WRITING HOME AND NATION:

EVANGELICAL DOMESTICITY IN THE JOURNAL-LETTERS OF HARRIET NEWELL, CAROLINE PILSBURY, AND NARCISSA WHITMAN, 1812-1847

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For my son Jack, whose impending arrival kept me writing.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Home in the nineteenth century is a term curiously subject to slippage. Its meaning within the domestic discourses of the period is notoriously difficult to pin down, morphing almost indecipherably from the concrete to the abstract and back again. Is home a physical structure—four walls and a roof, partitioned into rooms and offering protection from rain, wind, and snow? Or is it an ideological space, shaping the identities of its inhabitants according to the evolving collection of middle-class ideals and deeply-gendered meanings that dwell there? Perhaps home is a nation, protected from the "outside" by imaginary walls and held together by familial bonds of loyalty and mutual aspiration. Home might even transcend reality altogether to become merely a dream—an object of longing or the promise of ambitions never realized.

In the missionary letters and diaries of Harriet Newell, Caroline Pilsbury, and Narcissa Whitman, "writing home" during the first half of the nineteenth century meant more than literally dispatching letters across vast distances to the places and people they left behind. Instead, it meant writing their way through all the shape-shifting nuances of the word in order to stake out their identities and understand their capacity for action in the world. For Harriet Newell, writing in the early years of the nineteenth century, "writing home" meant negotiating her desire for the familiar comforts of domestic life in New England and her greater calling to a transnational vocation as missionary wife in the "sultry" climes of India (Woods 60). For Caroline Pilsbury, writing in 1820, it meant building a home as a single woman among the Penobscot tribe in the Maine wilderness and, in so doing, constructing an expansive ideology of the home not premised on marriage or biological children. At mid-century, "writing home" for

missionary wife Narcissa Whitman meant recreating New England home life on the western frontier by practicing a scrupulous domesticity that increasingly depended on racial boundaries.

Because all three writers included in this study are missionaries, or missionary wives, it is no surprise that the role of the home in their work among the "heathen" in Asia or on the American frontier is often foregrounded in their writing, or at least implied somewhere between the lines. Increasingly, scholars have come to appreciate the ways that women in nineteenth-century America were implicated along with men in the work of empire-building and national expansion, a dual process which depended upon a robust ideology of domesticity to legitimate and redeem its projects. Given the home's status as a center for the production and preservation of "civilization," the work of extending idealized domesticity to the "Other" was an important part of the missionary endeavor, which by and large considered the process of "Christianization" inseparable from the process of "civilization." This work of evangelical domesticity was likewise absorbed into the era's political discourses—which during the nineteenth century exhibited a distinctly theological tenor—and home was to play a central role in realizing the expansionist dreams of the early Republic and in bringing about the "Manifest Destiny" of the United States. Given women's role as producers and preservers of culture through their work in the home, they were seen as important figures in the evangelization and domestication of the various "wildernesses" of West and the wider world.

The role of women in nation-building and expansion has, in recent years, received some critical attention within nineteenth-century studies. However, little has been done to situate these relationships in the complicating contexts of Protestant mission work, and missionary women

have not figured prominently in the burgeoning scholarship on women, domesticity, and empire.[1] They receive only passing reference in Anne McClintock's *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*, for example, and the same is true in Laura Wexler's *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in an Age of American Imperialism*, another relatively recent exploration of the connections between domesticity and national expansion. In *U.S. Women Writers and the Discourses of Colonialism, 1825-1861*, Etsuko Taketani does devote one chapter to the writings of a missionary wife; it is telling, however, that before travelling to Burma as third wife to renowned missionary Adoniram Judson, Emily Chubbock Judson was already a popular magazinist and children's book author, writing under the pen name "Fanny Forester."

The reasons for this underrepresentation are many and diverse, reflecting, among other things, a tendency within literary studies to shy away from overtly religious themes (particularly when those themes are bound up in the cultural hegemony of white, middle-class Protestantism). The scarcity of critical attention paid to women's missionary texts also reflects the trend within contemporary scholarship to prioritize the study of marginal groups—a healthy corrective that has nevertheless overshadowed the century's more ambiguous figures. As Anna Johnston points out, missionaries of the nineteenth century "[inhabited] complex, ambivalent, and uncertain positions within colonial cultures," and, in the particular context of early America, the relationship of missionaries to the discourses and mechanisms of expansion was diverse and conflicted (Johnston 3). Posing a further challenge to easy classification, the writers in this study, as women, are marked by an additional degree of ambiguity, and in a profession dominated by

[1] With notable exceptions, of course. See especially the collection of essays edited by Barbara Reeves-Ellington, et al., entitled *Competing Kingdoms: Women, Mission, Nation, and the American Protestant Empire, 1812-1960*. Also, an older work, *Gendered Missions: Women and Men in Missionary Discourse and Practice*, edited by Mary Taylor Huber and Nancy C. Lutkehaus, addresses some of these questions in a nineteenth-century British context.

men, they occupied marginal positions of circumscribed agency while at the same time their white, middle-class status accorded them significant cultural power. Finally, just as mission studies have remained at the periphery of American studies as a whole; *within* mission studies, the texts of missionary women have been marginalized.[2] The historical privileging of male texts and perspectives within the written history of the nineteenth-century mission movement suggests the great need for archival and recovery work, and for every published text by a woman missionary or missionary wife, there are likely many more languishing in archives, with crumbling edges and script that fades with each year's passing.

For all these reasons, texts written by missionary women of the nineteenth century have suffered scholarly neglect, and these evangelists' uneasy, but undeniable, relationship to American empire is by and large missing from expansionist accounts. It is my hope that this project will help to address this critical gap, and contribute to what Mary Taylor Huber and Nancy C. Lutkehaus have called the "small but distinguished literature on missionary women" (7). Certainly, women missionaries were important figures in an era of national expansion. In fact, while they often contributed to the literal work of building a cultural, economic, and (in many cases) territorial American empire, their texts also serve to allegorize those imperial relationships, rehearsing the "vexed and contradictory" terms of empire on the miniature stage of the home (Kaplan "Manifest" 602). Reflecting a nineteenth-century tendency to speak in terms of a "national household," within these women's writings, homes become small nations—microcosms in which the events of national expansion are inflected with domestic meanings and the commonplaces of empire are reinterpreted and, often, revised. Importantly, this emphasis upon the domestic realm joins these writers' feminized sense of biblical mission to offer an

[2] Anna Johnston discusses women's marginalization within Protestant mission history in her introduction to *Missionary Writing and Empire, 1800-1860* (7).

alternative to more conventional, masculine accounts of expansion, which stressed heroism, aggression, and territorial acquisition. In this way, their texts undermine conventional discourses at the same time that they contribute to the myth of national unity, invoking the domestic hearth—with all its connotations of familial harmony and peace—as a primary means of, and justification for, cultural expansion.

This convergence of familial and national structures within women's missionary texts is unsurprising. In an age when empire was as much a moral as it was a territorial enterprise—motivated, at least on its face, by a desire to bring the colonized into "civil" society—women had an important role to play in the exportation of a bourgeois domesticity to the untamed regions of the continent (and globe). Missionary women, as agents of social transformation, were a crucially important arm of this "civilizing" agenda, both as active proselytizers of domesticity's reforming power and, perhaps less glamorously, as housewives doing the hard, physical work of creating middle-class homes in unfamiliar, and sometimes inhospitable, new contexts. Therefore, while their relationship to imperialist discourses was by no means straightforward, women missionaries were deeply implicated in the expansionist agenda of the United States, and the sometimes-aligning, sometimes-competing, obligations of domesticity, evangelical mission, and national expansion are woven together in their lives and literary work.

The writings of Newell, Pilsbury, and Whitman reveal these complex interrelationships, and the various imbrications of home, nation, and mission within their letters reflect the specificities of their lives and local contexts. However, as I demonstrate in the chapters that follow, their letters—in highly particular ways—also register the contradictory logic of nineteenth-century expansion, which was caught in the perpetual back-and-forth of inclusion and exclusion. Newell's memoir, for example, reveals her eager to extend the joint promises of a

domestic and biblical gospel to the "heathen" women of India (Woods 119). However, despite her willingness to dissolve national boundaries in favor of an apocalyptic global unity, she uses domesticity—and, notably, physical imagery of the home—to create implicit boundaries separating "us" and "them." Likewise, in Pilsbury's letters, descriptions of the daily duties of "keeping house" co-exist with the suggestion, only barely articulated, that these domestic activities are intimately connected with the values and practices of a "cultivated" middle-class ("Monday," Third Communication, 23; July 22, 1820, Third Communication 18). Importantly, the achievement of appropriate domestic arrangements emerges within Pilsbury's writing as a prerequisite for both national belonging and spiritual redemption. Whitman's decade-long correspondence shares Pilsbury's emphasis on "reform" through domesticity (*Letters* 94). However, while Pilbury is optimistic about domesticy's reforming power, Whitman suggests her disillusionment with its promises. Eventually abandoning her ministry to the Cayuse, Whitman's letters follow a trajectory of increasing disappointment that probably reflects the length of her missionary tenure as much as it betrays mid-century attitudes about race and removal.

In a new era of global mission, religion—in the form of a broadly ecumenical evangelical Protestantism—joined American nationalism to promote a vision of an expansive United States, spreading its benevolent influence to the farthest reaches of the globe. As the writings of Newell, Pilsbury, and Whitman demonstrate, however, the redemption of the world's "heathen" ultimately hinged upon their ability—and willingness—to fulfill the demands of a bourgeois domesticity. The *contingency* of spiritual salvation is thus a theme shared by all the writers in this study, and their evangelical invitation to dual citizenship in the nation and God's millennial kingdom ultimately depends upon boundaries preserving the moral (and—it is often implied—racial) purity of a growing and diversifying United States. For Newell, Pilsbury, and Whitman,

as for other missionary women of the century, domesticity provided a means of establishing these boundaries and a language for articulating them. In practicing an evangelical domesticity, therefore, these three women are perpetually running up against the fundamental contradiction of nineteenth-century missionary work: in the context of the mission station, their universalist evangelical ethic must confront places and cultures that provoke the discomfort, even disgust, of the unfamiliar. As a result, their inclusive intentions are everywhere hemmed in by insidious assumptions of cultural and racial superiority, and their evangelical zeal is often directed in service of an expansionist agenda.

For these reasons, it would be easy to dismiss white female missionaries of the nineteenth century as merely a homogenous group of cultural imperialists, bent on transforming the people they hoped to redeem according to an ethnocentric and nationalistic gospel of domesticity. To do so, however, would be to disregard what Huber and Lutkehaus argue are "the finer points of geographical, institutional, or historical variation" within nineteenth-century western imperialism (6). In fact, Huber and Lutkehaus blame a "tendency to rely on large generalizations about colonizers" for the fact that, "in recent literature in the burgeoning field of colonial studies, mission studies have played a smaller role than they deserve" (6). By casually lumping women missionaries into a monolithic cultural category, scholars are free to determine the value of these women's texts according to a simplistic, and politicized, judgment about their relationship to power.

Within the texts under consideration, however, home resists simple readings, and the plurality of domestic meanings that surface in these women's writings demand careful attention to nuance and contradiction. Furthermore, while I am primarily concerned with the way the domestic implies a set of symbols and practices that are deeply invested with national meanings,

personal meanings cannot ultimately be separated from the cultural and ideological. For instance, these writers articulate a shared sense of liminality in their writing—a sense of being caught between the various homes, real or imagined, that shape their identity and purpose.[3] Whether the home left behind, their heavenly "abiding place," or the home they are in the process of creating, these conflicting centers of meaning and identity inevitably influence the broader national and cultural meanings they construct.

Given their liminal position, it is perhaps fitting that the form their writing often takes is itself caught in the liminal space between the diary and the letter. As these three writers construct the domestic in their writing, they often do so within the hybrid form of what I call the journal-letter. This form, which is in large part an adaptive response to the material conditions of their lives and work, inevitably impinges upon the domestic meanings they create, and I draw upon the burgeoning literature on the epistolary and diary forms to open up the multiple meanings of home in their writing.

Home—as a place, a dream, an ideology—is understandably central to familiar letter writing, which metaphorically and metonymically connects one home (or address) to another home (or address). The act of letter writing, therefore, inscribes the writer's relationship to these multiple homes, depicting the writer looking backward to the "land of [her] nativity" with fondness and longing and looking forward (eagerly, if the common tropes are to be taken at face value) to her spiritual or heavenly home, while simultaneously dwelling in the present, where she is actively creating a provisional home in a "foreign land," a place where she may plan to spend

[3] The concept of "liminality" (from Latin *limen*, or "threshold"), as it is used here, originates with British cultural anthropologist Victor Turner and his extensive work on the so-called "liminal phase" of cultural rites of passage. In "Liminality and Communitas," from *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, Turner describes the "liminal" state of individuals in cultural transition: "The attributes of liminality or of liminal personae ('threshold people') are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between" (95).

the rest of her earthly days (Woods 111). From this liminal position, and through this liminal form, these three women write home in ways that reveal the contested and conflicted relationships between home, nation, mission, and empire in the nineteenth century.

By interrogating the relationships between cultural discourses centered on the home and the home's depiction in these writers' texts, I plan to interrogate the ways life "inside," filled with daily rituals and domestic deployments, engages with life "outside"—with the economic and social conditions shaping these women's lives, and with cultural discourses connecting home to nation and nation to empire. Furthermore, I want to look at the ways the tropes of domestic discourse are reproduced, adapted, or rejected within the local contexts of mission work, empire-building, and the frontier, and the way home's national and imperial meanings acquire nuance and complexity as they are negotiated within these women's writings. Finally, I will explore the ways home and domestic work take on new significance within the spiritualized framework of nineteenth-century evangelical Protestantism. This burgeoning religious movement placed the idealized middle-class home at the center of its efforts at the same time that it preached the ultimate *rejection* of any earthly home, providing a language of justification for women hoping to fulfill a missionary calling and, in effect, live out the contradiction of a domesticity that traveled.

Home, Nation, and Empire

Given the longstanding emphasis within nineteenth-century scholarship upon separate spheres and the private nature of the domestic realm, it is perhaps not surprising that domesticity was long considered separate from the political rhetoric of national expansion and insulated from the military maneuverings of empire. Nupur Chaudhuri and Margaret Strobel, in *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance*, argue that scholars often "consciously or

unconsciously accept the 'masculine' attributes of colonialism," and have consequently "excluded or marginalized Western women from the focus of their studies" (3). Mary A. Procida, in *Married to Empire*, also notes that empire has been construed by scholars in largely masculine terms. According to Procida, American women, like their European counterparts, are often presented by scholars "as either literally absent from the imperial environment or as so effectively divorced from the public realm of imperialism that they are symbolically erased from empire" (3). This historic erasure is unsurprising, given the conventional understandings of domesticity that, for a long time, dominated nineteenth-century studies.

The trend in scholarship to connect domesticity with national identity and empire-building is beginning to write women into the history of American imperialism, however. Within nineteenth-century scholarship on domesticity, there has been a movement toward an appreciation for the *political* implications of the ostensibly private realm of the home and an interrogation of its complex relationship with nationalism and discourses of expansion. This more expansive and politicized interpretation of nineteenth-century domesticity finds its nascent form in Amy Kaplan's widely cited, and forcefully articulated, essay "Manifest Domesticity," which, as the title implies, seeks to explore the ways domesticity was deployed within discourses of Manifest Destiny during the nineteenth century. These discourses, which underwrote nationalist dreams of expansion (especially westward) by conferring upon them an aura of divine favor and providential inevitability, imagined the nation as a home, and saw extending the values of domesticity to the "uncivilized" realm of the foreign as central to the "domesticating" project of empire. Women, positioned as they were at the center of the home, were therefore poised to play a crucial role in the nation's imperial agenda (Kaplan, "Manifest" 584).

Rather than chart an easy and unproblematic relationship between domesticity and the imperatives of empire however, Kaplan contends that the deployment of the home within nationalist discourses was often conflicted and contradictory. Using the domestic writings of Beecher, Stowe, and their contemporaries, Kaplan traces the "vexed and contradictory" relations existing between race and domesticity within contemporary discourses, showing how conceptions of the "domestic" and the "foreign," seemingly antipodal to one another, were in fact engaged in a complex "double-movement," with the domestic sometimes delineating, and sometimes dissolving, the border between the nation ("home") and the foreign. This movement, according to Kaplan, registered a deep cultural ambivalence about empire and its attendant incorporation of "specters of the foreign" within the national "home" ("Manifest" 602). Kaplan describes this double movement, and places women at the heart of it: "Domestic discourse both redresses and reenacts the contradictions of empire through its own double movement to expand female influence beyond the home and the nation while simultaneously contracting woman's sphere to police domestic boundaries against the threat of foreignness both within and without" ("Manifest" 585). Women, therefore, far from relegated to the private sphere of the home, are thoroughly implicated in empire. In fact, in Kaplan's formulation, they become the very agents of civilization—empire-builders through influence rather than conquest.

While Kaplan's essay has been wildly influential, and widely respected, some critics have taken her to task for her reliance upon a simplistic division between the "domestic" and the "foreign," pointing out that her easy "us"/"them" formulation serves to reduce a multiplicity of cultural and historical contexts into a single "Other." Etsuko Taketani, for example, is more concerned with moving past sweeping generalities about the "colonized" in order to explore the effects of domestic and colonial discourses on the margins, where they are inflected differently

based upon the irreducible specificities of local context (92). In spite of these criticisms, though, Kaplan's essay stands as a powerful rubric through which to view the imperial reach of the home as it was figured in nineteenth-century discourses, and it holds promise for spurring increasingly nuanced scholarship on the imbrications of domesticity and empire during this era. Furthermore, Kaplan's emphasis on the essential unity of "foreignness" within nineteenth-century discourses, while it privileges the colonizer's perspective, productively exposes the close relationship between nation-building and empire-building that existed during an era of American expansionism. Indeed, in a later work, *The Anarchy of Empire and the Making of U.S. Culture*, Kaplan insists upon an imperial reading of American history and challenges the "central geographic bifurcation between continental expansion and overseas empire" that persists in scholarship on nineteenth-century America, emphasizing the ways certain communities were constructed as "foreign" *within* as well as *without* the United States (17).

Often cited in conjunction with Kaplan, Lora Romero's book-length exploration of the cultural politics of nineteenth-century domesticity, *Home Fronts*, extends Kaplan's work to consider the ways domesticity is deployed, to multiple and often contradictory political ends, in the works of canonized males (Cooper, Hawthorne, Thoreau) and the "popular" domestic fiction and writings of several women authors and orators (Stewart, Beecher, Stowe, among others). Invoking Foucault's theories on power, responsibly disciplined by a New Historicist perspective, Romero insists that nineteenth-century discourses of domesticity, while implicated in "one of the most entrenched value systems of early-nineteenth-century bourgeois society," are nevertheless flexible enough to accommodate a wide variety of political agendas, none of which can be simplistically categorized as either wholly "liberatory" or wholly "oppressive." Noting the "political and imaginative differences" marking the texts in her study, Romero argues that,

"within the discursive parameters which *house* them all, [these works] acquire their own, highly contingent *fronts* for mediating cultural, social, and political conditions" (6).

Romero unsettles deeply entrenched assumptions that have long divided literary critics over the nature of nineteenth-century domesticity. Romero describes two oppositional camps, pitting those who associate the domestic with the "tyranny" of mass culture against those who see it as a space of freedom for women to remake culture in their own image and to level a critique of the patriarchal political structures that regulate life outside the home (7). As a part of her larger project of liberating the domestic from the limiting binaries that often contain it, Romero seeks to remap the landscape of nineteenth-century literary criticism and the assumptions about power that undergird it.

According to Romero, because power is not a static, monolithic system but rather a "mobile" and "shifting" web of power relations, it makes sense that texts might be radical on some fronts and conventional on others. Therefore, she argues, the underpinnings of nineteenth-century literary criticism, which simplistically classify texts as either "popular" or "literary," conventional or progressive, need to be rethought. As an alternative, she insists upon the multiplicity inherent in domesticity—a multiplicity which surfaces in the nuanced, and often-contradictory meanings of home, race, nation, and empire that are constructed in the epistolary texts treated in the following chapters.

While Romero's insights clearly cover a great deal of theoretical ground, perhaps *Home Fronts'* greatest contribution is its unsettling of deeply entrenched critical assumptions about domesticity. Rather than a monolithic ideological system or a mere literary genre, Romero refigures domesticity as an arena of contested cultural meaning in which home is deployed—across texts and even within the work of individual writers—to various and sometimes-

contradictory ends. Etsuko Taketani echoes this emphasis on the multiplicity and flexibility inherent in the concept of domesticity as it relates to the rhetoric of Manifest Destiny. She contends that women's nineteenth-century texts, while they certainly participated in the discourses of colonialism, were "not always subsumable into the hegemonic ideology of Manifest Destiny ... but were capable of creating alternative colonial and postcolonial visions" (92). These visions, argues Taketani, "were no less instrumental in the fabrication of the destiny of an American empire and foreign countries than the ideology of Manifest Destiny" (92). Rather than a discourse in blind service to empire, therefore, domesticity could, and did, offer alternative visions.

Scholars within the "new" western history have also picked up the threads of earlier works connecting domesticity and imperialism, bringing these critical insights to bear on the gendered history of westward expansion. Writing within this tradition, Janet Floyd, like Romero and Taketani, advocates for a carefully nuanced reading of the domestic that acknowledges its capacity to take on a variety of forms.

In *Writing the Pioneer Woman*, Floyd investigates homemaking in all its guises within the writings of white emigrant women engaged in the national project of emigration and settlement. While she explores domesticity from a variety of critical perspectives, she gives due attention to its imperial implications. Noting the rich and varied textures that emerge from emigrant women's domestic writings, Floyd is critical of readings of the domestic that "tend to make it consonant with the inflexible reproduction of dominant ideologies of patriarchy, industrial capitalism, or colonialism—privileging instead the fluid situation of the 'unhomed'" (7). While these women—invested with the duty of imposing domestic order on the wild spaces of the West—are admittedly implicated in colonization, and often "write new homes according

to conventional understandings," Floyd also notes a propensity for a "fine descriptive detail that sometimes unravels convention" (7). Furthermore, she argues, while "they embrace the tropes of nineteenth-century writing of domesticity, [by] placing them in an unfamiliar context they may destabilize their meaning" (7). Here Floyd offers an alternate, and more open-ended, interpretation of the mobility ascribed to the home by Kaplan, who imagined domestic space as a mobile (as opposed to anchored) sphere of civilizing influence, able to domesticate the foreign "within and without" the nation's permeable and "ever-shifting" borders ("Manifest" 602). In Floyd's formulation, it is this very mobility and stability that has the potential to "destabilize" the home, creating a space that is actively interpretive of culture rather than passively reflective of it. In this, she finds affinity with Romero, who writes, "As an identity rather than simply as a fixed location for women's lives, domesticity could—and did—travel." And where it travelled, says Romero, we can be certain to find richly diverse "sites of social conflict and political struggle" (25).

The History of Women in Protestant Missions

The modern missionary movement in America was formed in the crucible of the Second Great Awakening, when an outpouring of evangelical fervor swept New England Protestantism, moderating the relatively severe Calvinism of its Puritan forbearers with a Hopkinsian theology of "disinterested benevolence" and combating the "secular" forces of Unitarianism and Deism that threatened the cultural power of "orthodox" Christianity. The movement was given shape by an ongoing dialogue between religion and the Enlightenment, two powerful forces that continued to shape political and intellectual life during the nineteenth century, joining an emphasis upon the basic goodness and potential of humanity with the global imperatives of the gospel. It was further fueled by an emerging industrial-capitalist economy, which underwrote expansionism

and established global networks of communication and transportation, thereby forming the necessary infrastructure for mission work. Lending nationalist zeal to the missionary endeavor was a growing conviction of American exceptionalism, which corresponded with a sense of divine mandate to spread the nation's influence across the globe.

Protestant missions on the North American continent date back to the early colonial period, when mission efforts such as John Eliot's "praying towns" sought converts among Native American tribes in New England. However, American missions underwent a decisively global shift in 1810 with the founding of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) in Bradford, Massachusetts. Two years later, in 1812, the Board would send its pioneering mission to India (among this first group of missionaries was Harriet Newell, included in this study). This voluntary association of mostly Congregationalists and Presbyterians was responsible for organizing, governing, and funding missions both "foreign" and "domestic" and laid the groundwork for the eventual proliferation of similar organizations across the republic, under different denominational heads. [4] While women were largely excluded from the political workings of these formal governing bodies, they were nevertheless central to the missionary agenda, both symbolically, as representatives of the movement's values and potential, and practically, through direct service on the mission field. What's more, women played an essential role in the missionary enterprise through their activism back at home, where women's fundraising efforts were the financial engine of the movement.

[4] Reeves-Ellington, et al., join Amy Kaplan in challenging the "central geographic bifurcation between continental expansion and overseas empire," noting the common discourses of foreignness and heathenism informing missions "at home" and abroad (6). I follow their lead, noting the ways "other" groups of people—immigrants, American Indians, African Americans—were constructed as foreign within the United States and its territories. Furthermore, in light of the inherent reciprocities connecting American "nationalism" and "imperialism" in the nineteenth century, I use the terms interchangeably throughout this study.

Women's involvement in mission work was precipitated by a convergence of cultural change and practical necessity. In the years of the early Republic, theological developments within New England Protestantism coalesced with shifts in cultural attitudes about women's education and role in public life to open the field first to missionary wives and, later, their single counterparts.[5] Important within these theological and cultural developments was a growing emphasis on women's "usefulness," which emerged within broader religious discourses on the immanence of God's millennial kingdom and stressed women's special role in ushering in God's thousand-year reign on earth. According to this "doctrine of usefulness," women had an important role to play not only in raising virtuous citizens for the republic, but in spreading New England's burgeoning spirit of revivalism to the far corners of the earth (Sweet 43).[6] In fact, women were perhaps uniquely fit for a missionary vocation given their "natural" piety and capacity for moral influence (Sweet 47, 55; Robert 35). Echoing this familiar sentiment, the following 1825 excerpt from the *Religious Monitor*, a prominent New England religious periodical, explicitly connects women's moral influence with the spread of the "Christian religion":

> The importance of female virtue is universally admitted, and the influence of women on human society is confessedly great. Every attempt, therefore, to improve their gentle natures, should be warmly encouraged, and every effort to persuade them to employ their

[5] While single women were excluded from foreign missions early in the century, they were included in missions to Native American tribes on the frontier at a much earlier date. Dana L. Robert speculates that the American Board's "contradictory stance" on this issue stems from the more temporary nature of these placements, as the physical hardships of these missions were no less rigorous than missions abroad. Furthermore, since most of these single women were placed as missionary teachers, they were part of a broader trend of single women being sent to the frontier as "home missionaries" among white settlers (Robert 107).

[6] The Biblical imperative to global Christian witness is included in the book of Acts: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (*King James Version*, Acts 1.8).

> weighty influence for the credit of their own sex, as well as for the interest of the Christian religion, ought to be highly applauded.[7] ("Review" 461)

This emphasis on women's usefulness, to society in general and religion in particular, helped to prompt changes in women's education in the nineteenth century. British evangelical writer and educational reformer Hannah More was a prominent figure in debates over women's education in the nineteenth century, and her influence was felt across the Atlantic in the early years of the Republic. In *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education*, More was highly critical of educational models for women that focused on "ornamental" accomplishments, insisting instead upon an education for usefulness (Robert 33). Of course, in More's and other reformers' prescriptions, women's usefulness was to be properly shaped by the values of a sentimentalized domesticity and would therefore be achieved through moral influence rather than political action. Regardless of these boundaries, however, this evangelical doctrine of usefulness ultimately helped to create a gendered sphere for social action that legitimated women's involvement in matters outside the physical walls of the home.

These transformative shifts in attitudes towards women's education and public roles were essential in opening the foreign mission field to women; however, the ultimate justifications for sending women into the unfamiliar and often-harsh conditions of mission work boiled down to sheer pragmatism. First and foremost, women were sent on foreign missions to act as "help meets" and companions to their husbands. Ann Judson, who accompanied Harriet Newell on the American Board's first mission to India, typifies early missionary wives, who understood their

[7] Quotation is from an article reviewing a sermon entitled "The Excellence and Influence of the Female Character," by the Reverend Gardiner Spring, a Presbyterian minister who preached "at the request of the New-York Female Missionary Society."

vocation first in terms of marriage and second in terms of mission. In the following letter from the field, Judson links women's usefulness to missionary marriage:

> I hope no Missionary will ever come out here, without a wife, as she, in her sphere, can be equally useful with her husband. I presume Mrs. Marshman does more good in her school than half the ministers in America. (qtd. in Robert 44)

For women like Judson, in the early decades of the nineteenth century, marriage to a missionary was a virtual prerequisite for fulfilling a call to missionary service. In fact, in the formal language of the American Board, which oversaw the missions of all three writers in this study, women would not be considered "missionaries" in their own right, but rather "missionary assistants." All of their other activities—teaching, literacy training, the formation of female "praying societies"—while important, would therefore be subordinated to their primary role as wife and—eventually for many women—mother (Robert 37; P. Harris 32).

An acknowledgment of women's supportive role can be found in the letters and diaries of early missionary wives like Judson, and it is echoed in the formal literature published by the missionary organizations (Robert 32). For example, Rufus Anderson, influential member and historian of the American Board, maintained that—aside from certain "grand exceptions" such as the Apostle Paul—for missionaries, "marriage should be the general rule" (Anderson 55). According to Anderson:

> The missionary is worth as much more abroad with a help-meet for him, as the pastor is at home. The wife is endowed with equal courage, and more endurance. With her at his side, he is less likely to flee from danger, and is more safe. Among barbarians the wife, the mother, and children are, under God, a defense. (55)

This "defense" created by mother and children would, of course, take the shape of a home—a center for the production and preservation of culture and, "among barbarians," a safe-house for the "civilized" values of an idealized New England middle class. Aside from their other duties, then, women were charged with the sometimes impossible task of recreating the New England domestic scene half way around the world, in the midst of sometimes extreme geographic and cultural disorientation. In this way, the missionary wife would join her roles as helpmeet and homemaker to serve both God and her husband. While other considerations prompted this policy of missionary marriage—such as the need to guard against men's sexual temptation by "foreign" women, or to keep Protestant missions from being "spoiled" by the "monastic principles of the Romish church"[8]—the provision of men with wifely assistants and companions remained the foundational justification (P. Harris 31).[9]

Over the course of the century, however, the mission force saw an increasing professionalization of women's labors, and more and more single women were sent into the field under the banner "Woman's work for woman" (Robert 107; Hunter, "Women's" 29-31).[10] With rare exceptions early in the nineteenth century, and increasing regularity as the century wore on, women were liberated from marriage as a prerequisite to fulfilling a missionary vocation. This was partly in effort to ease the burden of missionary wives, whose domestic labors and child-

[8] The American Board, which reflected a widespread suspicion of and intolerance for Catholicism within Protestant New England, adopted an official stance of anti-Catholicism early on. This stance informed the Board's rhetoric and shaped its policies; it also engendered a spirit of competition with Catholic missions (P. Harris 16, 31).

