weeks of Rachel's sickness that followed were perhaps the best discipline Evesham's life had ever known...it was well for him to feel the helpless infirmity in his arms as he lifted Dorothy's mother from side to side of her bed, while Dorothy's hands smoothed the coverings. It was well for him to see the patient endurance of suffering, such as youth and strength defied. It was bliss to wait on Dorothy and follow her with little watchful homages, received with a shy wonder which was delicious to him; for Dorothy's nineteen years had been too full of service to others to leave much room for dreams of a kingdom of her own. Her silent presence in her mother's sick-room awed him. Her gentle decisive voice and ways, her composure and unshaken endurance through nights of watching and days of anxious confinement and toil, gave him a new reverence for the powers and mysteries of her unfathomable womanhood. (118-19)

In this passage, Evesham is clearly an outsider as he observes Dorothy's actions, and thus Foote employs a stock male character that is frequently found in nineteenth-century regionalist fiction to demonstrate how an outsider can learn the practices and values of a more inclusive community through respect and attentiveness. Dorothy's actions are a product of her religious upbringing, which emphasized self-sacrifice and duty to family. By watching Dorothy care for her mother, Evesham witnesses Quaker beliefs and values in practice, and Foote further connects self-sacrificing love with femininity as it is Dorothy who tends to her mother, not her absent father or her brothers. Moreover, through Evesham's "reverence" for Dorothy's "unfathomable womanhood, Foote models for her readers what a spiritual, loving, and respectful relationship between a man and a woman should look like.

When the story closes, Friend Barton returns to his family after five months of traveling and preaching in the city and is met with his wife's request that Dorothy be allowed to marry Evesham even though he is a non-Quaker. Rachel argues that although Evesham's family doesn't belong to the Society of Friends, their actions demonstrate that they follow the same system of values and beliefs: Rachel tells her husband, "Well, I can't see such a very great

difference, come to live among them. ‘By their fruits ye shall know them.’ To comfort the widow and the fatherless, and keep ourselves unspotted from the world; thee’s always preached that, father” (123). Yet, Friend Barton does not agree with his wife’s assertions, and he points to the ancient sword hanging in Rachel’s sickroom, the sword that belonged to Evesham’s grandfather, Colonel Evesham, and was used during the American Revolution. To Friend Barton, the sword acts as “a light and guide” for the Evesham family’s “footsteps” and symbolizes their belief and participation in war and violence, both actions that directly oppose orthodox Quaker faith. Although he gives Dorothy permission to marry, stating that it may be the “Master’s will,” Friend Barton doesn’t concede his view against their union, and in the final paragraph, the narrator also seems to be wary of a union between a Quaker and non-Quaker. Describing a picture of the sixty-nine-year-old Quaker grandmother, Dorothy Evesham, the narrator tells us that Dorothy “has found the cool grays and the still waters; but on Dorothy’s children rests the ‘Shadow of the Sword’” (126). The concluding premonition that the future of Quaker generations will be tainted by Dorothy and Evesham’s union may very well be Foote’s own concern about the faith and values of her children, who were raised out of meeting due to her marriage to Arthur Foote.¹⁶

The reference to the ‘Shadow of the Sword,’ however, also alludes to controversies in the nineteenth century between orthodox Quakers and more liberal Quaker and Christian denominations over the approaching Civil War. Many of these controversies, according to Quaker historian Thomas Hamm, emerged out of New York and began when Long Island Quaker Elias Hicks separated from the Philadelphia and New York City meetings because of,

¹⁶ Johnson suggests that the courtship and marriage “out of meeting” parallels Foote’s own marriage and thus serves as a “defense of her their [Mary and Arthur’s] marriage [because] Dorothy’s reticence before the grandson of Colonel Evesham mirrors Mary’s reluctance before the son of Colonel Augustus Foote” (39).

what he considered, their “fondness of the world” (40). Separators from the Orthodox Society of Friends became known as Hicksites, but even within the Hicksite body there were differences in opinions, and Hamm explains that one of the groups of Hicksites “was made up of incipient liberals. These Friends, especially strong around Philadelphia, in upstate New York, and in parts of Ohio, were open to ideas from the larger American society, particularly those connected with Unitarianism” (44). Foote’s first year in New York City as a student at Cooper Union brought her into close proximity with liberal, abolitionist Hicksites who supported the war along with other Congregationalist supporters. She was close friends with Emma Beach, who was the daughter of Moses Beach, and was a frequent a guest at their Brooklyn Heights home.¹⁷ In her memoirs, she writes that the “whole neighborhood was a hotbed of Beecherites and Hicksite Friends,” and she continues to say that the differences in doctrines between the pro-war Congregationalists and Hicksites and the more conservative Orthodox Friends, who “did not hold with preaching the Sword from any Christian pulpit,” led to many a verbal dispute. A religious leader for abolition, Henry Ward Beecher, the controversial Congregationalist preacher at Plymouth Church, vehemently advocated for the war and was often seen coming in and out of the Beach’s home. Foote writes that “all that winter of 1864-65 the silence in that house on the subject of the war was formidable,” and she continues to say that she “lived in an atmosphere of intense and but half-suppressed repulsion towards everything connected with Henry Ward Beecher and his church” (71). When read side by side, Foote’s Quaker story and her memoirs create a powerful dialogue about fissures within the Society of Friends during war time, and only by recognizing the cultural and historical references embedded in her story can we fully appreciate the complexity of the piece.

¹⁷ According to Rodman Paul’s footnotes in Foote’s memoirs, Moses S. Beach was a proprietor of the *New York Sun* as well as an active supporter of Henry Ward Beecher’s Plymouth Church.

Although readers may have enjoyed the realistic portrayal of “a peculiar faith” when it appeared in print, Foote’s family and friends did not. In her memoirs, she writes, “the friends of the family reacted to the unwonted and rather shocking exposure, the exploitation in print of the faith of our common ancestors” (185). Johnson argues that the Hallocks misread Foote’s story, writing that although the narrative “draws upon the activities and traditions central to Mary’s Quaker heritage, the real point of the story” is Dorothy’s courtship (38). Yet, through the romantic plotline, Foote was able to engage her readers with a literary form that was popular at the time, and continues to be so for many mainstream American readers, but through the traditional love story and sentimental conventions, Foote allows her reader a view of an American Quaker family and, perhaps more importantly, of an American Quaker girl who may have resembled many nineteenth-century, eastern, Protestant, and middle-class girls. Through Dorothy, Foote’s shows her readership that a Quaker girl can be like any other girl, and thus she breaks down commonly held stereotypes about Quakerism in the mid-nineteenth century and complicates traditional gender roles. Additionally, Foote creates a rich conversation about American Quaker history and religious observance in both the private and public space, and she illustrates many Quaker values such as piety, modesty, hard-work, honesty, justice, love, loyalty, faithfulness, and non-worldliness that were modeled by her country Quaker relatives.

2.2 Religious Beliefs, Western Landscapes, and Sentimental Heroines in Foote’s Idaho Stories

Having tested out her writing capabilities with short fiction while staying with her family in Milton, Foote began actively writing and publishing as she traveled back and forth between the western towns of her husband’s work and her eastern home. Over the next 40 and more years, Foote published multiple illustrations, regional sketches, short stories, and novels that have only

begun to draw scholarly interest since the feminist movement in the 60s. In discussions of her western writings, scholars, including Benay Blend and Janet Floyd, have largely focused on how Arthur's irrigation ventures, the mining industry, and the racial, economic, and social tensions of the modernized West influenced Foote's literary production during this time. Additionally, critics such as James Maguire, Miller, Johnson, Baym, and Smith have all noted how Foote's writings illustrate multiple hardships of western living such as intense isolation, lack of education, dysfunctional family life, and harsh climate and geographical elements, and they argue that Foote often focuses on the tragic effects these variables had on women's lives in particular. Thus, Foote's construction of the West, as scholars like Smith and Graulich contend, offered a place for women in the West and a vision of a feminized western landscape that subverted the overtly masculinized representations found in the works of nineteenth-century male writers like Bret Harte and Owen Wister.¹⁸

Yet, we also need to take into account the role that Foote's Quaker upbringing and religious beliefs may have played in the texture of her western writings. A religious lens expands our focus in reading Foote's work, allowing us to not only see how her religious beliefs shaped her imaginative response to the western landscape but also revealing connections between her and other nineteenth-century western women regionalists who imagined the West to be an innately spiritual place. An examination of Foote's western works reveals that the stories she wrote while in Idaho frequently employ religious rhetoric and a heightened sense of spirituality to describe the western landscape. The emphasis Foote places on the natural world as a means for spiritual and religious knowledge might be surprising considering that "Friend

¹⁸ Graulich postulates that although many women who emigrated West "saw their lives as circumscribed and isolated, cutting them off from the now famous female world of love and ritual," many also found their literary voices through the West and their characters, at times, as Foote's Madeline in "The Fate of a Voice," illustrate a "democratic voice in the West" (50).

Barton's 'Concern' appears to lack such descriptions. The natural world in Foote's Quaker story is largely familiar and controlled, despite the occasional natural disaster, which makes it relatively safe and mundane. The members of the Barton family, as other farming and ranching families in their town, have learned over the generations how to work with the land as exemplified by their agriculture, and so despite the importance of land as a means for sustenance and as an integral part of home, the farm lacks the wild and vast grandeur of the western landscape. However, as many western writers' works reveal, the uncontrollable and massive presence of the West prompted spiritual reflections in those who were unfamiliar with the territory. Thus, we might read Foote's spiritual and religious heightening of the natural world in her western fictions as a result of her immersion in a very different type of nature.

The Idaho stories that illustrate a shift in Foote's views on religion and the natural world most profoundly are located in a collection of stories entitled *The Cup of Trembling, and Other Stories* (1895), which included the title story "The Cup of Trembling" along with "Maverick," "On a Side-Track," and "The Trumpeter."¹⁹ Of these four narratives, I am most interested in "Maverick" for several reasons. First, "Maverick" illustrates a spiritually heightened landscape with religious symbolism that broadens scholarship's understanding of how Foote constructed the western landscape in the minds of her eastern readership. Second, the story has received very little scholarly attention, and the critical work that has been done grossly oversimplifies Foote's literary aesthetics and misinterprets the heroine. When viewed next to "Friend Barton's 'Concern,'" "Maverick" not only reveals how Foote's religious beliefs shaped her understanding of the natural world and generated literary expression but also offers an interesting case study of

¹⁹ The collection received much positive attention, and in 1896, a reviewer for *The Critic* wrote, "*The Cup of Trembling* contains some of the best work [Foote] has done thus far" (*The Critic* 92). Critics believed the title story for the collection was "undoubtedly the strongest" (92).

the role sentiment played in enabling an eastern audience to emotionally connect with western regional characters.

“Maverick” tells the tragic tale of a young girl who is raised in a dysfunctional family in the middle of the barren Arco desert in southeast Idaho. Rose Gilroy lives with her unruly brothers and mentally ill father in an isolated stage station near Boise. Her only other companion is the grossly physically disfigured sheriff of Lemhi County, Maverick, who was raised as a child in the Gilroy house after Indians killed his family and mutilated his face. Our narrator, an eastern college student on a hunting party through Idaho, tells us that the hideously deformed Maverick loves Rose and he considers their relationship to be a “Beauty and the Beast” style romance. Rose, however, does not return Maverick’s affections, and she wants nothing more than to escape her desolate life. In a desperate attempt at freedom, she runs away with a handsome young Swede who was previously employed at the Gilroy home as a dish-washer, and Maverick, accompanied by the narrator, chases them down, kills the Swede in an act of self-defense, and tries to escort Rose back home. Refusing to return to her dysfunctional home, Rose escapes and flees to the black lava fields, securing her death.

Although James Maguire wrote in his 1972 review of Foote’s literary career that “Maverick” was “one of Foote’s best short stories” for its vivid descriptions, more recent scholarship has interpreted the story as a moral tale about bad women who die in the West. In her discussion about Foote’s Idaho heroines, Johnson contends that Foote’s own desire for propriety made her hardest on those characters whose morals slip, and she refers to Rose as one of these characters, calling Rose “a betrayer” (97). In a similar view, Smith writes that the lower-class women often die “somewhat sentimentally and sensationally, like the hapless Rose,” and she continues to say, “Foote was unwilling to portray what might really have happened to

non-elite women when life dealt them a rough blow, so she killed them off” (18). Additionally, Baym writes in her 2011 extended review of western American women’s writings (published from 1833-1927), that in Foote’s fiction, “Bad women are usually lower-class, and the novelist cold-bloodedly brings them to various violent ends with no regret,” and she continues to say, “only crude, rough wom[en] with flexible morals seem appropriate” to the harsh Idaho landscape. Outside of such contentions, neither critic presents a developed analysis of “Maverick,” or of Rose. I argue that a closer examination of the story offers a more sympathetic view of Rose as well as a deeper appreciation for Foote’s character construction, narrative framework, and overall aesthetic.

I read Rose as one of the tragic lives of the developing West that Foote believed deserved a voice. Unlike Dorothy, who lives in a relatively healthy, secure, and domesticated rural environment with strong family ties, Rose lives in a desolate physical place without any familial or communal support. It’s unknown whether Foote had any particular woman in mind when she wrote the story – according to Miller some of her fictions like “A Cloud on the Mountain” were based on ranch families she met on her travels. Without this knowledge, we can only assume that Foote chose to locate her heroine near the Arco lava fields in order to heighten the isolation and desolation of Rose’s life and lead the reader to sympathize with her. Foote literally frames Rose’s story with vivid descriptions of a hellish landscape. When the story opens, the narrator tells us that Traveling Buttes is “a lone stage-station” on the road between Blackfoot and Boise. The country, he says, “is destitute of water,” and the very name Arco, he explains, “is just another name for desolation on the very edge of the weird stone sea” (79). He continues to elaborate on the strangeness of the landscape:

‘This is where hell pops,’ an old plainsman feelingly described it, and the suggestion is perfect. The colors of the rock are those produced by fire; its texture is that of slag from a furnace... One sees how the lava hardened into a crust... after all movement had ceased... time began upon its tortured configurations, crumbled and wore and broke, and sifted a little earth here and there, and sealed the burnt rock with fairy print of lichens, serpent-green and orange and rust-red. (80-81)

Foote invests her desert scene with biblical significance, especially the depictions of hellfire, torture, brokenness, and the “serpent-green,” which alludes to the snake in Eden and to the devil. Repeatedly she makes these dark and desolate comparisons between the landscape and a physical place of utter darkness and turmoil. For an example, only a couple of paragraphs later, she says that the narrator “fell completely under the spell of the skeleton flood” and that “no peace or radiance of heaven or earth could change its aspect more than that of a mound of skulls” (81). When the story ends, the narrator, reflecting on the tragedy of Rose’s death, returns to his contemplation of the lava fields: “Somewhere in that stony-hearted wilderness she is at rest. We shall see her again when the sea –the stupid, cruel sea that crawls upon the land – gives up its dead” (119).

Although in “Friend Barton’s ‘Concern’” the natural world is largely domesticated, in “Maverick” the Idaho landscape is not only un-controllable but treacherous and psychologically damaging.²⁰ A force of its own, the Black Lava fields seems to haunt and madden the narrator, and thus, the reader can’t help but question what type of effects a dark natural world such as this would have on its long-term inhabitants. Foote’s western stories are full of male characters who adapt to the harsh western landscape and lifestyle only to end up psychologically unstable and often morally corrupted by greed, money, gambling, or some other form of debauchery such as Harry Conrath in *The Led-Horse Claim* or Frederick Bingham in *Coeur D’Alene*. Much like

²⁰ In his 1972 review of Foote’s work, a part of the Boise State College’s Western Writers Series, James Maguire writes, “The Western setting functions in the early works as first a barren backdrop to emphasize the drama, but later as a force in its own right often controlling the characters” (26).

these other male characters, we are told that Rose's father, Gilroy, sells water from a spring near the top of Big Butte that he has piped down to the stage-house, an occupation that many locals feel is unethical and morally corrupt. The narrator's hunting guide openly states his disdain of Gilroy: "Any man that will jump God's water in a place like this, and sell it the same as drinks—he'd sell water to his own father in hell" (77). Yet, not only is Gilroy a "crooked" man (76), he is also mentally ill. In a desperate plea to the narrator for help, Rose tells him, "'Poor father, he's awful queer. He don't more than half the time know who I am,' she whispered. 'But it ain't him I'm running away from. It's myself—my own life.'...Father he's like I told you, and the boys—oh, that's worse!" (88). Just in case we doubted Rose's assessment of her father's sanity, Maverick confirms Gilroy's illness when he tries to persuade Rose to return home: "I guess we could get some doctor to certify that he's out of his mind, and get him sent up to Blackfoot; but I guess we'd have to buy the doctor first" (88). Foote's emphasis on Gilroy's insanity suggests that she wanted the reader to consider what life would be like for a young girl whose only parental figure is a mentally sick father.

Thus, these two stories illustrate alternate views of how the natural world influences its residents and their family lives. Unlike the stable, relatively domesticized natural world and the religious, emotionally supportive, and gender-balanced home where Dorothy thrives, Rose lives in a hellish place with only a family of crude, law-less, and neglectful men. Therefore, another debilitating factor in Rose's life is her lack of female role models. Fetterley explains that many nineteenth-century regional stories "begin with a female character's search for a mother or for a connection with other women that allows her to return in some derivative way to the world of her maternal origins" (*American Women Regionalists* xvi). Rose expresses such a need for female companionship in an impassioned plea to the narrator to help rescue her:

I can't get a decent woman to come there and live, and the women at Arco won't speak to me because I'm livin' there alone. They say—they think I ought to get married—to Maverick or somebody. I'll die first. I *will* die, if there's any way to, before I'll marry him. (115-16)

The narrator attempts to encourage Rose by convincing her that there are women who “could understand and help another in trouble,” but when Rose pleads again, “Can't you take me somewhere? Where are those women that you know,” he responds, “Dear little soul, all the women I know are two thousand miles away” (116). It is important to note how Foote uses the narrator, a man who has toured the immediate area and is familiar with the surrounding regions, to illustrate the limitations of Rose's environment – even he doesn't know of any women who Rose could befriend. Attuned to sentimental conventions, Foote's eastern female readership would not only have recognized the theme—the cult of womanhood that nurtures and teaches young women to find happiness in life through faith, virtue, and family—but understood the devastating effect that the absence of female friendship and guidance could have on a young woman, isolated in a barren desert landscape. By heightening Rose's isolation and illustrating her lack of female relationships, Foote increases the reader's empathy for this young woman's “tangle of grief and despair, the nature of which [the narrator] could only half comprehend” (108).

Without a healthy family or a connection to community and friendship, Rose is trapped in a world that does not understand her, and this is proven when even the narrator questions the real “tragedy” of Rose's life, commenting that it “may not sound like a tragedy as I tell it, but I think it was tragedy to her” (112). As do other nineteenth-century women regionalists such as Mary Noailles Murphree and Sarah Orne Jewett, Foote employs an outsider as her narrator in order to reveal the limitations of the outsider's perspective and to subvert the reader's expectations of a young rural girl living in the West. In an essay that focuses on another one of Foote's Idaho

stories, “A Cloud on a Mountain,” Inness argues that Foote, like other women regionalists of her time, employs regional conventions to create “a textual space in which Western women writers could explore and critique the division between East and West” (320). Although Smith contends that in stories like “Maverick” Foote depicts a “superficial” view of the “quaint customs of the natives from a detached and often superior perspective” (19), I believe her argument does not take into account the role Foote’s narrator plays in creating Rose’s childish and innocent character or the multiple times that Foote emphasizes the narrator’s limited understanding of Rose’s life. Thus I believe that Inness is correct in her assertion that Foote’s narrative frame is intended to probe the tensions between outsider and insider, eastern and western, and masculine and female perspectives.

First, it is through the narrator that we come to see Rose as more than an ignorant rural girl who runs off with a man she barely knows. Such an unruly girl might have raised readers’ eyebrows at her audacity and apparent lack of morals; however, instead of blaming Rose for her poor behavior, the reader comes to sympathize and pity the girl’s limitations through not only the narrator’s attention to the dark landscape and to her corrupt family, but also to her childish and spiritual nature. Although the narrator states that both Maverick and Rose seemed to be “like children who had lost their way home,” (89) Foote pays particular attention to Rose’s childishness—complete with emotional outbursts, extreme displays of self-centeredness, as well as a certain degree of naivety. Repeatedly the narrator refers to Rose as a “child” and a “poor, tired little girl,” and he notes that “her blue eyes were as wild with weeping as a child’s” (87). Throughout their journey home, the narrator also frequently describes her emotional outbursts as she “sobs,” “wrings her hands,” and “tries to throw herself out of the saddle” (87). Foote further heightens Rose’s childishness by revealing her inability to care for and protect herself. In yet

another scene where Rose refuses a whiskey concoction that Maverick makes in order to help her sleep, the narrator must “gently” coax her to drink as one might with a small child. Having slept, Rose is “quiet and meek,” and the narrator states, “She could not find her way at first in the uncertain light, and she seemed half asleep still, so I kept her hand in mind, and guided her to her horse” (90).

Although a reader might be tempted to judge Rose as a silly, weak, fool of a character whose death is of little consequence, Foote resists any such oversimplification and further complicates an amoral reading of Rose’s character by investing her with spiritual significance. Perhaps anticipating an eastern audience’s expectation that as a sentimental heroine Rose should embrace her life and work faithfully and dutifully to improve herself, Foote constructs an eastern narrator who has similar beliefs as the eastern reader. He states that Rose’s greatest flaw is her inability to love, unselfishly, and to focus on creating a stable family home with Maverick instead of running away. He notes that her life “might have brought God’s blessing into some man’s home—perhaps Maverick’s, had he not been so hardly dealt with.” He continues to say, “She was not of that great disposition of heart which can love best that which has sorest need of love” (86). The narrator appears to judge Rose’s life decisions and character against a general system of Christian values without fully considering or empathizing with her situation. Yet, by juxtaposing the reader’s expectations for how Rose should act with the severity of her circumstances, the reader comes to sympathize with Rose instead of blame her for her actions, and thus the narrator serves as a tool for subverting these expectations and illustrating the limitations of an outsider’s dogmatic judgment. For example, after witnessing the fatal feud between Maverick and the Swede, the narrator is left to care for Rose while Maverick performs the burial. While performing his watch, the narrator reflects on Rose’s “sweet life wasted, gone

utterly astray,” and he continues, “I thought how other things as precious as ‘God’s water’ go astray on the Jericho rode, or are captured and sold for a price, while dry hearts ache with the thirst that asks a ‘draught divine” (87). Although it is unclear exactly what “other things” the narrator refers to in the second line, it is clear that one of those things is the runaway Rose, and thus the narrator’s language serves to elevate Rose’s status, linking her troubled existence with “other things as precious as ‘God’s water.’” The analogy of water and thirst and spiritual need is a reoccurring image in Old and New Testament scripture in which believers often look to their dry desert surroundings as symbolic of some spiritual deficiency, and Foote adapts the imagery to reveal Rose’s “dry heart” and her yearning for love, belonging, and spiritual awakening. The narrator ends his contemplations by saying, “She was a rose, but a rose that had been trampled in the dust; and her prayer was to be left there, rather than that we should take her home” (87). Emphasizing Rose’s natural beauty and spirit, the injustices she has faced in her life, and her desperation, the narrator leads the reader to share his compassionate view of Rose instead of condemning her for her inability to move past them.

Foote further invests spiritual significance in Rose’s quest for escape in the concluding scenes when the narrator advises Rose to “go on like a brave girl” and stating, “My child, there is not a place under the heavens where I could take you...you must keep up your heart, and the way will open. God will not forget you” (90). Intensifying the scene, Foote has Rose stand “perfectly still” while the narrator, again holding Rose’s hands, foreshadows her death by saying, “Even now I wake in the night, and wonder if there was anyway but one” (90). Responding to his advice to have faith, Rose says, “Yes; the way will open,” as she “cast[s] off his hands” and flees down the road, “riding for her life” (90). The phrase “the way will open” also appears in “Friend Barton’s ‘Concern’” when in the midst of his spiritual turmoil Friend Barton cries out to God

that his “way is hedged up!” and Rachel consoles him by saying, “the way will open—never fear” (64-5). I find it interesting that Foote would incorporate a Quaker phrase into her Idaho story, and I imagine that a largely protestant eastern audience might have recognized the biblical cadences of Foote’s language. Yet, in using these words to preface Rose’s death, Foote suggests that Rose’s salvation comes through death, not life, and ironically, the demonic lava fields become part of a divine plan to rescue Rose from her hellish life.

Although one might argue that our eastern male narrator serves as a superior perspective in the story, as Smith does, and that Rose’s death is an indication of her moral corruptness, it is through the narrator that we not only come to sympathize with Rose’s flaws but to recognize the limitations of an outsider’s perspective. Foote frequently emphasizes the narrator’s inability to comprehend Rose’s situation and his misguided and ineffectual attempts to help her. For an example, in the previous scene, when the narrator advises Rose to be brave and look to God for help, Foote follows up the narrator’s words with his inner thoughts: “may He forgive me for talking cant to that poor soul in her bitter extremity” (90). By having the narrator note the triteness of his own preaching, as well as having him reconsider whether Rose’s death could have been avoided, Foote reveals the limitations of her narrator’s understanding of Rose’s life, and in this passage Foote may also very well be suggesting the limitations of mere religious doctrine, perhaps as opposed to faith-driven action and physical aid, in comforting those who suffer under extreme challenges. She continues to reveal the ineffectualness of the narrator’s attempts to assist Rose in the scene of her final escape by having the narrator say, “And we two men knew no better than to follow her” (90). The narrator returns to his second guessing in the very next passage when he states, “I knew better, or I think, now, that I did. I told Maverick we had pushed her far enough” (91). But in his “possessed” state, Maverick pushes them on,

chasing her over two miles, but just before they can catch her, the narrator relates that Rose looked back and “gave a little whimpering cry, the most dreadful sound I ever heard from any hunted thing” before disappearing into the moonlight, into the deep “silence” of the lava fields (91). In this passage, there is little ambiguity about who is the victim, and Rose’s death appears to be as much a result of the narrator and Maverick’s attempts to “rescue” her as of her own choice to die instead of return home. Considering that the only insight we have into Rose’s thoughts and motivations is through the male narrator, Foote may well have chosen to use this form of narrative frame to further reveal how Rose has become silenced by her environment, emotionally unstable, childishly underdeveloped, and yet somehow still strong enough to try to change her life.

When compared to “Friend Barton’s ‘Concern’” the shift from harmonious, domestic, rural life to dark, demonic, and unstable existence is quite extreme, and scholars, such as Johnson, have frequently noted an overshadowing darkness to Foote’s Idaho stories.²¹ It appears that Foote was more than aware of the grimness of her fiction during this time, calling them, in a letter to Helena, her “perpetually gloomy Idaho tales” and stating, “I can’t seem to think of any good wholesome jolly stories” (Miller 171). Indeed the dark years in Idaho often led Foote, at times, to imagine a dark, ambivalent, divine and evil landscape. Repeatedly Foote’s immigrant heroines, those who recently settled in the West for professional and personal reasons as well as those who were born and raised there as a second generation of immigrant farmers and ranchers such as Esmée in “The Cup of Trembling” and Rose Gilroy in “Maverick,” are erased by the western landscape in seemingly divine-inspired natural disasters that rescue them from their dire straits. Yet, the darkness, desperation, and depression that we find in many of her Idaho stories

²¹ Johnson argues that “these dark romances indulge the desires of their author by providing the necessary escapes, for they are grim working out of her fears and fantasies” (97).

might be understandable when we step back to consider the drastic physical changes that Foote's life undertook when she moved from the lush, fertile, and domestic countryside of Milton to the desert of Idaho. In a biographical essay published by *Book Buyer* in 1894, Helena expresses her dear friend's sentiments most clearly, stating, "In all [Foote's] Western writings the homesickness of the exile can be read, the difficulty of the daughter of the soil, whose people for generations had lived in and loved the river country of the East, to adapt herself to her new surroundings" (Miller 167).

Moreover, in addition to the change in physical surroundings, the years in Idaho also ushered in a period of multiple personal hardships for Foote.²² Miller explains that at this point in Foote's life she had "lost faith in her husband's schemes" and knew the trip to Idaho would be a "lengthy stay" (90, 92). Indeed the trip lasted twelve years, and the irrigation project, ultimately, left the family financially impoverished and, at times, deeply depressed—Arthur Foote frequently turned to alcohol, leaving Foote to control the family and the family's dwindling finances.²³ Over the next decade or more, Foote endured various personal hardships that were not limited to her husband's failed business ventures or the family's financial impoverishment. In 1891, her mother passed, and shortly after, she lost her brother-in-law as well, John Sherman; in 1892, her son had a minor bout with pneumonia while away at a Catholic boarding school (St. Paul's School in Concord, New Hampshire), and both of her daughters, first Betty (July 1892) and then Agnes (April 1893), came down with scarlet fever and Foote spent a total of 12 weeks in isolation as she nursed each girl back to health.

²² In her memoirs, Foote wrote that she dreaded the trip to Idaho, and that the move "meant farewell [to] music, art, gossip of the workshop, schools that [they] knew about, new friends just made who would forget [them], old friends better loved than ever and harder to part from—all the old backgrounds receding hopelessly and forever" (Miller 91).

²³ In her letters to Helena, Foote wrote that they "were a family without a future," yet, she refused to leave her husband, saying that she was "irrevocably committed to the part of an anxious wife" and that she had "a mother's yearning that he may keep strong and get through it creditably" (Miller 121).

There is also evidence in Foote's letters to suggest that the time in Idaho led her to reflect on her own religious beliefs, which might explain the increased attention to religious rhetoric in her writings. Although the elders in her family, especially her mother, were Quakers, Foote was not a practicing Quaker, and there is little reference in her memoirs to any affinity that she felt towards a particular religious organization or to regular church attendance. When she does reflect on religious issues, it is often with a note of distrust towards strict doctrine or religious practices that disavow believers any room for personal interpretation. Miller notes that while Foote was living in Idaho she began attending a local Episcopal church, and she explains that in a letter to Helena, Foote wrote about a new clergyman, Rev. Charles Deuel, who seemed "wedded to church dogma and resisted any private interpretation" (Miller 172). In her letter, Foote continues, "I don't think I should be happy, even passively looking on, while such strange superstitions were poured into [Betty's] young mind, as opiates to dull its natural life of reflection and comparison" (172). Considering her resentment of Henry Ward Beecher and his liberal, out-spoken church, Foote's rejection of dogma and overly zealous religious leaders is not wholly surprising.²⁴ Moving past her concern for her children, she momentarily elaborates on her own resistance to doctrine by stating, "I could never 'belong' because though I believe in immortality of the soul I don't know how to take the resurrection of the body. I am too old to be comforted that way" (173). It is unclear in Foote's letters as to what specific doctrines she rejected, but this passage suggests that she was conflicted as to her theological views on salvation and resurrection. Despite her doubts, Foote continued to attend the Episcopal Church,

²⁴ The fissure within Quakerism between Orthodox and Hicksite Friends (many Hicksites were dually aligned with other Protestant denominations), as Hamm explains, left both sides "deeply scarred," and the "bitter separation," which began in the 1820s and peaked in the 1880s, contributed to a decline in Quaker membership in the mid and late nineteenth century (39-43). A first-hand witness to the heated religious debates while in New York City, Foote's own faith may have suffered as due consequence.

explaining to Helena that “it was a good habit, and I wish I had had it earlier,” but she chose to wait for an older, wiser parish leader before she enrolled the girls in religious classes. When understood through her admiration of the simple and pious practices of her Quaker ancestors—as evidenced in her memoirs and in “Friend Barton’s ‘Concern’”—Foote’s reference to church attendance being “a good habit” may well suggest that she valued Christian values and ethics over strict doctrinal preaching. Such reflections on church doctrine and on her own faith are not common in Foote’s writing, and these statements show that Foote understood her own religious beliefs to be deeply personal, and perhaps not dictated by any specific denomination or organization. Moreover, the apparent tension between her personal religious convictions and the dogmatic beliefs and practices of other believers such as those represented by Rev. Deuel might have contributed to the spiritual darkness that Foote imagined in the Idaho desert landscape.

2.3 “I Became a Mystic”: The West and Spiritual Rejuvenation in *Edith Bonham*

If we were to only look to Foote’s Idaho stories for religious representations, however, we would fail to see a larger image emerge, an image of the West—in all of its geographical, social, and economic hardship—as a place for spiritual rejuvenation. After over a decade of living in Idaho, the Foote family moved in 1896 to Grass Valley where Arthur Foote embarked upon an extended position as Superintendent for the North Star Mining company, a company owned by his brother-in-law: James Hague. In her biography of Foote’s life, Johnson quotes Foote in saying she believed that the “gray and rugged passage” of her life was over. The family’s initial years in Grass Valley, Foote remarked, were of “perfect peace and health” (103). By the end of the century, Foote was no longer hastily publishing work to supplement her family’s income, but thoughtfully reflecting on her writing career. She published several short stories in *Century Magazine* at the turn of the century including “The Harshaw Bride” (1896), “Pilgrim’s to

Mecca” (1899), “How the Pump Stopped at the Morning Watch” (1899), “A Touch of Sun” (1900), and “The Eleventh Hour” (1906) as well as one in *The Atlantic Monthly*, “Pilgrim Station” (1896), and then it appears she turned her literary interests more exclusively towards novel writing as she completed seven novels over the next twenty years of her life: *The Prodigal* (1900), *The Desert and the Sown* (1902), *The Royal Americans* (1910), *A Picked Company* (1912), *The Valley Road* (1915), *Edith Bonham* (1917), and *The Ground-Swell* (1919).

As critics like Maguire, Miller, and Johnson have noted, Foote’s later work demonstrates maturity in both her literary style and her perceptions of the West. Instead of focusing on the West as a place of extreme hardship and isolation, a place that potentially creates personal and familial dysfunction, Foote’s later writings reveal how the West is also a place removed from the norms and materialism of eastern society, making it a place of individual regeneration as well as an ideal place to build a healthy, stable family. Although I agree with their assertions, these critics fail to acknowledge the role that Foote’s Quaker upbringing and her personal religious beliefs may have played in shaping her vision of the West as a place of rejuvenation. Unlike her Idaho stories where the western landscape is frequently both demonic and redemptive and where the challenges immigrants face often lead to dysfunction and imbalance, Foote’s later work suggests that she had come to see the physical hardships and isolation of western living as a catalyst for spiritual growth, moral development, and a deeper appreciation for life’s simpler beauties. In order to reveal these changes in her writing, I look to another fiction that has been widely overlooked in Foote scholarship, *Edith Bonham*, for the way it reflects a shift in Foote’s portrayal of the West. Published in 1917, the novel tells the story of a woman who grows up in New York and moves to Idaho where she is confronted by the strangeness of life on the frontier. Through the heroine, readers come to see the wild, isolating landscape as a place of “rest” far

away from the materialistic demands of eastern society, a place where “dreams” can become re-imagined and where love of faith, of the natural world, and of family can grow.

The novel begins with a dedication to Helena who died in 1916, “To the memory of my friend of fifty years—herself the perfect friend,” and we find that the opening pages of the narrative describe a friendship very much like the one that Foote and Helena cherished throughout their lives. Written in the form of a diary, our narrator, Edith Bonham, a girl raised in an artistic, literary, and worldly family in New York City, starts her story describing her friendship with Anne (Nanny) Aylesford, a girl from an old, “aristocratic” farm family on the Hudson River. Both art students at Cooper School of Design for Women, Edith and Nanny become inseparable friends, and Edith tells us, “It was as much a case of love at first sight as if one of us had belonged to the ‘opposite sex’” (5). Their friendship is interrupted by Nanny’s unexpected betrothal and marriage to a stern, handsome, and formidable young Canadian engineer, Douglas Maclay, whose job takes them to Boise, Idaho where they have two children. After Nanny’s first return visit to New York, the two re-ignite their friendship, and Edith, sensing Nanny’s loneliness out West, promises that in the near future she will move to Boise and act as a governess to Nanny’s children. Four years pass, Edith’s sick and widowed father departs to Tahiti on an artistic endeavor, and Edith is free to enact her promise. At twenty-seven years old, Edith travels by train to Boise where she discovers that Nanny has died, unexpectedly and perhaps due to complications with the recent birth of her second child. Determined to keep her promise to her deceased friend, Bonham stays to care for Nanny’s daughter, Phoebe, and infant son.

What follows is a rather predictable and tumultuous romance between Edith and Maclay. At first, their relationship is strictly professional, but after hearing that the local town is

spreading scandalous rumors about his and Edith's living arrangements, Maclay proposes in an attempt to save her respectability. She vehemently rejects him, taking personal offense at his lack of sensitivity and respect for Nanny, and in order to escape the ensuing awkwardness of their relationship, Edith moves the children back East where she and the children take up residence on the Aylesford's farm. For the next five years Maclay remains in Boise, only writing letters to his daughter but never visiting, and although Edith feels that his letters, children's stories about the relationship and adventures of his pack horses, are thinly veiled love professions to herself, she declines any further communication with him. At the novel's close, Mrs. Aylesford secretly sends Maclay a letter, entreating him to visit and encouraging him to re-marry if he so desires, and shortly after, he arrives to the farm and asks again for Edith's hand in marriage. Finally acknowledging her own affections, she accepts, stating, "This was the beginning, the anguished, half-stifled, hurried birth of our love so long maturing blind and silent, according to nature's law," (311) and they return to the mesa house in Boise where they have two children of their own.

It is important to note that, as in "Friend Barton's 'Concern,'" *Edith Bonham* includes an old, traditional, pastoral Quaker family who illustrates many of the Quaker practices and virtues that Foote was raised with including their isolation and emphasis on family as well as their character, virtue, and profound spirituality. We are told that Nanny's family, the Aylesfords, owns a "historic grist-mill" on the Hudson that operated during the American Revolution, and that the family had all of the "peculiar[ities] of the "old Eastern farming aristocracy" (13):

They had stayed in one place and cultivated character, and with it some of the excrescences of character that go with old standard types like theirs. They were very earnest, obstinate, dear people, of a great simplicity and kindness somewhat lacking in pliability and without humor in the literary sense, but strong and sane and faithful to their clear-cut opinions which were as immovable as the limestone rock that underlay their family acres. (11-13)

Despite the family's limitations, Edith finds their sturdiness, reliability, and kindness to be admirable, and this may well be Foote's own view of her Quaker ancestors who were rooted in place, strong in opinion, and rich in virtue and family relation. Edith writes that the "country-house" was "pure American of the Eastern States" and that it was quite different from the life she had known in New York, which was "American of New York and Europe" (13). The distinction between types of "Americanness" is important because it reflects a separation between the simple, spiritual, rural life of the Aylesfords and the historical, intellectual, and sophisticated urban life found in New York and modeled on Old World customs and values.

In addition to the Aylesfords' character and simple way of life, Edith finds a deep spirituality that permeates throughout the rural farm and its family members. Edith frequently refers to the "spirit," "beauty," and "magic" of the landscape, and particularly the woodland paths at "twilight," (12) and she often describes the quiet spirituality of the family, especially Mrs. Aylesford. Like Dorothy's mother, Mrs. Aylesford is patient, hard-working, nurturing, and deeply spiritual, and having lost her own mother as a young girl, Edith values Nanny's mother's "great good-will" (58) and her wisdom. Moreover, Mrs. Aylesford is described as being one of the most spiritual characters in the novel. In the scene prior to her initial trip West, Edith visits the Aylesfords in order to share her travel plans and gain Mrs. Aylesford's advice as to how she should conduct her relations with Nanny's husband. The morning of Edith's departure, Mrs. Aylesford entertains Edith as to whether she had heard any strange sounds the night before. Edith assures that her that she hadn't, but Mrs. Aylesford only grows increasingly upset:

"Then you didn't hear what I heard?" she whispered. "I can't speak of it to father. It was n't the wind. It was a throbbing in the air—I can't think of anything but our swallows in the chimney beating their wings—in the hollow chimney. And it wasn't like that either." She shook—her lips were white. Her eyes had a dreary, strained expression... "Well, I'm

nervous—I guess that’s all... “Unless,” she added softly as to herself, “it was only meant for me.” (71-72)

Mrs. Aylesford’s experience foreshadows Nanny’s death. Foote’s comparison of the strange sound to “beating” bird wings resembles biblical and classical literature that uses the bird as a symbol of the human spirit and refers to the bird as a divine messenger. The fact that Mrs. Aylesford hears the sound and Edith doesn’t might be because, as she notes, the message was intended to be between daughter and mother, but the passage further reveals Mrs. Aylesford’s faith in mysteries and supernatural occurrences. Thus, the Aylesfords, and their farm, come to represent, in Edith’s mind, the “safest place on earth” (24), and she frequently returns to it, as Foote did to her own family farm, as she does towards the novel’s close when she takes the children there in order to escape Maclay and offer them a loving, supportive home environment.

Interestingly, as much as Edith sees the Aylesford home as a spiritual and nurturing place, it is the West that takes on the most spiritual significance, and I believe this is in part due to the intense isolation, risk, and grandeur that she finds in western living and in the western landscape. Foote’s vision of the West as rejuvenating, as seen through Edith’s perceptions, is common among other late nineteenth and early twentieth-century American women writers of the West. In her critical study *Landscapes of the New West* (1999), Krista Comer argues that “the most often celebrated feature of western space is its spatial *noncontainment*, its expansiveness, its vastness, its sheer weighty limitlessness” (28), and building on the work of Annette Kolodny, Comer continues to reveal how in the “fictive worlds” of nineteenth-century women writers, the western landscape was often “home to a dream of hearth, garden, and community” (157). We find evidence of Comer’s claims in Mary Austin’s “The Land of Little Rain” (*Atlantic Monthly* 1903), where the narrator tells us, “For all the toll the desert takes of a man it gives compensations, deep breaths, deep sleep, and the communion of the stars” (572), as

well as in her “The Walking Woman” (*Atlantic Monthly* 1907), where the narrator explains, “She had walked off all sense of society-made values” and found “the naked thing,” the love for work, for place, for a child, and for a man (582). Although both of these works were published some ten years prior to *Edith Bonham*, we find the same cadences, the same imaginative response to the western landscape, and thus we may well read Foote’s work as perpetuating a narrative of the West as an authentic place for women to test their strength and will and to re-connect with their inner selves, with the natural world, and with family.

Yet, whereas Austin’s West awakens and empowers the inner self, Edith’s West cultivates a need for God and faith. Having been informed of her friend’s death, Edith stands outside the train station and hears the trill of a meadow-lark that sounds like the birds that she and Nanny used to listen to on the Hudson. Grief-stricken, she writes, “Under that great strange sky that seemed fairly dark with its depths of clearness, with the songs of the birds of home to welcome me, and Nanny not there!—It broke me down. I sat and cried to myself” (81). The next several days for Edith are full of grief, crying, and hardship as she arrives at Nanny’s home only to discover that Maclay is away at the mines and that the affairs of the house and children have fallen into disarray. She wastes no time endeavoring to build a relationship with Nanny’s daughter, but her first encounter with Phoebe goes poorly—Edith accidentally wears a cloak that is an exact duplicate of one that Nanny owned and thus the little girl initially mistakes Edith for her mother before realizing the truth. While listening to Phoebe’s “hard crying in the hall,” Edith reflects on her own losses and turns to prayer for help with the broken-hearted child:

I shut my bedroom door and I did something I had not done in years. I had not been a good girl who says her prayers every night. I did not say them even the night after papa went away. No, I could not have said a prayer for papa. Even while mamma lived, shy little churchwoman, she had not been able to keep up her own forms and house-hold traditions, in the face of his indulgent levity. But I prayed then—if tears are prayer—and

the thought of a face one has loved, as if it were there, looking at you and listening to the lonely sobbing of her own child beyond reach. (89)

It is worth noting that Edith draws a connection between her own inability to pray and her mother's inability to incorporate religious practices into the home because of Edith's father. Like Rose Gilroy's father who was neglectful and mentally unstable, Edith's father is self-absorbed and unable to see how his disrespect suppressed the values of someone he loved. This passage suggests, however, that Edith's mother was still a profound influence on her daughter's religious beliefs. Faced with a situation that she does not know how to handle, Edith drops to her knees to seek divine counsel. Immediately following her prayer, Edith states that she rose from her "foolish knees" and made her "first effort with Phoebe," and after sharing a cup of tea together, the two begin to bond.

Edith's budding reliance on faith and prayer as a source of strength, endurance, wisdom, and comfort, as evidenced in the previous passage, is tested in yet another scene where Edith comes face to face with the risks of western living. Despite Edith's most valiant efforts to keep her charge safe from disease or physical injury, Phoebe still contracts scarlet fever from a neighborhood girl, and Edith spends six weeks caring for her, the two quarantined in the house on the mesa that Maclay had been building for his family prior to Nanny's death. "Those six weeks on the mesa," Edith writes, "were the most searching experience of my life, and their consequences spread over many years that followed" (153). It was during this time that Edith finds her "first gray hair" and discovers "the outside of one is no more one's self than the garments one poses in" (156). She writes, "I lived with the dead in those days, much more in reality than with the living," and the isolation and endless toil of disinfecting and caring for the sick child leads her to many more spiritual revelations:

Day by day I spent it as it was given, night after night I lay down aching in every muscle with the delicious pain of relaxation. And I did not catch the fever. I couldn't, with Nanny on my side with the angels. Now I understood why nuns fret not at their narrow cells, why convent-life may give wings to the spirit: not without help, I thought from the spirits of the blest. That help I felt sure I had. In short, I became a mystic and temporarily insane. (156-158)

Edith's reflections on spiritual being over physical, on living in the moment and not worrying about the future, and on isolation as a source of spiritual growth may very well speak to Foote's own experiences caring for her sick children while in Idaho. Although Foote's Idaho stories do not portray this overwhelming spiritual rejuvenation, she may have needed distance from the hardships of her life in Idaho, which she found in California, in order to reflect on and draw meaning from her experiences. Moreover, the emphasis on isolation may also reflect Foote's Quaker childhood and her family's intentional seclusion and heightened religious temperament. As the narrator in one of Foote's other Idaho stories, "On a Side-Track," eloquently notes, "And then comes God in the silence" (159).

It's not just the isolation, physical toil, and stress of caring for Phoebe that rejuvenates Edith's faith in a higher power and heightens her spiritual awareness but also the grandeur of the western landscape that allows her to see herself as a small part of a divinely inspired creation. The quarantine chapter ends with a shift in Edith's thoughts from her own spiritual identity to the existence and creation of the western landscape that surrounds her:

When I went forth to empty my pails off the edge of the bluff, every being kept away. Alone I could stand and open my chest with great breaths of that air, and clasp my hands behind my head and look up deep into the amazing sky... The Owyhees swung down along the southern sky and where they approached the Boise Mountains with their near foothills, there was a break and through it one looked far off into the Powder River Country and saw the Blue Mountains of Oregon. As I knew very little Western geography these names were as new to me as names in a fairy-tale. All fairy-tales—except one—were tame to this. 'And the evening and the morning were the sixth day,' I used to say to myself aloud. I fancied I knew why evening came before morning in that stupendous record. Night is the constructive time when miracles are wrought; night for the mind and spirit, day for the body and will. (159)

Again we find Edith alone, separated from those she loves as well as the local town's people, and her isolation creates a space for her to consider creation. It's important to note how her occupation, removing her own physical waste, leads her to these thoughts, and the juxtaposition of her menial task and the sheer massiveness of the western mountain ranges might suggest her relative smallness, her humility, when faced with such an awe-inspiring view. By referring to the Old Testament story, Genesis, as one of many "fairy-tales" that Edith has heard to explain how the physical world came into being, Foote creates equality among creation myths—although she doesn't offer any additional examples. Foote then elevates the biblical story over any other creation "fairy-tale" by stating all others are "tame" in comparison. No others, to her, can account for the break in night and day, for the process of renewal that she finds in the cycle of night and day, or for the sublimity that she finds in the "lofty loneliness" of the western landscape (170). Thus we find in this passage that Edith's spirituality, her awareness of the relation between her spirit and the larger physical world, promotes religious belief. Additionally, by emphasizing the West's grandeur, Foote builds on the tradition of nineteenth-century American women writers by connecting the narrative of the West as a feminine space for freedom, self-growth, and family to an even older narrative of the natural world as a place of divine and sacred beauty, which took particular hold of America's imagination in eighteenth-century religious revivals, the Great Awakening, and in nineteenth-century religious views such as transcendentalism.

Thus through the isolation, risk, and grandeur of the western landscape, Edith comes to see the West as a place potentially free from the materialism, capitalism, and intellectualism of mainstream, eastern American society. Much to the dismay of Edith's sister, Essie, and her Aunt Essie, after returning East with the children, Edith prefers to live on the Aylesford farm rather

than with her own relatives because she wants to be close to the children and she prefers the quiet country life on the Hudson to city life in New York. Even Edith's family recognizes a difference in her, and during one visit with her sister, Essie exclaims, "But you *are* changed, Edith!...Is there anything out there that ages people!—inside, somehow?" (237). Edith affirms her sister's observation and inwardly grieves over the realization that, to her, New York was suddenly "lonesome" and "stripped of a certain glamour, and of a certain anguish it used to hold...that would never come again" (239). Leaving her sister's and traveling to the home of her Aunt Essie—a high-society widow who longs to dress Edith up and take her into circles "where the talk is deep, and simple, and strange to an outsider" and "where elegance is understood" (242)—Edith again confronts the image of her past in the city and the reality of her disassociation with high-society life:

I was stripped—bare to the bone. It startled me how little I cared now for things I had thought I depended on...I would find myself at dusk standing between the curtains of a window on the street...watching the stream of carriages that took men home to their dinners or men without homes to their clubs, or guests going to dine. That was the sort of pang I might have felt only a year ago—of a girl with no dinner invitations and no new gowns to wear if she had them, no personal hold on one of the throng of exciting folk that passed and passed! They did not excite me now. Not one of them could do a stranger thing than I had known, nor demand in me a more difficult, desperate counterpoise. Nothing in humanity could involve me deeper than that soul's adventure in one of the loneliest spots on earth. Fashion could not awe me, nor society nor the world cast down—I had been where men and women suffer mental shame and say to one another naked things." (239)

The phrase "naked things," interestingly, is the same phrase Austin uses in the passage from "The Walking Woman" to describe how she had walked away from society's values. The "naked things" that Edith refers to are also connected to a loosening of society's hold on her sense of value, but more specifically the phrase refers to her discussions with Maclay, discussions about their memories of Nanny and Edith's new-found sense of love, belonging, and

safety. Her emphasis on the “naked[ness]” of these talks suggest a level of authenticity that she now finds to be lacking in society talk but possible in the openness of the West.²⁵

Foote’s language suggests that the reason the West has the power to revitalize is because it encourages spiritual meditations and development of religious faith, which in turn alters people’s perceptions and sense of responsibility towards each other and enables them to create and cultivate healthy relationships. As with Dorothy and Rachel’s faith in “Friend Barton’s ‘Concern,’” Edith’s religious convictions call her to love and to give of herself unselfishly. Self-less and sacrificial love is the foundational doctrine of Protestant and Quaker traditions, and Edith demonstrates this type of love by caring for another woman’s children. During her conversation with Aunt Essie, Edith explains that she is devoted to Nanny’s children, stating that she “love[s] the call” (241), and Aunt Essie chastises her for her foolishness, arguing that Edith’s youth has been “wasted” caring for another woman’s children when she should be looking for a husband and children of her own. Yet, Edith responds, “I am not thrown away. I am found and used...to a purpose more real to me than the life you show me” (243), and in another conversation between the two women, Edith further explains her decision to remain faithful to the children by passionately exclaiming that she has found the purpose of her life in self-less love: “I am the lover of Phoebe: to love is better than to be loved” (253). Edith’s rejection of society and her choice to remain faithful, completely immersing herself in a love that makes little sense by society’s standards, is not something that Aunt Essie can comprehend. It is worth noting that Edith’s emphasis on self-less love becomes attributed to a single drop of Quaker

²⁵ In one late-night conversation, Edith tells Maclay that she had finally found “a better place, a sort of Soul’s Rest,” and she continues to say that her time in isolation at the mesa house brought back memories of Nanny: “I have a garden of memories planted on this hill—every flower a thought of her. Flowers like that don’t grow in crowded soil—they need solitude and concentration with the one idea. Then it becomes more than a dream; it is a vision!” (169). I find it interesting that Edith’s flower imagery hints at the same themes of isolation, rest, growth, and vision that she emphasizes in the rest of the novel.

blood that Edith's father claimed was in the Bonham line of descent: "No; you are a strange sport for us Bonhams to produce," Aunt Essie claims and continues, "You must throw back to the Quaker Gurneys. There was nothing like you among us until they came into the game" (253).

At first read, Aunt Essie's reference to Edith's Quaker ancestry might appear to be abrupt, even odd, but as I explained in the earlier section on "Friend Barton's 'Concern,'" Foote was aware of society's expectations of Quakers as supremely virtuous beings and therefore this reference might have served to explain Edith's sensitivity to a higher moral code. It is remarkable, however, that in this novel, Foote associates Quaker virtues with a character who is not a practicing Quaker, and she might be revealing how many Quaker beliefs such as virtue, faithfulness, and love of family can be embraced and practiced by those who aren't dedicated Quakers. It is also noteworthy that the place of heightened spirituality in the novel is the West, not the eastern Quaker farm. Throughout the novel, Foote moves us back and forth between places—New York, the Hudson farm, and Idaho—and instead of constructing the rural Quaker farm as ideal, as she does in "Friend Barton's 'Concern,'" Foote shows us that the West has become the ideal, spiritual, harmonious, domestic space. Considering Edith's descriptions of the fixed, rigid character of the Aylesford family, perhaps the Quaker farm represents an older, more stagnant, faith that continues to work for those who live there but may not be as accessible to the next generation. Or perhaps with the increasingly modern and corporate eastern American society that is sprouting up around the Hudson, the farm has become too close to mainstream culture to be able to retain its isolation and fixed religious standards. Thus, maybe Foote offers us an alternate view of religious beliefs that become most fully actualized in the freedom and openness of the West: a more generic Christian faith that leans heavily on Quaker beliefs in simplicity, unity, quiet, and an inner spiritual light, but a faith that allows for some flexibility, for

personal interpretation, for beliefs outside of strict denominational affiliation, and for spiritual inspiration that comes from the natural world and not strict church attendance.²⁶

Although scholars such as Maguire, Miller, and Johnson have praised the realism that they find in Foote's vision of the West in *Edith Bonham*, they have neglected to see how Foote employs sentimental conventions to translate experiences out West to her eastern audience and simultaneously instruct her reader's religious, moral, and social perceptions.²⁷ More than in any of her other works, Foote constructs a narrative frame that coincides with sentimental forms: the narrative is written from Edith's point of view, and she frequently addresses her readership and acknowledges common societal perceptions that Foote wishes to undermine. For an example, in the concluding scenes, Edith shares with her readership the fear she felt in accepting Maclay's proposal and leading up to her first kiss. She writes, "These chilling reflections I recall for the benefit of any sister-spinster who has postponed her betrothal kiss as late as I did mine... The seasons take care of themselves; all we need to do is to see that the root be sound and clean" (306). Not only does Foote draw attention to the possible connection between her readers' and Edith's experiences, but she further encourages them to disregard society's push towards marriage and to not worry about the timing of these critical events in their lives. Moreover, she advises her reader to retain her virtue in the meantime. Thus Foote sets the stage for sentimental identification between her readers and the thoughts and feelings of Edith. Moreover, the novel concludes with a chapter written by Phoebe where she reflects on her Aunt Edith's charm, wit,

²⁶ Foote resists oversimplifying the division between East and West and she illustrates how eastern society's materialism and empty talk is also found in the West; Foote is disgusted by the town's gossip over her living arrangements, and when Mrs. Post, a military wife, ventures to visit and give Edith a "frank" talking to about what the town thought about her "quarantine on the mesa" with only a widowed man venturing back and forth to see her, Edith is astonished at the town's audacity and viciousness. Moreover, in Phoebe's narrative, Foote notes the drastic change in the western landscape, stating that Boise is no longer "the little town that used to be called 'The City of the Desert Plains.' It really is very much of a city now and the plains are no more a desert" (326). Thus although eastern appears to equate to urban and western to country, Foote illustrates the fallacy of such a dichotomy.

²⁷ Johnson argues that in *Edith Bonham*, Foote revealed her acceptance and embrace of western living. She writes, "the West becomes the ideal, symbolizing fertility and regeneration in contrast to eastern sterility" (156).

and loving devotion towards their family, and in doing so, Foote further elevates her heroine's character by having Phoebe sing her praises: "That was Aunt Edith—"mother," queen of all mothers, perfect in love, in friendship, in magnanimity, the soul of friendship, which came as natural to her as vanity and selfishness to smaller natures" (326). Having set Edith on quite a high pedestal, Foote illustrates to her reader what type of virtue and moral character a woman should strive for in her life.

When *Edith Bonham* appeared in print in the early twentieth century, it received high praise from both the publishing company and reviewers. Houghton Mifflin wrote in a letter to Foote that *Edith Bonham* had "made a very good start" on the literary market, and a reviewer for the *Boston Transcript* stated that the work "would probably be considered [Foote's] most appealing novel" (Miller 250). Another reviewer stated that Foote's writing "as always, with its quiet clarity, offers grateful refreshment to ears which may be a trifle weary of the din and 'punch' of the current literary mode" (250). Yet, as the latter reviewer noted, the literary market was changing drastically at the turn of the century and modernism was taking hold of literary and public interest. Foote appears to be more than aware of this shift as she noted in the preface to *The Valley Road*, a novel published two years prior to *Edith Bonham*, that her readership and her writings were becoming part of a by-gone era: "The author knows that her readers by now must be chiefly the old friends who read her books when she and they were young" (Maguire 37). Foote's prediction that her writings would only be appreciated by a by-gone era proved to be true; *Edith Bonham* only received a few positive reviews in the 1970s and 80s—during the time when early Foote scholars such as Maguire, Miller, and Johnson were actively re-writing Foote's literary and artistic achievements into the canon of western American writing— and contemporary scholars tend to either brush over the piece or undervalue it as just another Foote

romance, as evidenced by Baym's assertion that the novel is "a romance along the lines of *Jane Eyre*" (184).