[9] Later, around mid-century (1842), Anderson would reverse his position on missionary marriage, seeing women and any eventual children as a handicap on the missionary enterprise, largely because of the prevalence of sickness; however, women's place on the mission field had been firmly established and was difficult to change in practice (P. Harris 33).

[10] Women's work as missionaries later in the century was often conducted under the authority of all-women mission organizations and carried out under the popular slogan "Woman's Work for Woman," which emphasized the social and charitable aspects of mission work. *Woman's Work for Woman* was also the title of a periodical "published monthly by the Women's Foreign Missionary Societies of the Presbyterian Church" around the turn of the century.

rearing responsibilities interfered with their ability to do active mission work, but it also reflected women's growing desire for a larger role and increased autonomy in the field (Robert 115). While this gradual shift brought about a more expansive role for women missionaries, domestic ideals emphasizing their roles as teacher and nurturer continued to hold sway into the early twentieth century.

Aside from their legitimating role as wives, women missionaries fulfilled another practical function: they were needed to gain access to otherwise unreachable women and children in the mission field. In Reverend Jonathon Allen's commissioning sermon for the American Board's original mission to India, he spoke directly to the missionary wives in attendance: "It will be your business, my dear children, to teach these women, to whom your husbands can have but little, or no access. Go then, and do all in your power, to enlighten their minds, and bring them to the knowledge of the truth" (Allen, qtd. in Robert 2). Particularly in sex-segregated cultures like India, women's efforts to educate women and children, especially girls, by establishing mission schools and outreach projects were "[t]he strongest public justification for including women in the foreign mission enterprise" (Robert 36).

This preoccupation with reaching "benighted Heathen" women was largely a projection of American nationalist ideology, which associated the progress of a culture toward "civilization"—and therefore Christianization—with the social position of its women (Woods 79). Certainly, women were positioned at the symbolic heart of discourses on American exceptionalism during the nineteenth century. Alex de Tocqueville famously linked discourses on gender and American exceptionalism when he attributed "the prosperity and growing power" of the American nation to the "superiority of their women," contending that "nowhere does she enjoy a higher station." Likewise, Catherine Beecher, whose popular writings helped give shape

to nineteenth-century discourses on domesticity, noted the "lofty and fortunate position" of American women among those of other nations, and she stressed women's centrality to America's messianic mission to effect "the regeneration of the earth" (qtd. in Tyyrell 48). Within such nationalist discourses, Anglo-American women were considered the culmination of Christian womanhood, their "elevation" achieved through education and centeredness in the home. Spreading American influence through mission work therefore entailed the exportation of this model of womanhood to "heathen" nations in need of the gospel's reforming power.

Accessing female populations was therefore a crucial part of mission work. Women, in the language of the time, were essentially a litmus test for society at large, and therefore central to its moral transformation. Furthermore, as bastions of culture and tradition, their conversion was considered a necessary step in rooting out the "heathen" influences that might otherwise impede a culture's progress under the light of the gospel (Robert 82). The language of "degradation" and "elevation" that suffused these overtly nationalist motivations for mission work is also found in the writing of missionary women, many of whom saw their work in the field as a mission to women in particular. For example, Elizabeth Smith Hervey hoped her mission work would be a means of "elevating the miserable and degraded females ... to a state of refinement and happiness" (qtd. in Robert 37). Harriet Newell used similar language in her shipboard diary to India, writing, "Oh, could I become the instrument of bringing one degraded female to Jesus, how should I be repaid for every tear and every pain!" (101). While these women's motivations were no doubt sincere, their language implicates them in an elaborate program of domestication—a program deeply nuanced, and often challenged, within the local contexts of mission work, but bearing the indelible stamp of America's nationalist and imperialist agendas.

Missions of Domesticity

In missionary discourses of the nineteenth century, the elevation of women, and the elevation of their cultures by proxy, would be achieved in two ways, each molded by the ideology of domesticity, and each central to the "civilizing" agenda of nineteenth-century missions. First, women would serve as "models" of domesticity by recreating Christian home and family life among the "heathen" they hoped to reach. In this way, women—particularly missionary wives earlier in the century—would fulfill their primary obligations as wife and mother while also playing a crucial role in extending the boundaries of domesticity—and by implication Christendom—to encompass their foreign context (P. Harris 32). According to Robert Fitts, "The ideology of domesticity transformed 19th century middle-class homes into highly symbolic zones designed both to influence their inhabitants and make statements to visitors" (116). Here, Fitts is referring specifically to the symbolic power of the home as it was wielded by social reformers working in urban "slums" in New York. However, a similar ideology was at work shaping women's mission theory and practice, and the notion of the home as a "highly symbolic zone" influencing visitors demonstrates how, in the nineteenth century, the simple modeling of domestic ideals and practices was imbued with transformative ideological power.[11]

Second to modeling, women engaged in a more active promulgation of domestic ideals through teaching. Registering the shift in women's vocational opportunities happening back at home, teaching was considered an appropriate, and necessary, activity for missionary women

[11] According to Dana L. Robert, missionary wives in Hawaii considered domestic modeling their primary contribution to the missionary effort. These women sought to project domestic values to the unconverted "heathen" by inviting indigenous women into their homes to observe them in the daily tasks of housekeeping and childrearing. While this allowed them to invest their time-consuming and often-overwhelming domestic duties with religious purpose, a growing fear of negative "heathen" influence on missionary children eventually justified their "retreat" from mission work into the safe haven of the home (Robert 65-70).

from the first foreign mission in 1812. In the sermons of ordination and charge that accompanied these first foreign missionaries' departure, Harriet Newell and her fellow missionary wives were addressed with the repeated injunction to "Go" and "Teach." Furthermore, in language that evoked the "Great Commission" in the book of Matthew,[12] the wives were charged with the responsibility of teaching *women* in particular, with the goal of "rais[ing] their character to the dignity of rational beings, and to the rank of christians in a christian land" (Allen, qtd. in Robert 2). For women, therefore, teaching would serve as the "functional equivalent" to the preaching done by men, and was consequently considered an "evangelistic mandate" in its own right (Robert xix).[13]

From the modern mission movement's inception, then, women were to be more than mere instruments of evangelism—they were to be agents of "social transformation" (Robert 3, 123).[14] Certainly, in order to fulfill their role as nurturers and teachers, women could not remain narrowly preoccupied with the state of "heathen" souls; instead, women's labors on the mission field were largely embodied ones. Whether seeing to the food and clothing needs of their charges or modeling domestic tasks, women's missionary practice joined the spiritual and temporal

[12] "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28.19-20). In the era of nineteenth-century Protestant missions, there was a renewed sense that Jesus' command in his "Great Commission" was intended not only for the early apostles, but was binding on nineteenth-century hearers as well. In fact, America was seen as uniquely positioned to extend the apostolic age of the New Testament into the modern era (Kling 801-802).

[13] There were, of course, some exceptions to the rule confining women to teaching. For example, Baptist wives in Burma, who enjoyed relatively more freedom than women of the ABCFM, regularly engaged in itinerant evangelism and Bible translation. Still, their evangelistic work was generally spoken of in highly gendered terms, and commentators were careful to insist that they were "not really preaching" (Robert 56).

[14] Joseph A. Conforti credits Samuel Hopkins with taking Jonathon Edward's notion of "disinterested benevolence" and giving it "an activist social thrust" (574). According to the doctrine of "disinterested benevolence," in the context of the "New Divinity" movement of the early nineteenth century, love of others without regard to self was considered the essence and expression of God's regenerating grace. It therefore constituted a rejection of the "secular" Enlightenment view that identified love of self as the foundational ethical principle guiding human relationships. In Hopkinsian thought, human beings became God's "co-workers" through mission work, which joined disinterested benevolence with an ethic of social transformation (Robert 6, 25).

realms together in a single vocation. While the consequences for their indigenous pupils were sometimes disastrous, taking a destructive toll on the people and culture they were attempting to "elevate," women's work as teachers also had the potential to empower, if only provisionally. For example, literacy training could equip women and children with the skills to negotiate their new colonial context and resist imperialist agendas.

Women's roles as teachers and social transformers put them squarely in the middle of a longstanding debate within mission theory and practice over the role of "civilization" in Christian evangelism. While early American federal policy dictated a strict program of civilization in regards to the nation's "Indians," the question of whether "civilization" before "Christianization" was indeed necessary remained an enduring tension within discussions of mission theory and methodology throughout the nineteenth century. According to Paul William Harris, the tide began to turn among American Board leadership around mid-century, with influential people like Rufus Anderson eventually championing a "Christ alone" philosophy that advocated for evangelism *apart* from education, primarily for the sake of expediency and efficiency (19). However, the civilization model was by then deeply ingrained in missionary practice. Furthermore, in some places, such as Ceylon, schools were considered the only way to guarantee access to the people they were trying to reach, and the only means "to guard against syncretism among indigenous hearers" (P. Harris 43). As a result, "preparationist schemes survived in ABCFM despite official repudiation of the view that 'civilization' must precede Christianization" (P. Harris 43).

The civilizing agenda of modern missions therefore remained a stubborn fixture in mission work throughout the nineteenth century, and the establishment of mission schools served as the primary and most powerful arm of this agenda. Mission schools were the institutions

through which the values and attributes of civilization—literacy, hygiene, industry, agriculture—could transform a culture starting with its youth. Girls were the especial targets of these civilizing programs, given their assumed role in the production of culture, and domestic training was one of the programs' key elements.[15] Explaining the need for this sort of training, Isaac Baird, a Presbyterian missionary at the Odanah mission in Wisconsin, once claimed, "The girls will need the training more than the boys & they will wield a greater influence in the future. If we get the girls, we get the race" (qtd. in Devens 229). "Getting the girls," in missions both overseas and on the continent, often included instruction in the duties of housekeeping and training in the habits of hygiene and industry associated with the domestic realm. At the Shawnee Quaker School in the 1820s, for example, girls spun and wove wool, churned butter, and sewed clothing and socks, along with their obligations of "daily housekeeping, laundry, cooking, and cleaning" (Devens 229). Justifying this practice as late as 1881, Martha Riggs Morris, at the American Board's Dakota (Sisseton) mission, contended that "book learning," while necessary, wasn't as important for girls as learning "to keep body and mind pure and clean" or "to keep house comfortably," which were "most important for the advancement of the people" (qtd. in Devens 229).

Familiar nineteenth century sentiments such as those expressed by Baird and Morris join comfortably together the virtues of domesticity and an overtly imperialist evangelical agenda. They also participate in a discourse of American exceptionalism that saw the middle-class lifestyle of (some) New Englanders as the pinnacle of human achievement and an expression of divine favor. According to Ian Tyyrell, this sense of exceptionalism imbued all the nation's

[15] Women's teaching was by no means confined to domestic training, however, and included activities like literacy training and biblical study. Still, education of women that emphasized the values and practices of domesticity remained an integral part of missionary instruction throughout the nineteenth century (Devens 229).

imperial projects—not just mission work—with a decidedly moral and religious character. So, whether expansion was achieved through state-sponsored means or through religio-cultural agencies such as foreign mission boards, it adopted a distinctive tone of moral reform that makes teasing out points of difference and divergence between colonialism and Protestant missions very difficult (Tyyrell 47-49). Through their missions of domesticity, whether modeled or taught, missionary women of the nineteenth century were likewise entangled in empire. Cast as central figures in the symbol and practice of Protestant missions, women were implicated just as thoroughly as men in the particular brand of Protestant moral expansionism that marked the era.

The three women writers in this study, as missionaries or missionary wives, are also bound up in these entanglements. Situated at the confluence of domestic and imperial discourses, their writing of the domestic has imperialist implications that reach far beyond the physical space of their homes. However, Jane H. Hunter, in her essay "Women's Mission in Historical Perspective: American Identity and Christian Internationalism," warns against drawing simplistic conclusions about the relationship between domesticity, Protestant missions, and imperialism. She argues that ideologies of gender are "notoriously unstable," and domesticity similarly constitutes "an elastic conceptual category which could be stretched to fit an array of apparently contradictory projects" (29). Certainly, the modern missionary movement cannot be separated from imperialism in the context of the nineteenth century, and these women's writings are often tainted with nationalist discourses of racial difference and white superiority. However, this association need not define their writing, nor reduce it to mere propaganda in service of empire. As scholars like Hunter and Dana L. Robert have pointed out, the relationship between Protestant missions and empire is plagued with ambiguity and contradiction (Robert xii). In fact, when refracted through the diverse local contexts of their missionary labors, where missionaries'

reception among indigenous populations was shaped by radically divergent cultural and political realities, the relationships between missions, cultural imperialism, and the formal apparatuses of colonialism were sometimes renegotiated, and even resisted (Hunter, "Women's" 22). Likewise, in the writing of these missionary women, the relationships between home, nation, and empire are multi-faceted and complex—often accommodating and conventional, sometimes tenuous or ambivalent, but always complex.

Journal-Letter Form

As the three women writers in this study attempt to construct the domestic and negotiate its broader cultural meanings in their writing, it is important that they often do so within a form that combines the conventions of the journal and letter. As a hybrid form, the journal-letter poses unique interpretive challenges to the scholar hoping to investigate its personal, cultural, and historical significance and to construct meaning from what is said, the manner in which it is said, and—perhaps just as important—what is left unsaid. At once journal and letter, these texts, however, resist being read as either wholly journal or wholly letter. One set of critical tools, while helpful, is not enough to open up their possible meanings, and by reading them as one or the other, misreading (or *missed* readings) is likely. As readers, therefore, we require a set of critical tools appropriate to the generic specificity of these documents. With this purpose in mind, I pay attention to the way the hybrid form of these writings inevitably shapes and intrudes upon the domestic meanings they create, drawing upon the contributions of both epistolary and diary theory to guide my interpretations.

As we approach these texts, whose epistolary present-tense has long since faded into the past, our interpretations must first be informed by a historical understanding of the social practices and material conditions of nineteenth-century letter writing. When we read these

women's writings as letters, we confront a highly conventional, yet highly flexible, form of writing that took place within "an extremely complex and highly developed cultural and rhetorical system," codified in letter-manuals of the period, reinforced through education in public schools, and reproduced and renegotiated through the complex reverberations of social practice (Bannet xvii). Furthermore, we confront writings that, despite their eventual appearance in print, began their lives as autograph documents—subject to the material limits of the letter sheet and the nineteenth-century technology of the pen—and destined for dispatch through the mails, across sometimes vast distances, to their intended destination and addressed recipient.

In *Epistolary Practices*, William Merrill Decker notes that, "as archival documents, letters have never suffered neglect: they have long been read as primary sources of biography and history, as texts brimming with informational content. Yet the performative, fictive, and textual dimensions of letter writing, and the artifacticity of the personally inscribed holograph, have only recently attracted serious notice" (4). Following Decker's lead, then, I treat the letters under consideration *as letters*—as artifacts inscribed and mailed, and as members of a unique class of literary objects, shaped by convention and necessity, and responsive to the material, social, and psychological conditions of writing, reading, and exchange (Decker 19). Furthermore, I recognize that letters, like all forms of autobiography or life writing, are ultimately fictions—constructed in ways that reflect their authors' unique cultural and historical locations and shaped by the rhetorical purposes that motivate their writing. Finally, I join Konstantin Dierks in acknowledging that letter-writers, despite their capacity for reflection, do not merely mirror history—they are history *makers* (Dierks, *Power* xiii). As Dierks demonstrates in *In My Power: Letter Writing and Communications in Early America*, the letter's ubiquity in mediating a widening swath of social activities from the eighteenth century on meant that letters were

increasingly "involved in the taking of action and the making of meaning" and were therefore responsible for performing "crucial cultural work" (4-5).

The means by which the women in this study participate in the "crucial cultural work" of letter writing is, in large part, through their focus on the home and their writing and re-writing of nineteenth-century domestic discourses. However, as they attempt to transport domesticity to a strange and sometimes-harsh new context, they make sense of this work in their writing by charting the relationships between "here" and "there," the home-being-created and the home left behind. In doing so, their letters register themes of separation and loneliness common to emigrant and migrant letters of the period and, according to Decker, central to letters' generic distinctiveness (Decker 22, 38-39). These themes—along with letter-writers' preoccupation with the inevitable "time lags" of epistolary communication and anxiety over the possibility that letters might never make it to their intended destination—arise from the geographic distance often separating correspondents and from the enduring unreliability of the nineteenth-century post (Altman 118, Decker 3). Furthermore, this negotiation of distance and absence not only shapes a letter's contents, it also gives the letter what David Barton and Nigel Hall call "a particular illocutionary force," which, along with certain rhetorical features such as dating, salutation, and subscription, is one of the defining features of its otherwise malleable and amorphous generic identity (6). Even more important in the context of this study, however, these thematic motifs of letter writing, often premised on absence from home and articulated from within the home, are inevitably bound up in the many-layered meanings of home and homemaking in the nineteenth century.

These women's letters participate in the ideology of middle-class domesticity in another way as well. Beginning in the mid-eighteenth century, the familiar letter, which was confined to

expressions of duty and affection among "kin, family and friends," became an increasingly ubiquitous cultural activity among the ill-defined but up-and-coming "middling sort," who used letter writing as a way to claim social respectability and as an aid in their struggle to carve out a class identity (Dierks, "Familiar Letter" 31-32). According to Eve Tavor Bannet, in *Empire of Letters*, this promise of upward social mobility through letter writing was given prescriptive force in the letter manuals of the period, which emphasized their ability to teach "civility" and "politeness" to a broad readership and therefore assisted in the "dissemination of politeness to wider and wider sectors of the population" (23, 49). Letter writing in the nineteenth century was therefore one way to claim and perform the middle-class identity that within the cultural imagination was firmly linked with the era's domestic ideology. In this way, the women in this study claimed domesticity as an identity and an agenda as much through the mere act of letter writing as through the actual content of their letters.

Yet many of the letters written by these women, while addressed and mailed, are nevertheless characterized by discrete, diary-length entries, written regularly over the course of several weeks or even months, thereby accommodating the realities of an irregular post and the perpetual interruptions of their domestic and missionary labors. In fact, the "interruptibility" of this form of writing, according to Sharon M. Harris, is central to the way it constructs personal and cultural meanings. According to Harris, early American women's writings—which often take the form of diaries and letters—are profoundly shaped by the material conditions of their lives and work (*American Women* 4). Taking into account the hard labor and lack of leisure characterizing women's lives, Harris proposes a "poetics of interruptibility" to describe the writings many of these women produced (22). Working within material and environmental constraints—which often meant accommodating the demands of domestic work—many women

developed techniques for writing around the interruptions of daily life and, in so doing, developed a distinctive "intellectual and philosophical aesthetic" (S. Harris, *American Women* 22). In this view, the journal-letter form can be seen as these three writer's creative and adaptive response to the demands of domestic work, while these demands reciprocally shape the ways the domestic is depicted within their writing.

A poetics of interruptibility therefore guides and grows from the development of the journal-letter form, shaping the diary-like pose of many of these women's letters and inflecting the domestic meanings they create. For example, according to Suzanne L. Bunkers and Cynthia A. Huff, in their introduction to *Inscribing the Daily*, a distinctive way diary literature constructs meaning across time and entries is through patterns of accumulation and association, which create an elliptical form that resists closure and doesn't fit neatly into "masculine" models of linear narrative (Bunkers and Huff 9; Cobb-Moore 140). These patterns arise from the ongoing and open-ended nature of diary composition, which shapes its peculiar aesthetic. As Harriet Blodget writes, "A diary seems to be real life going on rather than being, as in autobiography, life retrospectively shaped to a coherent whole" (Blodgett 157).

Unlike autobiography, which is conceived and realized in a relatively single location in time and space, a diary is worked out in language *through* time and space in an ongoing and open-ended act of construction and revision. This open-endedness and ongoingness leads to a form marked by a measure of fragmentation. As meanings accumulate across entries, however, the writer deals with the inherent fragmentation of the form through acts of repetition and redaction, attempting to achieve at least a provisional coherence. Still, while journal-letters,

unlike most traditional diaries,[16] directly address a particular audience and are therefore actively shaped for a reader, the journal-letter nevertheless habitually gives way to the perfunctory sentences and cataloguing impulse of what Lynn Z. Bloom calls the "truly private" diarist, who sometimes collects and records events without immediate efforts of interpretation or elaboration, or clear address of a specific reader (25). From within this conflicting pull of fragmentation and coherence, these three women negotiate their relationship to domesticity and to their broader sense of mission.

As each of these writers "write home" from their liminal position between the various homes that shape their identities and demand their allegiance—their new home, the home left behind, and their spiritual home—they resist, at least on a formal level, "masculine" models of empire and the progressivist narratives that undergird them. Certainly, the diary's serial form opens it to a plurality of meaning, born from the changing moods and perspectives of daily, hourly life. Consequently, the domestic is never reduced to a monolithic system within these writers' work, but is rather imbued with nuance and plagued by contradictions not easily resolved.

While attention to the journal-like characteristics of the texts treated here is important in teasing out their domestic meanings, I nevertheless consider their status as letters, in the context of correspondence between parties separated by distance, of primary importance in shaping their writing and the "cultural work" it attempts to do. Importantly, a great deal of the cultural work

[16] Lynn Z. Bloom explores the diarist's notion of audience in her essay "I Write for Myself and Strangers," and while she acknowledges that some diaries are "truly private," she contends that most blur the line between public and private and are written with at least the vague notion of a reader, or potential reader, in mind (24). Steven E. Kagle also addresses notions of audience in *Early Nineteenth Century American Diary Literature*, arguing that most, if not all, dairies are written with an audience in mind, whether it be a future or idealized self, family members or future descendents, or, more grandly, for the sake of posterity or with plans (or dreams) of future publication (5-6). However, most traditional diaries do not directly address a particular reader in the manner of letters; the diarist's audience is typically only implied.

performed by letters in the nineteenth century was national work, and beyond the conditions and characteristics defining the journal-letter form, letters, like domesticity in the nineteenth century, had a strongly nationalistic dimension. Because of their ability to mediate, maintain, and strengthen social bonds, letters played a starring role in broader cultural discourses about national identity, unity, and the new nation's imperialist agenda.

According to Elizabeth Hewitt, letter writing in the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, because it inscribed social relationships, became the literal and theoretical model around which themes of "union and disunion" plaguing the early republic converged (3). In an age of unprecedented geographic mobility and increased literacy, an elaborate network of letters was a crucial means of unifying "a nation too large to be present to itself" (Hewitt 12). In fact, the establishment of the U.S. Postal system throughout New England, and increasingly in newly-colonized territories, was largely motivated by the imperatives of national union and the need for an elaborate network of communications, which was crucial to the functioning of a representative form of government. According to Dierks, the communications infrastructure created in the postal service, and the letters it circulated, was therefore a veritable "cog in the engine of nation" and "a tendon in the connective tissue between nation and wider world" (*Power* 27). In fact, argues Hewitt, Federal union in the nineteenth century was "literally crafted out of correspondence" (Hewitt 3).

By penning missives from their homes, finding spaces for writing between their domestic tasks, women therefore directly participated in the project of nation-building. While letters enacted social union in the nineteenth century, however, missionary letters extended this imagined unity to the newly colonized territories of the mythical West and beyond, to the far corners of the globe. Furthermore, they did so according to motivations that were not narrowly

nationalistic, though they were certainly implicated in nationalism. Specifically, missionary letters played a key role in abetting the decisively Protestant and millennialist desire to "advance" the Kingdom of God to the ends of the earth—work that was premised on a radical vision of global unity under a single god. Certainly, letters served an important unifying function within the missionary enterprise, keeping alive the connection with the home left behind, and the nation it symbolized. They did so in order to secure the emotional and financial support necessary to sustain the mission effort and, just as important, to assert the essential continuity of their new home with the one left behind. So, while the letters in this study register experiences of disjuncture and disorientation, each of these three women, in different ways, attempts to write their new context into the old, thereby expanding national and spiritual boundaries in order to gather all the people of the world within God's millennial kingdom.

Chapters

In the next chapter, I consider the various intersections of home and national identity in *The Memoirs of Mrs. Harriet Newell*, a compilation of Newell's letters and diaries edited by the Reverend Leonard Woods and published shortly after her death at sea in 1812. Earlier that same year, Harriet Atwood Newell—newly married to missionary Samuel Newell—embarked for India on America's pioneering overseas mission, fulfilling a vocational ambition first articulated in her girlhood diary and later chronicled in her correspondence. While Newell's mission was cut short before it even really began, her writing reflects a developing transnational consciousness predicated on an evangelical rejection of any earthly "abiding place" and a parallel refusal of a national "home." In claiming a higher allegiance than home and nation, Newell is able to justify her refusal of a settled, conventional domesticity and, ultimately, provide a heroic missionary model for other women hoping to extend their "influence" beyond the confines of the domestic

realm. At the same time, however, Newell betrays the fundamental contradictions structuring the era's linked ideologies of home and nation, and her inclusive transnational ethic, supported by prophetic visions of a world united under God's millennial reign, ultimately depends on boundaries separating "us" and "them."

The journal-letters of Caroline Pilsbury, single female missionary to the Penobscot tribe of Maine, reveal the same symbolic imbrications of home and nation that surface in Newell's writing. Aware of a broader audience than that of her addressed correspondent, Pilsbury, writing in 1819 and 1820, harnesses the present-tense immediacy of the journal-letter form to build what is essentially a sustained argument for national inclusion. Pointing to evidence of the tribe's capacity to become domesticated Christians—and therefore assimilated in the "domestic" space of the nation—Pilsbury challenges the racial boundaries of domesticity at the same time she reinscribes them. Hinging the tribe's spiritual redemption on their cultural transformation, Pilsbury conflates evangelical rebirth with the successful adoption of the "civilized" values and practices of nineteenth-century domesticity. Pilsbury, therefore, preaches a deeply ethnocentric gospel with a decidedly political edge, and in confronting a tribe engaged in a battle to preserve their land, and their way of life, Pilsbury must reconcile Penobscot resistance with her conviction that the Penobscot are a people "which (I trust) 'Jesus Loves'" (June 19, 1820, First Communication, 6).

Writing from Oregon territory between 1836 and 1847, Narcissa Whitman's letters develop a sustained allegory between home and nation that eventually reverses Pilsbury's construction of home as inclusive national space. At first eager to transform the Cayuse Indians in the image of white, middle-class domesticity, Whitman gradually withdraws from her "more public" duties of mission work in order to focus on creating a moral, orderly home filled with

moral, orderly children (*Letters* 67). Writing from a territory transitioning from "borderland to border," Whitman seeks to manage the escalating racial hostilities of her frontier context by retreating into the carefully-maintained order of the Waiilatpu mission home (Addis 222). Her reconfigured "ministry" of motherhood, while contracted in scope, nevertheless resonates with political meanings, and her attempts to purge her home of dirt, and the Indians who track it in, parallel the U.S. government's imperial attempts to purge the national "home" of "Indian occupancy" through a politics of forced removal.[17]

In ways that reflect both broader political meanings and the complexities of their personal experiences, each of these early-American writers engaged in the literary and cultural work of building a home and building a nation. At a time when, as Susan M. Ryan points out, the "literal shape and membership of the nation" was being actively contested, these women used discourses of home to build harmonious visions of a national "family" at the same time that they participated in the work of boundary-maintenance upon which American imperial expansion ultimately depended (14). As I will argue in the following chapters, Newell, Pilsbury, and Whitman turned to the journal-letter form to write their way into and out of the contradictions that shaped our national mythology, at once reinforcing and unraveling easy parallels between home, nation, mission, and empire in the nineteenth century.

[17] In his speech in support of the Federal Indian Removal Act of 1830, President Andrew Jackson argued that to "relieve" Mississippi and western Alabama of "Indian occupancy" would "enable those States to advance rapidly in population, wealth, and power."

CHAPTER 2

"My Country is in Every Place": Domesticity and the Construction of a Transnational Subjectivity in *Memoirs of Mrs. Harriet Newell*

In a sermon preached "on the occasion of the lamentable death of Mrs. Harriet Newell," Leonard Woods, who would eventually compile and edit Newell's *Memoirs,* eulogized the young New England woman who had set out just a year earlier on America's pioneering foreign mission to India. Using the occasion as an opportunity to comment on the missionary vocation more broadly, Woods appealed to a verse in the gospel of Matthew: "And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life" (*King James Version*, Matt. 19.22). He went on to distinguish "the Missionary" as the Christian who not only "[has] a *willingness* to forsake all for Christ," but "*actually* forsakes all" (Woods 215, emphasis mine). However, Woods reserved his highest praise "the Wife of the Missionary," whose willingness to "forsake home and country" was especially remarkable given her natural ties to the home. Preached Woods, "The tie which binds her to her relatives and her home is stronger," for she is "more sensible to the tenderness of natural relations, and to the delights of domestic life" (Woods 215).

While missionary wives like Newell were publicly valorized for giving up the domestic "delights" of the home, they were nevertheless expected to carry its meanings along with them. In his commissioning sermon preached a year earlier, on the occasion of these same missionaries' departure, the Reverend Jonathon Allen specifically addressed the three missionary wives—Anne Hasseltine Judson, Rosanne Peck Nott, and Harriet Atwood Newell—who would

be accompanying their husbands on the first mission of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM).[1] Allen instructed them to "Go" and "teach" the women of India, "and do all in your power to enlighten their minds [and] raise their character to the dignity of rational beings" (qtd. in Robert 2). Implicit in this injunction to "Go," and "teach," was an expectation that their teaching would be largely an extension of their domestic duties at home. Charged with the education of women and children, their evangelical work would primarily entail extending the "civilized" values and homemaking practices of the middle-class New England home to the "degraded females" they hope to "elevate" (Woods 101). Importantly, this mission of evangelical domestication was inseparable from the nineteenth-century discourses of national exceptionalism that underwrote it. Therefore, in leaving their "homes and lands," these early missionary wives would, in one sense, fulfill the rhetoric of Woods's sermon and "forsake [their] country." However, they would do so according to the imperatives of a deeply nationalistic gospel. Ultimately then, in abandoning "home" and "country" for the sake of a higher allegiance to God, these women were paradoxically called to *fulfill* the era's twin discourses of home and nation.