Perhaps scholarship's disregard of *Edith Bonham*, as well as its current lack of interest in Foote's work overall, is in part due to Foote's employment of sentimentalism, a literary form that became associated at the turn of the twentieth century with women's domestic writings and minor interests and events. Additionally Foote's vision of the West appears to represent two narrative claims that have come under fire in scholarship over roughly the past twenty-five years: 1) the West as "exoticized" spiritual and mystical place and 2) the rural West as authentic versus the urban East and inauthentic.²⁸ Yet, if we dismiss her writings as part of a minor genre or as representative of a romanticized view of the West, we neglect a fascinating case study about a young, eastern, Quaker-raised girl who went West in the mid-nineteenth century with her engineering husband and who, through writing, transposed her religious beliefs onto the western landscape and into the imagination of her eastern readers. We also fail to see how her works offered a solution to what she saw as the increasingly materialistic and superficial fiber of nineteenth-century American culture: a renewed value of Christianity, place, and family.

3 CHAPTER 2 THE HEART OF HOME: CHRISTIANITY IN THE WRITINGS OF SARAH ORNE JEWETT

In an 1873 letter to editor Horace E. Scudder, Sarah Orne Jewett wrote that writing was not a "bread and butter affair" for her but that she still felt a spiritual obligation to pursue her literary career: "I don't wish to ignore such a gift as this, God has given me" (*Letters* 30).

Raised in a Congregationalist household and baptized in an Episcopalian church at the age of twenty-one (26), Jewett developed strong affiliations throughout her life with various Christian

²⁸ For a detailed discussion of nineteenth-century and twentieth-century representations of the West see Comer's *Landscapes of the New West: Gender and Geography in Contemporary Women's Writings* (1999).

organizations and leaders such as Swedenborgian Theophilus Parsons, Episcopalian Bishop William Woodruff Niles, and Shaker leader Elder Henry Green, and throughout her writings she illustrated a keen interest in the works of prominent American spiritual writers including Ralph Waldo Emerson and Harriet Beecher Stowe. Although scholarship has noted Jewett's connection to these various Christian institutions and leaders, the critical dialog surrounding Jewett's literary representations of spiritual and religious issues has glaring contradictions. In 1984, Elizabeth Ammons argued that Jewett's fiction was filled with witchcraft, occultism, and anti-Protestantism. In 1990, Marilyn Fisher contended that Dunnett Landing is "an ideal Christian community where the inhabitants, bonded by shared spiritual values, regularly renew their communal ties and practice a collective ministry of works" (67). In 1993, Richard Brodhead asserted that Jewett's fictional world is "almost wholly secular" and that her "old-timers of Deephaven and Dunnett Landing show virtually no trace of orthodox Christian heritage" (160).

This chapter seeks to clarify our understanding of how Jewett's religious beliefs shaped her vision of Maine's coastal communities and to further regionalist scholarship by highlighting connections between culture, religion, and place. I believe that the persistent ambiguity surrounding the nature of Jewett's religious and spiritual representations can be traced to trends in regionalist studies that moved scholarly interest away from institutionalized religion. These shifts in scholarship began in the early 1990s with Fetterley and Pryse, who elevated the literary status of women's lives, domesticity, and spirituality and rejected masculine systems of power, and continued with Brodhead, who revealed intersections between social class, gender, economy, and literary culture. Current regionalist scholarship, as Hsu writes in his 2009 overview of nineteenth and twentieth-century regionalisms, "often focus[es] on the genre's expression of

resistance to postbellum developments such as national consolidation, urbanization, and industrial capitalism” (219). Hsu’s 2010 critical study on the intersections of space, place, geography, literature, and regional production is the most recent attempt to re-situate regionalist texts, and Jewett’s Dunnett Landing sketches specifically, within a network of local and global tensions in order to demonstrate the affect that “large-scale phenomena such as migrant flows, transportation networks, and international commerce” have on regional communities (165). Considering the directional thrust of regionalist scholarship from the intimate particularities of women’s private space to the grander issues of economy, politics, and capitalism, it’s perhaps little surprise that religion has remained widely neglected in Jewett’s works.

Although a closer examination of Jewett’s representations of religion and spirituality may appear to return scholarship to the more “minor” and intimate details of human experience that twentieth and twenty-first-century critics of literary regionalism has attempted to move away from, I argue that such an undertaking will expand our understanding of how regions are produced through complex local, national, and international exchanges. In New England, the period between the mid-nineteenth century and the turn of the twentieth century witnessed a variety of social and intellectual changes that shaped New England’s theological tradition, ushering in a variety of religious expressions from evangelicalism, transcendentalism, Christian Science, social gospel, and religious universalism.²⁹ I argue that Jewett’s works reveal how these social and religious movements led to a dramatic shift in Protestant tradition during the nineteenth century from an exclusive, orthodox tradition, which was rooted in depravity, unconditional election, and uncertainty, to an inclusive, evangelical tradition, which was grounded in biblical scripture, nature, and experiential knowledge. In addition to revealing a

²⁹ Many prominent mid-nineteenth-century religious theologians and social reformers emerged from New England including Henry Ward Beecher and his sister, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Dwight L. Moody, Susan, B. Anthony, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Mary Baker Eddy, and Thomas Wentworth Higginson, to name only a few.

dynamic shift in Protestant tradition that affected local communities, Jewett's fictions also model how religious and spiritual knowledge is exchanged between cultures. She frequently constructed country characters who offered valuable religious and spiritual wisdom to her urban readers. By revealing the religious and spiritual lives of her fictional country peoples, Jewett illuminates how a Christian faith grounded in both biblical truth and the natural world can serve to create community by connecting people of different classes, genders, and ranks, and she also shows how faith can offer people emotional and psychological comfort during times of isolation, poverty, and hardship.

A closer examination of Jewett's religious representations will further expand regionalist scholarship by revealing how Jewett employs the narrative point of view of an urban traveler, common to nineteenth-century regionalist fiction, to represent the distinct, religious lives of country people. In her infamous letter to Scudder, Jewett wrote that she didn't think she "could write a long story" as there wouldn't be any "plot" and she would have to fill it up with "descriptions of character and meditations" (*Letters* 29). Jewett's innovative character sketch became the hallmark of her literary career, and Jewett scholars have often focused on how she employs a traveling, urban narrator in *Pointed Firs* to construct the character and lives of Maine's country inhabitants. Early Jewett scholars like Ammons noted that "Jewett's structure reflects her subject matter" and that the narrative, "instead of being linear, is nuclear,[moving] out from one base to a given point and back again" ("Going" 85). Brodhead also emphasized Jewett's narrative structure, referring to it as an "asymmetrical characterization scheme" (145), and D. K. Meisenheimer argued that Jewett's plot functions through "the accumulation of new friendships," instead of "conflict" (111). Most recently, Philip Joseph argued that *Country* is like earlier "Anglophone travel writing," which was made popular by Christian pilgrims in medieval

times, in that Jewett employs a pilgrimage narrative structure in order to reliably represent local communities, reveal them as sources of valuable knowledge, and “restore faith” between city and country peoples. For the purposes of my study, I find Joseph’s work to be most relevant as he highlights a literary history of individuals who actively sought religious truth and wrote about their experiences in order to share new insight. By foregrounding religious knowledge in Jewett’s works, we are able to see more clearly how Jewett’s traveling narrators can be understood as pilgrims who seek religious knowledge and find it in various expressions through their encounters with country peoples.

By foregrounding Jewett’s religious and spiritual representations, we will not only expand conversations on Jewett as a regional writer but also open a dialog on the role that sentimentalism played in Jewett’s writings. Although scholars like Brodhead have argued that Jewett moved away from the domestic fiction of her predecessors, Jewett was, nevertheless, greatly affected by these writers. In her letters she emphasizes the influence that Stowe had on her theory of authorship and desire to write of local peoples in a way that would allow readers to emotionally engage. In the preface to *Deephaven*, Jewett explains that Stowe’s *The Pearl of Orr’s Island* (1862) caused her “to see with new eyes, and to follow eagerly the old shore paths from one gray, weather beaten house to another” (32). Despite her admiration for Stowe’s affective literary regionalism, Jewett criticized her predecessor’s inability to maintain the “noble key to simplicity and harmony,” and she avowed to construct “a more true and sympathetic rendering” (11). Through her traveling narrators, Jewett stages story-telling practices, as Jacqueline Shea Murphy has noted about *Pointed Firs*, in order to create an “empathetic connection across place and class between the story’s characters and the (implicitly white) women readers imagined as their audience” (678). The female, socially privileged, outsider

point of view works two-fold: first, it creates a detailed, sympathetic rendering of the lives and stories of country peoples so as to illustrate common human experiences and emotions and to evoke an empathetic response in the readers; second, it establishes an intimate connection between the narrator and, as Murphy notes, the perceived white, upper-middle-class, female readership so as to build credibility, to create a sense of feminine community, and to, subsequently, guide readers' process of interpretation and of meaning-making. We will find that Jewett's early work employs more sentimental conventions than her later work, but that she consistently stages sympathy as a means for understanding country peoples. Therefore, in addition to building on regionalist scholarship, this chapter also furthers critical discussions on nineteenth-century sentimentalism in order to demonstrate how Jewett employed sympathy and religious experience to appeal to her largely female, Protestant audience.

Although Jewett published twenty books, most of them collections of previously published pieces, and hundreds of sketches and short stories dealing with Maine throughout her life, I am most interested in two books that have been frequently connected to each other in passing but never actually examined side by side: *Deephaven* (1877) and *Pointed Firs* (1896). Thus far, critics have largely focused on *Pointed Firs*, and this is probably due, in part, to Henry James's assessment of the book as Jewett's "beautiful little quantum of achievement" as well as to Willa Cather's praise of the book as Jewett's "masterpiece" (Pryse's introduction to Norton's *Pointed Firs* v, vi). As their letter correspondence reveals, Jewett and Cather were friends as well as fellow female artists, and Cather wrote the original preface to *Pointed Firs*. In her preface, Cather began with a quote from Jewett's letters that, Cather believed, spoke to Jewett's development as a writer as exemplified in *Pointed Firs*. Jewett observed, "The thing that teases the mind over and over for years, and at last gets itself put down rightly on paper—whether little

or great, it belongs to Literature” (ix). Cather, then, asserted that in some of Jewett’s earlier work, including *Deephaven*, “one can find first sketches, first impressions, which later crystallized into the almost flawless examples of literary art” (x) that make up Jewett’s Dunnett Landing sketches.³⁰ Many scholars, including Richard Cary, have echoed Cather’s assessment of the connections between Cather’s first book and her magnum opus, and I argue that if we compare *Deephaven* and *Pointed Firs*, we will find that one of the many “thing[s]” that “teased” Jewett’s mind, and became a reoccurring theme in her work, was religion. In both books, Jewett frequently illuminates the value of Christian values and biblical scripture, and she further depicts the natural world as a powerful source for spiritual knowledge that can supplement our understanding of the Divine and of life’s mysteries. In *Deephaven*, however, Jewett experiments with a variety of religious expressions as if to better understand where people find spiritual truth and how place and community influence faith. In *Pointed Firs*, published twenty years later, she creates a clear image of two types of Christianity—one, dogmatic and hypocritical, and the other, biblical and compassionate—in order to argue for a more place-based, community-based, and inclusive Christian faith.

3.1 Re-establishing Good Faith: Religion and Deephaven

In 1870, at twenty-one years of age Jewett was baptized in an Episcopalian church, and her letters between 1870 and 1877 (the year *Deephaven* was published) demonstrate how deeply involved she was in multiple forms of Christianity. In an 1872 letter to her aunt, Jewett described how uplifted her spirits were after listening to one of Episcopalian bishop William Woodruff Niles’s “very fine sermon[s],” and in an 1877 letter to one of her cousins, she

³⁰ Cather continued to write, “One can, as it were, watch in process the two kinds of making: the first, which is full of perception and feeling but rather fluid and formless, the second, which is tightly built and significant in design” (x). Echoing Cather’s observation, Richard Cary wrote in his introduction to Masterwork’s 1966 edition of *Deephaven and Other Stories* that Jewett’s first book stands as “the embryo to the adult organism” (12).

explained that she had very nearly “finished the survey of Sunday-school books” and found them to be “very entertaining” (*Letters* 26, 23, 34).³¹ In addition to these letters, Jewett corresponded for many years with Theophilus Parsons, who introduced her to Swedenborgianism, especially during the 70s when Jewett struggled with the death of her beloved father. Thus it may be of little surprise that religion becomes a prominent theme in *Deephaven* and that we find evidence of Jewett’s attempts to negotiate faith systems through her fictional characters.

What is interesting, however, is how Jewett creates an intimate connection between her country people and her urban readership through a shared understanding of and appreciation for religious and spiritual knowledge. She uses this common interest in religious and spiritual insight as a means for establishing her primary literary goal: to connect country and city peoples. She states her aim clearly in the preface to the 1893 edition of *Deephaven*, explaining, “The young writer of these Deephaven sketches was possessed by a dark fear that townspeople and country people would never understand one another, or learn to profit by their new relationship,” and she continues to express her desire to reveal a “class of country people who preserve the best traditions of culture and of manners, from some divine inborn instinct toward what is simplest and best and purest” (32-33). Through her language, specifically “some divine inborn instinct,” Jewett intentionally heightens the characters of country people, suggesting that they live in an exemplary state of holy, pure, and simple living, and her reference to mutual “profit” suggests that she believed city peoples could benefit from the spiritual insight of country people.

In order to accomplish this task—to teach townspeople about the “best” of country people—Jewett not only uses religion, but she also employs sentimental and regional

³¹ Jewett’s aunt, Lucretia Fisk Perry, was the wife of Dr. William Gilman Perry, and her cousin, Charles Ashburton Gilman, was the son of Charles Jervis and Alice Dunlap Gilman.

conventions to attract her readership to the “quaint old place which has seen better days” (38). The story begins with two young city girls, Ms. Helen Denis and Ms. Kate Lancaster, planning their summer vacation to the shores of Deephaven, Maine. As urban outsiders, Helen and Kate fit the spectator mode of nineteenth-century regionalist fiction, but their virtuous characters and their Christian affiliations may have further appealed to a readership familiar with the sentimental heroines of nineteenth-century women’s fiction. It’s important to note that Jewett intentionally distances her heroines from the more sensationalized forms of nineteenth-century sentimental fiction on the opening page of the book. After letting herself into the Lancaster home, Helen hurries to the parlor where Kate is diligently practicing her piano skills, and the girls greet each other with a kiss on the cheek. Helen immediately addresses the reader, “You need not smile; we are not sentimental girls, and are both much averse to indiscriminate kissing” (37). Jewett wastes no time in establishing the credibility of her narrator in order to appeal to her readers’ sensibilities and to earn their trust so that they might willingly travel with her to Deephaven and readily accept her character and community representations as truth.

Through Helen and Kate, the readers enter into a world that was once clearly influenced by orthodox Protestantism but that, over the years, has become increasingly less focused on dogmatic religious beliefs. The second chapter, entitled “The Brandon House and the Lighthouse,” begins with Helen and Kate’s departure from Boston and with their arrival at Kate’s great-aunt’s Deephaven house, the home of the recently deceased Miss Katherine Brandon. Helen and Kate are greatly impressed by the old architecture of the Brandon house, and we are told that the west parlor was their “favorite room downstairs” as it contained a great fire place that was “framed in blue and white Dutch tiles which ingeniously and instructively represented the careers of the good and the bad man.” The last two tiles depict the type of fire

and brim stone imagery that was common in orthodox Protestantism, and made famous by New England theologians like Jonathan Edwards, and that was used to instill fear and encourage morally right action in its members:

The last two of the series are very high art: a great coffin stands in the foreground of each, and the virtuous man is being led off by two agreeable-looking angels, while the wicked one is hastening from an indescribable but unpleasant assemblage of claws and horns and eyes which is rapidly advancing from the distance, open mouthed, and bringing a chain with it. (46)

Although the fire-place serves as the most striking example of the home's past and the resident's orthodox religious beliefs in judgment and damnation for sinners, many rooms in the house exude an air of decay and foreboding that emotionally affects the girls. We are told that the girls "stood rather in dread" of one of the front rooms, "the best chamber." The carpet was "colored with dark reds and indescribable grays and browns" and the wall paper was an "unearthly pink and a forbidding maroon, with dim white spots, which gave the appearance of it having moulded" (45). In addition to the dark, fiery, and hellish colors in the room, there were "fantastic china ornaments from Bible subjects on the mantel" and a picture of "the Maid of Orleans," also known as Joan of Arc, tied with an unnecessarily strong rope to a very stout stake" (45).³²

The dark religious imagery of the Brandon house stands in stark contrast to the "dazzling golden light" and ethereal descriptions of the sunset at the end of the same chapter, which might suggest the limitations of religion as a human-made, cultural construct. "The Brandon House and the Lighthouse" chapter concludes with the girls visiting the local lighthouse, and as they watch the sunset from the boat, Helen wonders, "if heaven would not be somehow like that far, faint

³² The painting of Joan of Arc painting reflects the lingering animosity between Protestantism and Catholicism in nineteenth-century New England, and we are told that Miss Katherine's youngest and favorite brother joined the popery, dealing "a dreadful blow to the family" (49). Once again, we have a Christian tradition that includes some and excludes others and demonstrates animosity instead of love to those who have alternate religious beliefs and practices.

color, which was neither sea nor sky” (53). With their faces turned away from “the Light,” the girls bask in the sun’s lingering rays, feeling as if they “were alone, and the sea shoreless,” and as darkness closes around them and the stars appear, Helen again returns to the thought of heaven, noting, “I used long ago to be sure of one thing,—that, however far away heaven might be, it could not be out of sight of the stars” (53). Whereas Helen feels a sense of depression and foreboding in the dark imagery of the Brandon house, she finds a sense of divine knowledge and of spiritual certainty in the brilliant and changing light of the sky and of the immense expanse of the sea. Critics have often noted the influence of Transcendentalism in *Pointed Firs*, and we find a similar literary aesthetic informs *Deephaven* as evidenced by Helen’s emotional response to the landscape.³³ It is also important to note the change in location; as the girls move from land to sea, they isolate themselves, temporarily, from the community, and through their isolation, they are able to fully experience and reflect on the world around them. Through this opening chapter, Jewett sets up two of her primary themes in the book: nature’s ability to inspire and reveal divine truth and isolation’s role in inducing reflection.

After their arrival in Deephaven, Helen and Kate become immersed in the local culture, and what becomes evident is just how grounded the society is in Protestant beliefs and practices. Conversations with residents often reveal idiomatic phrases stemming from Protestant beliefs and biblical scripture such as “the Lord bless ‘em!” (65) or “it was older’n the ten commandments” (57). The test of an individual’s character is frequently based on regular church attendance and on acts of piety. For example, Mrs. Dockum, a friend of Kate’s great-aunt, explains how Mrs. Patton, another townswoman, was a “nice woman; good consistent church-

³³ As Marcia Littenberg argues, “The first tenet of Transcendentalism is a reemphasis on feeling, for it is one’s sympathy with nature, one’s ability to ‘see into the very heart of things’ that allows one to discover nature’s beauty, and with it transcendent meaning” (138).

member; always been respected; useful among the sick” (67).³⁴ Jewett’s emphasis on the town’s religious practice is most evident in chapter four, entitled “Deephaven Society,” when Helen and Kate experience their “first Sunday at church” (71). From their seats on an “old-fashioned” pew, the girls are “delight[ed]” by the sound of violins, flutes, and of men and women singing, “The Lord our God is full of might, / The winds obey his will,” and with “great interest,” they observe the congregation, which is comprised of older aristocrats, who arrive with “stately step up the aisle,” as well as “younger farmers and their wives” (71).³⁵ When viewed collectively, these traditional religious beliefs and practices—Bible reading, charity, prayer, worship, church attendance—serve to connect individuals to community, and they create a sense of comfort, security, and stability within the community despite the town’s declining shipping industry and vanishing cosmopolitanism.

Although the town demonstrates a foundation of orthodox Protestant practice, Pastor Lorimer’s sermon, which he gives during Helen and Kate’s visit, illustrates a shift from orthodox to evangelical Protestantism as well a notable emphasis on the relationship between religion and place:

Everything in Deephaven was more or less influenced by the sea; the minister spoke oftenest of Peter and his fishermen companions, and prayed most earnestly every Sunday morning for those who go down to the sea in ships. He made frequent allusions and drew numberless illustrations of a similar kind for his sermons, and indeed I am in doubt whether, if the Bible had been written wholly in inland countries it would have been much valued in Deephaven. (74)

³⁴ Women, especially, are judged on their church activities and morality, as Miss Katherine is as well, which may reflect nineteenth-century perceptions of true womanhood.

³⁵ Helen notes that the entire congregation reflects a “curiously ancient” manner of dress and a “peculiar provincialism.” Several of the old men, Helen states, looked “as if they might have belonged to the crew of the *Mayflower*,” an explicit reference to the pilgrims who sought freedom and religious truth in the New World, and the “elderly women” who were “relics of old times” in “soft silk gowns that must have been brought from seas years upon years before.” Even the young members, who Helen imagines “believed” they were dressed in the “latest fashion,” are described as being out-of-style (72).

By focusing on Peter, Mr. Lorimer not only creates a connection between the lives of Deephaven residents who subsist off the sea and one of Jesus' most notable disciples, but he also emphasizes a character from the New Testament who exemplifies faith and forgiveness.³⁶ Thus his sermon reflects a shift in New England Protestantism from orthodox doctrines of depravity and unconditional election to scriptures of forgiveness and salvation.³⁷ Moreover, by highlighting a relation between Deephaven residents and biblical figures, Mr. Lorimer transcends time through place and reaches his audience. The effects of his sermon become an understanding of religion as existing in relation to the natural world, instead of abstract theories or invisible spiritual spheres like heaven and hell. Jewett heightens the role place plays in making religion accessible through Helen's assessment that the primary reason Deephaven residents rely on and believe in the Bible is because of its ability to link aspects of coastal living with issues of faith.

What is most remarkable about Helen and Kate's first Sunday service, however, is that neither girl appears to be particularly moved or inspired—at least not at the level that they are when they witness the sunset in the previous chapter. The most enjoyable moment, based on Jewett's language, seems to be their initial "delight" in the music. As the service continues, however, their appreciation for the aesthetic qualities of the service shifts as they realize the music, too, is tainted with age: "the singing was very droll, for there was a majority of old voices, which had seen their best days long before" (74). We might read Helen and Kate's interest in the service, then, to be more a matter of their curiosity and respect for Deephaven's religious culture and tradition as well as, perhaps, their appreciation for aesthetic ritual and Christian teachings. Yet, when we consider the three places that Jewett describes as being

³⁶ Peter is the apostle who leaves behind his family and lively hood as a fisherman to follow Jesus' calling, and he is also the one who Jesus forgives for denying him three times prior to the crucifixion.

³⁷ The notable shift in Protestant belief reveals the town's ability to adapt to changing times, which further refutes early critics' views of regionalism as a genre that represented local towns as stagnant or fixed in time.

invested with religious or spiritual significance thus far in the book—the dark, orthodox Brandon house, the spiritually infused natural landscape surrounding the lighthouse, and the church—we are led to a variety of important questions about Jewett’s religious vision in *Deephaven*: How have orthodox beliefs influenced Deephaven? What is the role of church in society? Where does one find religious truth and inspiration? What effect does country living have on personal faith?

The answers to these questions lie in Helen and Kate’s encounters with several Deephaven residents, including the “peculiar and somewhat visionary” Captain Sands whose radical ideas of telepathy, nature, and spirituality reflect a variety of nineteenth-century religious views. One afternoon Captain Sands takes the girls out to Black Rock to go cunner-fishing, and during their expedition, he reminisces about Deephaven’s shipping industry and entertains his guests with stories about his life as a sailor. Helen and Kate have heard tales about Captain Sand’s uncanny ability to tell when a storm is brewing, so when he suddenly winds up his line, looks to the sky, and tells them that it’s time to get going, the girls reluctantly take the oars. As they reach the moorings, “the clouds were black, and the thunder rattled and boomed over the sea,” and Captain Sands remarks, “folks may say what they have a mind to; I didn’t see that shower coming up...I know as well as I want to that my wife did, and impressed it on my mind...she watches the sky and is al’ays a-worrying when I got out fishing for fear” (121). The following morning, Helen and Kate find Captain Sands “alone on an overturned whaleboat,” and they ask whether or not Mrs. Sands had, indeed, seen the storm coming, and Captain Sands states that it was the “first thing she spoke of” when he got in the house. It’s important to note how Jewett invests Mrs. Sands with a heightened sensitivity towards her feelings and towards unseen, natural changes, and Jewett may well be making an argument much like other women writers of

sentimental and regional nineteenth-century fiction that women's emotions make them more attuned to spiritual matters.

Excited to hear more about Captain Sands's "decided opinions on dreams and other mysteries," the girls encourage him to share more about his philosophies, and the three engage in a serious conversation about spirituality, dreams, and telepathy. As a young man, Captain Sands explains that he used to put "more stock in dreams and such" and that old Parson Lorimer "spoke to [him] once about it, and said it was a tempting of Providence, and that we hadn't no right to pry into secrets." Captain Sands doesn't agree or disagree with the parson's assertion, but after admitting to picking up a dream book in a shop in Bristol, he concludes the subject by stating, "I see what fools it made folks, bothering their heads about such things, and I pretty much let them go: all this stuff about spirit rappings is enough to make a man crazy. You don't get no good by it" (123). Although Captain Sands dismisses dreams as a source of knowledge to explain life's mysteries, he firmly believes in the possibility of telepathy, or the possibility of "one person's having something to do with another any distance off," and he has much to say on his "pet topic," to Helen and Kate's "great satisfaction":

We've got some way of sending our thought like a bullet goes out of a gun and it hits. We don't know nothing except what we see. And some folks is scared, and some more thinks it is all nonsense and laughs. But there's something we haven't got the hang of... It makes me think o' them little black polliwogs that turns into frogs in the fresh-water puddles in the ma'sh. There's a time before their tails drop off and their legs have sprouted out, when they don't get any use o' their legs, and I dare say they're in their way consider'ble; but after they get to be frogs they find out what they're for without no kind of trouble. I guess we shall turn these fac'lties to account some time or 'nother. Seems to me, though, that we might depend on 'em now more than we do. (124)

Having established his faith in a sixth sense and in a spiritual world within close spatial proximity to the physical world, Captain Sands supports his theory with three personal accounts that he claims are "just as true as the Bible" (129): his daughter-in-law's uncanny knowledge that

her child, who was miles away, was hurt; his cousin John Hathorn's death and Mrs. Hathorn's premonition that her husband was sick and needed her; and his grandmother's dream that her long-lost son was about to return the very night before he arrived in port. Through a combination of spiritual insight and reasoning, Captain Sands creates meaning and answers to the mysteries he sees in the world around him.

Captain Sands's views on dream interpretation, on telepathy, on the natural world, and on the human senses as a means to perceiving and understanding the world may all hint at Jewett's participation in Swedenborgianism and Transcendentalism. Critics such as Ammons have noted Jewett's study under Swedenborgian leader, Theophilus Parsons. Additionally, at the close of the novel, Helen notes that she and Kate read Mr. Emerson's essays over the summer, and in addition to being the founder of American Transcendental thought, Emerson's philosophies were also profoundly influenced by Emanuel Swedenborg who claimed to have extraordinary powers as a clairvoyant and as a visionary.³⁸ According to Karlyn Crowley, Swedenborg's "doctrine of correspondence," or "the notion that for anything material, there is a corresponding spiritual equivalent...clearly shaped the philosophy of Transcendentalism" (91). Captain Sands's reference to the legs of tadpoles as the equivalent of human's spiritual faculties may be a reference to this Swedenborgian and Transcendental notion whereby patterns in the physical world reflect reality in the spiritual world. In addition to Emerson, many other prominent nineteenth-century philosophers and writers such as Henry and William James were fascinated by religious issues and scientific studies on telepathy, clairvoyance, and spirit medium-ship, and

³⁸ As Mark Valeri, professor of Church History at Union Seminary in Richmond, Virginia, writes in his chapter, "Jonathan Edwards, the New Divinity, and Cosmopolitan Calvinism," in *After Jonathan Edwards: The Courses of New England Theology* (2012), the New England theological tradition, which was largely influenced by Edwards, also emphasizes nature, feeling, and reason as ways of understanding God's sacred truth. Thus, we must remember that Emerson's Transcendentalism was as much influenced by traditional New England theology as Swedenborgianism. Jewett, too, having been raised in New England and having attended Protestant organizations since she was a child, would have been more than familiar with these multiple ways of experiencing the divine.

Jewett was familiar with the works of these figures as well. Parson Lorimer's and Captain Sands's rejection of dream interpretation may well suggest, however, that Jewett found some of Swedenborg's doctrine to be problematic.

What is remarkable about Captain Sands's insights is how he places equal value on his observations of the natural world and human experience as he does on the Bible, and through this encounter, Jewett illustrates how country living has become an additional source of spiritual knowledge, a knowledge that complements doctrine, explains mysteries that are not wholly revealed in scripture, and strengthens religious belief. After their encounter with the old sailor, Helen wonders, "why it is that one hears so much more of such things from simple country people. They believe in dreams, and they have a kind of fetichism, and believe so heartily in supernatural causes" (130). In an attempt to answer her own curiosity, Helen continues, "In their simple life they take their instincts for truths...because they are so instinctive and unreasoning, they might have a more complete sympathy with Nature, and may hear her voices when wiser ears are deaf." Helen's conclusion appears to mirror essentialist views of pastoral dwellers that were often employed by the Romantics, yet Jewett moves beyond such a simplistic representation in that Kate counters her friend's assertion and offers an alternate explanation:

I think that the more one lives out of doors the more personality there seems to be in what we call inanimate things. The strength of the hills and the voice of the waves are no longer only grand poetical sentences, but an expression of something real, and more and more one finds God himself in the world, and believes that we may read the thoughts that He writes for us in the book of Nature. (130-31)

Unlike Helen's rather de-humanizing stance on country people, Kate recognizes that for country people the natural world is not merely a source of aesthetic beauty or literary inspiration; rather, it is both home and uncontrollable force. Kate's reference to "the book of Nature" further connects her to Emersonian views and Romantic religious views of nature as the primary text

through which to read the dynamic character of God.³⁹ It is also interesting that Kate revises Helen's reference to a feminine mother nature with a masculine Christian deity who resides in nature, refuting any interpretation of country people as pagan and re-asserting a Christian frame for Captain's Sands's theories. Through Helen and Kate, Jewett takes Captain Sand's insights and translates them to her audience so as to reveal a connection between nature, country living, and Christian insight. Through the narrator, Jewett emphasizes Captain Sands's desire to better understand the spiritual world, and in doing so, she creates a link to her readership who may have had similar spiritual desires. Additionally, she further reveals the integrity of country peoples to her urban readers.

Jewett continues to illustrate how living "out of doors" can be a source of spiritual knowledge through Helen and Kate's encounter with Mrs. Bonny, a "queer" old widow who lives in an isolated home in the forest and reads her Almanac more than her Bible. In the chapter following Helen and Kate's philosophical discussion with Captain Sands, the girls leave the coastal town of Deephaven and travel inland, "where the people worked hard for their living" and "had a hungry, discouraged look" (133). Having run into Mr. Lorimer, who had ventured inland on one of his parochial calls, the girls accompany him on his visit to Mrs. Bonny's home in the woods. On their way to her home, Mr. Lorimer shares a little about Mrs. Bonny's life; her husband, who had passed away, used to be a charcoal burner and basket-maker, and Mrs. Bonny "used to sell butter and berries" in town—though few locals would buy her wares because they knew she was a dirty housekeeper—and she rarely leaves her home anymore since her husband's

³⁹ As John Gatta writes in *Making Nature Sacred*, "although the trope of the world as book is at least as old as Dante," (74) "the notion that God's sacred truths were inscribed in two books, that of the Bible and of Nature" had spread throughout European culture in the eighteenth century and greatly influenced American religious leaders such as Jonathan Edwards. Edwards understood nature as a "secondary beauty," a resemblance of true spiritual beauty, which offered human beings "moral benefits": "God has so constituted nature," Edwards wrote (68). Edwards's views and Romantic religious beliefs influenced Emerson's philosophies. For Emerson, and other transcendentalists like Thoreau, "the book of Nature became the central text" (74).

death. As the trio near her house, they laugh at Mrs. Bonny's "steed" whose fur was covered in mud and "looked nearly as long as a buffalo" and they observe that his leg was injured as his "kind mistress had tied it up with a piece of faded red calico." As Mrs. Bonny appears at the door and greets them heartily, Helen humorously describes how the woman was dressed in a man's coat that had been cut off to make a short jacket, men's boots, several skirts and aprons, and a tight cap on her head that was tied with string under her chin. As the party enters her house, they discover a flock of hens in the kitchen and an injured turkey behind the stove that was "evidently undergoing a course of medical treatment" (135). All of these details about Mrs. Bonny's isolated life in the woods, her unconventional and manly attire, her compassion and care for animals, and her knowledge of medical treatments all create a curiously appealing figure and serve as a foundation for Mrs. Bonny's values and her isolated, place-centered lifestyle.

Through Helen's narration of Mrs. Bonny's religious experiences and beliefs, Jewett continues to show how the region's orthodox Protestant tradition has shifted to a more evangelical tradition, an inclusive church experience that encourages members to speak openly about their conversion experiences and their joy in salvation. After exchanging pleasantries, Mr. Lorimer inquires as to whether or not Mrs. Bonny has been attending the local parish or visiting the schoolhouse where Parson Reid preaches, and she responds, "Parson Reid, he's a worthy creatur', but he never seems to have nothin' to say about foreordination and them p'int's" (136). Disappointed in Parson Reid's sermons, Mrs. Bonny reminisces about the sermons she used to hear from the former pastor, Parson Padelford. The widow exclaims, "Old Parson Padelford was the man! I used to set under his preachin' a good deal...He'd get worked up, and he'd shut up the Bible and preach the hair off your head, 'long at the end of the sermon. Couldn't understand more nor a quarter part what he said" (136). Mr. Padelford's passionate, strict, and stimulating

sermons on orthodox doctrine suggest that he was part of the Calvinist school of ministers, a school of thought that Douglas argued was known for its intellectualism, tough-mindedness, and communal, “male-dominated theological tradition” (254). Interestingly, even though Mrs. Bonny could not understand Parson Padelford’s sermons, she apparently respected the fervor and strictness of his orthodox teachings on foreordination.

According to Mrs. Bonny, the new church leadership, as represented by Parson Reid, encourages revivals whereby members can offer testimonials of personal conversion experiences. After stating that she no longer gets “much of any good” out of church, Mrs. Bonny recounts her most recent, and last, church experience, a revival:

They had a great revival there in the fall, and one Sunday I thought’s how I’d go; and when I got there, who should be a-prayin’ but old Ben Patey,-he always lays out to get converted; and by and by says he, ‘I’ve been a wanderer’; and I up and says, ‘Yes, you have, I’ll back ye up on that, Ben; ye’ve wandered around my wood lot and spoilt half the likely young oaks and ashes I’ve got, a-stealing your basket stuff.’ And the folks laughed out loud and he cleared. He’s an awful old thief, and he’s no idea of being anything else. I wa’n’t a-going to set there and hear him makin’ b’lieve to the Lord. If anybody’s heart is in it, I ain’t a-goin’ to hender ’em; I’m a professor, and I ain’t ashamed of it, weekdays nor Sundays neither. I can’t bear to see folks so pious to meeting, and cheat yer eyeteeth out Monday morning. Well, there! we ain’t none of us perfect. (137)

For Mrs. Bonny, the shift in church tradition from orthodox to evangelical opened the sacred institution to false believers, Old Ben Patey, in that it no longer had a strict leadership or an exclusive community. The shift from stern, rule-abiding, intellectualism to personal, emotional experience might indicate the “feminization” of nineteenth-century American culture that Douglas argued was a result of Calvinism’s decline and sentimentalism’s vogue.

In addition, Mrs. Bonny’s story reveals how people can be turned away from institutionalized religion when they witness a dissonance between believers’ proclaimed faith and lived practice. Mrs. Bonny has faith in Christian teachings and the Bible, but she resents the hypocrisy of believers as illustrated by Mr. Patey, a man who lives a dishonest life but claims an

identity in Christ. Although Mrs. Bonny offers an accurate Christian view of humanity's inherent imperfection and need for repentance, Jewett's attitude towards her insight is left ambiguous in that the story leaves Helen, Kate, and Mr. Lorimer in laughter, deeply entertained by Mrs. Bonny's "peart[ness]" as well as her "expression of extreme wisdom" (137). Earlier in the chapter, when Helen notes the hardness of the "poor people" who lived inland, she also states, "One could only forgive and pity their petty sharpness," and so we might find Mrs. Bonny's quick and harsh judgment of old Ben Patey as an example of how religious hypocrisy works in a variety of ways (133). Whether a dishonest man's proclamation of salvation or an old woman's judgment of another's sin, Jewett proves the devastating effects of hypocrisy on religious practice and on personal faith.⁴⁰

Mrs. Bonny's intolerance for hypocrisy and her dislike of evangelical Protestantism leads her to stop practicing in the traditional modes of regular church attendance; yet she still firmly believes in Christian values and biblical scripture. For an example, in a conversation with her neighbor, Miss Hate-evil Beckett, Mrs. Bonny attempts to use scripture to comfort the woman whose brother-in-law's boys are frequently rebellious and misbehaving: "'But there,' says I, 'Mis' Beckett, it's just such things as we read of; Scriptur' is fulfilled: In the larter days there shall be disobedient children'" (137). Although Helen states that "the application of the text was too much for [them]" and they had to refrain from laughing, Mrs. Bonny is quite "serious" in her

⁴⁰ Jewett further illustrates a shift in institutionalized Christianity in yet another scene where Helen and Kate attend a "free lecture" on the "Elements of True Manhood" at the Deephaven church. Helen notes that lecturer's passionate talk on the "duties" of "citizens and voters" would have been better suited to an "enthusiastic Young Men's Christian Association" as he references figures like George Washington and Benjamin Franklin, and she further adds, "If the lecture had been upon any other subject it would not have been so hard for Kate and me to keep sober faces; but it was directed entirely toward young men, and there was not a young man there" (110). Although in this scene there is a clear movement from orthodox doctrine to social gospel, which was a prominent trend in nineteenth-century Christian and welfare organizations, Jewett illustrates how this "new" religious expression is no more accessible than the old because it fails to take into account the personalized needs of its membership. In addition to the lecturer's lack of audience awareness, he also proves to be dishonest in that at the end of his talk he attempts to take up an offering to support "the cause," which Helen pointedly notes was a deceitful way "to pay his expenses" (111), which also continues to prove the inherent hypocrisy in institutionalized religion.

literal interpretation (137). For the second time, the girls' amusement seems to undercut Mrs. Bonny's authority over religious knowledge, yet through Mrs. Bonny's matter-of-fact reading, Jewett reveals how scripture informs her world in a way that makes sense out of confusion and that offers comfort in real-life situations. In addition to her faith in biblical truth, Mrs. Bonny also has the utmost trust and admiration for Mr. Lorimer: "He was the greatest man she knew...when he was speaking of serious things in his simple, earnest way, she had so devout a look, and seemed so interested, that Kate and Mr. Lorimer himself, caught a new, fresh meaning in the familiar words he spoke" (139). Through Mrs. Bonny's earnest interest in Mr. Lorimer's preaching, Jewett encourages her readers, who were likely as familiar with scripture as Helen and Kate, to look anew at biblical insight and to be re-inspired.

No longer interested in participating in traditional organized religious practices such as church attendance, Mrs. Bonny appears to have immersed herself in the beauty and culture of the natural world around her. Well acquainted with herbal remedies, she offers Mr. Lorimer homemade "bitters" for his sister, which he politely declines, and she approaches the natural rhythms and seasons of the world as a form of truth, trusting her Almanac to predict "good growin' weather" and "rosbry time" (138). In addition to her knowledge of healing remedies, for animals as well as people, Helen asserts that because of her isolation in the woods, Mrs. Bonny has become intimately knowledgeable about the flora and fauna of her local region:

Living there in the lonely clearing, deep in the woods and far from any neighbor, she knew all the herbs and trees and the harmless wild creatures who lived among them, by heart; and she had an amazing store of tradition and superstition, which made her so entertaining to us... There was something so wild and unconventional about Mrs. Bonny that it was like taking an afternoon walk with a good-natured Indian. We used to carry her offerings of tobacco, for she was a great smoker, and advised us to try it, if ever we should be troubles with nerves, or "narves," as she pronounced the name of that affliction. (139)

It's worth noting how Jewett aligns Mrs. Bonny with "a good-natured Indian" through her value for the natural world and her knowledge of local legends, as well as through common nineteenth-century stereotypical representations of indigenous peoples as "wild," uncivilized, and dirty, because it may well suggest that Jewett wanted to test other faith systems that relied heavily on perceptions of place and on the natural world. Murphy explains in her essay on Jewett's Dunnett Landing sketches that Jewett would have been familiar with national rhetoric about the problems of Native Americans and their inevitable assimilation as she was publishing in the *Atlantic Monthly* alongside editorials about Indian Boarding Schools and governmental legislation. Murphy argues that Jewett's references to New England's indigenous peoples suggests that she recognized their continued presence in the area, rather than believing in their elimination, as many nineteenth-century Americans. Yet, despite Jewett's awareness of their presence in New England, her stereotypical, non-tribally specific language proves just how removed Jewett actually was from these peoples and their ways of life.

Although Mrs. Bonny has endured the loss of her husband and lives isolated in the woods, she appears to be quite content in her situation, and perhaps this is due to her religious beliefs, her connection to place, and her financial stability; yet, in the following chapter, Jewett introduces her readers to a man whose experiences with personal loss, isolation, and poverty have led him to doubt his faith. In the chapter entitled "In the Shadow," which follows "Mrs. Bonny," the girls travel about four miles away from Deehaven to the "rough," "wild," and "rocky" coast where "even the trees looked hungry" (140). Like the "gnarled pitch pines" whose "savage fights with the winter had made them hard-hearted," the man who lives with his family in a house at the cove, Andrew, has also become "hard-hearted" from his desperate attempts to

provide for his family. After paying Andrew for taking care of the horses while they explored the shore, Helen and Kate have a brief discussion with him, and he tells them about his struggles:

I hope ye may never know what it is to earn every dollar as hard as I have. I never earned and money as easy as this before. I don't feel I can take it...I've done the best I could, and I'm willin' and my woman is, but everything seems to have been ag'in' us; we never seem to get forehanded. It looks sometimes as if the Lord had forgot us, but my woman she never wants me to say that; she says He ain't, and that we might be worst off,—but I don't know. (141)

It's important to note that Andrew's wife has more faith than he does because it mirrors the emphasis that Jewett placed on Captain Sands's wife as having a deeper sense of natural phenomena. As the title of the chapter suggests, Andrew feels as though he lives "in a shadow," in a place of darkness due to something blocking the light. Although Andrew claims that his poor health is largely responsible for his impoverished state, he also blames his land and his failing boat-building business. We might read these external factors as the cause for Andrew and his family's poverty, yet his language suggests that he holds God to blame as well in that he feels "forgot[ten]," as if God's lack of aid has kept him from getting ahead.

Andrew's story may be one of the most tragic tales in Jewett's writing in that when the girls return to see him and his family and to bring provisions, they discover that both he and his wife are dead and that the children have been separated and sent to live with their closest relatives. Helen and Kate arrive on the day of his funeral, and a neighbor informs them that Andrew's wife had died nine weeks prior and that after her death Andrew started drinking. The neighbor continues to share how he had tried to help Andrew by visiting him and fixing food, but despite his assistance, the man "faded right out" and "died Sunday mornin', when the tide begun to ebb" (147). It seems beyond coincidence that the man who had begun to doubt his faith would die on a Sunday morning. Because of his death, Helen and Kate begin to reflect on their lives and faiths as well. Helen notes the sad injustice of people who live in poverty, living for their

“literal daily bread,” while others live in luxury, and momentarily, they both consider how they “can help being conscious, in the midst of [their] comforts and pleasures, of the lives which are being starved to death in more ways than one” (146). Based on their words, Helen and Kate are as concerned about the spiritual well-being of those who live in such dire straits as they are about their material needs, and perhaps the girls’ anxiety mirrors the missionary aims of many upper-class Protestant women who joined welfare movements during the nineteenth century. Through the girls’ point of view, Jewett guides the reader to not only consider her own privileged position in society but to also consider the value of a Christian faith during trying times:

“I suppose one thinks more about these things as one grows older,” said Kate, thoughtfully... “I find that I understand better and better how unsatisfactory, how purposeless and disastrous, any life must be which is not a Christian life? It is like being always in the dark, and wandering one knows not where, if one is not learning more and more what it is to have a friendship with God.” (147)

There is the suggestion that Andrew may not have lived “in the shadows” if he had actively sought a personal relationship with God.

Through Helen and Kate’s distanced relation to Andrew and his family, the reader gains a side-line view of how personal hardship can stifle religious faith, how witnessing death can foster uncertainty and spiritual reflection, and how the natural and spiritual worlds are connected. Helen describes the change in peoples’ faces from the time when they enter the home to when they leave. Before they enter, Helen notes, they look “indifferent” and “business-like,” but when they leave, “their faces were awed by the presence of death, and the indifference had given place to uncertainty” (148). Reversing society’s expectations of power and knowledge, Jewett emphasizes how in life Andrew was seen as a failure by his neighbors but in death he has become superior because he now knows the “secrets” of life after death (149). Through Helen

and Kate, Jewett further proves that death is not a thing to fear for those who have faith and a personal relationship with God:

To Kate and me there came a sudden consciousness of the mystery and inevitableness of death; it was not fear, thank God! but a thought of how certain it was that some day it would be a mystery to us no longer. And there was a thought, too, of the limitation of this present life; we were waiting there, in company with the people, the great sea, and the rocks and fields themselves, on this side the boundary. We knew just then how close to this familiar, everyday world might be the other, which at times before had seemed so far away, out of reach of even our thoughts, beyond the distant stars. (148-49)

It is remarkable how the combination of death and of the natural world, as exemplified by the “sea,” “rocks and fields,” and “stars,” solidifies Helen and Kate’s faith in a spiritual world and reveals to them the close spatial proximity of these two planes of existence. Moreover, Jewett reveals the tension between what is unknowable yet at the same time inevitable. The mystery and uncertainty of death and the spiritual world become, in the moment, concrete and certain—the tension temporarily eased—as Helen and Kate take comfort in faith and in the unity of all living and non-living beings in the physical world who wait together to see how the mystery unfolds.

Jewett’s examination of how hardship affects religious faith culminates in the following chapter where Helen and Kate meet a woman who teaches them the meaning of “steadfast” conviction: Miss Sally Chauncey. A resident of “dull” East Parish, a town smaller and even more “complacent” than Deephaven, Miss Chauncey is the descendent of an old, well-educated, aristocratic family that suffered extreme loss. The only remaining member of the family, Miss Chauncey endured the financial decline and subsequent death of her father, whose ship-building business ended with Jefferson’s 1807 embargo act which made all United States exports illegal and subsequently shut down most of New England’s shipping ports. She also suffered the suicide of one brother, whose corpse she discovered after he shot himself, and the insanity of a

second brother, whose “horrid cries” filled the Chauncey resident as he was imprisoned and chained in one of the upper chambers for many years. “The saddest part of the story,” according to Helen, is that Miss Chauncey also suffers from mental illness, which was brought on by the shock of her loss. Having been released from the hospital, Miss Chauncey lives alone in her family’s old estate “where she seems to be contented, and does not realize her troubles; though she lives mostly in the past” (152). The first time we are introduced to Miss Chauncey, she is inside the East Parish church and dressed in “a rusty black satin gown” and a “great black bonnet” (151). Thinking that they’ve seen a ghost, Helen admits that their “first impulses was to run away,” but they recover their “wits,” ask for directions to the road, and leave, wondering about the “grave” figure and intending to find out who she is. After discovering her name and story, the girls become regular visitors at the Chauncey home as they are impressed with Miss Chauncey’s “elegance,” her lady-like mannerisms, her “quaint fashion of speech” (154), her stories about Deephaven’s history and about her schooldays in Boston, and her eloquent readings of biblical scripture.⁴¹

In the contemporary world of Deephaven, few characters would be as accessible to Jewett’s reader as Miss Chauncey, not only because her mannerisms align with traditional social conventions of female decorum but also because her religious beliefs adhere to traditional Protestantism. Remarkably, we are told that religion is the “only subject about which [Miss Chauncey] was perfectly sane,” and in her chamber, the girls notice “an old Bible, fairly worn out with constant use” (156). After hearing Mr. Lorimer praise how “grand and beautiful it was to listen” to Miss Chauncey read the Bible, the girls frequently ask her to read “some of the

⁴¹ All of Jewett’s language suggests that Miss Chauncey is part of Maine’s cosmopolitan past, a time prior to the 1807 embargo when many of New England’s sea ports were prosperous and many of the prominent ship-building families enjoyed upper-class privileges and social prestige. Jewett explicitly creates a “kinship” between Miss Chauncey and Kate, “the old generation” and the “new” generation of gentlewomen of high family and rank (154).

Psalms or some chapters of Isaiah,” and through their mutual love for scripture, the three women bond. During one of Miss Chauncey’s readings, Jewett reveals how religion is her source of comfort and endurance:

Miss Sally had opened the great book at random and read slowly, “In my Father’s house are many mansions”; and then, looking off for a moment at a leaf which had drifted into the window recess, she repeated it: “In my Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you.” Then she went on slowly to the end of the chapter, and with her hands clasped together on the Bible she fell into a reverie, and the tears came to our eyes as we watched her look of perfect content. Through all her clouded years the promises of God had been her only certainty. (157)

This passage, in which Miss Chauncey’s reflections on a verse lead her to a place of complete rest and peace, is important for the way in which it reveals religion as Miss Chauncey’s sole source of hope amidst life’s struggles, but also in the way it further proves how scripture becomes accessible and believable when it speaks to personal experience. As Mr. Lorimer’s sermon on fishermen and life on the sea spoke to Deephaven dwellers, Miss Chauncey’s reading on fathers and on wealthy estates speaks to her by mirroring the life she once knew. The sense of loss in her father’s death is replaced with a sense of hope in her heavenly Father’s presence, and the reality of her poverty is replaced with the promise of heavenly riches. It’s important to note that prior to Miss Chauncey’s “reverie” she focuses, momentarily, on a floating leaf, and perhaps either the sight of God’s creation or the quiet mental focus the leaf provided gave way to spiritual clarity. Mr. Lorimer’s sermon and Miss Chauncey’s verse are the only two specific examples of scripture in the book, and thus Jewett’s selections, focusing on love and salvation rather than judgment and punishment, may well further reveal her own disregard for dogmatic interpretations of scripture and her faith in the Bible.

Miss Chauncey’s virtuous character is illustrated most powerfully in the final scene of the chapter where Helen describes the woman’s death. Helen tells us that Miss Chauncey died

shortly after they returned to Boston, and she continues to note how in her “last days her mind seemed perfectly clear.” Prior to her death, she repeatedly exclaimed how “good God had always been to her.” Additionally, “she was gentle, and unwilling to be a trouble to those who had the care of her” (158). Grateful and considerate to others even on her death bed, Miss Chauncey stands in stark contrast to Andrew who doubted his faith and neglected his daughters while dealing with his own grief. Jewett further elevates Miss Chauncey’s character by offering additional insight into her character and last days. Instead of Helen or Kate’s thoughts, however, Jewett uses Mr. Lorimer’s to end the chapter on Miss Chauncey and this may further suggest Jewett’s desire for the reader to see Miss Chauncey in the very best light:

Mr. Lorimer spoke of her simple goodness, and told us that though she had no sense of time, and hardly knew if it were summer and winter, she was always sure when Sunday came, and always came to church when he preached at East parish, her greatest pleasure seemed to be to give money, if there was a contribution. “She may be a lesson to us,” added the old minister, reverently; “for though bewildered in mind, bereft of riches and friends and all that makes this world dear to many of us, she was still steadfast in her simple faith, and was never heard to complain of any of the burdens which God had given her.” (158)

Up until now in the book, Mr. Lorimer has been the one to evoke other people’s admiration and respect, and he does with Mrs. Bonny, but in this passage, the Deephaven pastor shows reverence for Miss Chauncey for her faith, kindness, and generosity. It is even more important, however, that this chapter, and specifically this passage, concludes Helen and Kate’s travels in and around Deephaven as the next chapter describes their departure for Boston. Thus through this final friendship, Jewett uses faith and virtue to connect her readers with Miss Chauncey—an old, senile spinster who lives in a marginal rural town—and thereby concludes with a vivid impression of just how strong, devout, and admirable country peoples can be.

In the final chapter, “Last Days in Deephaven,” Helen and Kate reflect on the people they’ve met during their summer vacation, people who will one day be long gone and who will

live on in their memories as “the incense of many masses lingers in some old cathedral” (161). As travelers, the girls never intended on staying in Deephaven, and as a matter of fact, they don’t want to because they believe, if they were residents, they would “grow very lazy” and “think it a hard fate,” as “village life is not stimulating,” and they would miss “society”(160). Helen and Kate’s assessment, that Deephaven is a quaint place to visit but not a place to live, confirms their outsider status and, more than likely, aligns with the perceptions of Jewett’s readership. The stories of those who live in Deephaven, and the insights that the girls take away, become what is most important about their vacation, and thus Jewett models for the reader how visiting a place, far away from their normal life, can offer new ideas and alternate ways of seeing the world. Although her urban, female, Protestant readership might not have imagined that a fictional rural town on the Maine coast, a town in economic decline that still adheres to old-fashioned modes of life, could offer anything valuable, Jewett reveals, through Helen and Kate, that an open mind and “a conscious choice” to take “the best of life” can lead individuals down extraordinary paths.

3.2 Place, Community, and Social Gospel in *Pointed Firs*

In a letter to William Dean Howells, Jewett wrote that *Deephaven* and *The Country of Pointed Firs* “[held] all her real knowledge and dreams, the very dust of thought and association that made [her] (*Deephaven* Intro 16). When viewed side-by-side, both books narrate the experiences of an urban traveler who immerses herself in the comings and goings of a fictional rural coastal Maine life, a life visibly in decline since its loss of a viable shipping industry, and who sympathetically describes the quaint and peculiar customs of country peoples. Although we find similarities in narrative technique, character, and theme, what makes *Pointed Firs* stand out, according to critics, is the structure, control, and complete abandonment of any form of dramatic action that Jewett demonstrates in her later work. The numerous character sketches that we find

in *Deephaven* are narrowed to a select few in *Pointed Firs*, and although in *Deephaven* Jewett appears to suggest that the insights gleaned from characters like Captain Sands, Mrs. Bonny, Andrew, and Miss Chauncey are all equally valuable as each figure only appears for a selected chapter, in *Pointed Firs* she elevates the insight of particular characters by having them re-surface throughout the book such as with Mrs. Almira Todd and her mother Mrs. Blackett. Moreover, the narrator, who goes unnamed, frequently refrains from pulling meaning from her experiences, unlike Helen who remarks on most encounters, which may reflect the shift in literary taste towards the turn of the twentieth century from sentimentalism to modernism. Through the tighter form, we also find a clearer image emerge of the role religion plays in society. Two Protestant traditions emerge: an exclusive tradition, based on judgment and loaded with hypocrisy, which hinders people more than it helps, and an inclusive tradition, grounded in biblical scripture and nature, which offers people moral instruction and serves to comfort believers and to foster community growth. Part of the reason Jewett's vision gains clarity in *Pointed Firs* is because there are fewer overt references to religion, and the ones we find are stronger in description, in depth, and in consequence.

Outside of the narrator, who plays a mediating role in the book, the two primary characters are Mrs. Todd and Mrs. Blackett, and both women not only illustrate a depth of spiritual knowledge and insight, but they also illustrate how their faith prompts them to care for the people around them. Based on her regular church attendance on Sundays and on her recital of "familiar hymns" (56, 31), we can assume that Mrs. Todd is a religious woman, but it is her knowledge of plants, local folklore, and genealogies that makes her memorable as a character. A widow who lives on the mainland and gathers herbs for homemade "brews," which she "dispense[s] to suffering neighbors" (4), Mrs. Todd is described as a female "mystic" (4), an

“enchantress” (31), and “a huge sibyl” (8). After spending a cold afternoon at a funeral, Mrs. Todd prepares an herbal draught for her and the narrator, and the narrator remarks, “I felt for a moment as if it were part of a spell and incantation.” (31) Mrs. Todd’s healing powers, however, are not only for “the common ails of humanity,” as even “love and hate and jealousy and adverse winds at sea might find their proper remedies among the curious wild-looking plants in Mrs. Todd’s garden” (4). It is important to note how Jewett demonstrates that Mrs. Todd’s knowledge of the natural world and her desire to help those in need combine to create a powerful remedy for both physical and psychological ailments. Jewett connects Mrs. Todd to an ancient tradition of herbal healers both classical and indigenous as the narrator notes one particular “Indian remedy” (4), and we might find some resonances of Mrs. Bonny’s character in Mrs. Todd’s in that they both demonstrate a powerful knowledge of plants and local folklore. Yet, whereas Mrs. Bonny’s “peart” and eccentric nature often results in laughter, Mrs. Todd’s compassionate, well-balanced, and knowledgeable character receives the utmost respect and admiration.

Mrs. Todd represents to Jewett’s readership an alternate way of understanding and behaving in the world, and in order to elevate this form of natural knowledge and compassionate action, Jewett uses diction to create an aura of mystery, sacredness, and magic around Mrs. Todd. Yet, such supernatural descriptions give way as the book unfolds, and Jewett reveals how Mrs. Todd’s knowledge is not supernatural but grounded in observation, reasoning and sound logic, and biblical scripture. Her attention to the characteristics of different plants and to the natural rhythms of growth and maturity, as exemplified by her knowledge of when to harvest pennyroyal, suggests that she has learned the value of close observation, and she uses this same skill to inform her understanding of human behavior and of life’s mysteries. For an example, in the chapter entitled “The Country Road,” which narrates Mrs. Todd, Mrs. Blackett, and the

narrator's journey to the Bowden Reunion, Mrs. Todd halts the wagon and shares with the narrator a story about "a tall ash-tree that grew just inside the field fence":

I thought 'twas goin' to do well... Last time I was up this way that tree was kind of drooping and discouraged. Grown trees act that way sometimes, same's folks; then they'll put right to it and strike their roots off into new ground and start all over again with real good courage... There's sometimes a good hearty tree growin' right out of the bare rock, out o' some crack that just holds the roots... right on the pitch o' one o' them bare stony hills where you can't seem to see a wheel-barrowful o' good earth in a place, but that tree'll keep a green top in the driest summer. You lay your ear down to the ground an' you'll hear a little stream runnin'. Every such tree has got its own livin' spring; there's folk made to match 'em. (92)

Mrs. Todd's "peculiar wisdom," as the narrator refers to it, resembles Captain Sands's logic in that both look to the nature world for symbols or patterns that inform human existence. In this passage, the ash-tree's "courage" and resilience in the face of poor environmental conditions becomes representative of people who also seem to survive, even flourish, in the midst of physical hardships. The source of such strength, according to Mrs. Todd, is the "livin' spring" that runs beneath it. Considering that New Testament scripture refers to Jesus as the source of living water, as "a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (John 4:14 NIV), we may well read this passage not only as proof of a connection between body and spirit but also as further evidence of how Christian beliefs inform Mrs. Todd's understanding of the natural world. By constructing a female character who embodies mysticism, spiritual naturalism, and Christianity, Jewett heightens the relationship between biblical scripture and nature and illustrates how both forms of religious and spiritual knowledge inform each other, fostering a viable, lived faith.