This paradox is deeply embedded in the journals, letters, and journal-letters of Harriet Newell, the youngest among the missionary wives to set sail for India in 1812 under the aegis of the American Board. Newell's is story of leaving but never arriving, a story of a home continually deferred and a mission never fulfilled. Accordingly, her writings reflect the sense of suspension between past and future that such a story embodies, and they do so in ways that, while uniquely epistolary, invoke the intertwined domestic and nationalist discourses of the era

[1] Aside from the wives, the party was comprised of Adoniram Judson, Jr., Samuel Nott, Samuel Newell, Luther Rice, and Gordon Hall. Anne Judson was Newell's childhood friend; Newell never met Rosanne Nott before her death, but she corresponded with her before and after their departures on separate ships.

and position them within the complicating context of nineteenth-century Protestant missions. Within her writings, eventually compiled and published post mortem by the popular evangelical presses, Newel creates and occupies a space of liminality, or in-betweeness,[2] where, suspended between multiple homes and nations, she constructs a condition of homelessness that is belied by her overriding preoccupation with the domestic realm and claims an identity that is transnational while it is premised on deeply nationalistic assumptions.

In giving due attention to the "transnational" in my study of Newell's published journals and correspondence, I acknowledge that the missionary crusades of the nineteenth century were, inarguably, a transnational phenomenon. In their introduction to *Competing Kingdoms: Women, Mission, Nation, and the American Protestant Empire, 1812-1960*, Barbara Reeves-Ellington, Kathryn Kish Sklar, and Connie A. Shemo argue that, despite current efforts to "internationalize" American history, little attention has been paid to the complex relationships between women missionaries and American nationalism and imperialism (3). Understanding that the work of American Protestant missions can only be understood in a transnational context, the authors argue that Protestant missionary women of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries "reinvented the meanings of American nationalism and imperialism as they negotiated competing nationalisms and imperialisms in varying colonial settings" (2). Following their lead, and in keeping with the "transnational turn" in American studies, heralded by Shelley Fishkin in her 2004 ASA presidential address, I join those in our field who acknowledge the artificiality of a "national paradigm" that constructs "the United States as a clearly bordered geographical and political space" (20). Instead, I attend to the ways nineteenth-century mission history highlights the permeability of national borders, opening up potential sites of cultural in-betweeness that, in

[2] The implications of "liminality" as a cultural concept were notably explored by British anthropologist Victor Turner in *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. See note 3 to the introduction.

Newell's case, are communicated through the liminal language of a transnational subjectivity. A language of thresholds and borderlands, this liminal language is an important part of our national story. By seeking to locate the perspectives of a nineteenth-century missionary woman within this story, I seek to remedy the general exclusion of women living before the twentieth century within transnational accounts of U.S. history. As Sharon Harris argues in her 2009 essay, "Transnational Paradigms as Feminist Lenses," "There has been a *recognition* of exclusion, but far more analytical questioning is needed of what constitutes nationalism and, indeed, transnationalism for women living and writing in the early period" (649-50).

A Note on the Text

Like most of the era's biographical publications about women, Newell's story made it onto the public stage through a male intermediary. From its first publication in 1814, less than a year after Newell's death, *Memoirs* was attributed to Leonard Woods, a Congregationalist minister and one of the central figures in the founding of the ABCFM. With a minimal degree of overt editorial intrusion, Woods compiled and edited Newell's extensive journals and correspondence, interrupting her first-person accounts only briefly and intermittently with framing third-person narration. Between 1814 and 1840, Newell's memoir was published in at least fifty editions and in twelve cities along the Northeastern seaboard and across the Atlantic, thereby reaching a large audience of both American and British readers within the first half of the nineteenth century (Cayton 85). Its publication, according to Mary Kupiec Cayton, was precipitated by a convergence of cultural forces. Most notable among them was the creation of new female reading publics in an era of broadening notions of women's education and, perhaps most important of all, the rise of a distinctively evangelical print culture, which was enmeshed in

the expansive social and institutional networks of denominational Protestant evangelicalism (Cayton 70, 83-84).

Memoirs blends two genres of women's biography described by Scott E. Casper in *Constructing American Lives*—genres which began to proliferate shortly after Newell's death, when new printing technologies and more extensive distribution networks revolutionized book publishing (79). First, it belongs to the popular genre of memoirs of obscure, "ordinary" women of admirable piety, often pieced together from their personal correspondence and diaries by a close relative or minister, who provided a framing narrative (78). Taking as their stage of action the interior spaces of mind and home, these memoirs created models of Christian womanhood by celebrating the quiet, holy lives of self-abnegation lived by women whose public accomplishments were unremarkable but whose spiritual lives were worthy of emulation (Casper 117-19). Newell's memoir in many ways conforms to these conventions of the pious woman's memoir, and in this way it typifies a characteristic strategy of American Board publications, which, according to Mary Kupiec Cayton, tended to "[position] women missionaries in the context of the private, interpersonal spaces they had always inhabited" (71). However, Newell's life was not merely a "private" one, and she was launched into public fame when she became a member of America's first foreign missionary enterprise and later when she emerged as a celebrated martyr to the missionary cause, representing a new breed of "cultural heroine" in nineteenth-century New England (Cayton 70). In this way, Newell's memoir belongs to the era's biographies of women of "action," whose reform work or missionary activity positioned them in the public realm, even while it limited their sphere of activity within the boundaries of evangelical Christianity and the sentimental values of feminine domesticity (Casper 113).

After a short introduction by Woods, *Memoirs* begins with extracts from the diary Newell kept while attending Bradford Academy in the summer of 1806, a short distance from the home of her soon-to-be-widowed mother and merchant father in Haverhill, Massachusetts. Signaling a departure from traditional biography, *Memoirs* begins not with Newell's birth, but with her evangelical experience of "new birth," when, according to Woods, "she first became the subject of those deep religious impressions which laid the foundation of her Christian life" (2).[3] Newell's early letters and diaries closely follow the conventions of the conversion narrative—convicted of her complete depravity and of the sinfulness of her past life, she enters into a period of agonizing self-reflection and spiritual struggle, through which she emerges with cautious assurance of her salvation and a deep humility born out of gratitude for the undeserved gift of God's grace.[4] Next, Newell's narrative, which is arranged more or less chronologically, shifts away from its inward focus on her conversion experience and early spiritual struggles. From this pivotal point, her letters and journals tell the story of her decision to travel to India on the first foreign mission of the American Board as the wife of Samuel Newell, a young Congregationalist who, along with a few fellow students at Andover Seminary, had been central in the founding of the American Board in 1810.[5] Once she embarks for India, Newell's story is told mostly through a series of journal entries, addressed as a letter to her mother and written during the missionaries'

[3] This opening sets the spiritual trajectory of the work, locating it within the evangelical revivalism of the Second Great Awakening, which emphasized the emotional dimensions of religious experience and the necessity of individual spiritual rebirth. See Dana L. Robert's *American Women in Mission: A Social History of Their Thought and Practice* on the shift toward individual emotional experience within nineteenth-century New England Protestantism.

[4] For more on the conversion narrative genre, see D. Bruce Hindmarsh's *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative: Spiritual Autobiography in Early Modern England*, which follows the genre from the early eighteenth century through its decline in the late nineteenth and adopts a transatlantic perspective.

[5] The story of the founding of the ABCFM begins with the legendary Haystack Prayer Meeting, led by Samuel J. Mills and attended by several fellow students from Williams College. Seeking shelter under a haystack in the middle of a rainstorm, the men held a prayer meeting and consecrated their lives to the work of foreign missions. Later, during their years at Andover Theological Seminary, this group—which eventually included Adoniram Judson and Samuel Newell—successfully petitioned the General Association of Congregational Churches to sponsor the formation of the ABCFM in 1810 (Kling 792).

voyage to India; from the British mission in Serampore, near Calcutta (Kolkata); and en route to the Isle of France, after the American missionaries' expulsion from the country by the British East India Company. Included in an appendix to many editions of the book is Reverend Jonathon Allen's funeral sermon, preached on the occasion of Newell's death at sea, following childbirth, on board the ship travelling to the Isle of France.

In exploring the interrelated meanings of home and nation that Newell constructs in her writing, I take into account the long and complex history of the documents that eventually comprised Newell's memoir. William Merrill Decker refers to the "multiple rhetorical lives" of published letters, which in being "readdressed" to a new, and sometimes (though not always) unintended, audience in a new social context, undergo an essential "transformation" (21, 24-25). Keeping this in mind, I pay due attention to the interpretive complexities posed by documents that have been lifted from their original material and rhetorical contexts, compiled and edited by a male interloper with a particular rhetorical agenda, and published in dozens of editions over the course of the century for a transatlantic readership.

National Exceptionalism and Newell's Divisive Deployment of the Home

While Newell exhibits a deeply ambivalent relationship to the era's linked domestic and nationalist discourses, she frequently invokes their characteristic rhetorics—both overtly, through discursive assertion, and implicitly, through use of imagery and selection of detail. In travelling as missionary wife to India, Newell embarked upon a deeply nationalistic enterprise that depended largely on a nineteenth-century ideology of domesticity for its legitimacy. According to David W. Kling, the early officials of the American Board, in seeking to convert the world's "heathen," exhibited a "spiritual noblesse oblige linked inextricably to a developing American nationalism wherein God raised up the United States as a beacon of gospel light to the

world" (801-2). Given that the "superior" status of New England women was commonly used to justify such providential claims of American exceptionalism—and to underwrite the enlarged sense of divine obligation that accompanied them—the exportation of American models of feminine domesticity was considered central to the nation's messianic mission (Tyrrell 46-48).

Feminine missionary influence was considered especially needed in Protestant missions to India, and the "degraded" status of Indian women was commonly rehearsed in missionary tracts of the era (Johnston 86). According to one anonymous missionary commentator, "Nothing but the spread of the Christian ideal of womanhood will break the fetters of India's women" (qtd. in Huber and Lutkehaus 44). Before leaving for India, Newell expressed horror and pity at the "cruel tortures" of "Hindostan," where "Widows consent to be burned with their deceased husbands" (Woods 90). The era's evangelical discourses likewise cast Indian women as the degraded subjects of patriarchy, subject to brutal practices like widow-burning or sequestered against their will in the gloomy darkness of the *zenana* (Johnston 90). Their simultaneous spiritual and cultural "elevation" would be achieved through the gentle influence of missionary women, who would model exemplary Christian womanhood, and an exemplary Christian household, to their "Hindoo sisters," who were largely unreachable by male missionaries (Johnston 88-90; Woods 103). Understanding her mission as a mission to women in particular, Newell declared, "If Oh, could I become the instrument of bringing *one* degraded *female* to Jesus, how should I be repaid for every tear and every pain!" (Woods 101).

Given the complex interrelationships of national and domestic discourses, it is perhaps unsurprising that Newell's nationalism finds particular expression in the home-centered imagery that populates her writing. Frequently in *Memoirs*, Newell uses home as a sort of short-hand for a nation's cultural and religious progress, indulging a tendency of nineteenth-century Americans

"to conceive of national and familial structures as analogous" (S. Ryan 160). Even in a few words, Newell's descriptions of physical dwellings register meanings with broader implications about nation. In the letters written to friends before her departure, Newell continually builds a contrast between "here" and "there" by invoking imagery of domestic space: she will leave the "peace" and "tranquility" of her maternal "home"—and all the associated "comforts of a civilized life"—for an "Indian hut" or a "mud-walled cottage" in a "foreign" and "unhealthy country" (Woods 118, 120, 136). In one such letter, Newell anticipates leaving "my affectionate friends, my pleasant home, my much-loved country" (Woods 94). Later in the letter, she inverts this tri-part construction of friends, home, and nation, writing, "The presence of Immanuel will make a mud-wall cottage, a foreign land, and savage associates, desirable," betraying a syntactic slippage between home, nation, and cultural progress that frequently surfaces in her writing (Woods 95).

In this way, leaving the domestic space of the nation is often figured by Newell in more intimate terms of leaving the domestic realm of the home, which, for Newell, comes to symbolize either the "civilized" or "savage" state of the nation. She will leave her mother's spacious "mansion" for a "little Indian hut" made with primitive building materials, where the distinct compartments of the New England home—which assure privacy and familial order—are collapsed into a single, shared space (Woods 82, 136). The contrast between "civilized" and "primitive" domestic spaces is intensified when Newell describes the passing scenery from the vessel as it nears Calcutta, the colonial context adding a new layer of complexity to her construction of difference. In a journal-letter to her mother, Newell writes, "After passing hundreds of the Hindoo cottages, which resemble hay-stacks in their form and color ... a large English house will appear to vary the scene" (Woods 149). Here, the coexistence of large

colonial dwellings and primitive "Hindoo" huts brings cultural and national difference into stark relief.

During her six weeks in India, travelling between Calcutta and the mission house in nearby Serampore, [6] Newell continues to use the home as a means of delineating national boundaries, implicitly registering her relationship to the "foreign" through the construction of interior and exterior space. Throughout her letters from India, Newell uses the domestic space of colonial and mission homes in India to build an implicit contrast between inside (clean, quiet, orderly, civilized) and outside (dirty, loud, chaotic, uncivilized). Newell spends a great deal of time describing to her mostly-female correspondents the "elegant" and "spacious" apartments of the Serampore mission, which had been founded by pioneering British missionary William Carey under the auspices of the Baptist Missionary Society and was the American missionaries' impermanent home as they awaited the next stage of their still-uncertain journey (Woods 145). [7] Newell describes the mission house as a refuge from the "noise and confusion" of Calcutta, whose crowds, upon their arrival, "surrounded" them and left them "half-stunned with their perpetual chattering" (Woods 163). Within the security of the missionaries' "happy dwelling," Newell writes, "[here] peace and plenty dwell, and we almost forget that we are in a land of pagan darkness." Depicting herself engaged in a distinctively domestic deployment—letter writing—Newell constructs the world without as barbaric and pagan: "While writing I hear the drum and the instruments of idol music" (Woods 169).

[6] Serampore is located in the Northeast region of India, in the nineteenth-century region of Bengal. According to an explanatory footnote in *Memoirs*, Serampore was "[a] Danish Settlement, chosen as the seat of the [BMS] Mission in the year 1799. It is situated about fifteen miles north from Calcutta, on the western bank of the Hoogly, a branch of the Ganges" (Woods 142).

[7] Reverend William Carey, author of *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* (1792), which was wildly influential on both sides of the Atlantic and is credited with helping to spawn the transatlantic mission movement of the nineteenth century.

Outside, in Newell's writing, is a place of superstition and spiritual chaos, where a profusion of sound, color, smell, and heat threaten to overwhelm the senses. At one point, Newell describes the "mass" of people swarming to fill the banks of the Ganges River, hoping to catch a glimpse of the "idol Juggernaut" as it passes (Woods 160, 165). [8] She depicts "thousands on thousands assembled to perform … idolatrous rites," guessing that "some will probably sacrifice their lives" (Woods 165). Inside, by contrast is constructed as peaceful, clean, secure—a retreat from the filth, bustle, and disorder of the outside, and a place constructed to afford the opportunities for privacy and solitary reflection that undergird "civilized" society. While in India, Newell often depicts herself within domestic spaces, engaged in domestic employments like reading, letter writing, sewing, and walking through the garden (itself a cultivated extension of domestic space). The home's separate "compartments" afford her opportunities to "bathe every day" and, importantly, to be "alone," which suggests a contrast to the "too *public*" domestic arrangements of the "Hindoos," so often decried by missionaries as a subversion of the nuclear family (Johnston 89; Woods 167, 170). In fact, according to Anna Johnston, "Both heterosexual conjugality and the capacity for spiritual reflection were seen to be compromised by Indian domestic arrangements," which exhibited a distressing permeability of physical and familial boundaries (90).

Amy Kaplan's "Manifest Domesticity" helps to situate Newell's construction of interior, domestic space within the era's related discourses of national expansionism and sentimental domesticity. According to Kaplan, the era's expansionist rhetorics used metaphors of home and family to represent the "domestic" space of the nation, and to symbolize the filial bonds of loyalty and affection that united it. In a period of American expansionism, therefore, the home

[8] "Juggernaut" evolved from the British mispronunciation of "Jagannath," the deity worshipped at the famous shrine of Puri, in the state of Orissa.

came to be deployed as a symbol of inclusion or exclusion from national ("domestic") space. While Kaplan's domestic model for understanding women's role in U.S. imperialism has been rightfully criticized for reducing difference to a monolithic category of "foreignness," in mimicking the simplistic binaries of expansionist discourses, it offers a useful rubric through which to view Newell's deployment of the home in delineating the boundaries of the foreign (Taketani 92). Kaplan describes this potentially divisive function of domesticity within imperialist discourses when she argues that domestic ideology, while it sometimes expands to encompass (or "domesticate") the "Other," also sometimes "contract[s] woman's sphere to police domestic boundaries against the threat of foreignness both within and without" ("Manifest" 585). In her construction of the mission home as recreated national space, Newell demonstrates how the walls of the home could be metaphorically deployed in the racial boundary-making that accompanied nineteenth-century American expansionism, which, as I point out in the introduction, was predominantly a form of *cultural* expansionism, with a distinctive tone of Protestant moral reform (Tyrrell 48). However, Newell's relationship to the home is not always defined by a narrow nationalism, and in the next section I will move to consider the ways she challenges a straightforward relationship between home, nation, and mission.

"Heaven is my home": Earthly Homelessness as an Authorizing Discourse

Early in *Memoirs*, a thirteen-year-old Harriet Atwood (Newell) proclaims the tenuousness of her connection to the illusory world of "time and sense," where the "glittering toys" of earthly existence, and "frivolous" pursuits like novel-reading, serve only to distract from the greater spiritual realities animating human existence (Woods 33). Rejecting a blinding worldliness, Newell proclaims an alternate allegiance to the Kingdom of God—an allegiance that

is communicated in strikingly domestic terms. In a diary entry written during her time at the prestigious Bradford Academy, Newell writes, "This world is a state of trial, a vale of tears: it is not our home" (Woods 16). Later, she uses a metaphor of nineteenth-century travel to frame her sense of eternal destination, writing "time will soon land us on the shores of eternity, our destined home" (Woods 59). And still later, she writes to a correspondent, "Our home is professedly in heaven" (Woods 62).

This language of home—and earthly *homelessness*—suffuses her writings, and it reflects the eschatological narrative of Protestant Millennialism that fueled the nineteenth-century mission movement and provided Newell with an interpretive framework for understanding her experiences. According to the period's Millennialist eschatology, which reframed a first-century expectation of God's imminent return within a nineteenth-century American context, the Kingdom of God—and the beginning of the end of earthly existence—was close "at hand" (Woods 194; Mark 1.14). This eschatology grew directly from the reworked Edwardsean Calvinism of the emerging New Divinity movement, which David W. Kling argues was a central force in the formation of the American Board and a primary catalyst for the foreign mission movement. Building upon and extending the moderate Calvinism of John Edwards and his disciple Samuel Hopkins, they married millennial fervor with a new emphasis upon the limitless universality of God's saving grace and grounded it all in an ethic of social activism that extended to the far corners of the earth (Kling 805-806). Within this nineteenth-century religious discourse, the work of harvesting souls through global evangelism was imbued with a profound urgency, and given the imminent collision of spiritual and material realms, earthly pursuits were deemed valuable only in terms of their advancement of God's kingdom (Sweet 44; Kling 800). Positioning herself squarely within this narrative, Newell invokes the language of home in ways

that transcend the discursive bounds of the nineteenth-century domestic realm, using home, rather more grandiosely, as an existential symbol pointing to either a worldly or a spiritual plane of existence. However, the frequent contrast she draws between worldly and eternal homes in her journals and correspondence nevertheless resonates with cultural implications that locate her firmly within the domestic discourses of the era.

In fact, by directly intersecting with contemporary discourses that sought to expand women's public roles, it is Newell's spiritualized language of home that ultimately justifies her eventual abandonment of "the dear home of [her] nativity," and of the "widowed and afflicted mother" that dwells at its center (Woods 28, 103). When, in April of 1811, Samuel Newell extends to a young Harriet Atwood an epistolary invitation to join him as wife and partner on the first American mission to India, she dutifully awaits her mother's blessing, declaring she will not consider the offer if her mother opposes it. When her mother responds "she will not refuse her consent ... yet she will not advise," it is left to Newell to determine whether or not this is her true vocational calling, and she is free to negotiate the conflicting duties centered in her maternal and heavenly homes.[9] In performing this struggle within her journals and letters, she overtly appeals to the discourse of women's "usefulness" that had begun to circulate early in the century. This discourse, largely underwritten by nineteenth-century evangelical Protestantism, subordinated the domestic realm to the spiritual realm as the primary locus of women's duty, thus helping to legitimize Newell's rejection of an earthly home (Robert 34-17, 104; Sweet 47, 55).

[9] After receiving Samuel Newell's letter requesting she join him as a wife in India, Newell writes in her journal that, should her mother refuse her consent, "my duty would be *plain*." She goes on to declare, "I *cannot* act contrary to the advice and express command of a *pious* mother" (Woods 73-74). In a somewhat rare instance of overt editorial intrusion, Leonard Woods dissolves readerly suspense by adding this immediate rejoinder: "The fact was, that her mother made no objection to her accepting the offer of Mr. Newell, but cheerfully left her to act according to her conviction of duty" (Woods 74). This sets up a series of letters in which Newell performs her struggle to make a decision for an audience of female correspondents.

This emphasis upon usefulness is everywhere present in Newell's writing, and it is this discourse that authorizes her expansion of the domestic realm to include appropriately gendered missionary activity. In a climate of uncertainty and skepticism regarding the prudence of sending young women into the foreign mission field, Newell invokes this discourse of usefulness through simple, but powerful, repetition of the term (Robert 107; P. Harris 33). For example, in a letter to Miss M.S. of Boston, dated May 11, 1811, Newell justifies her decision to "follow God to a land of strangers" by articulating her conviction that "females would be useful" in missionary work (Woods 77, 78). Later, in a letter to another young female friend, she writes, "Nothing but the ardent wish of more extensive usefulness first let my thoughts to the heathen world" (Woods 119). Further emphasizing her potential utility, Newell elsewhere conceives of herself as an "instrument of promoting God's glory" (Woods 65), designating her future work as missionary wife "the sphere, in which I expect to be useful, while life is prolonged" (Woods 131). Rather than retreat into the sanctuary of her mother's domestic haven, and "seclude herself, and spend [her] few remaining days entirely devoted to the best of Beings"—as she at one point longs to do—Newell instead chooses radical engagement with the world beyond the home (Woods 41). Newell's invocation of "usefulness" therefore points to the paradox at the heart of her writing: by claiming a spiritual home, Newell opens up a new sphere of agency beyond the domestic realm. At the same time, however, she formulates her usefulness in explicitly domestic terms—she goes first as "wife," hoping to "[add] to the happiness" of her husband, and only second as "missionary" (Woods 131). Furthermore, by subordinating the obligations centered in her earthly home to her home in heaven, Newell renegotiates her relationship to another domestic space—that of the nation.

National Homelessness: Constructing a Transnational Subjectivity

Within *Memoirs*, Newell's eventual decision to accompany Samuel Newell and the small company of American Board missionaries to India—a decision largely negotiated through letters—initiates a striking formal shift within her narrative. Upon her decision to "Go," she enters a liminal space of her own creation, from which she looks backward, to the home she anticipates leaving, and forward, to the home in India she hopes to create (Woods 79). This looking forward and backward from her anchored position in the present, a characteristic epistolary movement Janet Gherkin Altman calls "pivot[ing]" on the present-tense, registers a temporal orientation characteristic of epistolary discourse (and, incidentally, shared by the journal form) (Altman 123). Notably, in Newell's writing, this movement forward and backward in *time* closely parallels her movement forward and backward in *space*, allowing her to construct a liminal position between the multiple homes, real and imagined, that anchor her identity and shape her purpose. However, as I will eventually demonstrate, this liminality is not constructed merely in relationship to the domestic realm, bordered by the walls of the middle-class family home. Rather, upon the broadening of her sphere of mobility and agency to include the "strange" and "distant land" of India, Newell's constructed position of in-betweeness begins to register on a level of "domestic" space more broadly construed—that delineated by the geographic, political, and cultural borders of the nation-state (Woods 156, 179).

In her widely cited and critically formative book *Epistolarity: Approaches to a Form*, Altman sets out to isolate the distinguishing conventions and characteristics of the epistolary form. While Altman explores the use of the letter form as a literary device within epistolary fiction, scholars have nevertheless made use of *Epistolarity*'s critical framework in their interpretations of letters written within the material, social, and political contexts of actual

correspondence. According to Altman, the present is the "pivotal" tense in epistolary discourse, providing the temporal "anchor" from which the letter writer is able to look forward and backward in time in order to create the illusion of a *true* present, which always eludes the epistolary pen. Thus, the "unfolding of the letter narrative" necessarily alternates between events (whether actual or psychological) that occur either before or after the occasion of epistolary composition, in a future that the letter writer anticipates but which remains uncertain (117-18). In this way, the letter writer "is conscious of writing in a specific present against which past and future are plotted" (Altman 122). Unlike in traditional memoir, therefore, where the present exists to shed light on the past, the letter writer (like the diarist) uses the past to illuminate the present, and to propel her into an uncertain future (Altman 119).

In Altman's formulation, the letter writer's temporal orientation is therefore patterned into the themes and structure of her letters. Consequently, the fictive epistolary world of the letter—which William Merrill Decker argues all letter writers create—is characterized by a temporal suspension between past and future that, in Newell's writing, is communicated in domestic terms and has dramatically geographic dimensions (Decker 16). Once Newell accepts Samuel Newell's joint offer of marriage and a missionary vocation, Newell's pieced-together narrative shifts into the pronounced pattern of looking forward and backward Altman describes. In a letter to Mr. Newell, dated Oct. 10, 1811, from her home in Haverhill, Newell anticipates leaving home for a life of "trials" and "hardships" in India (Woods 82). She writes, "This is the eve of my birthday. Pensive and alone, I have this evening given full scope to recollection of the past, and anticipation of the future" (Woods 105). Positioning herself in time ("the eve of [her] birthday) and in a psychological place ("Pensive and alone"), Newell describes outright the movement between "past" and "future" that is deeply embedded in the subsequent letters and

journal entries she will write before embarking for India, later on board the ship en route, and finally from shifting locations within India and adrift in the Bay of Bengal, after the American missionaries' quick dismissal by British colonial authorities.[10]

Newell engages in this forward-and-backward movement in a letter written from the mission house in Serampore, where the Newells and Judsons awaited the arrival of the ship "Harmony" and the other half of their party. Upon their arrival at the mission house, which would serve as a way station for the American missionaries before embarking on the next stage of their journey, Newell describes to her Sister "E." their current "unsettled state." From this "unsettled" position in the present, Newell shifts back into the past, explaining that the missionaries have been ordered by the "Bengal Government" to return to America, and "have relinquished the idea of stationing a Mission at Burmah entirely." Again, pivoting on her present "unsettled" state, she turns to consider the future, once more in terms of destination: "Several other places have been thought of, but it is still uncertain where we shall go" (Woods 170).

Importantly, this looking forward and backward, which propels a story caught in the liminal space of unrealized hopes and an unreached destination, allows Newell to carve out a textual position that is both spatial and temporal, suspended between past and future, homes and nations. Altman clarifies the link between time and travel in epistolary discourse, explaining, "To write a letter is to map one's coordinates—temporal, spatial, emotional, intellectual—in order to tell someone else where one is located at a particular time and how far one has traveled since the last writing" (119). Newell suggests both the spatial and temporal coordinates of her constructed liminality in a letter, dated 1811, to Miss F.W. of Beverly, a female friend in her "familiar circle"

[10] The British East India Company's official ban on missionaries' entry into the country was lifted in 1813.

of correspondence (Woods 95). Also in this letter, she demonstrates the continual slippage between domestic and national discourses that shapes her writing perspective. Newell writes:

> Often does my imagination paint, in glowing colours, the last sad scene of my departure from the land of my nativity. A widowed mother's heart with anguish wrung, the tears of sorrow flowing from the eyes of brothers and sisters dear, while the last farewell is pronounced,—this is a scene affecting indeed! But this is only the commencement of a life replete with trials. Should my life be protracted, my future residence will be far distant from my native country, in a land of strangers, who are unacquainted with the feelings of friendship and humanity. (Woods 111)

Given the complex imbrications of home and nation in the nineteenth century, it is unsurprising that Newell's frequently articulated rejection of an earthly home here finds its analogue in her ultimate rejection of any national home. In this representative epistolary excerpt, the act of leaving "the land of [her] nativity," likely forever, is figured by Newell in maternal and domestic terms. In anticipation of her imminent departure she constructs an affecting domestic scene: her anguished, widowed mother, surrounded by her brothers and sisters, bids her a tearful, and likely final, "farewell" as she embarks on the first leg of her journey, to the port city of Salem. Newell does not dwell for long in the anticipated past, however, and on the pivotal conjunction "But," she forges ahead in time and space to envision her future life in India. Before she has even left, therefore, Newell projects herself into an imagined liminal space, from which she is able to look back, with fondness, on the home and nation she will leave behind, and forward, with a sense of divine calling and purpose, to her "future residence," in a nation "far distant from [her] native country."

In a later letter, Newell repeats this liminal construction, again in terms of nation. In this letter, dated December 20, 1811, to Miss R.F. of Andover, she writes, "The hour is hastening, when I must bid an eternal farewell to all that is dear in the land of my nativity, cross the boisterous ocean, and become an exile in a foreign land. I must relinquish forever the friends of my bosom, whose society has rendered pleasant the morning of life, and select for my companions the uncivilized Heathen of Hindostan" (Woods 116). Looking forward and backward from within an epistolary space of her own creation, Newell places "the boisterous ocean" at the pivotal center of a decidedly transnational syntactical construction. In so doing, she anticipates her sea voyage across the Atlantic and around the Cape, where, floating anchorless in a borderless expanse, beyond the reach of national sovereignty, her textual suspension in transnational space is dramatically literalized.[11] Adrift on a "pathless" ocean and confined to a "floating prison," with no land in sight for months on end, Newell accommodates her inability to post regular letters by penning daily or weekly journal entries and addressing them as a journal-letter to her mother back at home (Woods 118, 152). Notably, the serial structure of this extended journal-letter heightens the illusion of spatiotemporal suspension Newell creates, invoking the pivotal present anew each day, even each hour.

On May 1, 1812, she writes, "We are in the latitude of the Cape. The weather is cold, and probably will be so for a month: the last winter we shall have." Having therefore provided the

[11] In *Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates of the Golden Age*, Marcus Rediker constructs the sea as a borderless expanse, beyond the reach of the mostly land-locked political and military arm of the nation-state. He argues that pirates of the eighteenth century, piracy's "golden age," were sea-faring vigilantes, who "thought of themselves as people without a nation," and were able to use the space of the pirate ship to revise the power dynamics of the nation-state system and institute a new, more egalitarian, social order (8). See especially the chapter entitled, "The New Government of the Ship" (60-82).