Jewett reveals how true religious faith calls believers to action in that Mrs. Todd shares her insight with others and employs her herbal knowledge to the betterment of her community, and we find a similar, spiraling out pattern of faith in Mrs. Blackett as well. Unlike her daughter, who lives on the mainland, Mrs. Blackett chooses to reside on Green Island, where she

grew up, with her son, William, and in the chapter entitled “Green Island,” the narrator enthusiastically accompanies Mrs. Todd on an unexpected visit to see Mrs. Blackett. A “delightful little person, with bright eyes and an affectionate air of expectation like a child on a holiday” (36), Mrs. Blackett proves to be a kind, endearing, and generous woman, and the narrator quickly feels a sense of “peace and harmony” as she listens to mother and daughter banter, “affectionately (38). After an enjoyable dinner of fish chowder, the narrator listens to mother and daughter talk, and she reflects on Mrs. Blackett’s gift of hospitality and self-forgetfulness:

Her hospitality was something exquisite; she had the gift which so many women lack, of being able to make themselves and their houses belong entirely to a guest’s pleasure,—that charming surrender for the moment of themselves and whatever belongs to them, so that they make a part of one’s own life that can never be forgotten. Tact is after all a kind of mindreading, and my hostess held the golden gift. Sympathy is of the mind as well of the heart, and Mrs. Blackett’s world and mine were one from the moment we met. Besides, she had that final, that highest gift of heaven, a perfect self-forgetfulness (46)

In this passage, the diction—*hospitality, gift, surrender, tact, golden gift, sympathy, and highest gift of heaven, self-forgetfulness*—reflects nineteenth-century sentimental values of domesticity, which would have been recognized and perhaps admired by Jewett’s readership. Many Protestant women who were involved in the women’s rights movement during this time elevated their positions within and outside of the home as nurturers, healers, and teachers through religious doctrines of mercy, compassion, sacrifice, and motherhood. Thus Jewett uses sentimental values to create an intimate kinship between herself and Mrs. Blackett, uniting city peoples and country peoples through a mutual appreciation for Christian morals and for communal engagement.

Up until this point in the narrative, the only element that connects Mrs. Blackett to New England’s Protestant tradition is the narrator’s assessment of the Christian nature of her social

skills, but later in the same chapter, Jewett reveals the source of Mrs. Blackett's love and of her self-sacrificing nature: the Bible. Prior to Mrs. Todd and the narrator's departure back to the mainland, the narrator pauses in Mrs. Blackett's bedroom:

There was a worn red Bible on the lightstand, and Mrs. Blackett's heavy silver-bowed glasses; her thimble was on the narrow window-ledge, and folded carefully on the table was a thick striped-cotton shirt that she was making for her son. Those dear old fingers and their loving stitches, that heart which made the most of everything that needed love! Here was the real home, the heart of the old house on Green Island! I sat in the rocking-chair, and felt that it was a place of peace, the little brown bedroom, and the quiet outlook upon field and sea and sky. (54)

The image of the Bible is the same as the one depicted in Miss Chauncey's bedroom, which might suggest that Mrs. Blackett illustrates a similar religious devotion but without the mental illness. By linking the Bible with Mrs. Blackett's loving duties for her son, readers witness the effect of her religious devotion: tender and thoughtful attention to her family's most basic, and most vital, needs. The intimate space in the bedroom—where Mrs. Blackett rests, cultivates her religious faith with readings from the Bible, and sews for her son—becomes “the heart,” or the emotional center, of her life, illustrating the relationship between personal need, faith, and community. Moreover, in this passage, personal faith and demonstrative acts of familial love meld with home and the natural world, creating a supreme, microcosmic, image of a simple but beautiful life grounded in faith, family, and place. Removed from the mainland, but not wholly isolated from people as her son lives with her, her daughter visits, and her health permits for excursions like the Bowden reunion, Mrs. Blackett's island residence helps her to retain her sense of value and of purpose. When compared to the vast materialism and commercialism of nineteenth-century mainstream American culture, Jewett's portrayal of life on Green Island might have revealed, to her audience, the flaws in their society. Through this fictional space,

Jewett models for her reader how religious practice and temporary isolation can cultivate faith, which, in turn, can produce faith-based action.

Both mother and daughter illustrate intricate connections between faith, place, and culture, and both women care for others through the intimate space of their homes. As other nineteenth-century women writers of sentimentalism, Jewett reflects the nurturing relationship between mothers and daughter as well as the importance of domestic duties. Mrs. Todd serves ailing members of her society with herbs and tonics from her garden and house, and Mrs. Blackett cares for her family and visitors, including the narrator, from her home as well. Moreover, both women serve others through their craft, either herbal healing remedies or cooking and sewing, and the emphasis on Protestant tradition, personal faith, domestic duties, and community may reflect the community work of Protestant organizations in the mid-nineteenth century that became associated with the social gospel movement, a movement often led by women who wanted “to apply their [God-given] gifts to the world at large” and to spread the gospel, according to the religious scholar Jane Hunter (28). Although neither woman openly proclaims a desire to spread God’s word, Jewett seems to heighten their independence, their faith, and their faith-inspired good works, suggesting that she may have admired the Protestant values of piety, compassion, duty, and conviction as well as understood them to be beneficial to society. Interestingly, by the time that Jewett published *Pointed Firs* in 1896, American society’s conceptualization of women’s roles were dramatically shifting in that the New Woman, as Hunter notes, imagined her role outside of the home and her contributions to the world and to larger causes (28). Although Mrs. Todd is firmly situated within her home, she helps the entire community with her herbal knowledge, and thus we might see evidence of women’s ever-expanding role in American society through Mrs. Todd’s philanthropic work.

Through Mrs. Todd and Mrs. Blackett, Jewett reveals a Protestant tradition of beliefs and practices that provides comfort and wisdom to people as well as promotes communal engagement; however, she also depicts a Protestant tradition that judges people and hinders their faith. In the chapter entitled “Poor Joanna,” Mrs. Todd and a neighbor, Mrs. Fosdick, reminisce about a woman who moved from the mainland to a desolate island named Shell-heap after her fiancé ran off with another woman. Joanna Todd, Mrs. Todd’s deceased husband’s cousin, lived alone on the island until her death, refusing any company. According to Mrs. Todd, all of Joanna’s “hopes were built on marryin’, an’ havin’ a real home and somebody to look to; she acted just like a bird when its nest is spoilt” (66). As their conversation continues, and the narrator listens on in rapt silence, we are given clues as to what might have gone wrong with Joanna, leading her to a life of profound isolation. Mrs. Fosdick recollects, “Some other minister would have been a great help to her,—one that preached self-forgetfulness and doin’ for others to cure our own ills; but Parson Dimmick was a vague person, well meanin’, but very numb in his feelin’s.” (69) Mrs. Fosdick’s reference to the local pastor seems abrupt to the reader because it’s the first reference to him in the chapter, but as the story unfolds, we gain clarity into his role in Joanna’s story. For the moment, what’s important in this passage is the emphasis placed on doing for others—self-forgetfulness—as a means for coping with life’s hardships. Both Mrs. Todd and Mrs. Blackett lost their husbands, and Mrs. Todd even grieves for the long-lost love of her youth who married someone of higher standing. Yet, each of these women appear to have found comfort and purpose in serving others, and we find further evidence of this in Mrs. Todd’s following comment: “Mother used to say she didn’t see how Joanna lived without having nobody to do for.” (69) We may read this as yet another argument for the importance of Christian values

and communal engagement as well as a clear depiction of the two alternate Christian faith systems that Jewett envisioned.

As the tale continues, Jewett further illustrates how severely damaging irresponsible religious leadership and hypocrisy can be to a person's faith and she emphasizes the integral connection between religion and place. Despite Joanna's stern request to be left alone, the current minister, Mr. Dimmick, "felt he ought to go out and visit her" as "she was a member of the church, and might wish to have him consider her spiritual state," and he asks Mrs. Todd to join him on his expedition (65, 70). The boat ride proves to be full of "trials" in that Mr. Dimmick has little knowledge of coastal ways of life and almost capsizes the boat on the way to Joanna's:

Why, yes, Susan, the minister liked to have cost me my life that day. He would fasten the sheet, though I advised against it. He said the rope was rough an' cut his hand. There was a fresh breeze, an' he went on talking rather high flown, an' I felt some interested. All of a sudden there come up a gust, and he give a screech and stood right up and called for help, 'way out there to sea. I knocked him right over into the bottom o' the bo't getting by to catch hold of the sheet an' untie it. He wasn't but a little man; I helped him right up after the squall passed, and made a handsome apology to him, be he did act kind 'offended (70)

Unlike Deephaven's minister, Mr. Lorimer, who is immersed in the lives of his people and knowledgeable about the geography of his, and local, parishes, Dunnett Landing's pastor is ignorant about life on sea. Whereas Mr. Lorimer recognizes that in order for a pastor to effectively comfort and teach believers he must connect religion to place and culture, Mr. Dimmick lacks this insight and thus fails to reach his congregation. Mrs. Fosdick most clearly articulates how important it is for a pastor to connect with his congregation through an understanding of place when she says, "I do think they ought not to settle them landlocked folks in parishes where they're liable to be on the water" (70). Although a man of "high flown" language, Mr. Dimmick's inaccessible religious knowledge doesn't serve to help him man a boat

or keep his wits during the storm, and thus in this passage, Jewett also begins to create a comparison between Mrs. Todd's religious knowledge and the pastor's whereby she is the obviously superior, as exemplified most literally in the boat scene when she physically knocks him down to keep the boat from capsizing.

Jewett continues to emphasize the correlation between religion and place during Mrs. Todd and the pastor's visit with Joanna. After their arrival at Joanna's "hermitage," the three sit down to talk, and Mrs. Todd remembers how uncomfortable the minister was as he tried to discuss serious religious matters as well as how polite, but indifferent, Joanna was to him:

The minister found it hard... he got embarrassed, an 'when he put on his authority and asked her if she felt to enjoy religion in her present situation, an' she replied that she must be excused from answerin', I thought I should fly. She might have made it easier for him; after all, he was the minister and taken some trouble to come out, though 'twas kind of cold an' unfeeling' the way he inquired. I thought he might have seen the little old Bible a-layin' on the shelf close by him, an' I wished he knew enough to just lay his hand on it an' read something' kind an' fatherly 'stead of accusin' her, an' then given poor Joanna his blessin' with the hope she might be led to comfort. He did offer prayer, but 'twas all about hearin' the voice o' God out o' the whirlwind; and I thought while he was goin' on that anybody that had spent the long cold winter all alone out on Shell-heap Island knew a good deal more about those things than he did. I got so provoked I opened my eyes and stared right at him (74-75)

Unlike Mr. Lorimer in *Deephaven* who treats everyone with compassion and respect and who offers teachings from the Bible that speak to forgiveness and salvation, Mr. Dimmick appears to be so wrapped up his own authority and religious performance that he fails to see the personalized needs before him. In this passage Jewett's language creates a contrast between how Mr. Dimmick, a religious leader, behaved and of how he should have behaved: words like *cold*, *unfeeling*, and *accusin'* are juxtaposed with *fatherly*, *blessin'*, and *comfort*. I find it interesting that Mr. Dimmick preaches on "hearin' the voice o' God out o' the whirlwind" because the imagery reflects how God can be found in natural events, specifically phenomena that have the potential for disaster. Despite his theoretical understanding of the relation between physical

hardship and the cultivation of unwavering faith, Mr. Dimmick's focus on teachings over experience keeps him from seeing how Joanna may have lived the very lesson that he wanted to share with her. Imagining the loneliness and misery of a "long cold winter" on Shell-heap Island, Mrs. Todd is in a better position to understand Joanna's experience and to recognize the pastor's shortcomings.

In addition to Mr. Dimmick's irresponsible, judgmental, and unfeeling ministry, Jewett also reveals the devastating effects of orthodox tradition and doctrine on Joanna's mental and psychological state. After Mr. Dimmick's prayer, Joanna, "respectful[ly]," asks him if he's interested in seeing the "old Indian ruins" on the far side of the island, and after she points him the way and he disappears from sight, the two women have a frank, heart-to-heart talk where Mrs. Todd begs Joanna to return to the mainland and live with her. Joanna sternly responds:

'You must never ask me again, Almiry: I've done the only thing I could do, and I've made my choice. I feel a great comfort in your kindness, but I don't deserve it. I have committed the unpardonable sin; you don't understand,' says she humbly. 'I was in great wrath and trouble, and my thoughts was so wicked towards God that I can't expect ever to be forgiven. I have come to know what it is to have patience, but I have lost my hope.'

Joanna's reference to the unpardonable sin proves that she still adheres to orthodox Protestantism's dogmatic interpretation of scripture, as Mrs. Fosdick notes, "we don't seem to hear nothing about the unpardonable sin now, but you may say 'twas not uncommon then" (77).⁴² Although the Bible in Joanna's home suggests that she still reads scripture, her belief in her own damnation isolates her from God. As a believer, the psychological damage of believing that she's eternally separated from her creator as well as destined for ever-lasting punishment would be extreme, and so we may not find it to be surprising that Joanna chooses to also isolate

⁴²In the New Testament, Jesus references an unpardonable sin twice – as found in the gospels of Mark and Matthew – and in both he explains to the Pharisees that anyone who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will be eternally condemned. Most Protestant denominations believe that the only unpardonable sin is complete rejection of Christ, rather than wrathful thoughts towards God.

herself from community as she no longer has any hope in her life, or a life after.⁴³ Joanna's torture reflects the experience of many who lived in the eighteenth century and embraced orthodox doctrines on unconditional election, enduring life in a state of uncertainty and self-examination, yet as Mrs. Fosdick shows, orthodox beliefs are part of the past, and thus it appears that Joanna chooses to embrace this way of thinking. Mrs. Todd surmises that Joanna's melancholic outlook on life could be a genetic predisposition or a learned behavior as her mother also had a "grim streak" and never "knew what 'twas to be happy" (74). Yet, when viewed in relation to Andrew in *Deephaven*, we might also conclude that both characters choose to allow hardships to damage their faiths and to poison their lives, irrevocably.

Jewett's later work illustrates a vastly different type of pastor than her earlier fiction. Instead of a wise, benevolent country pastor, Jewett creates a religious leader who seems wholly unaware of his influence on the members of his congregation, and she misses no opportunity to ridicule his sense of authority and religious knowledge. After Mrs. Todd concludes the story about her trip to see Joanna, she notes, "He preached next Sabbath as usual, somethin' about the creation, and I couldn't help thinking; he might never get no further; he seemed to know no remedies, but he had a great use of words" (77). This is the second reference in the book to his elevated language, and thus we may well read this as Jewett's argument against empty eloquence for the way it creates dissonance, inhibits the spread of knowledge, and separates people. The scene where Jewett most clearly undercuts Mr. Dimmick's religious authority, however, appears at the end of "The Hermitage." During Joanna's funeral, Mrs. Todd remembers how a sparrow "flew right in and lit on the coffin an' begun to sing while Mr. Dimmick was speakin'."

Although the pastor seems "put out by it," Mrs. Todd firmly states, "I may have been prejudiced,

⁴³ Ironically, despite her belief that she's damned, Joanna's politeness and respect towards her visitors suggests that she has instilled the values of Christianity more than the pastor who is cold and more interested in surveying Indian ruins than offering comfort to a fellow Christian.

but I wa'n't the only one thought the poor little bird done the best of the two" (78). In the biblical book of Luke, Jesus warns his disciples to be on "guard" for religious hypocrisy, and in his teachings, he compares the divine value of a sparrow and a man: "Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows" (New International Version, Luke 12.6-7). Perhaps through this allusion Jewett wanted to emphasize the value of Joanna's life and suggest that God had not forgotten her. Moreover, by having a sparrow sing Joanna's eulogy, Jewett completely diminishes Mr. Dimmick's religious authority, and perhaps through his character, she wanted to show just how selfish and empty a Christian faith is that lacks attention to community and adherence to foundational, biblical principles such as demonstrative love and compassion towards others.

Considering the variety of religious and spiritual expressions that Jewett experiments with in *Deephaven*, we might expect *Pointed Firs* to depict a more radical departure from Protestant tradition. Yet, what we find instead is a clear return to this tradition as most clearly exemplified by the worn and open Bible in Mrs. Blackett's bedroom. Characters like the unnamed lecturer who gave the "The Elements of True Manhood" talk at the local church in *Deephaven* and Mr. Dimmick who leaves his members feeling judged and accused are the reason why critics such as Joseph Church have mistakenly argued that Jewett's fictions reveal "half-subtle attacks [on] man's constraining religions" for the way it "fail[s] to meet women's needs" (135). In his critical study *Transcendent Daughters in Jewett's Country of Pointed Firs* (1994), Church continues to assert that, for Jewett, "women in nineteenth-century American gain little or nothing from conventional institutions," and that "Jewett pays little attention or no attention to conventional religions (135). Although I agree with Church's claim in the respect that Jewett

often illustrates the exclusivity of orthodox, Calvinist tradition and the unfortunate trend of hypocrisy in Christian members, I disagree with his oversimplification of religion in Jewett's work as well as his gendering of conventional religion as masculine. Church fails to acknowledge the important role that Protestant practices and beliefs play in the lives of many of Jewett's characters both men and women, including Mr. Lorimer, Captain Sands, Mrs. Bonny, Miss Chauncey, Helen, Kate, Mrs. Todd, and Mrs. Blackett. Moreover, through the stories of Deephaven and Dunnett Landing characters, Jewett demonstrates how a closer reading of biblical scripture and of an understanding of the natural world as a source for sacred spiritual knowledge reveals a powerful, inclusive, place-based Christian tradition.

4 CHAPTER 3“A LIVING MOSAIC”: GERTRUDE BONNIN'S NATIVE AND CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

A mosaic is a conversation between what is broken.

Terry Tempest Williams, *Finding Beauty in a Broken World*

In 1884, an eight-year-old Yankton Sioux girl traveled from her home in South Dakota to a Quaker Indian boarding school with high hopes of new adventures and opportunities. For Gertrude Simmons Bonnin, who frequently published under the self-given Lakota name Zitkala-Ša (Red Bird), the following fifteen years would be a period of great change, a period of confusion and frustration, as she attempted to navigate the currents of white culture and to understand her position as a Native woman in an increasingly modern American society.⁴⁴ Like many Native children who attended Christian, Protestant or Catholic, Indian boarding schools during the nineteenth century, along with having to adapt to a different system of language and of cultural values, Bonnin faced the additional challenge of negotiating at least two faith systems

⁴⁴ Although Bonnin frequently published under the pen name Zitkala-Ša, she did not always publish under this name; therefore, in this chapter I follow James Cox's lead in using Bonnin to refer to her life and works published under her married name and in using Zitkala-Ša to reference work that was published under her pen name.

including Yankton Sioux and Protestant Christian. The reconciliation of these seemingly opposed faith systems became a driving force in her life. As Jane Hafen notes in the introduction to *Dreams and Thunder: Stories, Poems, and The Sun Dance Opera* (2001), a collection of Bonnin's unpublished work as Zitkala-Ša, Bonnin was often "distress[ed] over spiritual circumstances," "clinging to her traditional beliefs" while practicing various versions of Christianity from Catholicism to Mormonism throughout her life (xix). Her religious negotiations often come to the forefront of her writing as she criticizes white Christian traditions and asks profound theological questions about the existence of a monotheistic God and about the possible connections between tribal spiritualities and Christianity. Paying attention to the issues of faith and religion in Bonnin's writings reveals that she was able to reconcile Native and Christian faith systems by reconstructing religious ideologies. The result was a powerful religious identity that became the cornerstone of her life and offered her a clear sense of purpose as well as a profound political rhetoric.

Despite acknowledgements of Bonnin's dual religious affiliations and of the presence of spirituality in her work, however, the role that faith, and particularly Christianity, played in shaping Bonnin's writing career and political ideologies has been widely neglected. The lack of scholarship is in part due to the frequently critical and ambivalent stance that Bonnin takes towards Christianity in her early writings, a stance that scholars have viewed as representative of her ideologies. These early works include her semi-autobiographical essays and short stories that appeared in prominent literary periodicals such as the *Atlantic Monthly* and *Harper's Monthly Magazine* from 1900 to 1902. In these works, Bonnin often critiques the supporting role that Christianity played in Indian boarding school assimilation efforts and federal Indian policies that oppressed Native peoples and restricted their human rights to live and practice according to

traditional tribal ways.⁴⁵ Having only recently been a student at a Quaker Indian boarding school, White's Manual Institute, as well as a teacher at Richard Pratt's infamous, and Protestant, Carlisle Indian Industrial School, a position she left because of its poor educational practices, it's little wonder that Bonnin's writings during this time reflect her frustration with Christian assimilation efforts. Yet, in focusing on her early writings as representative of her ideologies, scholars have not fully explored the changes that she underwent throughout her life as evidenced by the various political essays, speeches, and poems that she published from roughly 1916 to 1922. This later period in her writing career is vital to understanding her personal, religious, and professional development because it reflects her experiences in Utah where she and her husband, Raymond Bonnin, worked on the Ute reservation, her involvement in Catholic and Mormon religions, as well as her work with the Society of American Indians (SAI), the first national pan-tribal political organization run exclusively by Native peoples. If we look only to her early writings and focus on her criticism of the practice of white Christianity, we overlook the consistent and important role that faith and religion played throughout Bonnin's life and literary career and we neglect to see its significance on her vision for racial and social equality in modern America.

In addition to focusing on the ambiguity of Bonnin's writings, scholars have also often conflated Christian and cultural/national assimilation projects, causing them to oversimplify issues of faith and religion in Bonnin's works. In the introduction to *Native and Christian: Indigenous Voices on Religious Identity in the United States and Canada* (1996), James Treat asserts that "Native Christians have been called heretical, inauthentic, assimilated, and

⁴⁵ Looking only to Bonnin's semi-autobiographical essays and short stories, Susan Mizruchi claims that Bonnin "only saw differences" between Indian and Christian religions and that she "repudiated [Charles] Eastman's merciful divide between Christian creed and deed" (*Multicultural America* 122). Mizruchi's argument reveals how Bonnin's early work is often seen by scholars as representative of a single, anti-Christian, ideology.

uncommitted,” and he continues to say that “the idea of a native Christian identity is both historically and culturally problematic” (9).⁴⁶ In a recent special issue of *American Indian Quarterly* that celebrated the 100th anniversary of the Society of American Indians (SAI), Philip Deloria furthers Treat’s discussion about the historically problematic notion of Natives who embrace Christianity; he writes, “Church, ethnography, museums, the colonial bureaucracy—all these things were significant tools of domination, and it can be hard to see an Indian person occupying one of these positions and not also see the active shadow of assimilation” (26). The binary categorization of Native peoples as either authentic or assimilated reflects a dominant discourse in indigenous literary studies that equates assimilation with tribal loss. As Michael Wilson explains in his critical study *Writing Home: Indigenous Narratives of Resistance* (2008), the “traditions of social sciences such as ethnology and anthropology” have “predominated in studies of indigenous people in recent literary studies” and have “foreground[ed] the binary opposition of purity and impurity, authenticity and inauthenticity” whereby “any evidence of cultural change is a sign of debasement, impoverishment, or impurity” (2).

For the purposes of this chapter, Wilson’s work is invaluable because it reveals how the emerging field of social sciences in the nineteenth century created a discourse that equated assimilation with loss and inauthenticity. Susan Mizruchi, an American studies scholar whose work probes issues of race and ethnicity in American society between the Civil War and World War I, further develops Wilson’s discussion on the role of social theory and assimilation in her critical text *Science of Sacrifice: American Literature and Modern Social Theory* (1998) as well

⁴⁶ In Treat’s introduction to *Native and Christian*, he identifies Charles Eastman, Liliuokalani, and William Apess as nineteenth-century figures who embraced Christian teachings and struggled to reconcile their faiths with their cultural heritages. Treat quotes a passage from Eastman’s *Soul of the Indian* (1911), “It is my personal belief, after thirty-five years of experience of it, that there is no such thing as ‘Christian civilization.’ I believe that Christianity and modern civilization are opposed and irreconcilable, and that the spirit of Christianity and of our ancient religion is essentially the same” (6).

as in her most recent study *The Rise of Multicultural America: Economy and Print Culture* (2008). Mizruchi proposes that American culture in the nineteenth century embraced a combination of religious and social scientific theories that sanctioned the sacrifice of particular groups of people, including Native Americans, for the economic progress of the nation. She explains that Darwinism contended that social evolution was necessary in order for savage cultures to become civilized, and white Christian culture further expanded the notion that sacrifice was not only necessary but beneficial for the nation's moral fiber. Additionally, she writes, "White and Indian authors writing about cultural conflict and the annihilation of Indian tribes in the period faced the difficult task of explaining, whether in political, philosophical, or religious terms the sacrifice of a people in an age of progress," and she continues to reveal how authors in this period often staged cultural conflict to reflect the victimization of Native peoples and to "challenge the doctrine that sacrifice was both indispensable and beneficial" (103, 7). As a Native American, Bonnin found herself at the center of Americans' attempts to assimilate Native peoples and annihilate tribal practices and beliefs as part of a civilizing mission that promoted sacrifice as a means for social and economic progress.

Like many writers who criticized national assimilation efforts, Bonnin's writings suggest that she was not only aware of society's rhetoric of loss but resistant to this model as a means for creating a viable future for Native peoples in modern America. Although some scholars like Craig Womack have labeled writings by nineteenth-century Native writers such as Bonnin who graduated from Indian boarding schools as "assimilationist dogma," other scholars including Dexter Fisher, Dorothea Susag, Ruth Spack, Susan Bernardin, Jane Hafen, and James Cox have all focused on the creative, appropriative power of Bonnin's work. Appropriation and resistance are words often used to discuss the writings of contemporary Native writers. Wilson states that

“indigenous writers of contemporary fiction are generally less concerned with assimilation than they are the power of appropriating and revising indigenous forms to create a literature of resistance,” and he further suggests that “this process of communal appropriation is an ongoing, creative, public process” (4,6). Writing about fifty years before contemporary Native writers like Momaday and Silko, individuals who Wilson identifies with a literature of resistance, Bonnin’s work demonstrates this “ongoing, creative, public process.” But, I believe, it also goes beyond appropriation in that she does not merely employ the dominant forms and ideologies as a means of resisting white American culture but as an active attempt to reconstruct Native and white belief systems in order to offer America a vision of social utopia that embraces cultural differences and encourages respect, love, and positive growth.

Nowhere can Bonnin’s process of reconstructing Native and white ideologies be seen more clearly than in how she negotiates Native and Christian faiths. Therefore, this chapter analyzes various representations of religion and faith found in Bonnin’s work to reveal how she went about reconstructing theologies as well as to show how her faith not only promoted her sense of personal well-being but offered her a vision for the future of modern America as well. By foregrounding issues of religion and faith in her writings, I argue that we will see an alternate rhetorical model emerge, a model that resists the notion that change and adaptation must necessarily equate to some form of loss. One literary trope that Bonnin employs to describe her spiritual awareness is that of “a living mosaic,” and I believe this is a useful paradigm through which to understand her religious identity and her vision for social equality because it emphasizes a natural, dynamic process of change and growth as well as a vision for wholeness through fragmentation. Contemporary writer, conservationist, and women’s activist Terry Tempest Williams writes in her book *Finding Beauty in a Broken World* (2008) that the very

concept of “mosaic” suggests conversation. For Williams, mosaic is a conversation between fragments, broken pieces, that takes place on surfaces, between forms, and across time (9). I use the term mosaic in this chapter to illustrate how Bonnin’s view on faith changed due to her interactions with white society and to reflect how she reconstructed various pieces of Native and Christian faith systems in order to create a viable religious identity. Moreover, by viewing Bonnin’s experimentation with multiple literary genres from autobiography, sentimental fiction, tribal legend, and political essays and speeches through the concept of mosaic, scholars are better able to see a brilliant aesthetic form emerge whereby each literary piece serves a unique purpose and audience while contributing to an ongoing conversation about humanity, religious faith, nationhood, and Native sovereignty.