See also the set of features on "Oceanic Studies" in *PMLA*, Vol. 125, No. 3, May 2010, which explores the sea as a metaphoric and material space in the context of the hemispheric, or transnational, turn in American studies. Hester Blum, in "The Prospect of Oceanic Studies," included in this issue, argues for a less "land-locked" approach to American studies, contending "an oceanic turn might allow us to derive new forms of relatedness from the necessarily unbounded examples provided in the maritime world" (671).

barest spatial and temporal orientation, she abruptly shifts backward in time and space: "Ten weeks since we left Salem. I often think and often dream of you. Is mamma happy? O yes! Blest with the rich consolation of the Gospel, she cannot be unhappy." Then, pivoting again on a contrasting conjunction, she turns suddenly forward: "But, mamma, the Heathen are wretched. For their sake shall not some Christians leave friends and country, and submit to many hardships, to carry them the word of life." Finally, bringing the entry to an end, she returns to the present, writing, "I do not repent, nor have I ever repented, of my undertaking. My health is as good as I could reasonably expect" (Woods 131). Each day at sea, Newell pivots on a new present; looking forward and backward between past and future national homes, she exists neither here nor there, but everywhere at once. In a poem that appears in a journal entry predating her departure, Newell articulates more explicitly the transnational subjectivity that is only implied in the pivotal structure of her narration, writing, "For me remains nor time nor space/My country is in every place/I can be calm and free from care/On any shore—since God is there" (Woods 95).

David A. Gerber isolates the letter writer's pivotal movement, described by Altman and exemplified by Newell, as a distinguishing feature of the "consciousness of in-betweeness" described in contemporary paradigms of transnational migration (Gerber, "Forming" par. 20). In fact, in his essay "Forming a Transnational Narrative: New Perspectives on European Migrations to the United States," Gerber proposes the letter as an early site of the development of this peculiar transmigrant consciousness, arguing that a transnational paradigm, while most often used to describe contemporary migratory patterns, offers a conceptual model equally well-suited to the study of the international migrations of the nineteenth century. According to Gerber, "While simultaneously looking backward and forward, these transnational migrants created [in

their letters] liminal experiential sites, which creatively faced the changing circumstances of daily life" (par. 26).

It is not merely the language of letters that registered the liminality of a nineteenth-century transnational consciousness, however. Rather, argues Gerber, the entire process of sending and receiving mails placed letter writers at the very brink of transnational modernity. In distinguishing letter writing as a "transnational activity," or "transnational social field," Gerber argues that transnational migration is not just a contemporary phenomenon, initiated by the dramatic shrinking of time and space in our era of instant electronic communication and jet travel. Instead, the collapse of spatiotemporal experience, facilitated by the twin processes of "disembedding and distanciation" that Gerber identifies as "central aspects of ... modernity," was first experienced through the writing and posting of letters. In an era of increasing mobility, letter writing during the nineteenth century connected individuals and families across sometimes-vast distances through the establishment of increasingly "extensive and routinized" transatlantic postal systems, which "were being ... linked together for the first time" (Gerber, "Forming" par. 24). Through the sending and receiving of letters, therefore, social relationships were spread out in time and space (distanciation), and lifted from their local contexts into transnational space (disembedding). By intensifying their sense of their own locality, and by requiring them to learn the rules laid down by a centralized and impersonal postal authority, letter writers of the nineteenth century were consequently "pioneers on the edge of transnational modernity," at once "expanding [their] knowledge of the increasingly widening world" and "of the new systems that organized that world" (Gerber, "Forming" par. 25).

Although Gerber's essay focuses on the migration of white Europeans to the United States, the conceptual model he proposes, and the centrality of letter writing within that model,

provides a useful tool for exploring a subsequent stage of this phenomenon—namely, the reverse migrations of citizens of the early republic *beyond* the shifting boundaries of the United States in an era of national expansion and mission-minded evangelical zeal. Like many foreign missionaries to follow, Newell seeks to position herself within an ever-widening and ever more-knowable transnational world. As a central part of this process, she maps her newly disrupted, and always-shifting, spatial and temporal coordinates through the act of writing and sending letters. While Newell sent her letters via ships travelling back to the United States, and not through a state-sponsored post, her participation in an emerging global system of travel and commerce no doubt helped to forge a consciousness of in-betweeness that, according to Gerber, is distinctively modern and distinctively transnational. Furthermore, while Gerber acknowledges that letter writers like Newell were often motivated by "a deeply conservative impulse" in attempting to maintain social relationships across time and space, the creation of "liminal experiential sites" through the forward-and-backward movements of their letters suggest the possibility of new, less conventional perspectives. In fact, from within the ambiguous and indeterminate position Gerber describes, Newell is able, if only provisionally, to transcend nineteenth-century discourses confining women to the domestic realm and to rupture national ties in favor of a radically transnational vision of Christianity. Throughout *Memoirs*, Newell emphasizes mobility and impermanence over national belonging, styling herself a wandering "pilgrim" and a "stranger ... on the earth" (Woods 31, 95). Claiming an identity defined by the world of the spirit, Newell is able to confidently assert that "Heaven is my home," and to answer the question "Have I no ties to bind me to my native country?" with an affirmative, "My country is in every place" (Woods 85, 95, 137).

While Newell's adoption of what we might call a transnational subjectivity bears little resemblance to the celebrated transnationalism of the contemporary postcolonial subject, it nevertheless destabilizes any easy interpretation of Newell's texts as blindly nationalistic. Admittedly, within the liminal constructions of her texts, Newell's nationalism and cultural ethnocentrism are uncomfortably apparent—she constructs outsiders as "foreign" and casually equates foreignness with a condition of primitivity and heathenism. However, the pivotal structure of these sentences—a pattern repeated throughout her writing—suggests that Newell's relationship to nation, while in many ways conventional, nevertheless contains a deeper layer of complexity than a superficial reading reveals. Through her pivotal forward-and-backward movement, Newell lifts herself out of her present time and place and into transnational space. This transnational perspective is not merely embedded in the form of her writing, however. Rather, the pivotal formal and syntactic structures of Newell's texts implicitly register the transnational vision of Christianity she often articulates more explicitly in her writing.

Transnationalism, Harriet Newell, and the New Divinity

Throughout *Memoirs*, Newell articulates a vision of Christian unity that transcends the boundaries of nation, using an optimistic millennial language that verges on the prophetic. In a journal-letter to her mother, Newell proclaims a distinctively transnational vision of God's millennial "reign of peace and love":

> The banks of the Ganges and the Indus shall resound with the high praises of Immanuel: redeeming love shall be the theme of the Hindoo; it shall warble sweetly from the lips of the uncivilized Hottentots on Afric's burning sands. The wandering inhospitable Indians of our own dear native country shall catch the sacred fire, and their hearts will beat in unison. (Woods 121)

Elsewhere, Newell pronounces her longing for the "religion of Jesus" to be "promulgated throughout the world," and in a letter to "Miss N.T. of Newbury," she anticipates the dawning of "[t]he glorious morn of the Millennium," when "the universal spread of the gospel" will mark the beginning of a "great revolution ... effected in this world of sin" (Woods 109, 117). In language that encompasses the whole world, Newell exhibits a prophetic imagination that is imbued with profound Millennial optimism. Besides tapping into the current of Millennial expectation that ran through the revivals of the Second Great Awakening, Newell's language directly participates in the global theology of mission that emerged within New England Protestantism in the years preceding her departure for India.

According to David W. Kling, the emergence of a mission-minded Christianity with global designs was precipitated by shifts within Calvinist theological discourses of early-nineteenth-century New England. These discourses sought to adapt the tenets of an Edwardsean Calvinism to the circumstances of a post-Revolutionary climate. During this tumultuous and uncertain period, the self-appointed heirs of Jonathon Edwards's theology, the so-called "New Divinity men" of the nineteenth century, took Edwards's central idea of "disinterested benevolence" and his emphasis on unlimited atonement (as opposed to the "Old Calvinist" emphasis on limited salvation for a chosen "elect") and articulated an explicit missionary theology, with radically global implications. In this way, they reoriented and extended what was only implicit in Edwards's thought, grounding his ideas in a practical ethic of social activism (Kling 800).

It is difficult to underestimate the intellectual, political, and cultural force of Jonathon Edwards's brand of Calvinism in the early decades of the century, and during this time, according to Douglas Sweeney, "it would not be inappropriate to speak of an Edwardsian

enculturation of Calvinist New England" (40). The New Divinity's updated Edwardsian theology was partly an activist response to the Revolution's decisive severing of ties between church and state, which prompted a reimagining of the church's place within the social order. In the wake of Revolutionary upheaval, the church sought to fill the resulting "social vacuum" with an ever-growing network of denominational organizations and voluntary associations that attempted to influence the future course of American society and—ultimately—of the whole world (Kling 793-794).

Among the voluntary organizations that sought to exert their influence at home and abroad was the ABCFM, which Kling argues was through-and-through "a New Divinity creation, rooted in New Divinity theology, inspired by New Divinity revivals, and staffed by a well-established New Divinity social and institutional network" (794). Harriet Newell was thoroughly enmeshed in this New Divinity network, which had no formal denominational affiliation but was largely Congregationalist in nature (Kling 792). She attended Congregationalist churches, quoted extensively from Congregationalist sermons espousing New Divinity theology, and attended Bradford Academy, which had Congregationalist board members and lecturers. Furthermore, her writing is suffused with the movement's characteristic rhetoric. The most striking instances of rhetorical alignment between Newell and the New Divinity occur in the transnational images of Christianity she brings before her reader(s). For example, in an 1812 letter to a female friend, Newell eagerly anticipates the day when "the highpraises of Immanuel [will] resound from the lips of the Hindoo in Asia, the Hottentot of Africa, and the inhospitable Indian of our dear native America!" (Woods 117). Likewise, in the same letter, she awaits the commencement of the "millennial state," writing, "When will the populous regions of Asia and Africa, unite with this our Christian country in one general song of

praise to God?" (Woods 117). The global scope of God's redemption in Newell's writing is strongly paralleled in an ordination sermon preached by Leonard Woods, a confirmed subscriber to New Divinity theology (Kling 799). Preached Woods, "This great atonement is sufficient for Asiatics and Africans, as for us…. The mercy of God is an ocean absolutely exhaustless." Therefore, asserts Woods, Christians "have a warrant from God to strive for the salvation of the whole world" (qtd. in Kling 804).

The transnational Christianity articulated by both Newell and Woods is born at the nexus of two important tenets of New Divinity theology. First, according to Kling, the New Divinity replaced "traditional Puritan notions of a civil or corporate sense of covenant theology" with an emphasis upon individual "New Birth" (Kling 801). Rather than approach God through a mediating community, therefore, the individual appeared "naked before a holy God" (to borrow a phrase from Newell), without the buffer of a corporate covenant (Woods 10). According to Kling, "this re-envisioning of the Christian community—from a nation that itself was elect to a nation of elect individuals—enabled the Edwardseans to think less parochially, less in terms of America's divine election, and more in terms of God's providential designs for the whole world" (801). Joining this "deconstruction of the national covenant" was the New Divinity's emphasis upon the unlimited sufficiency of Christ's atoning sacrifice. While the so-called "Old Calvinists" stressed the "limited *design*" of God's plan for salvation, which extended only to a pre-destined "elect," the New Divinity movement embraced a less fatalistic notion of God's plan for humanity (Kling 804). Asserting that God's atonement was "sufficient for the whole world—offered indiscriminately to all," they reasserted the global imperatives of the biblical Great

Commission[12] and positioned themselves as active participants, or "co-laborers" with God, in the universal advancement of God's divine kingdom (Samuel J. Mills, Sr., qtd. in Kling 805).

Taking a broader look at cultural and intellectual history, these central tenets of the New Divinity, which profoundly shaped the theological contours of Newell's writing, register the "epistemic shift" scholars associate with the emergence of a distinctively "modern" consciousness. According to Jared Hickman, the age of exploration that began (or at least "intensified") in the fifteenth century with America's "discovery" positioned individuals within a widening, and increasingly interconnected, world. This emerging global consciousness had profound implications for the way individuals—and nations—conceived of themselves in relationship to the wider world. Rejecting the prevailing notion that modernity and secularization went hand in hand, Hickman places religion at the center of his account. Rather than achieve the displacement of religion as an important narrative within culture, Hickman argues that modernity opened up a new "metacosmic" space in which the world's religions came into contact and were forced to create new stories—or adapt old ones—in order to account for one another (150). The increased religious relativism initiated by "global-cultural encounter" did not always lead to religious syncretism and tolerance (Hickman 161). In fact, the process of reconceiving religious narratives to fit a global context could be deeply divisive, leading to the "demonization" of other nations and cultures and to the construction of race according to a racialized language of "darkness" and "light" (Hickman 161). However, the rise of the so-called "global imaginary" also allowed Christian missionaries, reform workers, and other humanitarians of the nineteenth

[12] "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28.19-20).

century to employ a "language of shared humanity" and to imagine a transnational stage for the work of Christian benevolence (Hickman 148).

Declaring the transnational makeup of God's millennial kingdom—which would unite the "populous regions of Asia and Africa" with "our dear native America" in "one general song of praise to God"—Newell invokes New Divinity discourses that were in turn shaped by a distinctly modern consciousness. In so doing, she positions herself, and her nation, within a "sacred metanarrative" that encompasses the whole world (Hickman 170). In staging this cosmic Millennial drama, Newell eschews categories of race and social class and instead divides the world using spiritualized imagery of "heathen darkness" and gospel "light," at once declaring the essential spiritual equality of all degenerate humanity and betraying deeply ethnocentric—and nationalistic—assumptions about Christianity and cultural progress. In this way, Newell deconstructs U.S. imperialist discourses at the same time that she participates in them. Here, again, surfaces the deeper paradox within her writing—a paradox that intersects with the broader cultural work performed by her journals and correspondence in their original and published contexts.

Contradictions in Context: Newell's Readership

It is perhaps unsurprising that Harriet Newell never fully transcends the era's linked domestic and nationalist discourses, given the deep cultural contradictions structuring her relationship to home and nation. Throughout *Memoirs*, she conceives of her mission according to the values of a sentimental domesticity—values which were themselves intimately linked to the era's discourses of national exceptionalism. However, while her language is tainted with the cultural superiority of a typically nationalistic perspective, and her mission is shaped by gendered discourses positioning women in the home, Newell is nevertheless able to carve out a

space suspended between multiple homes and nations, and position herself on an imagined stage of transnational action. This cultivation of a liminal position between homes and nations has important implications for the rhetorical work performed by Newell's writing, which in its eventual publication came to address a transatlantic readership.

According to Mary Kupiec Cayton, in her essay "Canonizing Harriet Newell," the publication of *Memoirs* shortly after Newell's death was facilitated by the emergence in the early nineteenth century of an expansive evangelical print culture, funded by mission organizations and other benevolent societies and utilized largely to publicize their efforts. The proliferation of evangelical periodicals, published tracts, sermons, and missionary biographies during this time served to galvanize an evangelical public scattered across New England, uniting them through the dissemination of texts and the shared values and concerns these texts were meant to impart (Cayton 79-80). Significant within this distinctively evangelical print culture was what Cayton calls the "hagiographic dead missionary genre," of which Edwards' *Life of Brainerd* was perhaps the most well known and loved (Cayton 80).[13] Until Newell's time, this was a genre "populated only by men" (Cayton 83). However, the rise of new female reading publics in an era of women's educational reform set the stage for Newell to become the subject of her own missionary biography, providing a generic model for the proliferation of similar works later in the century (Cayton 83-84; Casper 115).

In *Constructing American Lives*, Scott E. Casper's discussion of pious women's memoirs helps to explain the instructive and inspirational power of Newell's story within nineteenth-century culture. According to Casper, there was a strong current of didacticism running through

[13] First published in 1749 and reprinted in Edinburgh in 1765, Jonathon Edwards' s biography of his son-in-law, missionary David Brainerd, was well known among evangelicals of the period and provided a foundational story for the development of the nineteenth-century mission movement (Cayton 80; P. Harris 812).

all forms of early American biography, a genre expected not only to "amuse," but to "instruct" (78). Furthermore, in providing models worthy of emulation, biography also served an inspirational function—a function attested to by many nineteenth-century readers in their letters and journals (Casper 86-87). The intimacy of the pious women's memoir in particular, which was often composed of the subject's "private" diaries or correspondence and published by someone who knew her, especially invited readerly identification and emulation. Argues Casper, "memoir could extend the force of example to a readership wider than the subject's own circle of intimates—and that the example became effective through the reader's intimate acquaintance with the subject" (117).

Like most pious women's memoirs, the comprising documents of Newell's published story originated as personal journals and letters written within the context of familiar correspondence. This lent a legitimating authenticity to the published versions, whose tone of intimate address invited readers' emotional identification with the memoir's subject and allowed Newell's female readership to imagine themselves as heroines within a similar story. In being "readdressed" to a public audience—to borrow a term from Decker—*Memoirs* invited the reader into Newell's circle of familiar correspondence, provoking emotional identification and promoting emulation (Decker 17). In fact, through the multiple publications of her memoir throughout the first half of the century, Newell emerged as a new breed of cultural heroine, inspiring an "imagined community" of female readers "to create a new place for middle-class women as influential actors in the public realm" (Cayton 70). Newell's constructed liminality was therefore central to *Memoirs*' instructive power. In claiming earthly homelessness to authorize her abandonment of maternal and national homes—and therefore legitimize a transnational life of mobility and impermanence—Newell offered a set of rhetorical strategies

that women could use to position themselves within the bounds prescribed by the era's domestic ideology while also claiming a more active public role.

In creating a suspended persona, caught in liminal space between homes and nations, Newell also provided the public relations engine of the American Board with a fit subject for Protestant "canonization" (to borrow Cayton's term) and an ideal public face the women's mission effort. Harnessing gendered discourses that emphasized women's sacrificial nature and natural piety, American Board officials valorized Newell as a martyr and missionary saint. In fact, Rufus Anderson, in his 1874 history of the American Board's missions to India, went so far as to say, "Mrs. Newell probably accomplished more by what seemed her untimely death, than she could have done by a long life. The memorial of her cultivated mind and devotion to the missionary cause, soon afterward published by Dr. Woods, secured for her a high place in the affection of the Christian community, which she still retains" (12). In this martyr's story of a home and a mission continually deferred, Newell remains eternally suspended in a liminal space of her own textual creation. Fortunately for publicists of the mission effort, Newell's suspension in this idealized, transnational space lifted her from the complicating contexts of actual mission work, where the ideal was quickly supplanted by the gritty truths of the real. Rather than an actor, valorized for her outward accomplishments, she became instead a study in pure missionary motivation—an iconic, and inspiring, figure within an emerging evangelical culture.

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In valorizing Newell's sacrificial willingness to "forsake home and country," as Allen's appended sermon does in explicit terms, *Memoirs* helps to construct a new public and transnational stage for women within evangelical culture. However, this creation of a wandering subject, whose "country is in every place," is held in careful tension with an abiding emphasis

upon the boundaries of home and nation. Therefore, the documents compiled in *Memoirs* often represent Newell within interior spaces, engaging in domestic activities—sewing, reading, and of course letter- and journal-writing—and therefore creating "domestic" space, in both senses of home and nation, wherever she goes—whether on board a ship, or within a missionary compound in India. Turning on the paradoxes of an expansionist ethic that at once dissolved and delineated boundaries of foreignness, Newell deploys language and imagery of home in service to a deeply contradictory agenda.

In writing from within this place of deep cultural tension and confusion, she anticipates the escalating questions of national inclusion that, in an era of anti-slavery protest, Indian removal, and overseas expansion, would increasingly face the developing nation. These questions, which remain largely implicit in Newell's memoir, reverberate with growing urgency in the journals and correspondence of two later figures within nineteenth-century mission history, Caroline Pilsbury and Narcissa Whitman, whose writings I discuss in the following two chapters. Their literary output, which, like Newell's, often takes the form of the journal-letter, brings the drama of national expansion "home," to the continental United States and its territories, where the physical and figurative borders of the nation were being actively contested. Pilsbury, writing from the Maine "wilderness," and Whitman, writing from beyond the Rockies, in Oregon Territory, revise and extend Newell's construction of the domestic as recreated national space, revealing in their texts the contradictions and irreducible complexities that shaped the relationships between women, home, and nation in nineteenth-century America.

CHAPTER 3

Homemaking and Unmaking: Domesticity, Race, and Nation in the Journal-Letters of Caroline Pilsbury, Missionary to the Penobscot Tribe, 1820-1821

In a series of epistles written between June and October 1820, Caroline Pilsbury addressed her correspondent, Hannah Stickney, with an immediacy that belied the vast physical and cultural gulf that separated them. Pilsbury—on the banks of the Penobscot river, in the heart of the "eastern wilderness"—and Stickney—in the small harbor city of Newburyport, Massachusetts, with its orderly colonial streets and familiar "glistening spire"—met and communed on the imaginative textual terrain created in Pilsbury's letters, which connected the two women, and the two worlds they inhabited (June 14, 1820, First Communication, 1). Before the correspondence, the two graduates of the Reverend Joseph Emerson's pioneering "Seminary for Young Ladies," in Byfield, Massachusetts, had lived in close quarters, where, "as Sparrows alone on the house top," they shared hours of intimate, "sweet converse" in their shared seminary chamber (June 13, 1820, First Communication, 3). However, having departed to take up her post as a missionary-teacher among the Penobscot tribe of Indians in Maine, Pilsbury now relied upon what William Merrill Decker characterizes as the "slow material exchange of letters" to bridge the distance between her and "Home" (Decker 4; July 5, 1820, Second Communication, 13).

Like most letter writers of the nineteenth century, Pilsbury turns to the letter form to negotiate the various dimensions—emotional and intellectual, spiritual and material—of her spatiotemporal separation from home.[1] However, Pilsbury also writes in service of a broader rhetorical agenda, entering the stage of public action first traversed by the likes of Harriet Newell

[1] My analysis is influenced by William Decker's exploration of the nature and role of epistolary communication in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American society, when new technologies of mobility and communication began to shrink the time and distance separating people in different geographical locations. See especially pages 3-4 in Decker's *Epistolary Practices: Letter Writing in America before Telecommunications*.

and facilitated by the rise of the evangelical presses, which brought the words and stories of women missionaries and reformers before an eager New England readership (Cayton 84). In fact, in addressing her correspondent, there is evidence that Pilsbury, like Newell before her, also addresses a larger public of readers, through the material circulation of her autograph letters among friends and acquaintances and, in at least one instance, their broader circulation in print. In hopes of generating public support for Protestant missions among the Penobscot Indians, Pilsbury uses the letter's metaphoric and metonymic power to connect home to home, address to address, as a means to unsettle the physical and cultural boundaries separating the Penobscot Indians of Maine's "wild" interior from the inhabitants of New England. Furthermore, given that her letters are composed of discrete, dated entries, and therefore adopt the hybrid generic pose I refer to as the "journal-letter," Pilsbury's epistolary address is able to cross these boundaries of domestic space with a level of intimacy and immediacy that eludes traditional letter writers.

In fact, in seeking to raise public support for missionary work among the Penobscot tribe, Pilsbury's rhetorical efficacy is predicated largely on this ability to unsettle the boundaries of the home—to extend or erase them, and to challenge their gendered and racial meanings. Pilsbury achieves this by transgressing—in both her life and letters—the orderly, "civilized" boundaries of the middle-class New England domestic realm, which, in an era of escalating racial tensions, "were meant to keep things neatly subdivided [and to] guarantee the safety, privacy, and moral self-satisfaction of the privileged home" (S. Ryan 2). While Pilsbury challenges the boundaries of the home in her life as a missionary "wanderer," she also achieves this unsettling transgression through the act of letter writing, which enables her to bring the plight of the Penobscot Indians—in the eyes of New Englanders a roaming and *un*domesticated people—directly into the domestic spaces of her addressed correspondent and wider circle of New England readers (August, 15,

1820, "Monday," Third Communication, 25). Harnessing the unique power of the letter to bring the writer imaginatively—even bodily—before the object(s) of her epistolary address, Pilsbury makes herself—and the Penobscot people—dramatically present before her correspondent and broader evangelical public (Decker 15, 38, 46).

Still, despite her good intentions, Pilsbury's gospel bears the deep imprint of a distinctively domestic agenda, shaped by the twin imperatives of "civilization" and "Christianization" that were articulated within nineteenth-century mission theory[2] and underwritten by the 1819 federal "Civilization Act." It is an agenda with a decidedly political edge that intersects with the escalating history of land disputes between the tribe and encroaching white settlers, pitting two divergent conceptions of home against one another in a battle over contested territory and the terms of its settlement. In attempting to assimilate this political and cultural history into her highly spiritualized narrative of God's redemption and judgment, Pilsbury engages in acts of silencing and erasure that are mediated by the hybrid journal-letter form of her writing.

A Home-Shaped Genre: The Material Conditions of Letter Writing

On a clear morning in early June, 1820, Pilsbury finished the last leg of her journey to Passadumkeag "in the eastern style," skimming over the deep blue waters of the Penobscot in a canoe propelled along by long poles reaching to the river bed (June 14, 1820, First Communication, 1). In the summer of 1820, Passadumkeag, one of a slowly dwindling series of riverine villages belonging to the Penobscot tribe, occupied a stretch of shoreline forty miles north of Bangor, and thirty miles upriver from the tribe's southernmost settlement. Here, in the

[2] For more on the ways a joint agenda of "civilization" and "Christianization" shaped nineteenth-century Protestant missionary ideology and practice, see Paul William Harris's *Nothing But Christ: Rufus Anderson and the Ideology of Protestant Missions*. See especially pages 17-23 and Chapter 4, "Educational Ends and Means."

heart of the "Eastern wilderness," the tiny settlement spread itself along the eastern and western banks of the Penobscot River, and here Pilsbury would begin her almost year-long tenure as a schoolteacher and missionary to the Penobscot tribe (August 14, 1820, "Sabbath," Third Communication, 25).[3] The region, in Pilsbury's terms, was "Rude, Romantic, & uncultivated," and in contrast to the orderly settlements of New England, white settlers as far upriver as Passadumkeag were relatively scarce, with a few feeble outposts and companies of men working the "log drives," sending lumber from the mills downriver to Bangor (June 14, 1820, First Communication, 1).[4] These conditions, which allowed for few opportunities to post letters "Home," and which created the sense of profound geographic—and, indeed, *spiritual*—isolation that drove Pilsbury again and again to her epistolary pen, are largely responsible for the shape and content of Pilsbury's journal-letters.

That these journal-letters were preserved, and are now accessible to a perhaps unforeseen twenty-first century public, is a testament to the value they held within the private economy of these two women's correspondence and, no doubt, to their perceived value as enduring cultural and historical objects. According to Decker, the recipient's disposal or preservation of a letter represents a "crisis in the letter's existence" (24). The manuscripts I am working with in this

[3] While the political and administrative details of Pilsbury's teaching assignment are rarely included in her letters (no doubt Stickney, a close friend and fellow seminarian, would have been well-acquainted with these particulars), Pilsbury's appointment to the Passadumkeag station was likely overseen by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. The Congregationalist ties of Bangor Seminary, which Pilsbury mentions as a point of contact and provider of occasional ministers to the mission, and her references to "Mr Loomis," one of the figures in the founding of the American Board, both suggest such an affiliation ("Sabbath Morn.," Third Communication, 21). The Reverend Harvey B. Loomis (1786-1825), born in Torrington, Connecticut, traveled to Bangor in 1811 under the auspices of the American Board in order to establish a church there.

[4] According to Micah A. Pawling, although the Penobscot tribe of Maine was "among the first Native groups on the eastern seaboard of North America to experience European contact, the economic and political uncertainties of a borderland region slowed Euro-American settlement into the area" (9). An 1820 mapping expedition, led by Joseph A. Treat and facilitated by John Neptune, the group's guide and a prominent Penobscot leader, revealed a territory that was still largely inhabited by native groups, and, according to Pawling, "the advancement of a Euro-American settler society in Maine and New Brunswick had not [yet] led to the departure of a Native geography" (9).

chapter, which I transcribed from photocopies of the original autographs, were carefully preserved by Pilsbury's correspondent, and likely by succeeding generations, and are now housed in special collections at the University of Delaware. The bulk of the collection consists of a bound book of journal-like entries, divided into seven "communications," which appear to be handwritten copies of the journal-letters Pilsbury wrote to Hannah Stickney between 1820 and 1821, during Pilsbury's year-long tenure in Passadumkeag. A class roster preserved in the Mount Holyoke College Archives, which lists Caroline Pilsbury and Hannah Stickney as members of Byfield Seminary's class of 1819, is the source of the correspondents' last names, which appear only as initials throughout the collection. There are also several unbound, autograph copies of letters included in the collection from 1824, written by Pilsbury to Stickney from Newburyport, where she had returned at some point to teach.

The materials I am concerned with in this chapter are those included in the bound portion of the Pilsbury collection. While the identity of the original compiler is unclear, whoever is responsible for the letters' autograph transcription was aware of particulars about Pilsbury's assignment that are not included in the body of correspondence housed in special collections, and there are several parenthetical insertions that seem to be quoting from other letters written by Pilsbury, perhaps to correspondents other than Stickney.[5] A couple of instances of rudimentary footnoting in an unfamiliar hand suggest another level of editorial intrusion upon the original texts. Throughout the seven communications, Pilsbury's individual entries appear to be included in their entirety, and the fact that the entries are titled inconsistently—sometimes with full dates,

[5] For example, in one of her early letters, Pilsbury's statement, "In the morning I read a sermon to the family" is followed by a quotation in parenthesis: "('as they could not read,')" ("Night," First Communication, 7). This parenthetical aside may refer to information contained in a letter written by Pilsbury to another correspondent. In an entry dated July 22, 1820, Pilsbury mentions to Stickney "a letter to Brother C.", assuming Stickney's familiarity with the letter's contents (Third Communication, 18). This reflects the common eighteenth- and nineteenth-century practice of sharing "personal" letters with friends and acquaintances (Bannet 47).

sometimes with only a time of day, like "Sabbath noon," or "Night"—suggest a close a careful transcription of the original materials. Therefore, it is likely that the form of the letters in this transcribed collection closely match that of Pilsbury's original epistles to Stickney.

So, while they are copies, these manuscripts nevertheless bear the deep imprint of the material conditions shaping Pilsbury's correspondence with Stickney, including the irregularity of the post and the forces constraining when, and for how long, Pilsbury could engage in letter writing. Given the fact that Pilsbury was writing from territory that, in the 1820s, was still largely uncolonized, opportunities to send letters were likely few and far in between, and she no doubt relied upon visiting missionaries, the odd company of travelers, or groups of Bangor men on logging business to carry her letters downriver, where they would be shipped from Bangor on a sea vessel to Newburyport, and eventually (hopefully) land in the hands of their intended recipients. Given the irregularity of the post, Pilsbury wrote daily, sometimes weekly, "journal" entries, returning again and again to her pen to share her stories, joys, uncertainties, and sufferings with "H.", her "dearest friend" (November 6, 1820, Sixth Communication, 40). Then, when the opportunity arose, she bundled the pages filled with entries, individually-dated and signed, and sent them off as a single "communication."[6] Adapting to the realities of an irregular and informal post and writing in response to an emotional and practical need to connect with those back home,[7] the journal-letter form of Pilsbury's mailed "communications" represent her creative response to situational needs and constraints.