A closer examination of the religious identity that Bonnin depicts in her works will also further critical debates in current Native American literary studies regarding the paradigm of hybridity. In “Tending to Ourselves: Hybridity and Native Literary Criticism,” Anishinaabeg literary scholar Niigonwedom James Sinclair explains how the post-colonial notion of hybridity, which defines human identity as being perpetually “remade, re-established, and ‘performed,’” can potentially “undermine Native sovereignty” by “limit[ing] the ability for Indigenous writers to name themselves and their realities” (248). Sinclair continues to demonstrate that the notion of hybridity can hinder Native claims for an “authentic” Native voice by arguing that “no subject position can be privileged; all are equal” (251). In her work, Bonnin claims, and privileges, an “authentic” Native identity despite her integration of Christian beliefs, specifically her embrace of a male, monotheistic God and biblical doctrines of truth, Christ imbued salvation, and equality for all humanity. Moreover, by synthesizing specific religious beliefs and sharing her newfound knowledge with other Indigenous peoples, Bonnin works within what Sinclair refers to as a

“Native-specific space,” a place where all cultural mediations and increased knowledge are used to promote a tribal communities’ collective knowledge. According to Sinclair, a “Native-specific space” is opposed to a “contact zone where identities are impossible to articulate” (256). Referencing Acoma Pueblo poet Simon Ortiz, Sinclair shows how the process of “cultural synthesis constitutes the way Native people have grown and continued,” and he notes, for Ortiz, this process of cultural synthesis is called “continuance” (251). Bonnin’s work helps illustrate how many Native peoples have, and still, mediate cultural influences, claim new knowledge, and share these insights with their communities in order to promote Native sovereignty, self-determination, and continuance.

I begin the chapter by briefly sketching the religious landscape of Bonnin’s childhood in order to contextualize her religious experiences, and then I examine how religion and spirituality figure in her early writings. Although early critics have noted how in her semi-autobiographical essays and short fiction, Bonnin frequently criticizes Christianity and elevates traditional tribal spiritualities, I believe that her representations are not so easily categorized and that such arguments miss the richness and complexity of her figurations. Therefore, in order to gain a broader and more comprehensive understanding of the role religion and faith play in Bonnin’s work, I will follow this thread as it runs throughout her early works, including her essay and speech “Side by Side,” which she delivered at the Indiana State Oratorical contest in 1896, her three semi-autobiographical essays, “Impressions of an Indian Childhood,” “School Days of an Indian,” and “An Indian Teacher Among Indians,” which were published in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1900, as well as one of her most widely anthologized short stories, “The Soft-Hearted Sioux,” which appeared in *Harper’s* in 1901. When read together, these texts reflect a growing tension between the traditional tribal beliefs Bonnin was taught as a child and the Protestant teachings

she encountered at the boarding school. After describing how this tension resulted in a spiritual crisis, I look to Bonnin's essay "Why I am a Pagan," which appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1902, to show how she earnestly attempted to articulate her ideologies and theological views and to negotiate a place for herself between differing faith systems. I then explore her time in Utah to reveal how her engagement with various Christian organizations led her to reconstruct elements of Christian and Native systems in order to create a viable religious identity, and I argue that this development is most evident in a poem that she published in 1916 entitled "The Indian's Awakening." Bonnin's religious "awakening" comes to profoundly influence her social activism, and thus I conclude my study by exploring how her religious beliefs influenced her political views and the works she published in SAI's *American Indian Magazine*.

4.1 The Religious Landscape

In order to better understand Bonnin's encounters with religion, it may be useful to briefly describe the American religious landscape that she entered into upon boarding the "iron horse" and traveling east. In his book *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience* (1995), David Adams explains that in the late 1860s the Indian Bureau was "riddled with corruption from top to bottom" and that President Ulysses S. Grant proposed the Peace Policy that, in part, turned all Indian affairs over to "church boards of various religious denominations" (7). Needless to say this change did not end corruption; however, it did encourage an already growing national mission aimed at civilizing the Indian through missionary zeal. From the reformers' perspective, a civilized society, one that had reached the highest point of evolution, was a Christian society, and thus the national imperative was to educate Indians in the moral and ethical codes of Christianity. Adams cites Merrill Gates, the 1891 president of the Lake Mohonk Conference which was a public forum for Indian reform run largely by well-

educated, evangelical Protestants, who states, “the time for fighting the Indian is passed” and what is needed now is an “army of Christian school teachers” (27). Thus the curriculum for most mission Indian boarding schools revolved around immersing Indian children in Christian teachings and practices. A standard mission school curriculum, whether Protestant or Catholic, according to Francis Paul Prucha, author of *The Churches and the Indian Schools, 1888-1912* (1979), would have required students to observe the Sabbath by attending a service every Sunday and to attend weekly prayer meetings. A prototype of a successful Christian curriculum, Carlisle epitomized the type of Christian control that was common in mission schools in that it offered Sunday services, weekly meetings, and it encouraged students to participate in associations like the Young Men’s Christian Association (162).

In addition to her exposure to Protestant Christianity through mission Indian boarding schools, Bonnin witnessed how the federal government and missionaries attempted to oppress traditional tribal religions as well as how Native peoples employed religion as a source of cultural empowerment. Throughout most of Bonnin’s life, as Davidson and Norris note, the government repeatedly attempted to ban the Sioux Sun Dance, a dance that lasted as long as a week and drew some nine to fifteen thousand people, in order to eliminate what it saw as a potential danger to the United States (xx). During her stay in Utah, Bonnin collaborated with Mormon music teacher William F. Hanson to compose an opera that would recreate the Plains Indian ritual for a mainstream American audience. Another tribal religion that caused a great deal of national anxiety was the messianic Ghost Dance, a dance based on a combination of Lakota and Christian beliefs that was supposed to make the whites disappear, to bring the massacred Indians back to life, and to return the buffalo to the plains. As more and more Sioux joined the religion and began congregating in massive numbers to conduct their ceremonial

dance, in 1890 the U.S. army sent a unit to kill the Sioux leader Sitting Bull, who was associated with the dance, but the mission ended instead with the massacre of at least three hundred Indian men, women, and children at Wounded Knee Creek. Although Bonnin doesn't write about the massacre, she was home on a school break when it occurred and would have heard about its violence. In addition, the early twentieth century witnessed the rise of the Native American Church, another belief system that combined pan-tribal and Christian elements. According to Chippewa Gregory Gagnon who works as an administrator-instructor at Oglala Lakota College on Pine Ridge Reservation, the church was a "reaction to the trauma of confinement to reservations and policies that sought to eradicate traditional religion in all of Indian Country" (84). The religion emphasized peaceful acceptance of the world and preparation for heaven with the help of various spirit Beings including Jesus, and it adopted the practices of southern plains tribes who used mild hallucinogenics like peyote. Bonnin clearly aligned herself against the church's practices in her anti-peyote campaign.⁴⁷

Having witnessed how religion could be used to oppress people as well as to encourage them, it is little wonder that issues about religion and faith pervade Bonnin's work. Viewing her work chronologically, we can see an emerging tension between Bonnin's desire for religious knowledge and certainty and her recognition of hypocrisy. One of her earliest pieces of writing, "Side by Side," an essay that she wrote as a student at Earlham College and that won second place at the 1896 Indiana State Oratorical contest, demonstrates how immersed Bonnin had become by the age of twenty in the traditional Protestant rhetoric of mission boarding school education as well as how aware she was of religion's role in social and political venues. In this

⁴⁷ In a 1916 essay entitled "The Menace of Peyote," Bonnin compares peyote to other forms of "liquor and drugs" (*American Indian Legends* 240). For Bonnin, peyote-usage led to impairment: "Men, women and children on Indian reservations attend weekly meetings every Saturday night to eat peyote. It takes all day Sunday to recover somewhat from the drunk. Too often in their midnight debaucheries there is a total abandonment of virtue" (240).

essay, Bonnin effectively employed biblical rhetoric to evoke sympathy from her audience, to draw awareness to the impoverishment of Native peoples, and to demand a place for Native peoples in modern America:

Oh Love of God and His ‘Strong Son,’ thou who liftest up the oppressed and succorest the needy, is thine ear grown heavy so that it cannot hear his [the Indian’s] cry. Is thy arm so shortened, it cannot save? Dost thou not yet enfold him in thy love? Look with compassion down, and with thine almighty power move this nation to the rescue of my race...America I love thee. “Thy people shall be my people and thy God my God”

Winning second place, Bonnin’s impassioned plea must have resonated with her audience, and yet her bitter tone is only thinly veiled as she suggests that Christ is not only weak but deaf to the cries of Native peoples (*Zitkala-Sa* 225). Beneath Bonnin’s highly contrived diction lies a tension between her seeming acceptance of Christian faith and her simultaneous resentment of its role in oppressing Native peoples. The ambivalence in her speech reflects an inner struggle with faith and religious teachings that surfaces in her early works as she attempts to negotiate cultural differences.

4.2 Bonnin’s Sioux Fictions and “Paganism”

As a college essay and speech project, “Side by Side” offers us a glimpse into the religious and political environment that Bonnin traversed as a young woman. However, the work that would come to define her literary reputation did not come until four years later, and it is this work that most clearly reflects a growing tension between the tribal spiritual beliefs that Bonnin was taught as a child and the practice of Protestant Christianity that she encountered at school. Her three semi-autobiographical essays record her childhood years with her mother on the Yankton Sioux reservation, her time spent at Indian boarding schools and at Earlham, and her brief term as a teacher at Carlisle before enrolling as a music student at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, Massachusetts. In these essays, she pays particular attention to tracing her

spiritual awareness and development. Interestingly, the first essay, “Impressions of an Indian Childhood,” opens with a section entitled “My Mother” that describes Zitkala-Ša’s “wild freedom and overflowing spirits,” spirits that were her “mother’s pride.” She explains that at the age of seven she “was not wholly conscious of [herself], but more keenly alive to the fire within,” and she continues to say that it was as if her “hands and feet were only experiments for [her] spirit to work upon” (69). Amelia Katanksi has argued that Zitkala-Ša was “a complex child—possessing a unique subjectivity” as well as a “recognition of her own multiplicity” (119). Indeed this passage suggests that at an early age Zitkala-Ša was highly aware of her personal spiritual identity, and it further illustrates her understanding of a connection between spirit and body whereby the first controls the latter. As the essay moves forward, her awareness of an inner spirit evolves into a relationship with a spiritual power outside of herself as well, and this is evidenced by her frequent prayers to the Great Spirit for blessings on her family and fellow tribesmen as well as for her own personal desires such as when she “beg[s] the Great Spirit” for her mother’s permission to go to school (85).

In “My Mother,” we also see how Zitkala-Ša’s mother modeled for her daughter a personal relationship with the Great Spirit. In “My Mother,” Zitkala-Ša recalls her mother’s story about how the palefaces “defrauded” them of their land, forced them to move their camps, and caused the deaths of the speaker’s uncle and sister. Her mother states, “My poor child, how I cried with her because the Great Spirit had forgotten us” (70). Both mother and daughter use the term *Great Spirit* to refer to a higher power; however, as literary scholars Betty Louise Bell and Julian Rice explain, traditional Sioux spirituality did not embrace a monotheistic deity but rather a polytheistic view of the world as being full of “power that circulates everywhere and that is visibly concentrated in certain transient forms” (Rice 15). According to Bell and Rice, the

Sioux term *Wakan Takan*, which refers to numerous spirits both good and bad, was translated by nineteenth-century missionaries into the *Great Spirit*, a term often believed to refer to a monotheistic deity, in order to make Sioux spirituality more acceptable to Christians. Bell states that many nineteenth-century Native writers used the term *Great Spirit* because it is “less objectionable to Judeo-Christian beliefs than particularized tribal practices.” She continues to say that “for leaders and intellectuals of the Society for American Indians (SAI), it combined and connected pan-Indian reform with a pan-tribal religion” (64-65). Thus, mother and daughter’s reference to the Great Spirit may suggest Zitkala-Ša’s desire to enhance the readers’ sympathy for their losses by using a term synonymous with the Christian term *God*.

Despite the mother’s temporary doubt in the dependability of the Great Spirit who had allowed her family to suffer at the hands of white settlers, she doesn’t ever give up her faith, and in the following sections she is repeatedly described as being an encourager of her daughter’s faith. For example, in “A Trip Westward,” Zitkala-Ša, now a teacher at Carlisle, returns to her mother’s home and is disturbed to find that her brother, who graduated from an Eastern Indian boarding school and worked as a government clerk on their reservation, was no longer employed and that his position had been taken by a white man. Outraged by the injustice, she says that she was “unable to hold longer any faith” and cries out, “Mother, don’t pray again! The Great Spirit does not care if we live or die!” Her mother responds, “Sh! My child, do not talk so madly. There is Taku Iyotan Waska, to which I pray” (109).⁴⁸ In these passages, I want to highlight not only how Zitkala-Ša’s mother illustrates for her daughter a personal and communicative relationship with a higher power but also how she sustains her faith despite life's hardships. In her essay “Re-visioning Sioux Women,” Spack cites Paula Gunn Allen who states that in most

⁴⁸ In their explanatory notes, Cathy Davidson and Ada Norris explain that Zitkala-Ša defines “Taku Iyotan Wasaka” in a footnote to her original text as an “absolute power” (265), but it is unclear as to whether or not this term correlates to the “Great Spirit” or whether it is monotheistic or polytheistic in nature.

Plains cultures women are responsible for passing on cultural knowledge, and it is important to note that this includes spiritual knowledge as well (35).

In addition to representations of personal faith as exemplified by daughter and mother, Zitkala-Ša's semi-autobiographical essays also describe how tribal stories further connected individuals to community and place and to spirituality. Based on the stories that she hears from her mother and tribal elders, various types of spirits, who are both good and evil, live in the world and have the ability to influence people. In a section in "Impressions of an Indian Childhood" entitled "The Legends," Zitkala-Ša remembers laying with her head in her mother's lap and listening to an old woman tell a "long story of a woman whose magic power lay hidden behind the marks upon her face," a story that frightened her deeply and made her "suspicious of tattooed people" for the "terrible magic power that was covered" by their mysterious markings. Zitkala-Ša's fear of evil spirits appears again in another section, "The Coffee-Making," when her mother tells her to "pity" the Indian brave Wiyaka-Napbina, a "crazy man" who frequently visited her family's tepee for food, because he had been "overtaken by a malicious spirit among the hills" that made him believe that "an evil spirit was haunting his steps" (77). In addition to the stories she hears about evil spirits who run loose in the world, she also hears stories about how physical sites can become sacred and how she must approach such sites with respect and caution. In "The Dead Man's Plum Bush," she recounts a story that her mother told her about a plum bush that marked the spot of a dead Indian brave. Her mother warns her to never eat of the plum bush because it is "sacred ground," and she states that the elders can hear the "strange whistle of departed souls" emitting from the ground, even though she never hears it herself (80). These stories illustrate the role of traditional oral storytelling in passing on tribal knowledge to new generations, and in both cases the stories illuminate a powerful spirit that pervades all life in

mysterious, and sometimes evil, ways. Additionally, these stories act as a bridge to connect individuals to community as well as to tether spiritual faith in physical place, making it an integral part of everyday life. By continuing to engage with the stories that explain how the plum bush became sacred ground, tribal members link the past to the present and promote a sense of communal identity through shared beliefs and knowledge.

The traditional faith system of Bonnin's childhood, as exemplified by tribal stories and superstitions, becomes complicated by her Protestant boarding school education, however, and her semi-autobiographical essays often depict her frustration with Christian hypocrisy. Like other sentimental writers of the nineteenth century, Bonnin employs emotionally charged language to help her readers feel her pain and frustration, and she also adapts religious rhetoric to heighten the injustice that Native children faced at the hands of white, Protestant instructors. In "School Days of an Indian Girl," Zitkala-Ša repeatedly reveals how the paleface missionary teachers mistreat Indian children, and the moment in her boarding school education when she feels most violated is when the missionaries cut her "thick braids," "shingling" her "long hair" like "a coward's." It is this moment when she states that she "lost [her] spirit," connecting her physical violation with her spiritual freedom (91). Furthermore, in addition to the injustices that the Indian children suffered at the hands of the missionaries, Zitkala-Ša also emphasizes how the missionary teachers taught the love of Christ and salvation while ignorantly neglecting basic physical needs such as proper food and medicine. In a particularly moving section entitled "Iron Routine," she grieves over a dying classmate who "talked disconnectedly of Jesus the Christ and the paleface who was cooling her swollen hands and feet." The speaker states, "I blamed the hard-working, well-meaning, ignorant woman who was calculating in our hearts her superstitious ideas" (96-97).

Zitkala-Ša's experiences at the Protestant Indian boarding school, along with the growing sense of alienation she feels upon returning to her tribal home during school breaks, lead her to reject biblical doctrine. During one of her trips home from school, she states that her mother tried to comfort her with an "Indian Bible" that had been given to her mother "some years ago by a missionary" (99). The book was the only bit of printed materials in the home and thus the mother thought that her daughter could be comforted by reading from the "white man's papers" because it would remind her of her days at school. "Enraged" at the book that "afforded [her] no help and was a perfect delusion to [her] mother," Zitkala-Ša states that she "did not read it, but laid it unopened on the floor" and that an "awful silent storm followed [her] rejection of the Bible" (100). Considering her mother's Yankton Sioux heritage and her lack of formal American schooling, it is unlikely that she would have been able to understand much of the Indian Bible, despite her growing knowledge of the English language. Her mother's inability to read the "white man's papers" may have contributed to Zitkala-Ša's rejection of the book as it represented the separation between Zitkala-Ša, her family, and her tribe.

Having separated herself from the oppressive Protestant teachings of the Indian boarding school and rejected biblical doctrine, Zitkala-Ša experiments with traditional tribal magic in the hopes of filling her spiritual void. She explains that prior to her "second journey East" she had a "secret interview" with one of the "best medicine men" who gave her "a tiny bunch of magic roots," which would "assure [her] of friends wherever [she] should go." Wearing the charm for more than a year, she says, "Then, before I lost my faith in the dead roots, I lost the buckskin bag containing all my good luck" (100). The word "lost" is curious in this context. It suggests an unintentional mishap, an accident with no real active agency. How does one lose faith? Perhaps like her rejection of the Bible, her disbelief in tribal magic is due to a lack of visible evidence to

prove that it works. Whatever the reason, it is important to note that she loses the roots before she loses her faith in their power because it enhances the pain of her experience. It also suggests that up until this moment in her life she wholly believed in the power of the medicine man's magic and that, ultimately, she comes to reject the notion of magic, the notion that one can control the universe through supernatural forces.

Dissatisfied with Protestant teachings and traditional tribal magic, Zitkala-Ša looks to education and literacy as a means for purpose and belonging. Her loss of faith in the dead roots is followed by her graduation from White's Manual Labor Institute and her entrance into Earlham College.⁴⁹ The trade, between tribal faith and academic education, however, proves to be a poor one for Zitkala-Ša as it leaves her in a state of spiritual despair and fragmentation. In the third essay, entitled "An Indian Teacher Among Indians," she opens by explaining that "an illness" had kept her from completing her college career and that she had taken a position at Carlisle to avoid returning to her mother who was disappointed in Zitkala-Ša for not remaining on the reservation. In the last section entitled "Retrospection," she sits alone in her room, deep in meditation over the course of her life:

In the process of my education I had lost all consciousness of the nature world about me...For the white man's papers I had given up my faith in the Great Spirit. For these papers I had forgotten the healing in trees and brooks. On account of my mother's simple view of life, and my lack of any, I gave her up also. I made not friends among the race of people I loathed. Like a slender tree, I had been uprooted from my mother, nature, and God. (112)

As in the previous essay when she states that she had "lost [her] faith in the dead roots," this passage also uses the term "lost," except in this passage she further articulates what was lost and how. So focused on gaining an education and succeeding in the white man's world, Zitkala-Ša

⁴⁹ "Homeless and heavy-hearted," she states that she "began anew [her life among strangers]" and that "by daylight and lamplight, [she] spun with reeds and thistles, until [her] hands were tired from their weaving, the magic design which promised [her] the white man's respect" (101).

explains that she has lost her relationship with her mother and her spiritual connection to the natural world. Quickly, she moves from claiming that her education is to blame for her disorientation to recognizing the active role she played in losing her own faith in nature and spirituality. Phrases such as “lost,” “gave up,” and “forgotten” all suggest that she chose to lose it. Yet, in the final line, by saying “I had been uprooted,” she also seems to suggest that her upheaval was not completely her responsibility. There is a tension between the role she played in her own removal and the role missionaries played in taking her from her home with the promise of adventure and opportunity. As Mizruchi explains in *Science of Sacrifice*, writings from the nineteenth century frequently contemplate “social consciousness and agency” (20). Considering her role in high literary society and her education in Protestant schools, the tension we read in this passage may be her attempt to work through issues of agency, responsibility, and consequences. Whether or not this is the case, evidently the Indian boarding school teachings that promoted assimilation and education as a means for progress and success in modern America prove to be more debilitating than helpful. Zitkala-Ša ends her series of essays with a melancholic reflection on her personal loss and spiritual deadness. Furthermore, for the first time in her semi-autobiographical essays, Zitkala-Ša uses the Christian term *God* and the pan-tribal term *Great Spirit* interchangeably and these contradictions suggest a growing religious crisis in the speaker.

Upon completing her semi-autobiographical essays, Bonnin shifts genres and begins writing short fiction, yet despite the change in form, the content is still much the same in regards to her concerns about religion. In fact, in her short story “The Soft-Hearted Sioux,” which appeared in *Harper’s Monthly Magazine* in 1901, her frustrations with tribal spiritualities, Christianity, and missionary efforts take center stage. The narrator, a young Native man who

was sent as a boy to a Christian Indian boarding school, returns to his tribe with “the white man’s Bible” and “the white man’s tender heart,” intending to convert “the hunters who chased the buffalo on the plains.” Instead of helping his people, he is faced with his own inability to hunt and provide food for his starving father, having spent the past nine years at school “hunt[ing] for the soft heart of Christ,” and in a desperate attempt to feed his family, he kills a cow and, unintentionally, a rancher. The story ends with the young Native man waiting in prison to be executed and wondering, “who shall come to welcome me in the realm of strange sight. Will the loving Jesus grant me pardon and give me soothing sleep? Or will my warrior father greet me and receive me as his son? Will my spirit fly upward to a happy heaven? Or shall I sink into the bottomless pit, an outcast from a God of infinite love?” (125). The story is a biting indictment of the Indian mission school’s inability to give adequate instruction to meet the needs of an impoverished people as well as a stark and provocative reflection of the psychological confusion brought on by religious assimilation and traditional Christian dogma. The narrator’s question about the afterlife and the possibility of damnation for un-converted Indians may well derive from Bonnin’s own concerns about spirituality and salvation as it is a theme that she returns to in later works. Her inflammatory language and aggressive stance against Protestant missionary efforts, however, resulted in a great deal of negative criticism, and on the front page of Carlisle’s school paper *Red Man and Helper*, under the headline “‘The Soft -Hearted Sioux’—Morally Bad,” Pratt condemned her story for its “morbidness.”

In response to the accusations against her work, one of Bonnin’s ensuing publications passionately defended her morality and sense of spirituality. Another semi-autobiographical essay, “Why I am a Pagan” appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1902. In this essay she juxtaposed her faith in beauty, nature, and the inter-connectedness of all life with the hypocritical

and superstitious religious practices of other, more “Christian,” believers in order to reveal the authenticity and validity of her personal experiences. Fully aware that her essay would be read antagonistically by educators and friends of the Indian, a group of primarily white, educated, evangelicals who supported Indian reform, Bonnin wrote to her then-fiancé, Carlos Montezuma, an Apache doctor and Indian rights activist, that the *Atlantic Monthly* had “accepted a little scribble” of her writing that she believed would cause “Carlisle [to] rear up on its haunches at [the] sight of the little sky rocket!” Although the essay could be read as a rhetorical stunt intended to embarrass critics who had misrepresented her work - in the essay she alludes to “a Christian ‘pugilist’ [who] commented on a recent article of [hers], grossly perverting the spirit of [her] pen” - I believe the value of this particular piece lies in Bonnin’s attempt to assemble various competing religious and spiritual systems and to identify her place in relation to them (117). What is especially important to note is how this essay is a distillation of many of the themes that re-occur in her work such as her belief in the divine essence of the natural world and the importance of personal spiritual experience, her rejection of dogmatic teachings, superstitions, and hierarchical institutions, and her disdain for religious hypocrisy.

Announcing her “pagan” beliefs in the title, Zitkala-Ša begins her narration by sharing how her love for the natural world is innately religious. With “half-closed eyes” and “folded hands,” she reverently contemplates the beauty and diversity that she finds in “all parts of the vast universe” from the “wild prairie flowers,” to the “clear crystal song” of a yellow-breasted bird, all “living symbols,” she believes, of “omnipotent thought.” Completely immersed in the sight, sound, smell, and feel of the “loving Mystery” that surrounds her, she “leisurely” strolls along an “ancient trail” that leads back to her cabin, relating Native American legends of Stone-Boy, a trickster and hero figure in traditional Sioux mythology, and reflecting on the “knowledge

of the native folk which enabled them to recognize a kinship to any and all parts of this vast universe.” As she follows the path home, she exclaims, “With the strong, happy sense that both great and small are so surely enfolded in His magnitude that, without a miss each has his allotted individual ground of opportunities, I am buoyant with good nature” (114-15). She is comforted by the knowledge that all life – from the river, the prairie flowers, and the yellow-breasted bird to the Native peoples who made their homes along the Missouri river – is encompassed within the divine plan of a supreme being and that each being has a pre-ordained purpose in life, a uniquely individual goal, time, or situation that is created for ultimate good. A dynamic part of this living landscape of human and non-human beings, Zitkala-Ša finds a place to belong within a larger story of existence, and through this sense of belonging and wonder, she achieves a state of higher spiritual awareness.⁵⁰

Her personal spiritual experience not only leads her to a more complete understanding of the interconnected nature of all life within a divine plan, but it also comes to be the window through which she views the material world around her. While contemplating the connection between the physical world and the spiritual world, she becomes more and more attuned to the inner spirit of life and this spiritual awareness teaches her respect for all creation despite its variances. Upon returning from her walk, she is greeted by her “shaggy black dog,” Chän. Zitkala-Ša holds the head of this “thoroughbred little mongrel” in her hands and stares into her “large brown eyes,” watching her “pupils contract into tiny dots, as if the roguish spirit within would evade [her] questioning” (115). Chän is an interesting character in the essay not only because her “roguish spirit” and mixed-breed bloodline mirrors Zitkala-Ša’s own rebellious nature and mixed-blood heritage, but because she, too, has learned two forms of communication,

⁵⁰ Bonnin’s spiritual view is akin to British romantics who frequently wrote about the natural rhythms of life and the songs of birds and Ralph Waldo Emerson’s views on nature and transcendence

speaking both canine and Sioux language. “Chän,” she writes, “seems to understand many words in Sioux, and will go to her mat even when I whisper the word, though generally I think she is guided by the tone of the voice. Often she tries to imitate the sliding inflection and long-drawn-out voice to the amusement of our guests, but her articulation is quite beyond my ear.” In this passage, Zitkala-Ša seems to be suggesting that language is only a tool for creating meaning and that the form of expression is less important than the meaning behind it. This knowledge reflects Zitkala-Ša’s belief in the equality of expression – both in regards to language, and more specifically Native languages, as well as spiritual expression. Additionally, she uses the inter-species relationship with her dog to reveal the subjective nature of experience and the limitations on human understanding in that the speaker accepts that, despite her affection for the dog, she is limited in her understanding of this spiritual being.⁵¹

Zitkala-Ša’s relationship with Chän further nurtures her “keen sympathy with [her] fellow creatures” and leads her to reconsider the characteristics that society uses to define and separate human-beings from each other. “The racial lines, which once were bitterly real, now serve nothing more than marking out a living mosaic of human beings,” she observes, “and even here men of the same color are like the ivory keys of one instrument where each resembles all the rest, yet varies in pitch and quality of voice.” A mosaic is not randomly or haphazardly created. It is a thoughtfully designed creation composed of different colored, textured, and shaped fragments that are all necessary to the overall finished product. In all of its richness and

⁵¹ In this passage, Zitkala-Ša’s meditation on the essence of her dog is strikingly similar to the philosophy of William James’s. At the end of his 8th lecture “Pragmatism and Religion” he writes, “I believe rather that we stand in much the same relation to the whole of the universe as our canine and feline pets do to the whole of human life. They inhabit our drawing-rooms and libraries. They take part in scenes of whose significance they have no inkling. They are merely tangent to curves of history the beginnings and ends and forms of which pass wholly beyond their ken. So we are tangents to the wider life of things. But, just as many of the dog’s and cat’s ideals coincide with our ideals, and the dogs and cats have daily living proof of the fact, so we may well believe, on the proofs that religious experience affords, that higher powers exist and are at work to save the world on ideal lines similar to our own.” Thus, perhaps Bonnin is engaging with an ongoing philosophical discussion of the late nineteenth century that explored spirituality, essence, being, and ontological distinctions.

complexity, a mosaic demands contemplation. Zitkala-Ša uses this particular aesthetic to illustrate how the beauty of the world depends on people's differences, racially and culturally. Moreover, having rejected society's perception that racial markers are characteristic of a superior or inferior nature, she moves on to articulate how even humans who are identified as being part of the same racial category have their own particular variances, their own voices. Like a mosaic, a musical composition requires the unique sound of each instrument, and the ivory keys of the piano come to illustrate how people that may appear the same on the outside have the potential to be quite different on the inside.