[6] Pilsbury's letters are serially divided into "communications" (under headings such as "First Communication," "Second Communication," etc.). Whether this term is an editorial insertion or an accurate transcription of the headings of Pilsbury's original letters is unclear. However, Pilsbury does use the term "communications" in place of "letters" at one point in the body of her correspondence ("Thursday," Second Communication, 17).

[7] According to David A. Gerber, in *Authors of Their Lives: The Personal Correspondence of British Immigrants to North America in the Nineteenth Century*, immigrant letters of the nineteenth century—with which Pilsbury's letters home share many characteristics—are burdened by the practical need to "register a self-presence

While Pilsbury's journal-letters are deeply contoured by her separation from home, they are also shaped by her labors on the frontier—labors which often fall under the umbrella of domestic work. As for many women of the nineteenth century, the demanding—and unending—nature of Pilsbury's labors often leaves little time to sit down at her desk and take up her pen. Acknowledging these constraints on women's writing, Mary Jane Moffat and Charlotte Painter propose the diary form as "an analogue to [women's] lives," describing the form as "fragmentary, interrupted, modest … as endless as their tasks" (5). Likewise, Sharon M. Harris argues that early American women's writings—which often take the form of diaries and letters—are profoundly shaped by the material conditions of their lives and work (4). Working within material and environmental constraints—which often meant accommodating the demands of domestic work—many women developed techniques for writing around the interruptions of daily life, developing a "poetics of interruptibility" that profoundly shaped both the form and content of their writing (S. Harris 22).

Like other women of the era, Pilsbury's letters are woven into the fabric of her life and "labours," and her sometimes-breathless entries—marked by long dashes and associative leaps—as well as those which are deeply meditative, taking the form of late-night prayers or silently-voiced longings for "Home," represent the "synthesis of words and work" that Harris isolates as the defining characteristic of early women's writing (4). Pilsbury spends her days juggling the demands of her domestic, "parochial," and teacherly duties, and, made weary by long days "spent in [her] Master's cause," she often longs for "the rest beyond the tomb" (December 6, 1820, Seventh Communication, 46). At the end of a particularly taxing day, spent reading

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that persuasively asserts a continued relevance to those from whom the writer is absent" (64). This ensures that the writer will not be cut off from vital sources of emotional and practical support—in other words, from the familiar "anchors" of their identity and from those able to dispense favor, promotion, supplies, or rescue (Gerber, *Authors* 46, 64).

sermons and leading prayer meetings, Pilsbury writes, "I am very much exhausted. O for stronger lungs and more willingness to be spent in my Masters cause" (June26, "Night," First Communication, 9). Pilsbury's work as a missionary-teacher requires of her long hours spent keeping house, caring for the children who board with her, preparing grammar lessons, choosing sermons to read for her "Sabbath school," and making "parochial visits," and she must do most of her writing in the between-times, taking up her pen briefly at "Noon," for example, then returning to close her daily entry later that evening (October, 1820, Sixth Communication, 47; June 15, 1820, First Communication, 4). In fact, given the nature of her duties, Pilsbury must do much of her "reading and writing" at night, by the light of her "animal fat" lamp, or in the late-night glow of her candle (October, 1820, Sixth Communication, 47; "Friday," Second Communication, 17).

The fact that Pilsbury was able to send (and receive) letters so infrequently, and the fact that the nature of her labors often afforded her only relatively small windows of time in which to write, are together largely responsible for her letters' distinctive generic pose, which represents her creative and adaptive response to the material constraints of her "work." Given the essential inseparability of form and function, the material conditions constraining Pilsbury's letter writing profoundly shape not only the content of her letters (what Pilsbury can say) but also the rhetorical functions they perform (what her letters can do) (S. Harris 23). Certainly, the journal-letter form is unique in that it makes it possible to chart the day-to-day, week-to-week trajectory of Pilsbury's changing moods and perspectives, and in a single letter she speaks from a multiplicity of spatiotemporal locations and perspectives. She writes during experiences of profound isolation, and in moments of belonging and connection. She speaks with sometimes hourly immediacy as she encounters both frustration and success, feelings of fear or boldness—

sometimes reflecting transformative shifts over the course of a single day. The "present-tense immediacy" of Pilsbury's address, a notion Janet Altman developed, and the ongoingness of her reflective, epistolary act, distinguishes it from a more typical letter, written from a single (at least relatively "single") spatiotemporal location, and it places constraints upon communication at the same time that it opens up new possibilities. Indeed, due to the multiplicity of discursive locations represented in a single "communication," Pilsbury's journal-letters embody a necessary fragmentation of perspective, exhibiting the disjunctive, episodic style that theorists often mark as a distinguishing feature of the diary form (Bunkers and Huff 7, 11-12; Jelinek, *Women's* xiii). At the same time, the reader can see Pilsbury struggling to create coherence, to speak with a single, authentic voice—and to maintain a coherent narrative of God's divine providence and protection—but to do so without sacrificing the truth of her experience, which includes periods of doubt, frustration, and spiritual struggle. [8] The tenuous balance of Pilsbury's letters—which hover between the pull of fragmentation and the desire to achieve coherence—is played out in her struggle to construct a relationship with the domestic realm.

[8] Theorists of women's diaries approach the form, and the unique ways it constructs meaning, with different interpretations and emphases; some focus on the diary's inherent fragmentation while others emphasize the diarist's ability to achieve a measure of continuity and coherence. In her introduction to *Women's Autobiography: Essays in Criticism*, Estelle Jelinek stresses the disjunctive, fragmentary nature of women's diaries, arguing that the ongoing, episodic nature of personal diaries, and of women's autobiographical tradition in general, works against the creation of a coherent narrative and reflects a "multidimensional, fragmented self-image" (xiii).

Some theorists, however, emphasize the diarist's power to create a measure of continuity across diary entries. For example, Suzanne L. Bunkers and Cynthia A. Huff, in *Inscribing the Daily: Critical Essays on Women's Diaries*, insist that "the narrative structure of diaries can be quite complex in shape and pattern" (4). Penelope Franklin, in *Private Pages: Diaries of American Women, 1830s-1970s*, also addresses issues of narrativity in diaries from a more positive perspective, emphasizing the flexibility and narrative possibility within the ostensibly "fragmented" diary form. Likewise, Margo Culley, in her introduction to *A Day at a Time: The Diary Literature of American Women from 1764 to the Present*, argues that the diary, like all autobiographical texts, exists "to give shape and meaning to life with words," and requires the diarist's active and purposeful selection and arrangement of detail (xi).

Home-Making: Epistolary Negotiations

While the form and content of Pilsbury's letters are shaped by her distance from home, and by the labors of homemaking on the very edge of the frontier, she reciprocally uses the act of letter writing to *construct* her complex and conflicted relationship to the domestic realm—an epistolary struggle that is highly mediated by the journal-letter form. As a single female missionary in the early decades of the nineteenth century, Pilsbury is caught in the crossroads of several, sometimes conflicting cultural discourses regarding women's proper roles and relationship to the home. That Pilsbury struggles to position herself in relationship to these cultural discourses—and to the "worlds" of home each represents—is evident in her journal-letters, which provide her a medium through which to negotiate her relationship to the values and practices associated with nineteenth-century domesticity.

In the context of rapid industrialization, which created a deepening split between the "spheres" of home and the market, many historical and political forces worked together to confine women to the domestic realm at the same time that they elevated the work they performed there. The ideology of "Republican Motherhood" was perhaps the most powerful of the era's discourses on gender (Welter 630). This ideology affirmed the importance of women's role in the new republic and assigned women the responsibility of cultivating a "virtuous citizenry" through their influence within the domestic sphere. Importantly, this spherical ideology was powerfully reinforced in the letter manuals of the era, which, according to Nan Johnson, tended "to conflate discursive or rhetorical performance with the appropriate performance of femininity or masculinity" (80). Therefore, the era's prescriptive literature on letter writing constructed "a separate rhetorical sphere for women that [was] centered in the home," and, as a result, women were essentially "written out of the comparatively powerful

discursive space of business and public affairs by having their epistolary influence bounded by the walls of the homes they occupied" (Johnson 80, 81). Certainly, many of Pilsbury's duties as a missionary-teacher conform to the era's ideology of nurturing domesticity—she sees to the religious and moral instruction of her young "flock," and she takes primary responsibility for their being clothed and fed (June 30, 1820, First Communication, 8). Still, as a single woman missionary in the early nineteenth century, Pilsbury occupies a uniquely liberating position given the era's constraints.

Like Harriet Newell before her, Pilsbury invokes the era's evangelical discourses to justify her rejection of a settled domestic existence for a higher vocational "call" ("5 o'clock," Second Communication, 13). These discourses, which emphasized women's potential "usefulness" as missionaries and teachers, played a crucial role in creating new professional opportunities for women outside of the home and provided a key impetus to the era's burgeoning antebellum female seminary movement. While this egalitarian movement did not get into full swing until mid-century, as a graduate from an all-female seminary, Pilsbury was on the cusp of a transformative shift taking place in patterns of formal education for women during the early decades of the nineteenth century, when the era's discourses on motherhood and Millennialism converged in the post-Revolutionary climate to open up new educational opportunities, and new spheres of influence, for women. In keeping with the evangelical emphasis upon the solitary individual, standing alone before God, women were seen as just as important—if not more important—than men in the Church's mission to advance the Kingdom of God, and within many circles, women were regarded as having an important millennial role to play in "the drama of

American destiny" (Kling 801; Sweet 47). [9] While the role of women in advancing God's Kingdom was in some ways a feminized one, emphasizing "influence" over "power," it offered some women (largely white upper or middle-class women) opportunities to create a life of unprecedented mobility and independence that was not centered in the home.

As a single female missionary, leading the "solitary" life of a "lonesome wanderer," Pilsbury largely stands outside of the era's expectations regarding women's rootedness in the home (June 29, 1820, First Communication, 10). Setting herself in opposition to letter-manual prescriptions for home-centered femininity, Pilsbury writes herself out of the parlor and into a narrative of eternal significance—a narrative in which her ultimate *rejection* of an earthly "Home" is the necessary prerequisite to fulfilling her role in the advancement of God's millennial kingdom (Sweet 47). Rather than "bounded by the walls" of a permanent home, therefore, Pilsbury's epistolary influence largely grows out of her *refusal* to make for herself an earthly "abiding place" (July 5, 1820, Second Communication, 12-13). In fact, the theme of "abiding place" continually resurfaces in Pilsbury's letters, and, styling herself a "weary Pilgrim" and "solitary wanderer," Pilsbury alternates between longing for the comforts of home and dismissing such earthly comforts in favor of a future, eternal place of "rest" (August, 15, 1820, "Monday," Third Communication, 25). In an entry dated July 5, 1820, Pilsbury writes, "I do not look forward to a life of ease among my beloved friends and the dear enjoymen[ts] of 'Home.' I am by profession a Pilgrim & Stranger' here and if I know my own heart, I do not wish nor am I

[9] Of course, religious discourses did not, on their own, increase women's access to education and professions outside of the home. While the rhetoric of Millenialism was certainly bound up with these social changes, the stage was set for such religious discourses to do their cultural work by deeper-seated ideological shifts already taking place in the early republic. Linda K. Kerber credits changes brought on by the Revolution and the attendant proliferation of democratic discourses with playing a foundational role in expanding definitions of citizenship to include women and with placing a new emphasis upon the importance of female education. For more on the cultural and political forces shaping women's education in the early republic, see Kerber's essays, "'Why Should Girls Be Learn'd and Wise': The Unfinished Work of Alice Mary Baldwin" and "The Paradox of Women's Citizenship in the Early Republic," both appearing in Kerber's collection *Toward an Intellectual History of Women*.

over anxious to find an 'abiding place' below the stars" (Second Communication, 12-13). However, Pilsbury must continually reassert this refusal in the wake of an overpowering longing for the comforts of home, and—it seems—in response to pressure from home regarding her daughterly duties to her ailing father. In fact, when Pilsbury finally leaves the mission field in October of 1821, it is to care for her father following the death of her last remaining sibling (October, 1821, Brownsville, 62). Throughout Pilsbury's letters, therefore, "Home" acquires shifting meanings, sometimes shading from the temporal to the eternal within the same sentence. And as Pilsbury positions herself in this liminal position between various centers of meaning and belonging—her home in Newburyport, her eternal home, and her home with the Penobscot tribe—the journal-letter form provides her an "interruptible" medium through which to daily—even hourly—negotiate the pull of these three home "worlds."

In articulating her firm commitment to the life of a single woman missionary, insisting it has been her "desines from a child to be employed in this way," Pilsbury ultimately rejects cultural prescriptions for femininity anchored in the home ("5 o'clock," Second Communication, 13). Still, she does not "sacrifice Home" entirely in order to follow her missionary "call" (July 5, 1820, Second Communication, 14). Instead of rejecting domesticity altogether, she models a complex and conflicted relationship to the era's domestic ideology and, in so doing, engages in a delicate epistolary negotiation of her sometimes competing domestic, teacherly, and "parochial" duties (June 15, 1820, First Communication, 3). This balancing act, heightened by the emotional twists and turns of the journal-letter form, illuminates the personal textures of her relationship with nineteenth-century domesticity. However, it also sets the context for the larger political drama being played out between the Penobscot tribe and United States government, in whose domesticating policies Pilsbury—as a Protestant woman missionary—was deeply implicated.

While Pilsbury models a revision of conventional domesticity that might, in some respects, be considered radical, she is not spared the mundane—and often exhausting—responsibilities of "keeping house" ("Monday," Third Communication, 23). To be sure, Pilsbury sometimes describes with apparent pleasure the attempts she and her fellow missionary "Mrs. N" make to recreate domestic space in the middle of the "eastern wilderness" ("5 o'clock," Second Communication, 13). At least initially, she delights in the rustic charms of her new arrangement, describing makeshift curtains of flowering "gold thread," which highlight a novel permeability of domestic and "natural" space, and insisting her correspondent could be rendered quite comfortable in her crude "parlor" (June 14, 1820, First Communication, 2). Domestic rituals like daily tea and bread making are also objects of frequent, self-satisfied mention. Despite her occasional tendency to romanticize the work of homemaking on the edge of the frontier, however, she often feels burdened by the weight of domestic tasks, which seem to compete with her teaching and "parochial" duties. Waking early to bake bread before school, carving out time to do the daily "washing," and, in winter, digging her firewood from beneath drifted snow, takes a physical toll ("Eleven Oclock, Night," December 10, 1820). After one taxing day, Pilsbury expresses a common refrain of weariness: "I am very much exhausted" ("Night," First Communication 7).[10]

Even her work as an instructor is always threatening to elide the tenuous distinction between her professional and domestic duties. Tasks such as seeing to the student's mending and washing, overseeing their meals (as they sometimes travel long distances to school and "bring

[10] Jane E. Simonson, in *Making Home Work: Domesticity and Native American Assimilation in the American West, 1860-1919*, emphasizes the material dimensions of Euro-American and indigenous women's domestic work on the frontier. Asserting that the work of recreating domesticity in the "contact zones" of the West was not merely an ideological project, Simonson advocates "knowing the home through work" and acknowledging the history of labor relations revealed in women's domestic labors and embedded in texts and images portraying domestic work (3, 4-12).

their dinner with them"), and cleaning the room ("as they bring in much mud") must be performed alongside her more teacherly after-school duties, which include "Copies to set, pens to make and grammar lessons to look over for the next day" (December 10, 1820, Sixth Communication, 47). Throughout her letters, Pilsbury alternates between expressions of tender regard and almost-maternal concern for "my children," her pupils, and expressions of weariness and barely-suppressed frustration with the demands of providing for their physical well-being. In one entry, she describes herself "busily employed in fixing some of the garments sent me from Bangor for my children," noting, "I have much to employ my mind and hands." After expressing her wish that her correspondent were there to "assist" her in her mending, she describes the physical toll of her labors: "I have open sores upon most all my fingers" (July 8, 1820, Second Communication, 15).

Still, at times throughout her letters, Pilsbury imbues even the most menial of her domestic labors with divine significance, suggesting that both scrubbing floors and guiding "souls" are equally part of her vocational call (June 14, 1820, First Communication, 2). For instance, Pilsbury ends the entry describing open sores on her fingers with this confident assertion: "But I am willing to bear <u>all</u> this and more too If I can but do <u>any</u> good__But I am an unprofitable servant" (July 8, 1820, Second Communication, 15). In this way, Pilsbury links the daily, domestic work of mending to her greater work of advancing God's kingdom, using the word "good" as she often does throughout her letters—a heavenly measure to be applied during "the last judgment," when the ultimate value of her "labors" will be determined (Night, First Communication, 7). However, representations of the toll of physical hardship, and intermittent mention of illness, provide the complicating subtext for these confident proclamations. For example, in one of several scenes in which Pilsbury depicts throwing herself on the bed, she

writes: “Am much fatigued with my days labour and was obliged after school to throw myself on the bed feeling as if I could not speak ag[ain$_e$]” (July 29, 1820, Third Communication, 22). As the summer heat intensifies, and her “thinly boarded” house becomes increasingly oven-like, she writes, “My health suffers”; the next day she begins to fear “my health will fail” (June 19 and June 20, 1820, First Communication, 5).

These feminized expressions of weariness and impending illness, well in keeping with popular depictions of feminine frailty during this period, may suggest a less willing attitude toward her demanding domestic work than Pilsbury sometimes claims (Herndl 25). In *Invalid Woman*, Diane Price Herndl highlights the potentially performative aspects of feminine illness by exploring its portrayal in popular literature of the nineteenth century. She joins other feminists, such as Carroll Smith Rosenberg and Elaine Showalter, in refiguring feminine illness as a possible method of resistance (Herndl 6). According to Herndl, illness, for some nineteenth-century women, can be understood as a strategic “use of (apparent) powerlessness” to resist patriarchal definitions of womanhood without actively challenging expectations of women’s frailty and submission (4). In constructing illness in this way, Herndl acknowledges that pathology is an ideological as much as a medical category and bodily experience of illness is therefore always shaped by cultural understandings and expectations. However, she reverses interpretations of feminine illness as mere capitulation to oppression, reimagining malady as a means for women to assert a measure of control over their lives (Herndl 10).

It is impossible to determine with any certainty the personal and cultural meanings of Pilsbury’s epistolary representations of illness and feminine fragility—and certainly, it would be a mistake to entirely efface the physical dimensions of her experience. However, understanding Pilsbury’s bouts of exhaustion and ill health as a mode of resistance, or a subtle form of protest,

is one possible interpretation. That Pilsbury eventually achieves some success in lightening her labors is suggested in an entry written later in her stay among the Penobscot tribe: "I have relinquished the idea of keeping house by myself. Mrs Cummings thinks with my other cares would be quite too much for me. I now live quite retired" (Monday, Third Communication, 23). Much like Pilsbury justifies leaving "Home" to "[tread] on Missionary ground" by rejecting an earthly home, and the settled existence it would entail, it seems she implicitly subordinates her domestic work to "other cares"—which, presumably, consist of duties that fall more squarely under the rubric of her role as an educator and missionary (June 29, 1820, First Communication, 8).

As Pilsbury negotiates her relationship to the domestic realm, she constructs an ongoing "autobiographical occasion," to borrow a term from Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, and her letters therefore "[become] a site on which cultural ideologies intersect and dissect one another, in contradiction, consonance, and adjacency" (xix). Returning again and again to her pen, Pilsbury weaves a narrative from the disparate threads of quotidian experience, and in constructing her relationship to home—both as a place left behind, and a place she is actively recreating in a new context—she sometimes tells multiple stories at once. Pilsbury longs for the comforts of home in Newburyport, yet she resists leaving the field to care for her ailing father, declaring it has been her design "from a child" to be a "wandering missionary" ("5 o'clock," Second Communication, 13). Furthermore, placing assertions of the worth of her domestic work alongside expressions of frustration, weariness, and illness, Pilsbury suggests another layer of conflict within her relationship to the home and the gendered expectations centered there. Caught in the confluence of competing discourses on womanhood, domesticity, and mission, her letters—with their daily shifts of perspective and emotion—show broader cultural conflicts being

worked out within the highly particular circumstances of an individual life and work. In this epistolary back-and-forth, she blurs the boundaries of the home—its power to delineate gendered spheres of action and, as I will suggest in the next section, to create racial boundaries.

Home-Unmaking: Transgressing the Boundaries of Home

In her work as a missionary teacher among the Penobscot Indians, Pilsbury unsettles the boundaries established by the era's domestic discourses in ways that parallel her larger rhetorical agenda. In recreating domestic space at the edge of the frontier, Pilsbury significantly revises the nineteenth-century ideal of the middle-class home, which defined the limits of "family" and positioned a mother at its moral center. [11] In an era when women's "circular course seemed set by the gravitational pull of the family," Pilsbury creates a home, and a family circle, that is not premised on biological—or even racial—ties nor narrowly limited to the physical confines of the domestic realm (M. Ryan 6). Not only does she open her home to two Indian girls, who board with her during the season of "stormy weather," she also extends the bounds of domesticity to encompass her school, where her gendered role as molder of young minds and characters takes on a decidedly professional cast (December 10, 1820, Sixth Communication, 47).

In practicing this more expansive domesticity, Pilsbury anticipates the eventual professionalization of women's missionary work later in the century, when sending single women to the mission field as educators or medical professionals became commonplace (Robert 107). According to Jane H. Hunter, this professional class of missionaries, who helped to ease the burden carried by married missionary mothers, "may have taken on the emotional coloring of woman's sphere," but each woman took "an expansive view of her home in order to populate it"

[11] See Mary P. Ryan's *The Empire of the Mother: American Writing about Domesticity, 1830-1860* for a nuanced look at the relationship between women, family, and the domestic realm as it is portrayed in popular literature of the nineteenth century.

("Womens" 29-30). By creating more inclusive domestic arrangements that were at once volitional and unconventional, "Single women chose as their 'children' the peoples in need both at home and in mission fields around the world" (31). This meant doing away with a "domesticity [that] depended on boundaries ... [separating] hearth from world," and replacing it with a more permeable notion of the home (Hunter, "Women's" 25, 30).

In expanding the domestic realm to include her work as an educator, and in literally opening her home to student boarders, Pilsbury revises the conventional boundaries of nineteenth-century domesticity to an extent unprecedented for a woman living so early in the century. Admittedly, bringing the racial "other" into her home in this way could be construed as an act of domestication in line with the era's federal Indian policy, which sought the political and cultural incorporation of the nation's indigenous as an alternative to forced removal (P. Harris 21). However, if we accept that in the nineteenth century the composition of the family home stood as an analogue to the composition of the nation, Pilsbury's revision of domestic, familial space can also be seen as attempt to enact a less culturally and racially homogenous vision of the United States. [12] From this perspective, while Pilsbury participates in the era's expansionist discourses of domestication through acculturation, she also sets herself in opposition to a turning cultural tide advocating forced removal, with its implicit exclusion of native peoples from the "domestic" space of the home and the nation it symbolized (P. Harris 21).[13]

[12] For more on the ways home—and the family structures it contains—was used in the nineteenth century as an analogue for nation, see chapter 5 of Susan M. Ryan's *The Grammar of Good Intentions: Race and the Antebellum Culture of Benevolence*, entitled "Charity Begins at Home: Stowe's Antislavery Novels and the Forms of Benevolent Citizenship."

[13] See Amy Kaplan's essay "Manifest Domesticity" for a finer-tuned explanation of the symbolic conflation of home and nation, which during the nineteenth century were considered mutually-constitutive forms of "domestic" space. See also Karen Sánchez-Eppler's "American Houses: Constructions of History and Domesticity" in *American Literary History*, which considers the ubiquitous metaphor of a "national household" and explores the various convergences of nationhood and domesticity within nineteenth-century discourses. (Sánchez-Eppler also explores

The transgression of domestic boundaries Pilsbury models in her missionary life finds its parallel in her rhetorical attempts to unsettle the racial and cultural boundaries of the white, middle-class home, which, according to Susan M. Ryan, "were meant to keep things neatly subdivided" in an era of escalating racial tensions, and, according to Amy Kaplan, were often deployed to exclude those "specters of the foreign" that lurked "within and without" the nation's borders (Ryan 2; Kaplan, "Manifest" 585, 602). Pilsbury's letters, in their power to connect home to home, address to address, become a means of transgressing the domestic boundaries separating her distant New England public from the inhabitants of Maine's vast interior "wilderness." In one telling instance, Pilsbury brings the Penobscot people uncomfortably near, denouncing the inhabitants of New England for their cold indifference to the plight of the Indians, who she charges are forgotten in their prayers and benevolent offerings. She writes in a moment of heightened rhetorical intensity:

> I allow that they are near us, they sometimes pass our doors, sometimes enter our dwellings & even in the Sanctuary of our God they are often seen to enter, but then are allowed to leave in silence & ignorance—they again enter the forest to engage the [chase$_h$] & nothing more is felt for them than is felt for those animals who follow our carriages or accompany us in our walks…." (October, 1820, Seventh Communication, 63)

Pilsbury not only seeks to represent this nearness, but to *enact* it, in and through her dispatched correspondence. In terms of this broader rhetorical agenda, Pilsbury is uniquely aided by the peculiar characteristics of the journal-letter form. The intimacy and immediacy of Pilsbury's epistolary address—which, as I will suggest, is heightened by her letters' hybrid

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the ways these historical convergences are interpreted—and deployed to contrary ideological ends—within contemporary scholarship on nation, domesticity, and the literary canon).

form—allows her to metaphorically and metonymically enter into the domestic space of her correspondent, and what is more likely a wider audience of "Friends" in Newburyport, and to simultaneously bring the Penobscot tribe along with her, thereby unsettling the increasingly-racialized boundaries of the nineteenth century home (August 19, 1820, Fourth Communication, 26-27).[14] This unsettling rhetorical power also extends, in at least one instance, to an even broader readership through the medium of print, reflecting a common practice within the era's burgeoning evangelical print culture of publishing missionary letters for a curious New England public (Cayton 84). Within the widening circles of Pilsbury's rhetorical influence, her journal-letters draw much of their power from their original status as letters in the context of familiar correspondence, and the suasory capacity of Pilsbury's epistolary address largely extends from the circumstances of an ostensibly intimate exchange between close friends.

That Pilsbury would occasionally address a wider audience, while it confounds our modern expectations of letters as a relatively private genre of discourse, reflects a common eighteenth- and nineteenth-century practice of sharing personal letters with others, and Pilsbury writes during an era in which letters were often distributed among family and friends or read aloud in front of an audience (Bannet 47). Furthermore, letters sent by missionaries from their posts in the field were particularly susceptible to being read by a wider audience than that of their intended recipient. Frequently published within evangelical periodicals of the day, missionary letters were often used by the "benevolent societies" of New England as a means of

[14] Simonsen highlights the racial meanings written into domestic boundaries when she argues that "domesticity was an imperial construct used by the white middle class to uphold its power in a diversifying and expansionist nation" (3). She goes on to contend that the efforts of nineteenth-century writers and reformers "to define domesticity as a white, middle-class trait were attempts to assert power over the lives and bodies of those whom they deemed foreign; bad housekeeping became a marker of racial inferiority" (3). However, domesticity could also be used to reverse the exclusive function of the middle-class home, and "women excluded from this version of domesticity due to the color of their skin made radical political claims by asserting the virtues associated with their own housekeeping" (3).

generating publicity and garnering public support for the missionary cause. To date, I have been able to verify at least one instance in which Pilsbury's letters found their way into print, appearing—somewhat misleadingly—as "extracts from the Journal" of a "Lady Instructress" in a 1823 issue of the *Boston Recorder*.[15] While I have been able to locate only one instance of publication, however, it is also likely that Pilsbury's letters were circulated more informally within a larger network of readers. Certainly, the care with which Pilsbury's letter were transcribed and bound, together with instances of rudimentary footnoting that are directed toward a reader unfamiliar with the letters' personal particulars, argue for a wider audience of readers. Furthermore, Pilsbury's letters often strike remarkable parallels with other missionary letters written during this historical period, and her exhortations to "pray" for the salvation of the Penobscot, her impassioned pleas for financial support, and her repeated attempts to demonstrate the Penobscots' potential to become "cultivated" suggest an awareness of a larger audience and a clear rhetorical agenda (July 22, 1820, Third Communication 18).

Therefore, while Pilsbury clearly writes out of a deep psychological need to connect with the people and places of "Home," and to mitigate the radical sense of discontinuity and displacement that David A. Gerber argues is typical of immigrant letters of the nineteenth century, she also writes out of a *rhetorical* need to raise public support for Indian missions and—at a time when the tide of public opinion is beginning to turn in favor of removal—to argue for natives' inclusion in the national "home" (*Authors*, Gerber 67). Furthermore, she writes in particular support of her own mission to the Penobscot tribe, which is continually put in jeopardy by the threat of insufficient funds. Therefore, among their other functions, Pilsbury's letters can

[15] Excerpts from Pilsbury's first letter to Stickney from the mission field appeared in the Boston Recorder on December 20, 1823, under the heading "FEMALE BENEVOLENCE. *Extracts from the Journal of a Lady, employed, as an Instructress, in the north-eastern part of Maine, during the years 1820 and 1821*." By 1823, Pilsbury was back in Newburyport, where—her later letters suggest—she was employed as a teacher.

be viewed as an attempt to persuasively assert her presence—and the presence of the Penobscot tribe—before her correspondent and broader audience of readers.