Although she states that all life is a part of "God's creat[ion]," Zitkala-Ša's personal spiritual experiences and insight enabled her to make one distinction between humans: that there are those who base their views on authentic spiritual experience and those who base their beliefs on dogmatic doctrine and tradition. Continuing her analogy of humans and musical instruments, she states, "And those creatures who are for a time mere echoes of another's note are not unlike the fable of the thin sick man whose distorted shadow, dressed like a real creature, came to the old master to make him follow as a shadow" (116). This passage precedes the arrival of a "native preacher" who confronts her about her lack of Sunday church attendance and pleads with her to "think upon these things and choose now to avoid the after-doom of hell fire" (116). The "converted Indian," she writes, speaks of a "bigoted creed" that condemns her for not following traditional Protestant practices, including adherence to the Sabbath and regular church attendance, and contends that the Christian dead reside in heaven, "gathered in unceasing song and prayer," while "the sinful ones" fall into a "deep pit" and "dance in torturing flames" (116). Following along with the missionary's teachings and believing that the Bible is a "sacred book" of "great power," the native preacher becomes one of those "sick [men]" who are "mere echoes

of another's note," and Zitkala-Ša undercuts his belief in dogmatic teachings and hierarchical traditions by referring to it as "the new superstition," the superstition that even her mother has accepted (117). The Indian convert's faith is based on other peoples' teachings and fear of death and torture; he "sit[s] wordless" with a "downcast face," and when he leaves his eyes are "bent fast upon the dusty road," and it is clear from the descriptions that his faith has left him depressed, judgmental towards others, and unable to focus his sight on the beauty of the world around him.

Zitkala-Ša then closes her essay by juxtaposing the faith of the Protestant missionaries and the faith of the converted Indian with her own spiritual insight gleaned from her experiences in the natural world in order to further establish her spiritual views and thus locate her position between them. The concluding passage of the essay reads as follows:

Still I would not forget that the pale-faced missionary and the hoodooed aborigine are both God's creatures, though small indeed their own conceptions of Infinite Love. A wee child toddling in a wonder world, I prefer to their dogma my excursions into the natural gardens where the voice of the Great Spirit is heard in the twittering of birds, the rippling of mighty water, and the sweet breathing of flowers. If this is Paganism, then at present, at least I am a Pagan (117, 265-66).

When Zitkala-Ša refers to the "palefaces" in her writings, it is often to point out white society's injustice towards Indian peoples and missionary efforts to convert, forcefully, Indian children. In "Impressions of an Indian Childhood," having arrived at the Indian boarding school, she is forced to endure various "indignities" at the hands of palefaced women, from being "tossed about in the air like a wooden puppet" to having her long hair "shingled like a coward's" (91). The pale-faced missionaries, specifically, refer to white Christians who impose their beliefs on others all the while thinking that their actions are divinely noble. The "hoodooed aborigine" is a more complicated reference; considering Zitkala-Ša's previous descriptions and rejection of tribal forms of magic, she may actually be referring to indigenous spiritual belief systems that are

rooted in magic, ritual, and superstition; however, the dramatization of the “hoodooed aborigine” could also suggest that she is attempting to appeal to a primarily white, Protestant audience who may have perceived indigenous peoples as devil-worshipping pagans. In either case, having set up these two types of spiritual and religious people, and pointed out the limitations of their “conceptions of Infinite Love,” Zitkala-Ša, in an act of self-dramatization, refers to herself as “a wee child toddling in a wonder world” (117). Interestingly, her description of herself lacks the cultural and racial characterization as exemplified in the “pale-faced missionary” and “hoodooed aborigine,” and this omission might suggest her desire to position herself somewhere between the two as a mixed-blood, pan tribal member who desires spiritual truth over pre-determined cultural or religious traditions. Instead of calling attention to her racial or cultural designation, she focuses on her age and lack of spiritual maturity. Referring to herself as a child, she emphasizes her inexperience and willingness to learn as well as her childish innocence that enables her to be continuously awed by the beauties of the natural world. She grounds her spiritual views in the natural world, a world that breathes the love, beauty, and omnipresence of an almighty power, and adamantly rejects dogmatic teachings that spread fear and judgment.

When “Why I Am a Pagan” appeared in *Atlantic Monthly*, Bonnin’s prediction that Carlisle would be enraged proved to be true; in *Red Man and His Helper*, Pratt commented that the story was “trash” and the essay’s author “worse than a pagan” (Davidson and Norris xix). Just as Pratt and many friends of the Indian interpreted Zitkala-Ša’s essay as an aggressive attack on Christianity and educational efforts, many literary scholars have also emphasized the anti-assimilationist rhetoric employed in the essay. Fisher contends that Zitkala-Ša “insisted on remaining ‘Indian’ [by] writing embarrassing articles such as ‘Why I Am A Pagan’ that flew in the face of the assimilationist thrust of their education” (230). In “Re-visioning Sioux Women,”

Ruth Spack argues that in “Why I Am a Pagan,” Zitkala-Ša “turns away from the Christian rhetoric she learned in school and instead communicates through the sacred discourse of her own people” (34). Additionally, Betty Louise Bell asserts that “Why I Am a Pagan” is Zitkala-Ša’s “least accommodationist of her non-fiction” and that the essay “reflects a defiant swerve from her earlier celebratory embrace of America and its paternalistic ambitions for the Indian” (67). Yet, unlike Pratt and his followers, critics like Spack and Bell have also acknowledged the ambiguous nature of Zitkala-Ša’s spiritual and religious representations and ideological perspective. Noting that Zitkala-Ša includes the “pale-faced missionary” as one of “God’s creatures,” Spack suggests that “Why I Am a Pagan” be “viewed not as a sign that Zitkala-Ša turns away from Christianity itself but rather rejects a Christianity that denigrates American Indian life” (34). Bell further complicates interpretations of Zitkala-Ša’s essay by explaining how it “benefits from a fluid middle ground between tribal religions and Christianity” (67).

Neither critic, however, fully explores the complicated nature of Bonnin’s spiritual and religious views, and therefore, a more thorough exploration of the text is required in order to better understand the type of faith she saw for herself and, later, for other Indian peoples. Zitkala-Ša’s essay abounds with what appear to be theological contradictions. Considering that the last line establishes her pagan beliefs at the same time as it calls them into question, by saying, “*If this is Paganism,*” Zitkala-Ša may well have been aware of the ambiguities in her writing (italics added for emphasis). Although her admiration of the natural world, the “loving mystery” around her, and her criticism of mainstream religious teachings and practice suggests a deviant spiritual faith outside of the mainstream norm, her celebration of a loving “God” that “enfolds all in *His* magnitude” is more readily identifiable as Christian in that it that recognizes and worships a divine, masculine creator. Moreover, both of Zitkala-Ša’s artistic analogies, the

mosaic and musical composition, reveal how all beings are unique and important emphasize the act of creation and design and therefore require an artist or a composer in order to exist.⁵² The real nature of Zitkala-Ša's "paganism," then, appears to be in its rejection of dogmatic teachings and practices. By rejecting elements of fear, prejudice, and superiority, Bonnin constructs a theology that embraces both a Native belief of the interconnectedness of humans and the natural world and a Christian view of a monotheistic Godhead.

4.3 Re-visioning The Great Spirit: Reconstructing Native And Christian Theologies

The complexity of "Why I Am a Pagan" increases when we consider that Bonnin revised it in 1921 and republished it in *American Indian Stories* under the title "The Great Spirit."⁵³ The body of the essay remains largely the same except for one substantial change to the conclusion. In her revision, she removes the last line where she proclaims her pagan beliefs and adds the following passage:

Here, in a fleeting quiet, I am awakened by the fluttering robe of the Great Spirit. To my innermost consciousness the phenomenal universe is a royal mantle, vibrating with His divine breath. Caught in its flowing fringes are the spangles and oscillating brilliants of sun, moon, and stars. (117)

Undoubtedly, she felt, at some point, that she needed to revise, indeed erase, her statement about being pagan, and much like the juxtapositions found in the rest of the essay, the revised passage, along with the title, further intertwines a pan-tribal, view of the mysterious "Great Spirit" with a more readily identifiable Christian view of a divine, masculine creator of cosmic order. In addition to adapting the monolithic nature of the Christian God, Zitkala-Ša also appropriates

⁵² In a piece published in 1902 entitled "A Protest Against the Abolition of the Indian Dance," Bonnin refers to Indian dancers as the "the original works of the Supreme Artist" (*Zitkala-Ša* 36).

⁵³ In a note to her essay "Re-visioning Sioux Women: Zitkala-Ša's Revolutionary *American Indian Stories*," Ruth Spack explains that two editions of *American Indian Stories* appeared in 1921, both published by Hayworth, and that one edition kept the original script of "Why I am a Pagan" whereas the other contained the revised essay "The Great Spirit." Spack states that she was unable to determine the reason for these changes as well as to account for which version appeared first.

biblical language to describe the appearance or essence of the higher power. The “Great Spirit” is symbolically “robed” like the God of biblical text who Psalms 93:1 celebrates, “The Lord reigns, he is robed in majesty,” and furthermore, the “phenomenal universe” is the “royal mantle,” the imperial robe, or dress, of God. Additionally, Zitkala-Ša’s reference to “His divine breath” that infuses the world with spirit sounds strikingly similar to Genesis’ declaration that the Lord God “formed man” and “breathed in to his nostrils the breath of life.”

Between “Why I Am a Pagan[’s]” first appearance in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1902 and its revision in *American Indian Stories* as “The Great Spirit” in 1921, Bonnin’s life undertook many personal and professional changes, and as critics like Hafen have reported, these changes affected her views on Christianity as well. During her stay in Utah from 1902 to 1916, Bonnin continued teaching and started a community center that offered sewing classes to the Ute women as well as a lunch program for local Indians who traveled to the local Government office to receive their monthly subsistence checks. Hafen notes that while in Utah Bonnin regularly corresponded with the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, particularly with Father William Ketcham and Father Martin, to discuss not only financial and logistical issues but to discuss “her concern for the Christian spiritual welfare of the Utes” (*Dreams* xix). It was during this time that she also asked the Catholic fathers for their recommendation on a Christian boarding school for her son, Raymond Ohya. Additionally, in Utah Bonnin developed strong ties to the Mormon Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints that lasted until her death.⁵⁴ In Hafen’s most recent essay on Zitkala-Ša, entitled “‘Help Indians Help Themselves’: Gertrude Bonnin, the SAI, and the NCAI,” she cites from various letters that Bonnin wrote regarding her work with the Indian Bureau and SAI, and one of these letters reveals how much Bonnin had come to rely on

⁵⁴Cathy Davidson and Ada Norris note that Bonnin was buried with her husband in the Arlington National Cemetery and that her memorial service was held at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (xxix).

spirituality and Christian faith for comfort and insight. In a passage from a letter sent to Father Ketcham in 1917, Bonnin writes, “Thank you for your reminding me to pray. I have been so very much discouraged at times that I could not pray. And yet the very cause of persecution has been because I was doing work to advance real uplift for my race.” Hafen remarks that “the religious tone of this letter is a far cry from the young woman who penned ‘Why I Am a Pagan’” (202). Bonnin’s former experiences with Protestant education reform and her relationship with the Catholic Church, which also led many nineteenth-century mission and reform movements, may have contributed to her desire to work within indigenous communities to promote Indian welfare programs.

Yet, although Bonnin adamantly rebukes Protestant hypocrisy, judgment, and dogma in “Why I Am a Pagan,” as I have shown, in the poem she does not fully reject Christian theology, and based on the religious affiliations that she develops as an adult, it would appear that Bonnin not only came to accept, but to embrace, Christian teachings. Consequently, when she returns to her writing career in 1916 as a contributor to SAI’s journal, her work further reflects this development in her theology. The first piece that she writes for the *American Indian Magazine*, a poem entitled “The Indian’s Awakening,” resurrects many of the themes and literary tropes that appeared in her earlier work and further revises her spiritual views. Like her earlier work, Bonnin returns to the literary persona of Zitkala-Ša in this poem, something she hasn’t done since “Why I Am a Pagan,” and, as Hafen suggests, perhaps the return to her pen name is due to the “creative nature” of the piece (202). Published in the January/March 1916 edition of SAI’s *American Indian Magazine*, “The Indian’s Awakening,” narrates Zitkala-Ša’s spiritual journey, a vision quest, whereby she hears a divine voice and then travels on horseback to a spirit-world where she is reunited with the souls of her ancestors who instruct her to celebrate “the Gift of

Life” and the universal creator, “the Maker of Souls.” When looked at side-by-side, “Why I am a Pagan” and “The Indian’s Awakening” both reveal Bonnin’s personal frustrations with the practice of organized Christian religion; however, “The Indian’s Awakening” illustrates her developing spiritual maturation and her re-conceptualization of the connections between Christianity and traditional tribal spiritualities.

Until only recently, “The Indian’s Awakening” has received limited critical attention in that most scholars have only referenced the poem in relation to Bonnin’s fiction or in overviews of her literary accomplishments. In her prefatory notes to *Dreams and Thunder*, Hafen emphasizes how the poem “reiterates many of the resentments toward assimilative educational practices” that can be seen in Zitkala-Ša’s earlier works, and Hafen further suggests that the poem reveals the speaker’s attempt to “seek comfort from a higher power” (115). Similarly, in Nancy Peterson’s historical study of mixed-blood Indian women, she writes that the poem “describ[es] [Zitkala-Ša’s] traumatic separation from her people and the joy she experienced as she reconnected with ‘God and the land,’ and the souls of her ancestors” (171). In *The Cambridge Companion to Native American Literature*, Norma Wilson quotes Chickasaw writer Linda Hogan who states that Zitkala-Ša’s “The Indian’s Awakening” reveals a “realistic attitude towards assimilation,” and Wilson furthers Hogan’s assertion by arguing that the “only hope expressed in this poem is for a spiritual escape from America” (147-148). Not until Cox’s 2006 essay, “‘Yours for the Indian Cause’: Gertrude Bonnin’s Activist Editing at *The American Indian Magazine*, 1915-1919,” has any critic explored the poem in any great depth. Cox proposes that “The Indian’s Awakening” is “Bonnin’s most ideologically complex literary contribution,” and he further argues that “the poem is a figurative ‘going back to the blanket,’ the expression used by the boarding school to describe a student who has returned to the reservation and rejected

Western education” (182,184). Although I agree with Cox that this piece is particularly complex in its theological representations, I disagree that it reflects her rejection of Western culture. I argue that the poem should be read instead as a rhetorical reconstructing of Native and Christian faiths, a reconstructing that offers traditional tribal peoples salvation and a place in the after-life.

Composed of twelve, eight-lined stanzas and written in a traditional, lyrical style, the poem’s form and elevated diction would have appealed to many SAI members and contributors who were intellectual and well-versed in classical literature; however, like in her earlier work, Zitkala-Ša appropriates the poetic form to reveal the inherent problems of Indian boarding school education and religious assimilation. The first stanza of the poem describes the cruel and ineffectual nature of Zitkala-Ša’s Protestant boarding school education and reveals her inability to fully embrace Christian doctrine. She writes, “I snatch at my eagle plumes and long hair / A hand cut my hair; my robes did deplete / Left heart all unchanged; the work incomplete. / These favors unsought, I’ve paid since with care” (1-2). As seen in “The School Days of an Indian Girl,” the loss of her hair was a traumatic experience for Zitkala-Ša, and in both texts, she equates the cutting of her braids with the loss of her spiritual freedom. Yet, unlike the often angry and accusatory voice of her previous work, in this piece Zitkala-Ša grieves for the misguided instructors as well as for herself, a victim of “favors unsought.” In a direct address to her boarding school instructor, she states, “Dear teacher, you wished so much good to me.” The formal and respectful tone draws the audience in to sympathize with both the teacher’s attempts to instruct and the student’s attempts to understand the beliefs and values she was taught at school. No longer the young girl who enacts revenge against the tyranny of her teachers by smashing through the bottom of a cooking pot while prepping turnips for dinner, as she does in “School Days,” the mature Zitkala-Ša thoughtfully presents her case before her teachers and the

readers, mournfully writing, “That though I was blind, I strove hard to see.” Appropriating evangelical rhetoric of sight, truth, and salvation, Zitkala-Ša reveals how badly she wanted to see the truth but couldn’t. The final couplet of the first stanza explains why she was unable to understand, or accept, Christian teachings - because the beliefs, and good intentions, didn’t explain the gross contradictions in practice found in racism and forceful assimilation: “Had you then, no courage frankly to tell / Old race-problems, Christ e’en failed to expel?” (7-8).

As in “An Indian Teacher Among Indians,” Zitkala-Ša describes how the contradictions in teachings and practice led to a religious crisis, and in this piece, she dramatizes her sense of spiritual deadness and fragmentation by employing both classical and biblical imagery. The second stanza begins, “My light has grown dim, and black the abyss / That yawns at my feet. No bordering shore; / No bottom e’er found by hopes sunk before” (9-11). The dogmatic religious teachings of the Indian boarding school are represented by a figurative place of darkness. The “black abyss” sounds strikingly similar to the image of hell that pervaded the rhetoric of ministers during the eighteenth-century religious revivals, the movement known as the Great Awakening, which Zitkala-Ša references in the title. Located in this black pit, Zitkala-Ša reflects on the hopeless state of her people. She addresses her tribe, or perhaps, considering the title, more generally other Indians, with “My people, may God have pity on you!” The stanza ends with the reason as to why her Christian teachings are useless to herself and her people: “No Sun for the flowers, vain planting seeds” (14-16). The capitalization of the word “sun,” creates a pun between “Sun” and Christ and illustrates Zitkala-Ša’s fear of damnation for her traditional, or unconverted, Indian peoples, which is the same conflict that is at the core of the narrator’s turmoil in “The Soft-Hearted Sioux.”

Although in her previous work there is little evidence to suggest that Bonnin had reconciled her concerns about salvation, in “The Indian’s Awakening,” she recreates her boarding school experience and crisis so that she can reconstruct Christian and Native faiths, a formation that results in a heightened state of spiritual awareness and certainty. Not only does she employ rhetoric of the Great Awakening to create a figurative place of despair, she also appropriates the concept of an “awakening” to offer herself, and other Indians, an alternative theological perspective that synthesizes faith systems. For Jonathan Edwards, arguably the most influential of revivalist preachers during the Great Awakening, “conversion [is] the experience of waking out of spiritual deadness and embracing the joy of being chosen by God for salvation” (Kidd 13). Although it is unclear whether Bonnin would have read Edwards, her Protestant education made it likely that she would have been familiar with his work and theology.⁵⁵ Moreover, the conversion experience offers her a fitting paradigm for Zitkala-Ša’s religious quest in that after questioning, “Oh, what am I? Whither bound thus and why? / Is there not a God on whom to rely? / A part of His Plan, the atoms enroll?” she hears “a clear, sweet Voice” that calls her to meditate on the divine awe-inspiring complexity of creation: “Then close your sad eyes. Your spirit regain. / Behold what fantastic symbols abound, / What wondrous host of cosmos around. / From silvery sand, the tiniest grain / To man and the planet, God’s at the heart. / In shifting mosaic, souls doth impart” (34-38). Halting her agonizing meditations on darkness and isolation, the Spirit reminds her that God is in control of the entire universe. As in “Why I am a Pagan,” the mosaic metaphor elevates the individual by communicating the unique and indispensable nature of each brilliant piece to the overall picture. In the poem, however, the mosaic is described as “shifting,” and this detail may well suggest that life and faith should be

⁵⁵ Oliver Crisp and Douglas Sweeney note in *After Jonathan Edwards: The Courses of the New England Theology* that “recent studies suggest that Native Americans appropriated Edwards” in ways that are only now starting to be explored (256).

understood as a process of perpetual movement and growth. Indeed, growing in her spiritual awareness, the “sweet Voice” reminds Zitkala-Ša to pay attention to the patterns and symbols of the natural world as they are representative of divine truth.⁵⁶

Zitkala-Ša’s spiritual experience restores her sense of harmony and balance with the rest of the world; however, despite her renewed sense of faith and purpose, she cannot fully reconcile her concerns about Christianity until she has answered the question about the possibility of salvation for traditional Indian peoples. Thus, instead of ending with the “Divine Voice” that brings her to an understanding of “Harmonious kinship,” Zitkala-Ša continues on a vision quest that leads her to a place in the Spirit-world where the souls of her ancestors live according to the traditional ways. According to George Linden, a scholar of Lakota and Dakota culture, the vision quest is the most intimate of all Dakota rituals because it requires the individual, usually a man, to experience the sacred and then translate it for the people, emphasizing the communal nature of knowledge and human interrelatedness (229). Much like the great vision that Black Elk recounts to John Neihardt in *Black Elk Speaks*, Zitkala-Ša narrates how upon hearing the spirit Voice, she is presented with a “steed / All prancing” that carries her into the spirit-world (lines).⁵⁷ As Julian Rice explains in his article on Black Elk’s vision, the horse, in many Plains Indian cultures, is a “messenger,” a potential embodiment of the powerful “Thunder beings of the West,” and a symbol of “spiritual confidence” (63). Thus Zitkala-Ša melds together a Christian awakening and a Native vision quest to lead her to truth. It is important to note how

⁵⁶ The idea that one can look to the natural world to see God may well point to Edwards as well. Ronald Story, an Edwards scholar, quotes a passage from Ola Winslow’s biography *Jonathan Edwards, 1703-1758: A Life*, a passage written by Edwards that illuminates this view: “[The beauty of the] trees, Plants, and flowers with which God has bespangled the face of Earth is Delightful, the beautiful frame of the body of Man, especially in its Perfection is Astonishing, the beauty of the moon and stars is wonderful, the beauty of highest Heavens, is transcendent” (36). There also seem to be many similarities in Edwards’s language and the language Bonnin uses “The Great Spirit.”

⁵⁷ Whereas some scholars such as Julian Rice find John Neihardt’s rendition of Black Elk’s memoirs to be credible, many scholars such as Susan Bernardin dispute the validity of this work because it is re-told by a white man. Therefore, I reference *Black Elk Speaks* only to illustrate a common theme in both works whereby a Native travels to the spirit-world on horseback and returns with insight intended to promote Native life-ways.

both of these religious experiences require the active participation of the individual and how both immerse the individual in a richly vivid and sensorial experience. In contrast to the tribal stories that Zitkala-Ša learned as a child and to the Christian teachings and ideologies that she learned as a student – both forms of knowledge that may have left her feeling like an observer of someone else’s faith or story - the religious experience described in the poem reflects an intensely personal, lived, and felt spiritual encounter.

One of the most remarkable aspects of Zitkala-Ša’s quest is how it transports her through the spiritual realm and into a physical place that is not only analogous to the earthly world but located in Indian country. In her vision, horse and rider journey “along a worn path,” through the “enchanted spade” where the Great Spirit “reigns,” and into a place where “He doth hold / A village of Indians, camped as of old” (stanza 8-9). It is important to note how the Great Spirit is used in conjunction with the capitalized pronoun reference “He” to indicate a paternal, monotheistic God. Moreover, instead of a place that could be anywhere, the geographical details suggest a very specific place: Indian and Dakota homelands. As one of the Spirits explains, “In journeying here, the Aeons we’ve spent / Are countless and strange. How well I recall / Old Earth trails: the River Red; above all / the Desert sands burning us with intent” (81-84). Hafen notes that the Red River “runs through traditional Dakota lands and marks the boundary between North Dakota and Minnesota” (*Dreams* 157). Instead of the Red River, however, Zitkala-Ša uses “the River Red,” and this detail may be a thinly veiled reference to the Red River War of 1874, a war that Pratt describes in his memoirs as a federally organized elimination program whereby military troops were ordered to pursue, attack, arrest, and hold as prisoners of war any hostile Kiowa, Comanche, Cheyenne, and Arapahoe Indians found throughout western Texas and Indian Territory (*Battlefield and Classroom* 65-66). Thus, Zitkala-Ša crafts a place for her

ancestors within a Christian framework where tradition and past injustices are not forgotten but remembered and valued.

Furthermore, the sense of time and of place in the after-world illustrates an understanding of time as continual and of a connection to land. The after-world becomes tangible, real, and lived as she experiences the world of the Indian souls, hearing their “Earth-legends,” talking to the Spirit elder, and seeing the “white flowers and trees” that grow “radiantly” in the village. The elder states, “Now various stars where loved ones remain / are linked to our hearts with Memory-chain” (79-80). Although many of Bonnin’s contemporaries, such as Montezuma, believed that the past was irrelevant to the future of Indian peoples in America, Bonnin celebrated the lives and traditions of traditional Indian peoples. Her poem foregrounds the importance of remembering and gaining knowledge from those who lived before. Additionally, the Indian dead are portrayed as existing in the same time as those who are still alive on Earth. Although they reside in different cosmic spaces, there is the suggestion that time continues from one stage to the next – through layers of existence whereby each phase teaches a new truth: the elder states, “The signs in our orbits point us the way. / Like planets, we do not tarry nor wait...All these we have passed to learn some new thing” (75, 76, 85). Thus, the after-world is not the end of the journey but a continuation of it. Moreover, by describing the geography and natural beauty of the spirit-world, Zitkala-Ša further connects time, spirituality, culture, and land. In his essay “Regionalist Bodies/Embodied Regions: Sarah Orne Jewett and Zitkala-Ša,” D.K. Meisenheimer, Jr. argues that “one of regionalism’s most distinctive topoi, both for Great Plains and specifically Native American writing, configures people and landscape, culture and nature, as functions of each other” (110). Even in the after-world, the dead are rooted in a natural environment, and nature’s presence in the after-world reflects its spiritual energy. Thus Zitkala-

Ša reconfigures notions, as Meisenheimer emphasizes as well, of a Cartesian separation between body and spirit and culture and nature (110).

Ultimately, through her vision, Zitkala-Ša personally witnesses the immortality of traditional Native souls and comes to reconcile her fear of damnation for traditional indigenous peoples. In evangelical rhetoric, the Spirit elder sings, “Rejoice! Gift of Life pray waste not in wails! / The maker of Souls forever prevails!” (87-88). Interestingly, the “maker” referenced by the Spirit is un-capitalized, which might suggest what Rice considers to be a more traditional Sioux view of a non-descript, polytheistic creative power: *Wakan Tanka (Before the Great Spirit* 15, 21); however, the speaker revises the Spirit elder’s words in her concluding declaration of renewed faith by capitalizing “Maker,” thus responding to her ancestor’s instruction by creating meaning and, ultimately, embracing the Christian view of a single, all-powerful deity.⁵⁸ In the conclusion, she further reconstructs Christian theology and pan-tribal philosophy by celebrating the supporting role that her horse played in returning her “to God and the land / Where all harmony, peace, and love are the creed. / In triumph, I cite my joyous return. / The smallest wee creature I dare not spurn” (91-94).⁵⁹ As in “Why I am a Pagan,” her heightened spiritual awareness further illuminates the interconnectedness of all life and reinforces the integral connection between humans, the natural world, and the spiritual world. Moreover, consistent with many Native philosophies, Zitkala-Ša recognizes her social responsibility in sharing her vision, religious awakening, and reconstruction of faith for others to learn from. Just as Wilson describes contemporary Native literature as engaging in “an ongoing, creative, public process,”

⁵⁸Cox argues that because Bonnin’s afterworld excludes whites that it illustrates a tribal spirituality.

⁵⁹ Bonnin’s essay entitled “A Protest Against the Abolition of the Indian Dance,” published in 1902, concludes with a passage that is similar to the events presented in “The Indian’s Awakening.” It reads: “Here a pony is ready, and soon a gallop over the level lands shall restore to me the sweet sense that God has allotted a place in his vast universe for each of his creatures, both great and small- just as they are” (*Zitkala-Ša* 26).

Leslie Marmon Silko similarly refers to the communal act of storytelling as a “self-correcting process,” and thus the poem, and its publication, enters into a tribal mode of truth-making (9).

“The Indian’s Awakening” marks a critical point in Bonnin’s re-conceptualization of religious doctrine and traditional tribal philosophies and thus it’s important to consider what might have influenced her religious development. As previously discussed, Bonnin witnessed various religions that combined pan-tribalism and Christianity such as the Ghost Dance and the Native American Church that may have served to encourage her view of the malleability of religious expression. However, considering her time in Utah and her relationship with Hanson, Bonnin’s theological views may have also been influenced by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS), which held a specific and unique role for indigenous peoples in Christian doctrine. According to Mormon scholar and historian Armand Mauss, the Book of Mormon identifies America’s indigenous peoples as members of the lost tribes of Israel. The Lamanites, as they called the Indians, were “a fallen and degraded people who had rejected God,” and their “fallen condition was signified by a divine curse and mark...according to which they became a ‘filthy,’ ‘loathsome,’ and dark-skinned people” (49). Despite their fallen condition, however, Indians were still considered to be “among God’s chosen people,” and thus the Mormons have been, and remain, active in Indian missionary efforts. Although the relationship between Mormons and Natives during the nineteenth and twentieth century was often tumultuous due to land disputes and racial prejudices, the LDS Church has lived in close proximity with many of the Native peoples in Utah including the Utes since its emergence in 1830. Additionally, as Jared Farmer narrates in his book *Mormons, Indians, and the American Landscape* (2010), Hanson was born to Mormon parents and was raised in eastern Utah’s Uinta Basin, which was practically next door to the Uintah-Ouray (Ute) Indian reservation. It is not

clear whether Bonnin became involved with the church through her community work or whether through her friendship with Hanson and their collaborative efforts to compose *The Sundance Opera*. However, what is clear is that she would have been familiar with the Mormon doctrine and the supporting role Natives played in their religious story, and although she does not engage with a specifically Mormon traditions in her writings, perhaps their doctrine offered her a form of evidence to support her growing understanding of the interconnectedness of Native and Christian traditions.⁶⁰

4.4 A Faith-Driven Rhetoric: Inspiration, Vision, and Bonnin's Political Activism

Having reconciled her religious beliefs in a way that not only respected and valued the traditions of her ancestors but enabled her to embrace Christian teachings, Bonnin's ensuing literary work illustrates how her theology came to shape her communal, political, and personal views. Her works exemplify Christian doctrines of love, self-sacrifice, and equality for all humans, and these religious beliefs appear to have led her to claim a more prominent voice in Indian Welfare movements. Following the publication of "The Indian's Awakening," Bonnin wrote an essay titled "A Year's Experience in Community Service Work Among the Ute Tribe of Indians," which appeared in the October-December 1916 issue of *American Indian Magazine (AIM)*, that shares the challenges she'd faced while running the community center. With poise and professionalism, she thanks the government for offering salary-paid positions for employees as well as the "Church [for] provid[ing] its self-sacrificing missionaries" (171). Yet, she calls upon Native peoples to provide more support for the project, arguing that it is their God-given responsibility to love, to honor, and to serve family and community. She writes:

⁶⁰ For a more complete discussion of Mormonism and Native Americans see Armand Mauss and Jared Farmer.