In pursuing this rhetorical agenda, Pilsbury is accommodated by the letter's unique capacity to reconstruct intimate, domestic scenes of face-to-face conversation. Janet Altman speaks to letter writers' uncanny ability to recreate the *tense* of intimate conversation in their letters, suggesting letter writers continually return from epistolary forays into past and future to address their correspondents in the conversational present-tense (Altman 124, 128). Importantly, this recreation of immediate, intimate exchange, further heightened by the ongoing present-tense of the journal-letter form, can extend to encompass a broader audience, even in the context of publication. In his study of pious women's memoirs, Scott E. Casper speaks of the published letter's ability to figuratively invite a public readership into the writer's intimate correspondence, arguing that power of published letters to provoke emotional identification between reader and writer is predicated on the displaced intimacy of the exchange (117). By addressing her correspondent as if she had indeed been granted her oft-voiced wish and could share a cup of tea and conversation with Stickney in her rustic "parlor," Pilsbury therefore achieves a level of intimacy and immediacy that extends beyond the confines of familiar correspondence (June 14, 1820, First Communication, 1).[16]

So, whether shared among friends, transcribed and disseminated, or published for a wider audience, Pilsbury's journal-letters draw their rhetorical power from the terms of intimate, present-tense address. The displaced intimacy of Pilsbury's epistolary address, predicated on the original context of familiar correspondence, invites her broader readership into the world created

[16] In her letters, Pilsbury occasionally constructs scenes of imagined reunion with her correspondent; in so doing, she reproduces a common gesture of nineteenth-century letter writers. According to Decker, "the epistolary construction of utopian scenes that restore the full presence of the lost or absent friend is one of the most pervasive and interesting motifs in pre-twentieth-century letter writing" (22-23).

within her letters at the same time that it brings her world dramatically into the "private" domestic spaces of New England—the realm that, in the nineteenth-century, often served as the scene of letter writing and reading (Johnson 80, 81). In addressing her correspondent with the immediacy of two friends engaged in intimate "parlor" conversation, Pilsbury is also able, in a sense, to enter into the "parlors" of her wider circle of New England readers, and to bring her epistolary representation of the Penobscot Indians along with her. In so doing, Pilsbury brings the nation's indigenous uncomfortably near, transgressing the boundaries of the home that, in an era of westward expansion, served to delineate between the "wild" spaces—and people—of the frontier and the "civilized" spaces—and people—of New England.

In her attempts to recreate the intimacy of domestic space in her letters, Pilsbury not only constructs imaginary domestic scenes of face-to-face "converse" with her correspondent; she also brings the Penobscot tribe directly into imagined scenes of New England home life (Monday, June 27, 1820, First Communication, 9). For example, in an entry dated August 19, 1820, Pilsbury implores, "Friends of Emmanuel will you not think of them? When sitting at the table of plenty and feasting on the luxuries of life, will you not ask, is there no superfluity here that might be dispensed with? O think of the eastern wilderness, look at their wretched situation till your eye affects your hearts and then say, will you not add your mite to the treasury and be willing that these dying souls may live?" (August 19, 1820, Fourth Communication, 26-27). In this instance, Pilsbury conjures the collective presence of the Penobscot tribe within a scene of family meal time, using the power of the epistolary form to make those who are *absent* dramatically *present* among her distant New England readership.[17] As this example

[17] According Altman, one of the unique characteristics of the epistolary form is its uncanny power to suggest both *presence* and *absence*. The letter, while it exists to overcome absence with presence, is nevertheless caught in an ambiguous position between these two poles. Altman argues "the letter straddles the gulf between

demonstrates, Pilsbury's letter writing is motivated by the need to keep the Northeastern tribe present before her audience of readers, and, on this same occasion, Pilsbury directly addresses the problem of an empty "charity fund," reflecting the sometimes uneven and irregular support afforded missions in the Northeast (MacDougall 131).

Certainly, Pilsbury is mindful of addressing, at least indirectly, a wider audience, which she variously constructs as either indifferent to the situation of the Penobscot or skeptical of their capacity for "reform." In an entry dated June 23, 1820, Pilsbury recounts her conversation with a Penobscot man, who, along with a group of Indian men, had taken shelter in her dwelling during a thundershower the previous evening. After writing of the man's professed love for God, Pilsbury asks, "Now I would ask, cannot this tribe of Indians be taught that better way that leads to Eternal Life? Are we not criminal, awfully criminal while we pass by them saying 'The time for their reform is not yet come'?" (June 23, 1820, First Communication, 8). Throughout her letters, Pilsbury quite consciously sets herself in opposition to cultural attitudes questioning the capacity of "the Red mens race" to become integrated into the domestic space of the nation (March, 13, 1821, Seventh Communication, 52). In the last letter of Pilsbury's correspondence, not included in this collection, she acknowledges a Christian audience dismissive of Indian missions altogether, writing, "The practical language of Christians has too much been— they have no souls— they are not destined to immortality" (October, 1821, Brownsville, 61). This audience, whether addressed by Pilsbury directly or indirectly, anticipates the shift in American attitudes about race undergone during the middle years of the century. At this time, the cultural theories of race underlying the federal Civilization Act of 1819, which saw *education* as the key

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presence and absence; the two persons who 'meet' through the letter are neither totally separated nor totally united" (43). Thus, the letter writer's ability to overcome absence with presence is always provisional, and "[t]he letter lies halfway between the possibility of total communication and the risk of no communication at all" (Altman 43).

to "civilizing" and "Christianizing" the Indians, began to be replaced with biological theories of race stressing their innate inferiority (Bieder 168). Given these cultural attitudes, and given the geographic and cultural distance separating the Penobscot from her Christian audience in New England, Pilsbury is conscious that she must bring her "eastern" world before her the world of the "west"—she must become for them their eyes, and must bring the spiritual and material plight of the Penobscot, through the sheer power of her pen, into the vision of her audience. Perhaps then, the "eye" will affect the "heart," and the coffers will be filled. In this way, the present-tense immediacy of the journal-letter form accommodates Pilsbury's rhetorical agenda, allowing her to bring herself, and the Penobscot tribe, dramatically before the distant world of New England—and, in a sense, directly into their homes.

Home, Nation, and Empire: Struggling for Coherence

While Pilsbury appoints herself as an advocate of sorts for the Penobscot tribe, challenging—in both her life and letters—the racial boundaries imposed by the era's discourses of domesticity, she is nevertheless deeply implicated in the expansionist politics of the period. In attempting to demonstrate the tribe's ability to become assimilated into the nation, Pilsbury must establish their capacity to "reform" themselves according to the "civilized" values of the domestic realm (June 23, 1820, First Communication, 8).[18] In this, Pilsbury finds herself at the convergence of the era's intersecting discourses of domesticity, mission, and empire. Anne McClintock explains this interrelationship in *Imperial Leather*, arguing that, in nineteenth-century colonial cultures, "the mission station became a threshold institution for transforming domesticity rooted in European gender and class roles into domesticity as controlling a colonized

[18] That these "civilized" values were definitively linked with the era's ideology of domesticity is evident in the fact that modeling—and actively teaching—domestic values, like hygiene and industry, and daily housekeeping duties, like sewing and laundering, was a common strategy employed within the era's Indian missions (Devens 229).

people" (34). Certainly, it was a commonplace within nineteenth-century missionary discourses that inducting native cultures into the values and practices of a white middle-class domesticity was a prerequisite to their spiritual and cultural salvation (P. Harris 17; Robert 82). That this discourse was tainted with the conceit of colonial ownership and control was also not uncommon. For example, Isaac Baird, a Presbyterian missionary at the Odanah mission in Wisconsin, justified training native girls in the values and practices of domesticity using frank terms of possession, remarking simply, "If we get the girls, we get the race" (qtd. in Devens 229). McClintock helps to illuminate the imperial implications of such a statement when she writes, "Through the rituals of domesticity ... animals, women, and colonized peoples were wrested from the putatively 'natural' yet, ironically, 'unreasonable' state of 'savagery' and inducted through the domestic progress narrative into a hierarchical relation to white men" (34). Importantly, this "domestic progress narrative," while it offered the means of a culture's "advancement," nevertheless preserved the hierarchical relationship between *domesticator* and *domesticated*.

While the relationship between the United States and the native peoples of the North American continent may not have been one of formal colonialism—the context for McClintock's analysis—it was certainly conducted along colonial lines.[19] In fact, the federal Civilization Act, passed only a year before Pilsbury's Maine arrival, sought the political and cultural incorporation of the nation's Indians as an alternative to forced removal, adopting a stance of benevolent paternalism that closely mimicked the tone of colonialist rhetorics (Taketani 24; P. Harris 21).

[19] Etsuko Taketani challenges the common scholarly distinction between formal colonialism and the forms of so-called "soft" imperialism, arguing that such distinctions unproductively "[foreclose] the possibility for exploring colonialism in a U.S. context" (5). Taketani contends that U.S. colonialism "does function even without establishing formal colonies," arguing that the absence of formal colonies is precisely what makes U.S. colonialism "more furtive and more difficult to detect and resist than overt European colonialism" (5).

This federal act was born out of the Enlightenment rhetoric of "civilization," which saw Euro-American culture and Christianity as essentially linked. Through the policy, the government sought to resolve the "Indian Problem" by means of a rigorous program of religious and educational instruction meant to "civilize" and "Christianize" the nation's Natives—essentially, to transform them into the white citizen-farmers of Thomas Jefferson's agrarian vision (MacDougall 128). The act made provisions for the federal and state governments to spend money through the "benevolent" societies of New England, including mission organizations such as the American Board, which was already busy establishing schools for Indian children during this period (P. Harris 20). The teachers of these schools—most of whom were women[20]—were therefore expected to "cultivate" young minds in much the same way native men would learn to tame the "wilderness"—within and without—by cultivating the soil (P. Harris 20).

While Pilsbury complicates this imperialist portrait of mission work by challenging domestic discourses at the same time that she fulfills them, she is inarguably an actor in America's imperial project of westward expansion. Throughout her letters, she participates in expansionist discourses that cast home-building and nation-building as synonymous, and she employs a subtle language of domestication in regards to the "wild" places—and people—of the frontier. For example, early in her correspondence, Pilsbury evokes the "wretched situation" of a Penobscot family living in the "very depths" of the woods by suggesting their inability to fulfill the obligations of nineteenth-century domesticity. Describing the encounter as her "first parochial visit," she writes, "I went in search of a family of half starved children, whose parents

[20] It became increasingly common for women to enter the teaching profession during the early and middle years of the century, when many women took up posts in New England schools and, increasingly, in settlements on the western frontier. This change was partly owing to shifting attitudes about women's education and public roles, but it was also motivated by sheer pragmatism. In an era when the establishment of public schools was considered the necessary precondition of a flourishing democracy, women teachers filled the vacuum left by men exiting the profession for more lucrative options within the nation's rapidly industrializing economy; they also worked for decidedly less pay, receiving about half the teaching salary of the average male (Schrems 56).

are poor & wretched & who have not food to give them or clothes to hide their nakedness—-they are without a home" (June 15, 1820, First Communication 3). Here, Pilsbury evokes a scene of crude poverty and "ignorance," placing a long, disjunctive dash in the middle of the sentence to signal, perhaps, the insufficiency of her descriptive attempt (June 15, 1820, First Communication 4). Mid-sentence, she switches tactics, using the absence of a "home"—a word rich with cultural meaning and pathos—to stand in as a short-hand for the family's desperate, uncivilized situation. Pilsbury goes on to draw an implicit contrast between "house" and "home": designating the family's primitive, half-built cabin a mere "house," she emphasizes its status as a physical structure and perhaps anticipates its eventual inadequacy as a nurturing domestic space.

Further developing this bleak portrait of undomesticated family life, Pilsbury goes on to describe the animal-like condition of the parents' "four beautiful children," who occupy a "pen composed of logs" a half-mile deeper into the woods. She describes them "devouring [roots] for their supper," and contrasts this scene with an imagined scene of New England meal time, writing, "O my dear H. when you again sit down to a full table, let your heart rise with thankfulness to that Bountiful Giver, who has bestowed on you the necessaries of life" (June 15, 1820, First Communication 4). Continuing to emphasize their distance from the standards of "civilized" domestic living, Pilsbury characterizes the children as "profoundly ignorant," unable even to "count"; she later requests of their mother that they be permitted to attend her school, where she might "instruct them," and further "plead[s] that [the family] might attend on the Sabbath" (June 15, 1820, First Communication 4).

Here Pilsbury depicts herself extending the promises of the "domestic progress narrative" to the family, presenting the family's initiation into this narrative as the potential means of their redemption. In so doing, Pilsbury suggests the highly political terms of the ostensibly spiritual

"reform" she seeks to effect through the missionary "work so dear to [her] heart" (June 15, 1820, First Communication 4). Hoping for the family's conversion through attendance at her Sabbath school, she also seeks to supply the "instruction" that the children's mother—lacking the ability to fulfill the obligations of a virtuous domesticity—is unable to provide. That Pilsbury tends to conflate the process of "Christianization" with the achievement of appropriate domestic arrangements suggests her complicity in the legitimating rhetorics of U.S. expansionism. These rhetorics, according to scholars like Janet Floyd and Jane H. Hunter, employed idealized images of family and homemaking on the frontier, purporting the westward extension of domestic virtue as a means to sanitize and sanctify the aggression and violence at the heart of American empire (Floyd 4-5; Hunter, "Women's" 23).

Within the context of the Northeast borderlands, this deployment of the home within expansionist discourses acquired highly particular meanings. Pilsbury writes in the midst of an ongoing conflict over perspectives on—and political claim to—the land of Maine's vast interior, which by 1820 was still sparsely populated but subject to increasing pressures of U.S. expansion and settlement (Pawling 46). Over the course of the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, the Penobscot tribe had been divested of more and more of its ancestral lands through a series of (later-contested) treaty negotiations conducted with the state governments of Massachusetts and, later, Maine, which became a state in 1820.[21] By the time Pilsbury was writing, the Penobscot tribe's expansive traditional land base, which comprised roughly sixty percent of Maine territory, had been reduced to the "upper four townships" and a series of islands that stretched along the Penobscot river (Pawling 12, 54). Undergirding this longstanding conflict over land rights were

[21] This series of treaty negotiations—conducted first with Massachusetts and later with Maine—was never endorsed by the U.S. government according to the stipulations of the 1790 Trade and Intercourse Act, and their legitimacy was formally contested by the tribe in 1980 (Pawling 16).

deep-seated cultural differences regarding the forms and purposes of human settlement—while the U.S. government valued permanent structures and an anchored agricultural existence, the Penobscot privileged impermanent dwellings and seasonal mobility, premised on shifting patterns of hunting, gathering, and fishing. At the heart of this divergence, therefore, were contending ideas of home, and of the kinds of families these homes would define. Within Penobscot culture, family relationships were defined and preserved across time and space through elaborate kinship relationships, not tied to the physical arrangement of permanent dwellings (Pawling 10).[22] By contrast, for encroaching white settlers—and the missionaries and teachers like Pilsbury that often preceded or accompanied them—family was defined by the neat fixity of the idealized middle-class home.

That Pilsbury subsumes her civilizing—and domesticating—aims within her Christianizing agenda, and therefore fails to discern the decidedly *political* edge of her ostensibly *spiritual* mission, creates a layer of conflict within Pilsbury's letters that is heightened by the structural fragmentation of the journal-letter form. While Pilsbury cultivates a close and affectionate relationship with many of her pupils, and the family with whom she boards, within her letters there is nonetheless a strong subtext of Penobscot resistance—a subtext which is very sparely communicated in its political and historical particulars, but is rather transformed by Pilsbury into a narrative of spiritual battle and impending final judgment. In fact, while Pilsbury longs for the "veil of darkness" to be lifted—and for the spiritual realities pervading earthly existence to be dramatically revealed to the Penobscot tribe—Pilsbury views the world through a

[22] In fact, given the scarcity of settlers in Maine's interior, Penobscot family bands continued at the time of Pilsbury's tenure to "practice traditional lifestyles" and persisted in hunting and camping "on land well beyond their reservation or reserve boundaries" (Pawling 10).

dark veil of her own, and her letters fail to account for the political and historical realities motivating Penobscot resistance (July, 1820, Sabbath Eve., Third Communication, 23).

By incorporating Penobscot resistance into a spiritual narrative of God's coming millennial kingdom, Pilsbury positions herself as an agent within an apocalyptic biblical story that is deeply inflected with nineteenth-century cultural meanings. The spiritualized "world" Pilsbury constructs in her letters represents a particular expression of the Millenialist worldview gaining ascendance within New England evangelicalism during the early decades of the nineteenth century (Sweet 55). The Protestant doctrine of Millenialism stressed that the coming of God's millennial Kingdom would be carried out through the work of individual Christians, who, by spreading the gospel to the "corners of the earth," would bring about the universal harvest of souls that would ultimately initiate the Messiah's Second Coming. As a seminary graduate thoroughly steeped in the rhetoric of Millenialism, Pilsbury's epistolary identity therefore cannot be discussed apart from a consideration of the spiritualized narrative she constructs in her text. Surely, her sense of herself as a Christian, called to dedicate her life to missionary work, is intimately connected to her understanding of the world as a temporal stage for a spiritual story. Therefore, as Pilsbury struggles to create a coherent "self" in and through the act of letter writing, she must also, like any letter writer, struggle to fashion "a distinctive world at once internally consistent, vital, and self-supporting" (Decker 16). The "distinctive world" Pilsbury creates in her letters is one in which the temporal and the spiritual are two dimensions of the same reality, and Pilsbury's autobiographical narrative—along with her story of the Penobscot tribe—is therefore written into an overarching narrative of God's redemption and judgment, worked out in and through human history.

However, evidence of Penobscot "indifference," suspicion, and even "persecution" in response to her domesticating agenda poses a challenge to narrative coherence that Pilsbury attempts to resolve within her letters (December 15, 1820, Sixth Communication). Speaking as she does from a multiplicity of spatiotemporal locations within the body of a single letter, Pilsbury must contend with a degree of fragmentation that more traditional letters, often written in just one or two sittings, are more readily able to disguise. Therefore, Pilsbury's attempt to integrate the disparate elements of her experience is, within a single letter, carried out across journal entries and within them. As time progresses, and each entry shades into the past, personal memory is inscribed and preserved on the letter sheet, and each succeeding entry must contend with those that came before it. Within journal-letters, perhaps more obviously than across individual letters in a more traditional correspondence, any epistolary attempt at historical revisionism must acknowledge the daily and weekly histories inscribed on the pages before it. For Pilsbury especially, therefore, daily and hourly memory cannot easily be buried or suppressed; rather, the inscribed past must be *incorporated* into the evolving narrative of her journal-letters. Importantly, the success of Pilsbury's epistolary performance, while it meets a deeply human, psychological need for coherence, is also directed outward, intended for the spiritual edification of her correspondent—and likely reading public—and a means to motivate their prayerful and financial support.

Given the fragmentation of the form, Pilsbury must sometimes struggle to reconcile past experiences of doubt and uncertainty regarding the tribe's future reformation with those reasserting her belief that the Penobscot are a people "which (I trust) 'Jesus Loves'" (June 19, 1820, First Communication, 6). For example, in a letter written on a "Sabbath Morning" in August, Pilsbury expresses deep despair over the tribe's "indifference" to Christianity, which she

understands in terms of a biblical metaphor equating sin with the darkness and chaos of the "wilderness." She writes: "Another Sabbath has smiled upon this wilderness but no Sabbath blessings is here known. Darkness, gross darkness, hovers over us. And (if I may use the expression) Satan reigns with undisturbed sway." The entry ends on a note of despair, and she closes, "My God shall this scene never be reversed? Shall the hope of angels, never resound with joy at the conversion of these souls?" Later that evening, however, Pilsbury returns to her pen, and while she acknowledges that her "spirits have sunk to their lowest ebb," she ends with a powerful reassertion of trust in God's promises, taking comfort in her "Saviour's" words, "I will be with you always," and boldly proclaiming, "The throne of Satan will yet totter and fall and the dear kingdom of the Redeemer will be built on its ruins!" (August, 1820, "Sabbath Morning," Fourth Communication, 27-28). As this example illustrates, Pilsbury alternates between periods of doubt and belief, certainty and uncertainty, at the same time that across letter-entries, and within them, she continually asserts and reasserts her missionary commitment, smoothing over inconsistencies and discontinuities to emphasize an overarching coherence, rooted in an unshakeable trust in God's divine love and providence.

By writing Penobscot "indifference" into her spiritualized narrative of divine redemption and judgment, however, Pilsbury fails to account for the *temporal* realities motivating the tribe's historical resistance to Protestant missionary efforts, and she effaces the deeply political dimensions of her domesticating agenda by conflating cultural and spiritual "reform." Indeed, while Pilsbury celebrates her young scholars' hunger for literacy, holding up their example as proof of the Indians' capacity to become "cultivated," she seems to confuse the desire of the Penobscot for the books of the "white men" with a desire to become white men themselves (October, 1821, Brownsville, 63). In this, Pilsbury fails to recognize the deeply political

motivations behind the tribe's apparent hunger for literacy and learning, mistaking in their desire for the "white man's" books a more general openness to the civilizing and Christianizing efforts of Protestant missionaries than, in truth, existed among the Penobscot people. In fact, MacDougall argues that literacy acquisition was actually a strategy of *resistance* for many of the Penobscot, and education promised the power to negotiate treaties with the federal government and to advocate on their own behalf (68). So, instead of demonstrating openness to the "civilized" values and practices associated with the domestic realm, in seeking literacy and learning, the Penobscot evinced a desire to preserve their traditional land base, and the traditions of hunting and seasonal mobility it sustained. The tribe's resistance to Pilsbury's missionary agenda was therefore an outgrowth of their larger refusal to adopt the permanent settlement model that undergirded the era's mission theory and upon which nineteenth-century domesticity depended (P. Harris 19).

Sometimes, Pilsbury addresses Penobscot resistance directly, as in a letter written on December 15, in which she dejectedly reports, "Opposition arises. The parents of the Children are against me because I give so much religious instruction" (1820, Sixth Communication, 40-41). At other times, however, the reader gets only a glimpse of more personal encounters of hostility—even violence. At the end of a journal entry written in July, more than a month into her missionary appointment at Passadumkeag, Pilsbury adds, almost as an afterthought, "We are continually surrounded with Indians. One came in on the Sabbath, he had on a loose Robe girt round with a rope at the end which a hung a long dagger. he was intoxicated, and insisted on coming into the meeting and fighting with Mr C. But after much provocation he went away" (July, 1820, "Thursday," Third Communication, 20). On another occasion, in an entry written on the "Sabbath" in mid-July, under the heading "Night," Pilsbury recounts the activities of the day,

narrating an encounter at her "Sabbath school" that she had nervously anticipated earlier that morning: "This afternoon some of their Parents came and two men, one of them was an intemperate man. I was tried, more than you can imagine. I had no enjoyment and almost envied my N.P. friends who could go to the dear Sanctuary and be silent hearers of gospel truths" (Second Communication, 16). In her very next statement, however, Pilsbury seems to transform her creeping feelings of doubt and uncertainty into a metaphor of ominous thunder and foreboding skies, writing "Distant thunder and frightful clouds proclaim that a shower is near_ But I will trust in the Lord!"

Driving Penobscot resistance to Pilsbury's "religious instruction"—and the "civilizing" agenda in which it was enmeshed—were several historical and political forces. Protestant missions to the Penobscot were much less prominent on the New England cultural scene than those established among, for example, the Cherokee in the Southeastern United States—likely owing to the fact that missions to the Penobscot, and other Maine tribes, were relatively less successful in realizing their goal of domestication through "cultivation" and "conversion" (MacDougall 128). Missions to the Cherokee, on the other hand, because of the tribe's relative openness to the civilization programs of the U.S. government, were widely publicized in the religious periodicals of the day. That Pilsbury's letters demonstrate an awareness of such culturally prominent missionary efforts is therefore unsurprising. In one of her letters, Pilsbury draws a parallel between one of her young female scholars and "Catharine Brown," the famous Cherokee convert whose letters to prominent New Englanders made her the literary darling of New England Christian society, held up by missionary organizations as a shining example of Indian potential for reform (July, 1820, "Sabbath Eve.", Third Communication, 22). On another occasion, describing a young Penobscot scholar, Pilsbury writes, "She posses a mind that might

be highly cultivated. He [sic] has all those fine feelings that would make her an ornament to society. Could she be instructed" (July 22, 1820, Third Communication, 18). Clearly, Pilsbury understands her mission to the Penobscot largely in terms of the era's most successful missionary efforts, indulging a hope that Penobscot girls in particular might become "cultivated" through a domesticating program of instruction and feminine influence.[23] However, missions to Northeastern tribes such as the Penobscot faced a people with markedly different cultural traditions and patterns of subsistence, and with a very different history of Euro-American contact.

According to historian and folklorist Pauleena MacDougall, Penobscot traditions have displayed a remarkable resilience in the face of centuries of land encroachment, forced migrations, epidemics, and Euro-American conflict. Over the centuries following the arrival of Samuel de Champlain in 1604, the Penobscot developed a close trade relationship with the French through their participation in the great Northeastern fur trade, cementing these economic ties by establishing kinship relationships through intermarriage. Given these economic and social bonds of affiliation, and given the tribe's long history of strained relations with the English, the tribe aligned itself with the French during the century of conflict that ravaged the Northeast from 1675-1763 and pitted the two European nations against one another in a bloody struggle for regional control. While fighting alongside the French was driven less by loyalty than by necessity, the Penobscots' history of socio-economic ties with the French nevertheless established an enduring relationship between the tribe and the French Jesuit priests, or "Black Robes," who established missions among them from the earliest years of contact. In fact, despite

[23] "Successful," in this context, is of course a relative term, and one that fails to account for the perspectives of the Cherokee, who were not simply the passive recipients of Protestant missionary efforts. Moreover, "successful" must be further qualified to acknowledge that the story of Protestant missions among the Cherokee ultimately ended tragically, in forced removal and the legendary "Trail of Tears" (P. Harris 22).

years caught in the middle of French and English political maneuverings, many of the Penobscot remained loyal to their Jesuit priests, who, according to Mac Dougall, often acted independently of French politics and advocated on the tribe's behalf. Furthermore, while the Jesuits certainly suffered from the narrow euro-centrism of their Protestant counterparts, Historian Peter A. Dorsey argues that, over time, the Jesuits' methods became more sensitive to indigenous cultural and religious beliefs, and the priests developed an increasing appreciation and tolerance for those native beliefs and practices that did not overtly defy Catholic doctrine (Dorsey 401). In fact, according to Paul William Harris, by the seventeenth century, Jesuits came to oppose acculturation through colonization because of its destructive toll on Indian groups, establishing as an alternative model *reserves*, where "Indians could freely come and go without pressure to settle there and adopt a sedentary lifestyle" (15). Given the Jesuits' history of advocacy and relative cultural tolerance, the Penobscot continued to welcome priests into their tribe well into the nineteenth century. However, because the Civilization Act of 1819 made provisions for federal money to be distributed largely to *Protestant* missionary societies within New England, the tribe's continual requests for a priest were often denied (MacDougall 66-70, 115).

In 1820, therefore, Pilsbury faced a tribe engaged in a complicated, and highly political, dance of assimilation and resistance. Accommodating Euro-American culture when necessary, the Penobscot continued to fight for political control of ancestral lands, and to hold onto traditional lifeways, as a strategy for cultural survival (MacDougall 123). Through her evangelical agenda of "cultivation" and "reform," Pilsbury offers to extend the boundaries of the domestic realm—and of the national "home" it symbolized—to encompass the Penobscot tribe, inviting them to enter into the "domestic progress narrative" that would be the means of both

their spiritual salvation and cultural redemption (McClintock 34).[24] However, Pilsbury fails to account for the Penobscots' desire to maintain a traditional lifestyle based upon seasonal mobility and impermanent dwellings—a lifestyle in many ways incompatible with the dictates of nineteenth-century domesticity, which depended upon permanent dwellings populated by nuclear families (Johnston 89). Predicating successful conversion upon metaphors of individual "cultivation," Pilsbury betrays the depths of her entanglement in the era's expansionist agendas, which, in conjoining the politics of home and nation, benignly construed national expansion in terms of the westward progress of New England domesticity (and conveniently left out the crucial role of political and military might) (Hunter, "Women's" 22-23). So while Pilsbury understands her mission in terms of the imperatives of the biblical gospel, her evangelical message is also deeply inflected with the "gospel" of nineteenth-century domesticity. Pilsbury is largely blind to her own political and cultural affiliations, however, and the spiritual veil through which she views temporal events clouds her ability to fully understand—or productively respond to—the tribe's suspicion of her religious instruction and resistance to her "civilizing" mission.

While the journal-letter form in some ways accommodates Pilsbury by providing her a discursive space in which to daily, even hourly, negotiate this tension, and to express her feelings of doubt and uncertainty in the presence of her imaginatively invoked correspondent, she must make what at times seems to be a Herculean effort to integrate this undercurrent of resistance into her narrative of God's coming millennial kingdom. This tension is strikingly evident within a single entry dated August 18, in which Pilsbury juxtaposes two seemingly contradictory statements—one, a statement of resignation regarding the impending eternal damnation of

[24] According to Kaplan, these two forms of "domestic" space were considered analogous, and the boundaries of the domestic realm served to define the nation's relationship to those "specters of the foreign" that lurked "within and without" its borders (Kaplan, "Manifest" 585, 602).

Penobscot souls and one a powerful reassertion of hope. She writes: "My sister, it is a heart cheering thought, that God will be glorified, tho' this people be not gathered into his fold! Yes! He will be glorified an ends of the earth shall see his glory." Then, in a startling reversal, Pilsbury goes on to write, "He has also said that the wilderness shall yet blossom. What sweet encouragement have I to continue to labor___ O yes! And I will labour cheerfully till lifes last pulse shall cease to throb and death shall grant me sweet release _ _" (August 18, 1820, Third Communication, 26). Throughout her journal-letters, Pilsbury plays a delicate balancing act, speaking from moments of almost debilitating despair, yet holding her despair at bay in order to affirm and reaffirm—for herself and for the edification of her readers—that her missionary work is not in vain, for "[God] is good in all things" (January 30, 1821, Seventh Communication, 49).

By writing Penobscot resistance into her spiritual narrative of God's love and justice, Pilsbury effects the erasure of the deeply political dimensions of both nineteenth-century Protestant missionary efforts and Penobscot resistance to those efforts. However, in dramatizing her struggle to strike a balance between despair and hope, the journal-letter form likely also serves to further Pilsbury's greater rhetorical agenda. In fact, holding dramatic proclamations of the dire spiritual situation of the Penobscot in tenuous opposition with repeated demonstrations of their inherent potential for "reform" is no doubt a careful rhetorical strategy, intended to dramatically illustrate to her correspondent—and her wider audience—the profound *need* for public support of the missionary cause, but without painting so grim a picture as to cast doubt upon the Indians' potential to become domesticated Christians. The present-tense immediacy of the journal-letter form—while it poses a challenge to narrative coherence—therefore also accommodates Pilsbury's rhetorical agenda, allowing her to bring the spiritual and financial need of the Penobscot before her audience with a heightened sense of urgency. Altman writes that,

inherent in the epistolary form, is a "sense of immediacy, of a present that is precarious, [which] can only exist in a world where the future is unknown" (124). The tenuousness of her balancing act, reflecting the tenuousness of the Penobscots' salvation, no doubt serves to dramatically illustrate the need for "Friends of Emmanuel" to act *soon* on the Penobscots' behalf. By pivoting daily, even hourly, on the present, and by keeping ever before her—and her public of readers—a future waiting to be realized, Pilsbury taps into the sense of hurry and anticipation fostered by the era's millennial discourses, which proclaimed the *imminence* of God's millennial kingdom (Sweet 44). In the final entry of Pilsbury's second communication, titled "Sabbath Eve.", she exhorts her correspondent, "O my Sister be active for the time is short and what you do you must do quickly" (July, 1820, "Sabbath Eve.", Second Communication, 18).

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Slipping away from her duties to pen a few lines in haste, or filling her page by candlelight in the late-evening quiet, Pilsbury turns to the journal-letter form to both preserve and construct her complex relationship to "Home"—a place at once literal and figurative, and rich with personal and cultural meanings. Across journal-letter entries and within them, home—as a place of belonging, locus of work, or repository of ideology—acquires shifting and sometimes contradictory meanings that challenge easy equations of home and womanhood, or home and nation.

Like Harriet Newell, writing nearly a decade earlier, Pilsbury embodies the fundamental contradictions of imperial domesticity, which at once dissolved and defined the boundaries of the home, and the nation it symbolized. Fulfilling an agenda shaped by the universalist ethic of evangelical Protestantism—and yet perpetually undermined by its narrow terms of inclusion—both women were motivated by a mission that disguised its imperial leanings and nationalist

affiliations in apocalyptic language about God's coming millennial kingdom. Given Pilsbury's frontier context, however, what comes across in Newell's memoir as a vision of global unity that transcends the borders of the nation-state is transformed by Pilsbury into an explicit argument for expanding the cultural and political boundaries of the continental United States. Wielding only her pen, Pilsbury rewrites these boundaries, extending them to include native groups, who are "near us," and yet exist at the nation's periphery (October, 1820, Seventh Communication, 63).

Returning again and again to her pen, Pilsbury, a "solitary wanderer on the Bank of the P.", writes across the boundaries of the domestic realm in order to make herself—and the Penobscot tribe—dramatically *present* before the distant world of New England (August, 15, 1820, "Monday," Third Communication, 25). In so doing, Pilsbury challenges the racialized boundaries of the nineteenth-century home in much the same way she unsettles their gendered meanings. However, in leaving home to "[tread] on Missionary ground," and rejecting the settled existence conventional domesticity would entail, Pilsbury—like Newell—does not fully transcend the personal, or political, obligations of nineteenth-century domesticity (June 29, 1820, First Communication, 8). Burdened by the demands of "keeping house," she uses her letters as a medium through which to negotiate the sometimes-conflicting, sometimes-aligning terms of her missionary labors and domestic work ("Monday," Third Communication, 23). Furthermore, like her Protestant contemporaries, Pilsbury preaches a gospel deeply beholden to an ideology of domestication; as an agent of evangelical domesticity, she opens her home in a gesture of welcome that obscures the hierarchical relationship between *domesticator* and *domesticated* that the era's Protestant missionary ideology implied. Within her writing, therefore, Pilsbury can be seen making the boundaries of home at the same time she unmakes them, turning on meanings

that, in an era of social change and political upheaval, would continue to be contested throughout the century in the highly personal terms of individual lives and letters.

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In the next chapter, I consider the mid-century journal-letters of Narcissa Whitman, who, like Pilsbury, creates implicit parallels between home and nation that are inflected by the character and agenda of the nineteenth-century Protestant mission movement. While Pilsbury's letters construct an expansive national "home," able to accommodate the nation's Indians (so long as they are willing to transform themselves according to the dictates of domesticity), Whitman's letters register the shift in prevailing cultural attitudes regarding the Indians' ultimate fitness for national inclusion. Written from Oregon territory during the century's great overland migrations, Whitman's letters tell a story of domesticity-turned-inward and welcome rescinded, and her eventual attempt to create a mission home purged of native influence reverses Pilsbury's construction of inclusive domestic space to dramatize, on the scale of the family home, the era's federal policies of Indian removal.

CHAPTER 4

Imperial Motherhood: Child-Rearing and Empire-Building in the Journals and Letters of Narcissa Whitman, 1836-1847

Mrs. Whitman was not adapted to savage but to civilized life. She would have done honor to her sex in a polished & exalted sphere.... As for myself I could as easily have become an Indian as not. I could gladly have made the wigwam my home for life had duty called. But it was not so with Mrs. W. She kept her original sphere to the last.

Reverend Henry Perkins, Methodist missionary at The Danes, Oregon, to Narcissa Whitman's sister Jane Prentiss, October 1849

Not in the whole world ... is there a character as heroic as the home mother.... Without home ... the world would be a chaos, without order or beauty; without patriotism, or social regulation, without public or private virtue.

The Lily, women's rights journal founded by Amelia Bloomer, 1855

In November of 1847, as a devastating epidemic swept through Oregon territory, Narcissa and Marcus Whitman's eleven-year mission among the Cayuse Indians came to a brutal end. On that day in mid-winter, due to a complex of historical and political forces, and prompted by a series of cultural misunderstandings, the mission house at Waiilatpu became the scene of a bloody slaughter, leaving fourteen newly arrived emigrants and members of the mission family dead.[1] Among the deceased was Narcissa Whitman, the matriarch of the mission, singled out as the only woman to be killed in what came to be known as the "Whitman Massacre."

A contemporary engraving depicting the event illustrates the highly-charged racial meanings ascribed to the attack, which promptly gained the status of frontier legend and was used to justify a series of violent reprisals (Addis 249). The artist depicts a cozy domestic scene: Marcus Whitman, quietly engaged in the "civilized" activity of reading, is leisurely positioned on a settee, one of the house's many refined furnishings. His back to the door, Whitman is unaware that the peaceful scene is about to be shattered by violence. Behind him lurks a group of

[1] For a thorough treatment of the causes of the Whitman Massacre, see Cameron Addis's essay, "The Whitman Massacre: Religion and Manifest Destiny on the Columbia Plateau, 1809-1858."

dark, savage-looking figures, approaching slyly, their tomahawks raised. In this moment of dramatic suspension, the artist constructs a striking visual contrast: the tranquil domestic hearth bespeaks order and familial harmony; the creeping band of barbaric intruders, with their animal skins and crude weapons, embody the dark chaos of the "wilderness."[2]

As I note in the previous chapter, Janet Floyd and Jane H. Hunter argue that discourses of westward expansion routinely employed idealized images of family and homemaking on the frontier, purporting the westward extension of domestic virtue as a means to sanitize and sanctify the aggression and violence at the heart of American empire (Floyd 4-5; Hunter, "Women's" 23). Rather than erase frontier violence altogether, however, this image invites violence directly into the sanctuary of the home, insisting upon the inherent opposition of "civilization" and "savagery" and posing the latter as a threat to human progress and cultural advancement. In this way, the drawing participates in expansionism's virtuous masquerade, obscuring the ways the seemingly benign domestic scene—replete with quotidian objects of comfort and convenience—is itself thoroughly implicated in the U.S. project of land appropriation and settlement. Looked at a different way, however, the dramatic visual convergence of middle-class civility and frontier violence, while meant to highlight difference, nevertheless betrays the intimacy of their connection.

While Narcissa Whitman is not included within the picture's frame, her "touch" is everywhere evident in the fine furnishings and careful arrangement of the parlor. Her letters home, many of which were likely written in that very parlor, register the same convergence of personal and political meanings illustrated in the drawing. While Whitman's writing is in many ways an exploration of interior spaces—of the home, and of her own subjective experience—her

[2] N. Orr, *Massacre of Rev. Dr. Whitman of the Presbyterian Mission*, from Frances Fuller Victor's *River of the West*, 1870.

letters, many of which take the journal-letter form, cannot be understood apart from the animating context of westward expansion and Manifest Destiny.[3] As many scholars have recently begun to appreciate, the legitimating discourses of conquest were inseparable from the nineteenth century's evolving ideology of sentimental domesticity, elaborated within the era's domestic fiction, invoked to varying strategic ends within its political rhetoric, sanctified within its sermons, and rationalized and professionalized within its prescriptive literature.[4] Importantly, this ideology was also created—and contested—in the "private" lives and letters of women charged with exporting a "civilized," middle-class domesticity to the "wildernesses" of the western frontier. As Jane E. Simonsen argues in *Making Home Work: Domesticity and Native American Assimilation in the American West, 1860-1919*, both writing and "home display" were crucial forms of cultural work performed by women in the "contact zones of the West" (14). In fact, "domesticity traveled west through these very forms" (Simonsen 14). According to Simonsen, women's daily labors of homemaking on the frontier were invested with national and

[3] The extant letters and journals of Narcissa Whitman, which span the decade between her departure for Oregon territory in 1836 and the Whitman Massacre in 1847, are all available in published form. Whitman composed and produced copies of what she titled "My Journal" based on trail notes she kept during the overland portion of her journey West (*Journal* 67). One version of Whitman's journal was published by her sister as early as 1838. Versions of Whitman's journal were also published by a variety of newspapers and historical associations in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Of the three copies of Whitman's journal, two are housed at Whitman College in Washington State and one resides at the University of California at Berkely. While Whitman's full correspondence was not published until the latter decades of the twentieth century, her autograph letters were consulted and selectively included in early twentieth century histories of the Whitman mission, a subject of enduring public interest due to Marcus Whitmans' mythic status as the "Savior of Oregon" and the massacre's role in fueling several decades of bloody conflict in the Pacific Northwest (Addis 251; Garth 119). Her extant correspondence, along with other letters associated with the Whitman mission, is housed at Whitman College. In preparing this chapter, I consulted *The Letters of Narcissa Whitman, 1836-1847*, published by Ye Galleon Press in 1986 (this publication also includes a version of Whitman's journal).

[4] On the relationships between domesticity and empire in the nineteenth century, see Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*; Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* and "Manifest Domesticy"; Lora Romero, *Home Fronts: Domesticity and Its Critics in the Antebellum United States*; Laura Wexler, *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in an Age of American Imperialism* ; Karen Sanchéz-Eppler, "Raising Empires Like Children: Race, Nation, and Religious Education"; and Etsuko Taketani, *U.S. Woman Writers and the Discourses of Colonialism*. For works that focus on these relationships in the particular context of the American West, see Jane E. Simonsen, *Making Home Work: Domesticity and Native American Assimilation in the American West, 1860-1919*, and Janet Floyd, *Writing the Pioneer Woman*.

racial meanings specific to the cultural and political context of nineteenth-century expansion; therefore, close attention to activities as disparate as laundering and letter writing can help to illuminate the dynamism of domesticity as an imperial construct.

That Whitman engaged diligently in the cultural work of transferring domesticity to the American West is evident in her letters, which provided her a venue for constructing and interpreting the details of her domestic work for an audience of family and friends.[5] Her diligence is also evident in the state of the mission home at the time of the massacre. Following the attack, Henry Spalding, a missionary associate of the Whitmans', created an inventory of the Waiilatpu mission at the request of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, which oversaw the Oregon mission from its New England headquarters (Garth 119). The drawing described above—with its detailed rendering of the Whitman parlor—appears to be an accurate representation of the mission home's comfortable furnishings. Among other items in Spalding's inventory were six settees, twelve common chairs, three feather beds, two rocking chairs, a variety of tables, a spinning wheel, a bookcase filled with books, a curio cabinet, hanging pictures, wash stands, clothes presses, and wooden window blinds (Drury 140).

While meticulous, Spalding's succinct and business-like accounting belies the depth of emotional attachment and ideological meaning represented by this collection of objects within the domestic world created by Narcissa Whitman. Taken together, these remnants of material culture comprise the ephemera of a "civilized" life—each object a testament to Narcissa Whitman's success in carving out a white, middle-class existence on the western frontier, far beyond what she referred to as "the very borders of civilization" (*Letters* 11). More than simply

[5] In using the term "American West," or simply "the West," I acknowledge both the relativity of the term and its mythic implications; at the same time, I welcome the suggestion that "the West" existed more as an idea than an actual geographic location.

personal objects with personal histories, therefore, these domestic commodities were bound up in a complex network of highly specific historical and cultural meanings, and thereby provided Whitman a material means of asserting particular racial and class identity. In fact, the "civilizing"—even humanizing—power of the middle-class domestic hearth, a familiar nineteenth-century trope, was, increasingly by mid-century, ascribed to the commodities that comprised and furnished it [and to the (usually white) woman of discriminating "taste" that dwelled at its center] (Merish 15, 45).[6] By embodying the virtues of piety and "progress," these domestic goods served to justify (and distract from) the violence of land appropriation and forced removal that undergirded westward expansion (Merish 15). However innocuous these objects at first appear, therefore, their status as an index of "civilization's" westward progress—and as material markers of racial and class identity—suggest their position within the symbolic economy of imperial conquest (Tonkovich xxiii-xxv; Simonsen 13).

Despite Whitman's complicity in American empire, however, the cultural work performed in Whitman's frontier journals and letters, as well as her labors in the home, cannot be understood as a mere rehearsal of broader cultural and political meanings. Instead, in looking carefully at Whitman's voluminous, decade-long correspondence, a more complex portrait emerges. Whitman, as a missionary wife, was subject to the often-contradictory expectations of gendered missionary work in the nineteenth century, and her letters register the tension faced by many missionary wives of the period. Motivated by an evangelical desire to model a "Christian home" for the improvement and "elevation" of the "heathen," these women were also expected

[6] In *Sentimental Materialism*, Lori Merish argues that in the mid-nineteenth century an "ethic of pious consumption" emerged as a distinctly feminine category of civic engagement, opening a new, though circumscribed, sphere of agency and political "freedom" for women (specifically, white, middle-class women) (15, 90-92). An activity imbued with "civilizing efficacy," it was also predicated on the construction of boundaries delineating race and class (Merish 18, 33).

to create a domestic sanctuary for their own families, physically and figuratively sealed from the threat of "savage" influences lurking without (Hunter, "Women's" 116; Robert 72-74). While Whitman embarked upon her evangelical work with sincere, though benevolently condescending, intentions toward the Cayuse Indians, her letters tell a story of a domesticity gradually turned inward, and Whitman's later writing reveals her busily employed in the work of constructing and policing the racial boundaries of the home. Disillusioned by the various disappointments of mission work, and frustrated by the resistance of the Cayuse to the Whitman's inflexible, domesticating agenda (not to mention their repeated violations of her scrupulous notions of bodily hygiene and domestic order), Whitman reconfigured her "ministry" as "Motherhood" and dedicated herself to "the care of so many immortal souls to train up for God" (*Letters* 197).

Partly out of practical necessity, having, in the wake of her infant daughter's death, undertaken the care of three "half-breeds" and, later, the seven Sager children orphaned along the overland trail, Whitman invoked familiar tropes of domestic discourse to legitimate the revised scope of her ministry. As I will argue in this chapter, the era's ideology of sentimental domesticity, which cast motherhood on an expansive political and theological stage, empowered Whitman to invest her domestic labors with divine significance and national import—to claim as her own the maternal mission articulated by the likes of Catharine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe, who advocated the creation of "Christian Families" that might "go forth to shine 'as lights of the world' in all the now darkened nations" (Beecher and Stowe 458-59). Utilizing nineteenth-century rhetorics touting the "professionalization of motherhood," Whitman was able to withdraw from the "more public" responsibilities of mission work and yet maintain a role as

actor in what Leonard Sweet has called the millennial "drama of American destiny" (Sweet 47; Meckel 404; *Letters* 67).

"Cleanliness is next to Godliness": Policing the Boundaries of the Home

By the time of the Whitman Massacre, Narcissa Whitman had, by all appearances, succeeded in carving out a middle-class existence—replete with white picket fence and fine china—on the farthest edge of the mythic American frontier, an impressive feat of pioneering domesticity (Drury 140, 151-152).[7] Having "superintended" much of the building and furnishing of the "T-shaped" mission home at Waiilatpu (which, in 1840, replaced the Whitman's first, much smaller dwelling), Whitman set about enforcing a set of routines and rituals that would "regulate" the physical space of the family's new home according to the ideological dictates of nineteenth-century domesticity (*Letters* 96, 128; Garth 124). The disorder of the mission house in the wake of the 1847 attack—books and letters scattered about and trampled on, overturned settees, broken china—no doubt stood in stark contrast to the strict domestic order maintained by Whitman while she and "this orphan family under our care" lived at Waiilatpu (*Letters* 200).[8] Whitman, whose adopted children eventually totaled eleven, implemented a stern regimen of daily bathing and scrupulous housekeeping, waging a battle against "filth" and its implied behavioral associates—disobedience, laziness, and immorality (*Letters* 93). Her later letters, especially, reveal her attempts to create a domestic sanctuary for her growing brood of adopted children—a refuge from the "dirt" and disorder of the "heathen" world beyond its walls (*Letters*

[7] Thomas R. Garth, in his report published in the Pacific Northwest Quarterly, 1950, wrote of Whitman's taste in fine china: "Her refined taste is well expressed in her selection of chinaware, at least half of which is beautiful English pictorial wares—Spode, Staffordshire, Copeland and Garrett.... There was very little plain undecorated earthenware or utility china. What must have been the everyday ware had an attractive blue border" (qtd. in Drury 140).

[8] The Waiilatpu mission station was situated at the confluence of the Columbia and Walla Walla rivers, on the Columbia Plateau, in the dry interior region enclosed by the Cascades and the Rockies. Henry Spalding's letter to Narcissa Whitman's parents, the Prentisses, in the wake of the massacre describes in careful detail the events of the attack and is suggestive of the state of the mission home following the killings (*Letters* 230-235).

94, 47). Situated along a "highway" of the era's great overland migrations, this work was carried out against a backdrop of growing racial tensions and escalating violence, fueled by the "influx" of land-hungry white settlers into tribal territories and brought to the point of crisis by a series of devastating epidemics that severely depleted native populations (Letters 93, 175; Addis 242-243).

From the earliest years of the mission, Whitman's letters reveal her caught in the "double movement" of imperial domesticity described by Amy Kaplan in her influential essay "Manifest Domesticity" (585). As Kaplan demonstrates, nineteenth-century rhetorics of expansion co-opted domesticity in order to articulate and justify the cause of empire, at once working "to expand female influence beyond the home and the nation while simultaneously contracting woman's sphere to police domestic boundaries against the threat of foreignness both within and without" (585). This contradictory movement, according to Kaplan, registered a deep cultural ambivalence about empire and its attendant incorporation of "specters of the foreign" within the national "home" (602). This ambivalence—a notable source of tension within the writings of Harriet Newell and Caroline Pilsbury, discussed in the previous chapters—is likewise evident in Whitman's letters: while Whitman conceives of her work in the home as part of her mission to model Christian family life to the Cayuse, and a means of "extending a silent and gentle influence upon these benighted minds" in need of "elevation," her letters nevertheless register a desire to erect and police boundaries keeping "heathen" influences *out*, thereby preserving the moral sanctity of the middle-class home (*Letters* 67, 93). Whitman was not unique in finding "evangelical domesticity" frustrating in practice, and, in *The Gospel of Gentility*, Jane Hunter mentions this as a common trial of missionary wives. Writes Hunter, "Missionary women had worked hard to make their homes into oases of civilization in the deserts of heathendom, and

welcomed with ambivalence inquisitive visitors who smelled of garlic, opened drawers, and banged on precious pianos" (116). In a letter addressed to her parents several years into her mission work, Whitman expresses a familiar refrain of dismay over the Cayuse tribe's promiscuous disregard for bourgeois boundaries of privacy and cleanliness. Calling for her mother's sympathy in particular, she declares:

> Could dear mother know how I have been situated the two winters past, especially winter before last, I know she would pity me. I often think how disagreeable it used to be to her feelings to do her cooking in the presence of men-sitting about the room. This I have had to bear ever since I have been here-at times it has seemed as if I could not endure it any longer…. But the greatest trial to a woman's feelings is to have her cooking and eating room always filled with four or five or more Indians-men-especially at meal time…." (*Letters* 93)

Throughout her early letters, Whitman describes the original mission house as perpetually "crowded," overrun with Indians who track in dirt and disease (in the form of fleas) and "run all over the house" (*Letters* 94). The matter of crowding in the kitchen emerges as a point of particular contention for Whitman, and no doubt represents an especially egregious violation of her nineteenth-century notions of gendered space. However, Whitman does not articulate the nature of this violation directly; rather, she channels her frustration over the Indians' disregard for physical and cultural boundaries into a preoccupation with dirt. In April of 1840, she writes, "They are so filthy they make a great deal of cleaning wherever they go, and this wears out a woman very fast" (*Letters* 93). In a later letter, Whitman justifies the missionaries' insistence that the Cayuse build their own house of worship, writing, "We told them our house was to live in and we could not have them worship there for they would make it so dirty and fill it so full of

fleas that we could not live in it" (*Letters* 94). Dirt, in Whitman's writing, comes to represent the lasting material trace of the Indians' repeated breeches of privacy and good order. Furthermore, over time and across letters, dirt acquires a deeper, more insidious meaning, emerging as a racially-charged measure of moral and physical contamination from which her children must be protected.

Scholars have paid increasing attention to the ways "home," in the nineteenth century, was constructed as an elevated moral sphere, which, through the mother's work of housekeeping and childrearing, was responsible for building up a moral nation and preserving its purity.[9] In this context, culturally- and historically-specific values of cleanliness, industry, obedience, and privacy achieved the status of domestic "virtues" and were imbued with transhistorical moral force. For example, according to Leonore Davidoff, in the nineteenth century, "Tidiness was seen to be as much a moral as a physical attribute;" therefore, a bodily state of filthiness reflected disorder within the individual character and belied a state of moral impurity (79). In her classic essay "The Rationalization of Housework," Davidoff explains how the matter of "dirt" in particular emerged in the nineteenth century as a symbolic means of enforcing the boundaries of a threatened social hierarchy. According to Davidoff, "concern with personal and domestic cleanliness, with the stricter ordering of things and people in the house" first emerged in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries as an important measure of status and a means of "marking the middle classes off from those below them"—a group of social undesirables lumped together as the "Great Unwashed" (78, 80). Women, responsible for keeping disorder at bay

[9] On the connections between home-building and nation-building, and the role of middle-class morality in defining the terms of this joint nineteenth-century enterprise, see Karen Sanchéz-Eppler, "Raising Empires Like Children: Race, Nation, and Religious Education," and Mary P. Ryan, *Empire of the Mother: American Writing about Domesticity, 1830-1860.* For an exploration of these connections in the particular context of westward expansion, see Jane E. Simonsen, *Making Home Work: Domesticity and Native American Assimilation in the American West, 1860-1919*, and Brigitte Georgi-Findlay, *The Frontiers of Women's Writing: Women's Narratives and the Rhetoric of Westward Expansion*.

within the home through scrupulous housekeeping, were therefore invested with the symbolic task of patrolling hierarchal boundaries and maintaining the social order. Intrinsic to this work, according to Davidoff, was delineating between "nature" (a realm of dirt and disorder) and "culture" (a realm of cleanliness, purity, and order demarcated by the walls of the bourgeois home).

While Davidoff focuses her analysis on nineteenth-century England, her work is nevertheless suggestive of the ways "dirt control" became absorbed into rhetorics of race, class, and nation in an era of American expansionism (Davidoff 96). During this period of cultural upheaval, when social boundaries were being blurred and contested, and questions of national "purity" acquired increasing urgency, the housekeeper's imperative of boundary-maintenance took on particular force. Furthermore, given the context of escalating racial tensions spurred by debates over Indian removal and slavery, the racial dimensions of imperial housekeeping were especially foregrounded. As Mary Douglas has pointed out, "dirt is essentially disorder;" however, "the perception of disorder is a cultural artifact which changes through time and place" (qtd. in Davidoff 76). In antebellum America, the threat of disorder of physical objects in the home was mapped onto deeper cultural anxieties about disorder in the nation, and domesticity provided a language for articulating the threat of Otherness posed by the "foreign" within America's borders—immigrants, natives, and African Americans.[10] Therefore, in "striving for order and control by keeping dirt away," the white, middle-class women of America were simultaneously creating domestic spaces that, in the words of Jane E. Simonsen, "made the gendered and racial order of the world visible" (Davidoff 78; Simonsen 12).

[10] In "Manifest Domesticity," Amy Kaplan argues that "foreignness" in the nineteenth century posed a threat "both within and without" the nation's borders (585).

With dirt as an organizing metaphor, the Whitman household became a stage for rehearsing in miniature the terms of national inclusion and exclusion that, in the mid-nineteenth century, were beginning to resonate on a distinctly racial register. What Whitman considered the "filthy" state of Indian bodies (and, by implication, Indian morals) provided justification for the construction of physical boundaries that would protect her home and family from the threat of a contaminating Otherness that lurked without. In Whitman's letters, what exists as a formless "heathenish darkness" outside the home is transformed into a mass of filthy, flea-ridden bodies once it has entered through its doors (usually the door of the kitchen, much to Whitman's dismay) (*Letters* 164). In a March 1838 letter to her parents, Whitman describes her Indian school and remarks, "my kitchen has been filled with children morn and eve, which has made my floor very dirty, besides it is open and cold" (*Letters* 55). A month later, she again remarks to her parents, "our kitchen has been crowded," and in another letter she blames a bout of ill health on "our open house" (*Letters* 57, 93). The problem with the original mission home at Waiilatpu, it seems, boils down to a lack of boundaries. The house is entirely too "open," permeable to weather and uninvited visitors (not to mention the dirt they track in with them) (*Letters* 55, 91). Furthermore, serving as both school room and meeting house, the few rooms within the Whitman's "small and inconvenient" home were made to serve a multiplicity of functions that, in the nineteenth-century, would have been considered an egregious breach of bourgeois order and privacy (*Letters* 57).

Evangelical discourses of the period would have legitimized Whitman's concerns over the house's structural shortcomings. As I discussed in the second chapter, mission organizations of the nineteenth century often decried the "too *public*" arrangements of "heathen" homes, considering the specialization of domestic space according to certain functions necessary to the

preservation of the "Christian" (read: nuclear and middle-class) family (Johnston 89). Catharine Beecher's 1841 *Treatise on Domestic Economy* likewise emphasizes the appropriate arrangement of rooms according to social and domestic function, and includes detailed diagrams of family homes structured according to the dictates of domestic "economy" and the needs of the middle-class family (268-297). In a letter to her mother dated May 20, 1840, Whitman shares the couples' plans to construct a new, much larger mission home at Waiilatpu, which would hopefully put an end to the Indians' perpetual transgressions of middle-class standards of cleanliness and privacy. A rough blue-print of the design, included in the letter, designates a separate "Indian Hall" in an isolated wing of the house, replete with its own entrance. Whitman, anticipating the structure's completion, looks forward to a time when "this trial" of Indian crowding "is nearly done" (*Letters* 93). She writes to her mother, "when we get into our other house we have a room there we devote to them especially, and shall not permit them to go into the other part of the house at all" (*Letters* 93). She goes on to describe their habit of tracking dirt wherever they go, explaining, "We must clean after them, for we have come to elevate them and not to suffer ourselves to sink down to their standard" (*Letters* 93). Once again linking the values of privacy and cleanliness in order to justify the exclusion of the Cayuse from the Whitman home, she declares, "I hardly know how to describe my feelings at the prospect of a clean, comfortable house, and one large enough so that I can find a closet to pray in" (*Letters* 93).

While Whitman's earliest letters home reveal a preoccupation with cleanliness and dirt removal, the racial resonances of her attempts to purge the Whitman home of "filth"—in both its material and moral forms—become stronger over the course of her correspondence. In fact, while Whitman eventually attempts to protect her home—and her children—from the "unsavory" example of the "heathen," her early letters suggest a relative openness to Cayuse

influence that reflects her initial, more optimistic view of the Indians' capacity for "reform" (*Letters* 59, 94). Indeed, the Whitman's first, and only, biological child, Alice Clarissa, born shortly after their arrival at Waiilatpu, eventually becomes "fluent" in Nez Perce, the language spoken by the Cayuse tribe in the nineteenth century, and Whitman writes proudly to her family, "she sings all our Nez Perces hymns and several in English" (*Letters* 74). Whitman even makes a point to describe her daughter's particular fondness for the Nez Perce hymns, noting "Alice has become so familiar with them that she is repeating some part of them most of the time" (*Letters* 62). Aside from accommodating their daughter's immersion in the language, the Whitmans also "allow her to be called a Cayuse girl," a designation bestowed on her by a "friendly Indian," who named her "Cayuse te-mi (Cayuse girl) because she was born on Cayuse wai-tis (Cayuse land)" (*Letters* 47, 48).

Given the their practice of assigning new, Euro-American names to the Nez Perce and Cayuse children attending the mission school—a clear acknowledgement of the links between naming, culture, and identity—the Whitmans' acceptance of "Alice's Indian name" suggests a surprising willingness to blur cultural (and racial) boundaries (*Letters* 37, 58). Despite these indications of cultural accommodation, however, Whitman's letters register a nagging uneasiness over her daughters' exposure to Cayuse language and "habits" (*Letters* 129). In a letter to her sister Jane, she discloses, "Situated as I am, I know not how I shall succeed in training her as I ought. So many Indians and children are constantly in and about our house, and recently I discovered her much inclined to imitate and talk with them, or they with her" (Letters 62). Here again, Whitman voices her worry over the permeability of household boundaries, a situation that challenges her ability to create a clean, orderly environment, free from contaminating influences and therefore fit for the moral and cultural "training" of her child (*Letters* 155). Following a

pattern established across her decade-long correspondence, Whitman's worry over her daughter's exposure to Cayuse influence is also articulated in terms of dirt, and Whitman describes her attempts to "keep [Alice] entirely off floor," which is kept "very dirty" by the Indians who fill her kitchen "morn and eve" (*Letters* 55). Whitman's concern over Cayuse influence within the domestic realm is further fueled by missionary associates at the nearby Methodist mission, with whom Whitman regularly corresponds. Whitman writes, "Mr. Hall says much to us about the evils of allowing her to learn the native language, as well as our correspondents there. I can assure you we feel deeply for her. We know not what is our duty concerning her. In order to prevent it appears that I must take much of my time from intercourse with the natives" (*Letters* 78).

In confessing these anxieties, Whitman betrays the ethic of exclusion upon which the nineteenth-century mother's moral imperative ultimately depended. In order to succeed in "training" her daughter according to the dictates of the era's domestic ideology, she would need to purge her home of the various "evils" of native influence (*Letters* 155). Likewise, her "public ministry of teaching, etc."—which often took place within the mission home—would need to be reconfigured, and perhaps abandoned, in order for her to devote her energies to motherhood (*Letters* 67). This ethic of exclusion, while rarely articulated overtly, comprised the abiding subtext of nineteenth century domestic treatises and manuals on motherhood, which cast child-rearing in positive terms of nation-building and invested American mothers with the power to, through their children, "effect the moral revolution of the world" (Dr. John Scudder, qtd. in Sanchéz-Eppler, "Raising Empires" 400). According to Richard A. Meckel, the mid-century "deluge of domestic and child rearing advice literature" prescribed a newly expansive role for the nation's mothers, investing them with "the formidable ability to shape the future character of the

American populace" (Meckel 403, 404). However, in addressing as one the "mothers and housekeepers in this Nation," as Catharine Beecher did in her popular 1841 *Treatise on Domestic Economy,* this literature implied an unproblematic national unity—perhaps a *hoped-for* unity—that was otherwise belied by insistent inscriptions of difference, registered in the writers' narrow prejudices and implied assertions of white, middle-class superiority (ix). In publications such as Beecher's and Stowe's *The American Woman's Home,* for example, hand-wringing over the influx of "ignorant foreigners" ill suited to the task of raising "educated children," along with mention of natives' "savage" customs and the dangerous celibacy of "Romish" clergy, worked together to suggest the unique fitness of white, middle-class women for the task of building up a moral nation through their work in the home (467, 170, 21).