We have awakened, in the midst of a bewildering transition, to a divine obligation calling us to love, to honor our parents. No matter how ably, how well others of God's creatures perform their duties, they never can do our duty for us; nor can we hope for forgiveness, were we able to stand idly by, satisfied to see others laboring for the uplift of our kinsmen. (171)

The language of "divine obligation," "love," and "forgiveness" are recognizable aspects of Christian teachings, and although Bonnin would have been appealing to both SAI members and contributors, she is quite clearly speaking to other Native peoples in this passage because she refers to her "kinsmen" and to their elders who are in need of assistance, calling them to act instead of letting others do it for them. Like other social reform organizations that blossomed in the early-twentieth century, particularly Protestant women's groups such as the Relief Society and the Women's Temperance Society, Bonnin's vision for community outreach is rooted in her religious perception of the importance of family and community, health and education, as well as charity and servitude.

Bonnin's religious faith, as described above, provided her with a clear purpose in life as well as a strong rhetoric for promoting change, and she employs this faith-driven rhetoric in her political works as well.⁶¹ In another poem entitled "The Red Man's American," a poem that appeared in the January-March 1917 edition of *AIM*, Bonnin rewrites the lyrics to "My Country Tis of Thee" to reflect the disenfranchisement of Native peoples and to urge the government for stricter legislation to protect Native peoples against corrupt political organizations and peyote. She writes, "My country! Tis' to thee, / Sweet land of Liberty, / My pleas I bring. / Land where OUR fathers died, / Whose offspring are denied...My native country, thee, / Thy Red man is not

⁶¹ Many of Bonnin's contemporaries such as Carlos Montezuma and Charles Eastman also embraced Christian tenets in their political rhetoric, employing religious language and references to both God and the Great Spirit. In a speech given before the Lawrence Conference, and reprinted in a spring edition of *The Quarterly Journal of the Society of American Indians*, Montezuma appeals to the Christian conscience by writing, "In behalf of our people, with the spirit of Moses, I ask this—The United States of America—'Let My People Go'" (31).

free, / Knows not thy love. / Political bred ills, / Peyote in temple hills” (lines 1-5 and 8-11). By capitalizing “OUR,” she revises Euramerican accounts of colonial history that celebrate the deaths of America’s white founding fathers, and in doing so, she resists cultural erasure. The end of the poem, like in the anthem, calls out to God for protection and blessing: “Great Mystery, to thee, / Life of humanity, / To thee, we cling. / Grant our home-land be bright, / Grant us just human right, / Protect us by Thy might, / Great God, our king” (22-28). In her revision, she replaces the opening line of the final verse, which reads “Our father’s God to, thee,” with “Great Mystery, to thee,” thereby elevating traditional tribal spiritualities that humbly accepted the mystery of the spiritual world. It is important to note, however, that although she changes God to Great Mystery in the opening line, the rest of the poem remains targeted towards a Christian God. Thus Bonnin appropriates traditional Protestantism’s views of God’s blessing and protection of family, nationhood, and progress in order to claim a place for Native peoples within His “kingdom.” It is also notable that even though Bonnin employs Biblical rhetoric to appeal to a wide audience – as she often did in her earlier writings – the tone of her language has changed dramatically. Whereas in her essay “Side by Side” the tone is angry and bitter towards a weak savior, “The Red Man’s America” reflects a secure and confident faith in God’s ability to protect and to care for his people. Thus, although perhaps a minor piece when compared to the complexity of her other writings, “The Red Man’s America” illustrates Bonnin’s growing religious faith as well as her emerging vision for the future of Native peoples in America, a vision grounded in personal and communal faith.

As Cox has noted, “Bonnin’s final issue as editor includes an increased emphasis on spirituality,” and he looks to a short piece that Bonnin published in the Spring of 1919 edition of

AIM entitled “An Indian Praying on the Hilltop” to support his assertion (190).⁶² The prayer opens with a direct address to the “Great Spirit” whereby she offers thanks for “the superb gift of individual consciousness” and “for thy great law, protecting my place in the spaces hung with the myriad stars, sun, moon, and earth.” She continues to offer her gratitude: “Along my trail through the wilderness... Thy power awakens me... Poor in a land of plenty; friendless in a den of thieves... Great Spirit I thank thee for awakening me.” As in “The Indian’s Awakening,” the prayer ends with renewal and joy: “My strength is renewed like the eagle’s. New courage brings its vision. I see the dawn of justice to the Indian, even upon earth, and now, Great Spirit, my heart is full of Joy!” (212). Grappling with Bonnin’s authorial intentions, Cox questions whether the piece was intended as autobiography or fiction as well as whether Bonnin wanted it to be read “in support of traditional American Indian spiritual practices” or if instead it should be read as her “performing ‘the humble Indian’ for her acquaintances in Christian reform organizations” (191). However, perhaps there is an alternative. When viewed next to “The Indian’s Awakening” and “The Red Man’s America,” the prayer articulates many of the same insights that Bonnin develops in her previous work: the sense of spiritual awakening, the emphasis on the natural world as symbolic of God’s beauty and omnipotence, and the reliance on Biblical tropes in combination with references to the Great Spirit that meld Christian and tribal spiritualities. Perhaps this piece could be read as Bonnin’s continued attempt to link the plight of Native American peoples with biblical figures who endured personal hardship, and, considering the fluidity in which she moves back and forth in her writings between “God,” “Great Mystery,” and “Great Spirit,” to further claim that there is one God who is creator and protector of Native and non-Native peoples alike.

⁶² In his analysis of “An Indian Praying on the Hilltop,” Cox concludes that “the ambiguity of the message, however, is an appropriate representation of her complex intellectual and ideological understanding of American Indian life in the early twentieth century” (190-191).

Unlike the overly contrived biblical rhetoric of “Side by Side,” the prayer reflects Bonnin’s familiarity with Biblical stories so much so that she is able to use them to illustrate the injustices that she has endured and to illuminate the power of faith to overcome hardship. The “wilderness” that Bonnin refers to, as Cox notes, could refer to America after colonization as well as to poor reservation systems. Bonnin had been struggling for many years at this point to improve living conditions for reservation Indians, to ban peyote usage, to remove corruption from federal organizations like the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and to cultivate SAI’s potential for reform despite internal disagreements, so it’s understandable that Bonnin might have seen herself like one of many biblical figures who wandered in the wilderness and relied on God for sustenance and comfort. As described in the Old Testament of the Bible, Moses and the Israelites wandered in the wilderness for forty years before God brought them to their promised land.⁶³ By locating herself in the wilderness, she is able to represent her fight against oppression, her sense of isolation, hardship, and perseverance. Her references to being “poor in a land of plenty” and “friendless in a den of thieves” are also biblical allusions, and Bonnin may well be using them to reflect the impoverished state of Natives peoples in America, a land that was plentiful for Natives prior to Euramerican intrusion. The “den of thieves” - Jesus’ reference to a temple that had been turned into a market - could refer to how many nineteenth-century mission schools attempted to increase enrollment in order to gain government subsidies as well as corruption within the Indian Bureau and on reservations.⁶⁴ Despite hardships and injustices, however, the overtly personal, and performative, nature of the prayer ultimately

⁶³ The Biblical story of Moses, the Israelites, and their journey through the wilderness to reach the Promised Land is common in nineteenth and twentieth-century literature. It was often appropriated by civil rights leaders, and according to Armand Mauss, it was also appropriated by the Mormons during their migration to Utah.

⁶⁴ In Matthew 21:13, having entered into a temple and found it to be overrun with merchants, Jesus states, “It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves (King James).

asserts “the gift of conscious life, -- in spirit,” a gift that serves to offer her comfort, joy, and hope in the most trying of times.

As Bonnin’s editorship came to an end so did her position as SAI secretary and treasurer. In the summer of 1919, Thomas Sloan, according to Cox a “well-known peyotist,” won the election for SAI president, and Bonnin submitted her resignation shortly after. In addition to “An Indian Praying on the Hilltop,” Bonnin’s final contribution to the organization was a speech that she gave at SAI’s annual convention, which was re-printed at the end of the summer issue. In her address, she urges the Society to “organize” and to “act like a body” so that the American Indian might have a “voice” (216). Like many of her contemporaries, Bonnin believed that the future of Native peoples in American required that they actively claim a place in American culture; however, Bonnin’s vision is particularly grounded in spirituality. In her address, Bonnin urges Native peoples to place their faith in God and to use their God-given talents to create a new future for themselves:

The greatest gift in life is consciousness. Not positions, not the dollar, but that the *Almighty Spirit* gives us life and we have a rational mind with which to see all the wonders of the universe... *We have had to change from the old style of hunting, have had to leave the old trails*—we can do it... God has given you life, he has given you minds to think with and hearts that we may be just to all, that we may be true to all mankind. Then we are true to God—to ourselves... We are on this earth to think and do the best we can *according to our light*. That is our God-given privilege. Well, then, let us think. We have no one else to fear after we are right with God. We get our intelligence from Him, our life, then let us think calmly and reasonably. (*Zitkala-Ša* 213-215, italics added for emphasis)

As in “An Indian Praying on the Hilltop,” Bonnin emphasizes the “gift” of individual and spiritual awareness, but in her address she connects spirit to intellect and encourages her audience to appreciate their ability to reason and feel – both equally important aspects, she asserts, of sound decision-making. Nowhere does Bonnin suggest that white culture is superior to Native culture or that Natives should be embarrassed by their heritage; instead Bonnin

approaches the matter of a Native future from a highly pragmatic sense that serves to empower Native peoples with their capacity to reason, imagine, and feel their way through the process of adapting to a changing world. Her references to organizing like a body and to living “according to our light” both suggest Christian teachings that emphasize the importance of different kinds of people, different kinds of work and service, different purposes that all contribute, uniquely, to a common good, and her model of divine purpose, once again, sounds similarly to her belief in mosaic.

Bonnin finds beauty in a social vision where all individuals are treated with love and respect despite cultural and racial affiliations. “A mosaic,” Williams writes, “is a conversation between what is broken.” For Bonnin, greed, prejudice, injustice, and a lack of faith in humanity and spirituality had broken the social and moral structure of American culture. Instead of sacrifice and assimilation, she sees the answer to America’s social and economic problems in love, respect, knowledge, and faith. Through her writings, Bonnin depicts a religious identity that embraces a Native belief in the interconnectedness of humans, community, and the natural world as well as a Christian God of Old and New Testament Biblical scripture. Like other Protestant women reformers, Bonnin believed that religious belief should affect behavior, and she acts out her faith in religious doctrines of love, self-sacrifice, and equality by engaging with Native communities, leading education reform programs, advocating for indigenous land claims, and lobbying for Native rights in a variety of political venues. In a process that Ortiz defines as “continuance,” Bonnin actively mediates between Native and Christian theologies and religious traditions—rejecting tribal superstitions and magic and embracing faith in a benevolent and sovereign God--and then shares her religious knowledge with Native communities and leaders in order to advocate for Native American’s God-given rights: freedom and self-determination.

5 CONCLUSIONS

Although Foote, Jewett, and Bonnin have a limited readership today, there is much we can gain from their writings. Their works demonstrate the limitations of a strict orthodox Christian tradition that emphasizes practice over personal experience and judgment over love. The white missionary teachers in Bonnin's semi-autobiographical essays and short stories often neglect to demonstrate compassion and kindness in their attempts to convert Native peoples, and the pastor in Jewett's *Pointed Firs* fails to offer comfort and wisdom to his congregation as he focuses on preaching doctrine and praying for salvation. Rather than promoting strict orthodox religious tradition, these writers reveal how religious experience can appear in a myriad of ways including vision quests, walks in nature, church attendance, and scripture reading, to name only a few. By constructing a variety of spiritual and religious experiences, these women writers expand our understanding of the vital role religion can play in everyday lives as evidenced by Foote's Quaker girl Dorothy and Jewett's old spinster Ms. Chauncey who both derive wisdom and emotional support from biblical scripture. Moreover, they reveal how social morality is tied to religion as Foote's Edith cares for her deceased friend's children and as Jewett's Mrs. Todd serves her community through herbal healing and storytelling. More than a fictional representation of the link between social morality and religion, Bonnin's Indian activism, community work, and political speeches to the Society of American Indians illustrates how Christian doctrines of equality, duty, and love can lead to social reform.

These three women writers also reveal how sentimentalism and regionalism can potentially function together to create a powerful view of the intersections of community, domesticity, place, religion, and social morality. I find it interesting that they employed sentimental conventions and values even though the genre was dramatically in decline in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Perhaps they were so deeply influenced by their

predecessors—as Jewett was by Harriet Beecher Stowe—that they employed sentimental constructs without considering that literary tastes were changing. Or perhaps considering the rapidly changing cultural and regional diversity of modern America, they appreciated sentimentalism’s emphasis on domesticity, religious values, and social morality as well as the sense of community and entertainment that many of sentimentalism’s literary conventions promoted. By emphasizing heroines, female narrators, and familial relationships and incorporating emotionally charged and religious rhetoric, Foote, Jewett, and Bonnin may have appealed to their readership and subsequently cultivated a sense of community—as Bonnin does in her semi-autobiographical essays, Foote does in “Friend Barton’s ‘Concern’” and *Edith Bonham*, and Jewett does in *Pointed Firs* when they use the relationship between mother and daughter to connect with readers on personal, feminine, and maternal levels. Through their usage of sentimental conventions, Foote, Jewett, and Bonnin were able to create a link between their eastern readerships and regional characters, thus illustrating the powerful role of empathy and of identification in connecting alternate cultures and ways of life.

Despite the prominent role that domesticity, religion, and social morality play in translating regional cultures, however, throughout my research, I noticed a growing trend in regionalist studies towards more economic, political, and global issues as evidenced by the work of Fetterley, Pryse, Joseph, and most recently Hsu. In their introduction to *Writing Out of Place* (2005), Fetterley and Pryse define region, and subsequently regionalism, “less as a term of geographical determinism and more as a discourse or a model of analysis, a vantage point within the network of power relations that provides a location for critique and resistance” (13). Although Foote, Jewett, and Bonnin often reveal cultural and regional power struggles—Bonnin’s work most specifically illustrates the social and political injustice enacted on Native

peoples—as well as shifting regional economies, they also appear to raise questions that regionalist scholarship has failed to fully acknowledge because of its preoccupation with more global and political issues: What gives people a sense of fulfillment and purpose? How do people negotiate hardships? What is people’s moral responsibility towards each other? All of these questions are in some way answered in the works of Bonnin, Jewett, and Foote through religion. In part, the failure of regionalist scholarship to acknowledge these questions appears to be due in part to the secularization of academia, which has diminished the importance of considering personal spiritual and religious beliefs. However, as these writers reveal, religion can shape peoples’ relationships to community and family and define their understanding of the natural world, thus making it an integral and necessary part of regionalist studies.

Moreover, the works of these three women writers further re-define regionalism by illustrating how outsiders can come to know and belong to a region. In their introduction to *American Women Regionalists 1850-1920* (1992), Fetterley and Pryse argue, “the regionalist character tends to develop within her community of origin,” and they continue, “Characters in regional fiction are rooted; they don’t leave home in search of their identity” (xvi, xvii). However, as we see in many of Foote, Jewett, and Bonnin’s writings, regional characters sometimes do leave home and settle in alternate regions, and through active and sympathetic engagement with local people’s lives, customs, and stories as well as through attention to characteristics of place such as geographical features and non-human beings, these figures successfully establish themselves in new places. In Foote’s *Edith Bonham*, Edith comes to love and respect the West despite its many hardships, choosing to live there rather than back home in the east. In Jewett’s *Deephaven*, Helen and Kate are outsiders who participate in the local peoples’ customs and practices and pay close attention to the stories and wisdom of the residents,

as they do to Captain Sands and his stories of spirituality and telepathy. Their sensitive and respectful engagement with the region's culture offers them a sense of belonging even though they choose to return to their homes in the city. In Bonnin's essay "A Year's Experience in Community Service Work Among the Ute Tribe of Indians," she reveals how her charity work with the "aged members of the tribe" offered her access to "many funny stories" and "laughter" as the women stitched and sewed clothing for their families and friends. Bonnin's leadership role in the "instructive and social" elements of the community center, subsequently, gave her a voice to speak on behalf of the Ute peoples. As we see in all of these examples, Foote, Jewett, and Bonnin seem to emphasize responsible and sympathetic engagement with a region as the requirement for membership, rather than birthright.

Foote, Jewett, and Bonnin's attention to the relation between people and place also recovers regional geographies as a viable mode of inquiry, rather than diminish geography in order to emphasize, as Fetterley and Pryse do, the active political work that regions represent (15). By revealing the important role geographical features play in constructing spiritual and religious faith, Foote, Jewett, and Bonnin also connect themselves to contemporary inter-disciplinary interests in place. Over the last twenty years, humanist geographers and religious scholars have endeavored to illustrate how concepts of place and space supplement our understanding of religion as a cultural expression. Foote, Jewett, and Bonnin demonstrate how a sense of place cultivates religious belief and spirituality, which then fosters communal growth. Thus, we can read their works as participating in this discourse about the mystery and sacred meaning of space and place, even though their works predate this relatively recent scholarship by roughly one hundred years. According to American and religious studies scholar Belden Lane, such interest in the reciprocal relationship between person and place is a direct result of the estrangement that

many people in the modern world feel towards place, an estrangement that began in the industrial age. We find evidence of this fissure between people and place in Foote, Jewett, and Bonnin's works as their characters attempt to negotiate urban and rural experiences. In *Edith Bonham*, Edith ponders the sense of isolation she feels in the city and revels in the spaciousness of the western landscape. In *Pointed Firs*, the urban narrator imagines Dunnett Landing's rural way of life to be an escape and antidote to her life in the city. Lastly, in "An Indian Teacher Among Indians," Zitkala-Ša reveals how her life in academia resulted in her loss of faith in the natural world. However, each of these writers counters the alienating effects of nineteenth-century's industrialization by revealing to readers how one comes to know the natural world and how a heightened sense of place leads to religious and spiritual knowledge.

What does it mean to know a place, and what does it mean to experience the divine in a spatially fixed reality? These are only a couple of the questions that scholars of religion and geography have attempted to answer in order to grasp the meaning of "religious experience as 'placed' experience" (Lane 11). Lane's 2002 critical study of geography and American spirituality explains that ordinary places, or *topos*, can become places of extraordinary significance, places that "become available to us as *chora*—an energizing force, suggestive to the imagination, drawing intimate connections to everything else in our lives" (39). In order to understand the process through which a place become sacred, he writes that scholars employ three primary approaches of interpretation: ontological, cultural, and phenomenological.⁶⁵ From a phenomenological perspective, a place becomes *chora*, according to Lane, when we actively

⁶⁵ From an ontological perspective, a place become sacred when it represents the spiritual or religious traditions of indigenous peoples—such as the Blue Lake in New Mexico, which is a sacred site to the Taos community—and thus has been set apart from more common, or profane, locations. From a cultural approach, a place become sacred when more than one social group lays claim to it as an identifiable part of their spiritual or religious culture such as the city of Jerusalem which holds spiritual significance for Christians, Jews, and Muslims alike. Both the ontological and cultural perspective, according to Lane, fail to recognize the particularities of a place outside of cultural influence, and therefore, the phenomenological approach serves to balance the discourse by emphasizing the reciprocal relationship between humans and the natural world.

participate in the “various affordances it offers, responding to the striking geographical features it projects, adjusting to changing visual, auditory, olfactory, and kinesthetic qualities” (53). In addition to knowing a place through subjective sensorial experience, scholars have also attempted to define what makes a place sacred by considering cultural histories, conflicts, stories and changes. “To ignore this part of the story,” Lane argues, “is to betray the dignity of the land itself and to silence the voices of those who have lived upon it and made it their own (Lane 3-4).

Although I was formerly unaware of the terms that recent scholars were using to articulate relationships between people and place, it appears that I have been working with many of the same theories throughout my dissertation. Most notably, I have foregrounded how Foote, Jewett, and Bonnin create characters who participate in place through their senses as well as through a region’s histories, stories, and ecological changes in order to demonstrate for readers how engaging with the particularities of place leads to spiritual and religious meaning. It’s important to note that the places that Foote, Jewett, and Bonnin write about are ordinary places such as a bluff or a rock, rather than historically or culturally defined sacred places such as a shrine or a cathedral, but through their characters’ active participation, they reveal the potentially sacred quality of everyday places. Locating the sacred in everyday places, according to Lane, reflects “a longing for the discovery of the holy and extraordinary in the midst of all that might be considered common” (28).

One scene that stands out in Foote’s writings for the way it exemplifies the correlation between place and religious knowledge is located in *Edith Bonham*. Having spent four weeks at the house on the mesa caring for the fever-stricken Phoebe, Edith finds spiritual rejuvenation and religious insight one morning while “emptying [her] pails on the edge of the bluff” (158-59). While there, Edith “open[s] [her] chest with great breaths of [the] air” and “look[s]” up into “the

deep amazing sky!” (159). In this passage, Foote draws attention to how Edith “chooses” to visit the bluff at dawn and dusk, and perhaps the ritualized visits at the beginning and end of the day encourage Edith’s reflections on time and Genesis: “And the evening and the morning were the sixth day” (159). Her elevated position on the bluff offers her a panoramic view of Idaho, Oregon, and Wyoming, revealing multiple regions that are, supposedly, separated by borders. Yet, instead of focusing on states, Edith emphasizes the geographical features of mountain ranges and canyon-lands that appear to seamlessly transition between each other, and her lack of attention to borders or boundaries may well suggest the close spatial proximity between the natural and spiritual worlds as well. Moreover, although Edith claims that she “knew very little Western geography” (159), her knowledge of the names of the terrains—the Oyhees, the Boise Mountains, the Blue Mountains, and Powder River Country—reveals her awareness of the region as well as her desire to engage with the particularities of place. Edith’s experience caring for a deathly-ill child, her awareness of the natural rhythms of morning and night, and her attention to the vast and awe-inspiring geographical features of the land appear to merge together into a moment of religious insight, and thus we may read her experience on the bluff as a moment when place becomes *chora*.

In the scene in *Deephaven*, Helen and Kate also experience place in a way that allows them to see spirituality and religion with new eyes. After traveling to the coast and discovering that Anthony and his wife are deceased, Helen and Kate seat themselves “on a rock near the water” and watch Anthony’s funeral procession. As they survey “the people, the great sea, and the rocks and fields,” they reflect anew on their identities as Christians, on the “consciousness of mystery and the inevitableness of death” as well as on “the limitations of this present life” (149). Helen and Kate continue their reflections on the limitations of the present world and the

inevitability of change as they imagine what will happen to Anthony's land in future generations: "It is not likely anyone else will ever go to live there. The man to whom the farm was mortgaged will add the few forlorn acres to his pasture land, and the thistles which the dead man had fought so many years will march in next summer and take unmolested possession" (149). Helen's attention to Anthony's struggle to shape the land to fit his purposes as well as her emphasis on the land's future ecological changes reveals the limitations of humans' attempts to control or possess nature. By consciously considering the particularities of the place and the social and ecological changes, Helen and Kate arrive at a deeper understanding of the inevitability of hardship, death, and change, which leads them to a heightened sense of just how "close to this familiar, everyday world might be the other" (149). In this passage, Jewett highlights the multiple layers of geography, people, stories, time and intertwines the physical and spiritual worlds, thus showing how and when a place can become sacred: in moments like this, when all elements of one's life seem to connect in a profoundly significant and spiritual way and alter perception.

Lastly, as Foote and Jewett reveal how a place becomes sacred through conscious participation in the region's geography and stories, Bonnin also articulates the power of place to become *chora*. In the scene in "Why I Am a Pagan," also known as "The Great Spirit," when the narrator retraces a footpath along the "precipitous embankment" in order to "seek" out the "level lands" where "wild prairie flowers" grow, Zitkala-Ša emphasizes how the narrator "drink[s] in the myriad star shapes wrought in luxuriant color upon the green" (114). The stunning visual details lead the narrator to remark, "Beautiful is the spiritual essence they embody" (114). "Why I Am a Pagan" is perhaps the strongest example of engagement with a region's geography and stories as the narrator not only thoughtfully observes "the high bluffs," "soft cadences of the

river's song," and "the low river bottoms" but also locates the stories of "American aborigine[s]" within the land. She briefly describes the mythical Sioux figure of Stone-Boy and notes the burial site of "Inyan our great-great-grandfather," and she continues to state that "With the strong, happy sense that both great and small are surely enfolded in His magnitude... I am buoyant with good nature" (115). As in the previous fictions, "Why I Am a Pagan" reveals how the narrator's sensorial experience with the natural world promotes her sense of wonder in a "omnipotent" higher power who created the world in all of its nuance. However, this essay emphasizes previous cultural claims, stories, and spiritualities, and perhaps the narrator's heightened sense of the multiple voices and cultures, both human and non-human, who have lived in the region supports her religious belief in the equality of all "God's creatures" (117).

Each of these three women writers illustrates how place can become sacred, promoting religious belief. For these writers, place offers a variety of wonders and insights that confirm the existence and power of God. Yet, because they all draw from a distinctly Christian tradition in their representations of God and of his creation, they also might serve to deepen our understanding of a critical debate with religious and humanist geographers about the nature of place in Christian theology, a debate between place and placelessness. For humanist geographer Yi-Fu Tuan, Christianity is part of a religious view that embraces a sense of placelessness, rather than of place:

My own understanding of religion hinges on the idea that it has a directional thrust, the dedication from being an emphasis on 'place' and 'power' to one where place—as a richly textured and emotionally charged locality—diminishes in importance... But only one kind of religion, one associated with Buddha, Jesus Christ, and the great prophets of Israel. For them and for their true followers, who are few, the shift from place to placelessness is not a cause for regret, for to them the true home for human beings is never a geographical place... somewhere on Earth. It is always elsewhere. (ix-x)

From this perspective, God exists in the spiritual world, in the afterlife, and it is only when people have finished their lives on earth that they achieve true communion with God. Lane further articulates the scholarly and theological debate over place and placelessness by revealing how from a traditional Christian perspective life becomes about ridding oneself of “destructive idolatries of daily experience” and carefully limiting attachment to places and physical objects in order to avoid the “temptation” of “imagin[ing] our possession of place as an end of itself” (240). Additionally, he notes that Christianity has a history of rejecting the idea that God can be placed, limited, or confined, in any one physical setting (242). Lane also reveals the opposing view that traditional Christianity has emphasized placed encounters with God in the Old and New Testament scripture such as in the case of Moses and the burning bush. He further articulates the argument for a placed perspective of religion by explaining that the term “‘Yahweh’ is preeminently ‘Place,’ that which incorporates and defines, even making room for all other spaces,” and he continues, “The Psalmist had spoken of ‘the Lord as our dwelling place’ (Ps. 90:1).” According to Lane, this line of argument “integrate[s] the experience of God into the natural world of placed existence” (245).

I wonder how Foote, Jewett, and Bonnin might respond to this debate. Based on their writings, it appears that they would re-affirm the role of place in understanding and gaining access to a transcendent God. For their characters, the natural world inspires their religious beliefs, and when combined with biblical teachings, their faiths appear to become literally grounded in place in that they feel obligated to live out their faiths through service to their communities and through loving devotion to their families. For Foote’s Edith, her religious experience on the bluff fosters her faith in Christian values of self-sacrifice and of duty to family. For Jewett’s Mrs. Todd and Mrs. Blackett, their connections to place and to Christian traditions

such as church attendance and biblical scripture reading merge to create a functional and powerful social religion. Lastly, for Bonnin's speaker in "An Indian Praying on the Hilltop," her experience "while upon the hilltop" leads her to "renewed strength" and to "courage" that subsequently results in a "vision" for the "dawn of justice to the Indian, even upon earth," a vision that Bonnin actively strove for in her own life (212). Thus maybe we can see these nineteenth-century American women regionalists resisting the notion that religion is placeless and raising important questions about the way people experience place and practice religion. How affective is a religion that doesn't take into account place and culture? What is the reciprocal relationship between place and religious belief and how do people attain the sacred in the everyday? Perhaps their works prove that the physical world cannot be separated, and shouldn't be separated, from religious tradition and doctrine. With both sources of knowledge and inspiration, faith becomes vibrant and effectual for believers and for their communities.

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