That Whitman was an avid consumer of this literature is evident in her letters. Among other publications she mentions reading—and circulating among other mothers of the Oregon mission—are W.A. Alcott's works on child-rearing and *Mother's Magazine,* a popular New England periodical which vigorously promoted the spread of maternal associations during the nineteenth century (*Letters* 59; Meckel 416).[11] In fact, inspired by *Mother's Magazine*, the Oregon missionary mothers created their own maternal association, for which Whitman acted as "corresponding secretary" (*Letters* 188). Occupying widely separated stations, and therefore unable to hold regular "maternal meetings," this group of women instead shared popular advice literature and corresponded by letter, supporting each other in the crucial work of "training up" moral children and a moral nation (*Letters* 59). In connecting her to the homes of other women, and to the world of shared cultural meanings those homes represented, Whitman's letters provided an important means of creating community "*in absentia*," the crucial epistolary office

[11] On the proliferation of maternal associations after 1830, see Richard A. Meckel's "Educating a Ministry of Mothers: Evangelical Maternal Associations, 1815-1860."

described by Eve Tavor Bannet in *Empire of Letters* (52). Furthermore, for the Oregon mothers, letters became a means of joining the "imagined community" of American mothers constructed in domestic treatises such as Beecher's and Stowe's and realized in the proliferation of maternal associations across antebellum America (Meckel 407; Bannet 52).

However, in counting themselves among the "mothers and housekeepers of the Nation," these women likewise implied the *limits* of national identity, engaging in the same reinscription of social and racial boundaries that haunted the inclusive address of the era's prescriptive literature. In fact, in an 1838 letter to her parents, Whitman justified the need for a maternal association in Oregon by constructing a contrast between "heathen" and "Christian lands," writing, "If mothers need help in training up their children in Christian lands, surely we do here, in the midst of heathen, without one savory example before our eyes" (*Letters* 59). Indeed, in the very act of creating an association of mothers connected across great distances through the material circulation of texts—letters, books, periodicals—these mission mothers, living "in the midst of heathen," acknowledged their isolation from other women perceived fit for sharing child-rearing advice.

If, as Elizabeth Hewitt has said, letters in the nineteenth-century were the means of uniting "a nation too large to be present to itself," then it is as important to consider who participated in the national correspondence as it is to name those who were excluded from it (12). In excluding native women from their epistolary exchange, the members of the Oregon maternal association implied what was often articulated explicitly in Whitman's letters—the lamentable inferiority of native mothers and their consequent inability to contribute to the work of building a moral nation. In fact, Whitman often draws a contrast between native child-rearing

practices—which she constructs as either barbaric or pitiably inadequate—and her own, which produce robust, well-fed, and well-disciplined—not to mention *clean*—children.

In Whitman's estimation, the superiority of New England techniques is unmistakable, even to native women, who express "wonder" over the Whitmans' new infant, Alice Clarissa (*Letters* 47). She describes them thronging about the child, marveling over "her complexion, her size and dress," which differs from their own children, "for they never raise a child here except they are lashed tight to a board, and the girls' heads undergo the flattening process" (*Letters* 47). In a later letter to her "Very, Very Dear Parents," she remarks that her daughter is "as large and larger than some of the native children of two years old. Her strength, size and activity surprises the Indians very much" (*Letters* 55). As Whitman sees it, the superiority of white ways is clear to the Indians, and "they think it is owing to [their children] being laced in their te-cashes (as they call the board they use for them), motionless night and day, that makes their children so weak and small when compared with her" (*Letters* 55). In fact, Whitman even goes so far as to suggest there is something peculiarly American and democratic in white child-rearing techniques when she explains the situation of a mixed-blood daughter of a nearby family: "She, like all the other children of this country, was doomed to be laced to a board for the first three months of her life, but, on being released for a season, she learned the blessed privilege of liberty, and they could not tie her up again" (*Letters* 58). Later, when Whitman's adopted "half-breed" girls show an inclination to "take a piece of board or a stick and carry it around on their backs ... for a baby," Whitman immediately intervenes, making "two rag babies" in order to "change their taste a little" (*Letters* 129). Still, despite her focus on these specific child-rearing techniques, Whitman is careful to point out that head flattening and board-lashing were merely symptoms of a greater cultural (and perhaps racial) problem, and the inferior state of native children, irreducible to a

mere set of inferior practices, "is doubtless owing to [these practices] *with many other causes*" (*Letters* 55, emphasis mine).

That practices associated with domesticity would, in Whitman's letters, emerge as an important marker of racial identity is consistent with other women's narratives of the frontier West. According to Jane E. Simonsen, as white women were confronted with alternate models of domesticity in the "contact zones of the West," they were forced to reconsider—or re-entrench—their assumptions about what it meant to keep house and raise children. More often than not, domesticity emerged as a symbol of exclusion, and Simonsen argues that nineteenth-century domesticity "was an imperial construct used by the white middle class to uphold its power in a diversifying and expansionist nation" (3). She goes on to contend that the efforts of nineteenth-century writers and reformers "to define domesticity as a white, middle-class trait were attempts to assert power over the lives and bodies of those whom they deemed foreign" (Simonsen 3). As Whitman's letters reveal, "bad housekeeping," like bad child-rearing, "became a marker of racial inferiority" (Simonsen 3). In Whitman's letters, therefore, child-rearing provided a language for articulating the terms of national belonging—native women's clear inability to provide for their children's basic needs, much less "train up" moral citizens for a growing American empire, suggested they were ill fit to fulfill the demands of a virtuous, bourgeois domesticity (and therefore unlikely candidates for inclusion in the national "home" (*Letters* 59).

As Whitman's letters reveal, the language of child-rearing depended upon the same dialectic of inclusion and exclusion that undergirded nineteenth-century processes of national formation—processes which, according to Susan P. Ryan, were increasingly racialized in the decades preceding the civil war (14). In a nation reeling over Irish Catholic immigration, and deeply divided over issues of slavery and Indian removal, the questions of *who belongs?* and *on*

what terms? began to define the limits of national identity according to categories of race and class. Furthermore, in an age of imperial expansion, the answers to these questions were not worked out merely through language and symbol, but increasingly through bald aggression and government-sponsored violence. In fact, as Amy Kaplan has been quick to point out, in the nineteenth-century United States, nation-building and empire-building were essentially synonymous.[12] Still, while empire depended ultimately on force, the symbolic work of delineating boundaries played an essential role in supporting the work of imperial conquest. Therefore, while they were rarely direct perpetrators of military and political violence, women, in making homes and raising children, were nevertheless contributing to the work of building a cultural and economic American empire. In fact, as Whitman's letters demonstrate, the nineteenth-century "Empire of the Mother" emerged as an important proving ground for racial identity—an arena for establishing the superior claims of "civilization" on the "wild" spaces of the West.[13]

Imperial Motherhood: Keeping Disorder at Bay in the Home and Nation

The violent realities of empire building were brought into dramatic relief in the mid-century context of the Pacific Northwest, when escalating hostilities between newly-arrived

[12] In "'Left Alone with America': The Absence of Empire in the Study of American Culture," Amy Kaplan regards "United States nation-building and empire-building as historically coterminous and mutually defining" (17). In *The Anarchy of Empire and the Making of U.S. Culture*, Kaplan likewise challenges the "central geographic bifurcation between continental expansion and overseas empire" (17). Like Kaplan, Etsuko Taketani challenges the common scholarly distinction between formal colonialism and the forms of so-called "soft" imperialism, arguing that such distinctions unproductively "[foreclose] the possibility for exploring colonialism in a U.S. context" (5). Taketani contends that U.S. colonialism "does function even without establishing formal colonies," arguing that the absence of formal colonies is precisely what makes U.S. colonialism "more furtive and more difficult to detect and resist than overt European colonialism" (5).

[13] Mary P. Ryan's *Empire of the Mother: American Writing about Domesticity 1830-1860* considers the relationship between imperialism and domesticity, focusing on women's experience of "imperial isolation" within the home rather than the geopolitical aspects of empire (97, 113). In "Raising Empires Like Children: Race, Nation, and Religious Education," Sanchéz-Eppler extends Ryan's arguments about imperial domesticity to consider the mother's actual role in creating empire-builders, looking at nineteenth-century Sunday school literature and its role in molding children into heroic missionaries and agents of imperial conquest.

white settlers and area tribes threatened to (and sometimes did) erupt into bloody conflict. In the wake of the U.S.-Mexico war, Oregon territory—at the time under joint U.S. and British control—emerged as a promising new stage for the national drama of Manifest Destiny. In his 1835 *Plea for the West*, the Reverend Lyman Beecher described the region's acquisition and settlement as an important key to "the religious and political destiny" of the nation, staging the region as a decisive battleground between "Papists" and Protestants (11).[14] Other mid-century writers, according to historian Cameron Addis, saw the territory as "the key to the entire Pacific Rim, the critical steppingstone on the way to converting China, Japan, and South America" (230). Informing these writers' grand pronouncements was the conviction that America was a nation divinely favored to spread the redeeming influences of Christianity and civilization to the rest of the world; furthermore, because of the superiority of its institutions and its distinctively moral national character, the United States was uniquely poised to usher in the age of God's millennial reign on earth. In the resulting upsurge of overland emigrants from the states, the Whitmans became unwitting—though not entirely unwilling—agents of territorial conquest, caught between their efforts to evangelize the "perishing" Cayuse Indians and their new role as ministers to the "weary, way-worn" travelers flooding Waiilatpu on their way to settle the Willamette Valley (*Letters* 114, 115).

This context of imperial expansion, and growing tensions between natives and whites, provided the backdrop for the more intimate drama being played out within the Whitman household. In fact, given its many striking parallels, the story that is told in Whitman's letters

[14] Whitman's letters reflect the sense of competition that existed between Protestant and Catholic missionaries in the mid-nineteenth-century Pacific Northwest, and at one point she describes their worry that Jesuit missionaries would gain control of the unoccupied "Dalles station." In 1847, Whitman wrote, "Marcus has now gone to Vancouver on business to bring up the property of the mission and see to the occupancy of the Dalles station. We are unwilling to let it pass out of our hands and fall into the hands of Catholics" (*Letters* 224).

can be read as an allegory for the larger drama of westward expansion and Manifest Destiny taking place on the geographically and politically expansive stage of Oregon territory. Particularly, Whitman's attempts to exclude the natives from the mission home—which become increasingly steadfast and systematic over time—strike a poignant parallel with the federal government's attempts to exclude native people from the national "household" through a policy of forced removal. [15] As rhetorics touting the inevitability of Indian "decay" and disappearance began to replace arguments in favor of their "reform," their displacement—and civilization's westward progress—began to seem "destined" (*Letters* 182).[16] While Whitman rarely expresses her political sentiments overtly (leaving it to her husband to articulate such positions in his letters home), her steady withdrawal from her "public" ministry to the Cayuse, and her attempts to keep the Indians out of her home, suggests the missionaries' increasing complicity with mid-century rhetorics of removal (*Letters* 67). Indeed, much like the federal government, Narcissa Whitman faced an "Indian Problem" of her own: the Cayuse, who persisted in their resistance to the missionaries' unyielding Calvinism, threatened to bring moral and physical disorder into the highly-regulated environment of Whitman's home, disrupting the "order" and of her household and the "government" of her children (*Letters* 169, 192).

Whitman'steady retreat into the home—first motivated by concerns over her daughter's affinity for the Nez Perce language—was likely catalyzed by a variety of forces, both personal and political. Following the accidental drowning of her "precious child, Alice Clarissa," at the

[15] See Karen Sánchez-Eppler's "American Houses: Constructions of History and Domesticity" in *American Literary History*, which considers the ubiquitous metaphor of a "national household" and explores the various convergences of nationhood and domesticity within nineteenth-century discourses.

[16] In his speech in support of the Federal Indian Removal Act of 1830, President Andrew Jackson argued that to "relieve" Mississippi and western Alabama of "Indian occupancy" would "enable those States to advance rapidly in population, wealth, and power." He likewise suggested a policy of removal "was in the best interest of the Indians," and would "retard the progress of decay, which is lessening their numbers, and perhaps cause them gradually, under the protection of the Government and through the influence of good counsels, to cast off their savage habits and become an interesting, civilized, and Christian community."

age of two-and-a-half, Whitman entered a period of deep grieving that eventually gave way to epistolary expressions of resignation to God's "Providence" (*Letters* 79). This was followed by several extended bouts of "nervous" illness and severe gastrointestinal complaints, which largely confined Whitman to the home and kept her from accompanying her husband, a physician, on his frequent journeys on mission business or to visit the sick (*Letters* 70, 110). Whitman's letters also reveal her growing weariness of missionary work, which, she writes to her sister, "becomes burdensome, especially if health fails" (*Letters* 110). At one point, she remarks, "I cannot write any more, I am so thronged and employed that I feel sometimes like being crazy" (Letters 182).

Whitman's frequent complaints of exhaustion also doubtless reflect her growing discouragement in the face of the tribe's "bitter opposition" to the missionaries' ambitious evangelical agenda (*Letters* 77). In the tradition of the nineteenth-century Protestant mission movement, the Whitmans travelled to Oregon under the banner of "Christianization" and "civilization," seeking the Indians' spiritual conversion to Calvinist Christianity and their cultural conversion to agriculture and sentimental domesticity (*Letters* 174). The Cayuse, however, had grown accustomed to a highly-selective relationship with Catholicism, which was introduced by French and Iroquois traders early in the nineteenth century, and over time the tribe had developed a flexible tradition of religious syncretism that had little room for Calvinist doctrines of "total depravity" or—as Whitman put it—"correct views of the atonement" (*Letters* 59; Addis 228-29). Furthermore, given their traditional subsistence patterns of hunting and seasonal mobility, the Indians were largely unwilling to abandon their "roving habits" for the virtues of "cultivation" and a settled, middle-class domesticity (*Letters* 74, 94).

This resistance must have been deflating to Whitman. Hailing from upstate New York's "burned-over district," so named for the religious revivals that swept across the region during the

nineteenth century, Whitman embarked upon mission work with a spirit of millennial optimism that was further fueled by her reading of the era's missionary hagiography (which she preferred to the "vain trash of novel reading") (*Letters* 115). In fact, she counted Harriet Newell's memoir, discussed in the second chapter, foremost among her inspirations to pursue a missionary vocation (Jeffrey 45). Unfortunately, the genre's tendency to valorize missionary motivation over actual results in the field must have contributed to her naïve expectations of success in the Pacific Northwest. Whitman's hopes were further encouraged by a story that had been circulating in New England in the early 1830s, an embellished account Whitman recalls "read[ing] about as the first news west of the Rocky mountains" (*Letters* 102). This apocryphal story, published in the New York *Christian Advocate* in 1833, told of a group of Nez Perces and Flatheads who had travelled to St. Louis in 1831 to issue a "Macedonian cry" for Protestant religious instruction (Addis 231). The Indians' highly-publicized plea for the "White Man's Book of Heaven" stirred missionaries, and missionary supporters, to action, generating interest in the spiritual plight of Northwestern tribes and suggesting a new field of "usefulness" in the wake of earlier disappointments among tribes of the East (*Letters* 160). [17] Expecting a more receptive audience than she met in the Indians of the Columbia Plateau, therefore, an exasperated Whitman was eventually led to write, "They are an exceedingly proud, haughty and insolent people, and keep us constantly upon the stretch after patience and forbearance" (*Letters* 94).

Given the disappointing realities of mission work, the opportunity to take in three "poor little outcasts" as her own provided Whitman with a new, culturally-sanctioned, target for her evangelical efforts. Between 1840 and 1841, Whitman agreed to adopt two "half-breed" girls—

[17] For a succinct history of Protestant missions to tribes of the eastern United States (largely a history of failures and frustration), see Paul William Harris, *Nothing but Christ: Rufus Anderson and the Ideology of Foreign Protestant Missions*.

"natives of the Rocky mountains" named Mary Ann Bridger and Helen Marr Meek—and one boy, who Whitman named David, the son of a native woman and Spanish trapper (*Letters* 129). Several years later, Whitman also agreed to adopt a family of white children orphaned along the trail, expanding her brood to eleven children. Because many of Whitman's letters became public documents, distributed among acquaintances and church-members that supported the mission, Whitman was aware of a need to defend this gradual disengagement from missionary work in order to focus on her "numerous" "family cares" (*Letters* 178).[18] In justifying the revised scope of her ministry, Whitman invoked contemporary discourses supporting the "professionalization" of motherhood, which cast child-rearing as a process of "elevating mortals" and invested mothers with the power to shape their children's (and the nation's) "destiny" through "instruction at the fireside" (Meckel 404; Abbott 111, 177). Echoing these sentiments in her letters, Whitman describes motherhood as a process of "training immortal spirits for an eternal world," and in an 1846 letter to her family she writes, "No responsibility is greater than the care of so many immortal souls to train up for God, and we must be the ministers" (*Letters* 155, 197).

The era's prescriptive literature encouraged just such a ministerial role for the nation's mothers. An 1832 promotional circular of the New York Maternal Association proclaimed, "When every nursery shall become a little sanctuary, and not before, will the earth be filled with the knowledge and glory of the Lord" (implying, of course, that the mother would fill the role of minister) (qtd. in Meckel 412). Beecher and Stowe likewise asserted the mother's ministerial role when they wrote, "The family state then, is the aptest earthly illustration of the heavenly

[18] Whitman's letters, like those of other missionaries, were often shared among family friends and acquaintances, and among a broader audience of home church members who supported the mission and provided needed supplies (Drury 131). In fact, Whitman occasionally addresses this wider audience of "beloved Christian Friends" directly, and is careful to specify to her family which parts of her letters can be considered public and which should be "kept to your own bosom" and "not be circulated" (*Journal* 42; *Letters* 118).

kingdom, and in it woman is its chief minister" (24). Importantly, Beecher and Stowe went on to enlarge the mother's ministry to encompass "if not her own children, then the neglected children of her Father in heaven," allowing women like Whitman to fulfill their maternal destiny even in the absence of biological children (24). Claiming this unconventional vision of motherhood as her mission, Whitman writes, "The Lord has taken our own dear child away so that we may care for the poor outcasts of the country and suffering children" (*Letters* 129). And in another letter, she writes:

> Although they are not mine by birth, yet I am interested in them and am much better pleased than if I had not the opportunity of acting the part of a mother. It is a satisfaction to feel that we are doing good and saving many individuals from being worse than useless in this world and lost in the world to come. (*Letters* 218)

Whitman even expresses a hope that her efforts in the home, while they absorb most of her time, will nevertheless exert a "gentle influence" over the "heathen mothers" of the mission, who she alternately accuses of "neglect" and pitiable incompetence (*Letters* 67, 50). In fact, while she owns to feeling "distressed … to think I am making so little personal effort for [the Indians'] benefit," Whitman appeals to the mission boards' expectations that missionary wives would model ideal Christian family life to the "heathen," reasoning, "but perhaps I could not do more than I am through the family" (*Letters* 207).

Nineteenth-century discourses of mission and motherhood therefore enabled Whitman to retreat into the home, and from the disorder represented by the largely incomprehensible "heathen" world surrounding her, and yet recast the work of child-rearing in terms of a virtuous, evangelical imperialism—a mother's ministry that would, in Beecher's words, "[extend] over the world those blessed influences, which are to renovate degraded man" (Beecher 37). Still, just as

the project of building an American empire was predicated on a rigorous (if largely concealed) ethic of exclusion, Whitman's was a domesticity that depended upon boundaries. In an 1846 letter to her father, Whitman wrote, "Bringing up a family of children in a heathen land, where every influence tends to degrade rather than elevate, requires no small measure of faith and patience, as well as great care and prayerful watchfulness" (*Letters* 197). In a letter to her sister Jane, Whitman likewise described "the constant watch and care and anxiety of a missionary mother," which could only be known "by experience" (*Letters* 131). Indeed, while Whitman expressed ambivalence about her biological daughter's exposure to Cayuse influence, by the time she agreed to take in her third adopted child, ambivalence had been supplanted by an anxious "watchfulness," and Whitman redoubled her efforts to construct and police the physical and figurative boundaries of the home.

Anticipating the highly-regimented environment of the Federal Indian schools, which began to proliferate in the late-nineteenth century, Whitman created a strictly-ordered domestic space, inducting her three "half-breed" children into middle-class morality through a stern program of moral training and bodily discipline.[19] In a "heathen land," this program required the children's containment within the home: "I keep them in the house most of the time," Whitman wrote to her sister, "to keep them away from the natives" (*Letters* 197, 129). Aside from regulating influences from *without*, however, Whitman also went to work "subduing" the persistent Otherness that lurked *within* her children, which threatened to express itself in the form of wild conduct, bodily "filth," or an uttered Nez Perce phrase (*Letters* 129). Employing a

[19] In "Domesticity in the Federal Indian Schools: The Power of Authority over Mind and Body," K. Tsianina considers the regimented environment of the Federal Indian schools from a Foucauldian perspective, focusing on the role of bodily discipline in the schools' programs of coercive assimilation. According to Tsianina, "In order to mold young people's minds, 19th-century educators bent first to mold their bodies, according to gender- and race-specific notions of capacities and inclinations. The federal emphasis on physical training reflected racist conceptions of the intrinsic link between uncivilized minds and undeveloped bodies" (227).

strategy later used in the Federal Indian schools, Whitman did everything in her power to purge her children of their native identities—she assigned the young orphan, "David," a new name, and she stripped all three of their traditional clothing and forbid them from speaking their native language. As she explained to her siblings Jane and Edward in 1842, "We confine them altogether to English and do not allow them to speak a word of Nez Perces" (*Letters* 129). This rigorous process of cultural retraining was, in many respects, also a means of assigning the children a new racial identity, and Whitman set about transforming her young charges through a set of values and bodily practices that were increasingly associated with America's white middle-class, a group anxious to distinguish itself in a diversifying and expansionist nation.

In keeping with the pattern introduced early in her letters, dirt—and its removal—emerges as an important index of Whitman's child-rearing success. In fact, Whitman constructs an implicit parallel between purifying the body and purifying the character when she writes of her decision to take the young orphan David into her home:

> The care of such a child is very great at first-dirty, covered with body and head lice and starved-his clothing is a part of a skin dress that does not half cover his nakedness, and a small bit of skin over his shoulders. Helen was in the same condition when I took her, and it was a long and tedious task to change her habits, young as she was, but little more than two years old. She was so stubborn and fretful and wanted to cry all the time if she could not have her own way. We have so subdued her that now she is a comfort to us, although she requires tight reins constantly. (*Letters* 129)

Here, disorder of the body (dirt, lice, nakedness) is construed as disorder of the character, and Whitman describes bringing a child from a wild, animal-like state into the controlled "habits" of a "civilized" middle-class. As Whitman sees it, domestication is an ongoing process of

subjugation that "requires tight reins constantly"—a fretful vigilance that seeks to manage the forces of disorder that exist both within and without the home (and, indeed, within and without the child).

Jane H. Hunter places this process of domestication in the context of nineteenth-century expansion, arguing that domesticity as a concept depended on boundaries—"the ability to separate hearth from world" ("Women's" 25). While domesticity was indeed expansive, invested with the capacity to transform the world in its image, according to Hunter, "it succeeded only when it had successfully converted savage to homebody" ("Women's" 25). Whitman suggests the necessity of boundary-maintenance to successful "conversion" when she describes her early "care" of David. After Whitman "washed him and oiled him and bound up his wounds, and dressed him and cleaned his head of lice," she expressed optimism that he would soon grow "accustomed" to the regimented order of the mission home, and "I think…be happy, *if I can keep him away from the native children*" (*Letters* 130, emphasis mine). Whitman's home would therefore serve the competing roles of moral fortress and place of sympathetic "care." Hunter illuminates this tension when she argues, "Homes required walls and doors. The cozy nourishment of domesticity resulted from its ability to keep the forces of disorder and confusion at bay, beyond the walls, outside the house" ("Women's" 25).

In the waning years of the Whitman mission, these outside "forces of disorder and confusion" continued to multiply and intensify. Over the 1840s, settlers continued to "flood" the country in increasing numbers and, in need of food and supplies, to gather about the Waiilatpu mission, which Whitman described as "a way mark, as it were, or a center post" along one great "highway" of the overland trail (*Letters* 173, 181). During this time, hostilities between area tribes and encroaching white settlers began to escalate, and, according to Whitman, the Cayuse

feared the Americans were plotting "to rob them of their land, to kill them all off" (*Letters* 158). The emigrants also brought illness to Oregon territory, and a series of epidemics introduced by new settlers severely depleted tribal populations, leaving area Indians dependent on the mission for treatment, yet increasingly resentful of the Whitmans' role in facilitating settlement (Addis 241). In this context, the Whitmans' relationship with the Cayuse—already strained by cultural misunderstanding—was brought to a point of crisis, leading the Indians to demand payment for the land occupied by the mission and to issue threats that occasionally escalated into vandalism and violence. While Marcus Whitman addresses these issues directly in the few letters to family and the American Board he had time to write, these growing tensions register more subtly in the letters of Narcissa Whitman, and aside from off-hand mentions of "excitement" among the Indians, disorder outside the home is transformed by Whitman into a growing preoccupation with domestic cares—particularly cleanliness (*Letters* 189).

As racial tensions escalated outside the Waiilatpu mission house, therefore, Whitman augmented her efforts to seal her home from the disorder that threatened "beyond the walls," constructing its protected interior as an oasis of "civilization" in the midst of a "dreary land of heathenish darkness" (*Letters* 164). Whitman's language reflects this contrast: inside the home was an environment that could be carefully "regulated," "arranged," "set in order by degrees"—a realm of maternal "government" in which children could be "subdued" through disciplined "habits" of early rising, daily study, strict observance of the Sabbath, and meticulous hygiene (*Letters* 169).[20] Outside, on the other hand, was a realm of disorder and "darkness," where

[20] Matilda J. Sager Delaney, one of the family of orphans adopted by Whitman, recalls in *A Survivor's Recollections of the Whitman Massacre* the strict schedule of daily chores and rigorous study the children were expected to adhere to while living in the mission home at Waiilatpu (8-9).

Satan's "dominions ... held their undivided sway," and the "powers of darkness" extended well beyond Whitman's benevolent, but circumscribed, governing reach (*Letters* 176).

As an important step in maintaining this vigilant domestic order, Whitman eventually instituted a practice of daily bathing, which, after adopting the Sager children, she began to advocate in her letters with almost religious zeal. In a letter to her sister, Harriet, she offers "the daily bathing of children" as an "improvement on mother's plan," and devotes several paragraphs to its virtues. Beginning when a child is an infant, Whitman explains, "[I] put it in a washbowl of water and give it a thorough washing with soap. I do this the next day and the next, and so on every day as long as the washbowl will hold it; when it will not, then I get a tub or something larger, and continue to do it until the child is able to be carried to the river or to go itself" (*Letters* 200). In the case of the Sager infant, who arrived "filthy" and "emaciated, and but just alive," Whitman credits the practice of daily bathing with restoring the child to "fleshy" good health and—after a contest for "mastery with her mother"—with causing her eventually "to submit" (*Letters* 200). Whitman goes on to extol the virtues of daily bathing for every member of the household, boasting, "This is our practice as well as the children…. Every one of my girls go to the river all summer long for bathing every day before dinner, and they love it so well that they would as soon do without their dinner as without that" (*Letters* 201).

For Whitman, well aware of the growing disorder outside her home, ritual bathing provides a means of "striving for order and control by keeping dirt away" (Davidoff 78). In Whitman's letters, threats of violence from without the home—in the form of broken windows and occasional forced intrusions—are met not with arms or barricades, but with broom and scrub brush. Rather than deal openly with the political dimensions of Cayuse resistance, Whitman channels her energies into dirt control, retreating farther and farther into the sanctuary of her

home, where racial conflict can be managed symbolically rather than confronted directly. Within this domestic sanctuary, rigorous hygiene provides an implicit means of marking racial difference. In keeping with the era's emphasis on the bodily dimensions of racial identity, Whitman employs bathing as a method of purifying her "half-breed" adoptees of the corrupting racial influences that exist within them and, more generally, as a means of establishing boundaries between the "filthy," flea-ridden Indians and her large brood of well-scrubbed, well-disciplined children (Tsianina 227). Indeed, in an era when cultural theories of race were being replaced with biological theories stressing Indians' innate inferiority, Whitman's preoccupation with bodily cleanliness takes on a particularly insidious meaning, and it is difficult to miss the racial resonances of her attempts to restore the skin to a purified whiteness by scrubbing away "filth" (Bieder 168).[21]

As Whitman engages in this work of imperial domesticity, contributing to American empire-building through her efforts in the home, her physical sphere of agency becomes, paradoxically, increasingly circumscribed. Mary P. Ryan presents this as the "quandary" of nineteenth-century domesticity, writing:

> No matter how critical [women's] activities were to the operation of society, they were performed in a narrow and remote social space. No matter how critical a mother's labor was to the quality of American life and character, she performed it in isolation from other domestic workers and remote from the formal arena of political and economic power. (114)

[21] As I mention in the preceding chapter, beginning in the 1820s and 30s, biological theories of race began to replace those emphasizing cultural difference as the foundation of racial identity. Out of vogue by mid-century, these cultural theories of race had provided the rationale for the assimilationist programs supported by the federal government earlier in the century (Bieder 168).

As Whitman is increasingly confined to the home, and to the care of her large family, her letters betray a sense of isolation and loneliness that is often acute. Continually "left alone" by her husband, who is frequently called away on medical or missionary business, Whitman expresses the depth of her loneliness through repetition, describing herself "feeble and lonely in such a lonely situation," and marveling that she has "endured … being left alone in our lonely house among a savage people" (*Letters* 164, 149).

Whitman's prolific letter writing helps to ameliorate the loneliness of domestic isolation—not to mention her feelings of displacement and alienation "among a savage people"—accommodating her retreat into the "remote social space" of the home by connecting her to the homes of other women, and to the world of shared cultural meanings those homes represent. The journal-letter form, in particular, is especially suited to the endless demands and "interruptions" of her domestic work, providing her a venue for daily, even hourly, conjuring the presence of those who are absent, and allowing her to address her correspondents in the illusory present-tense of epistolary "conversation" (*Letters* 224).[22] Whitman alludes to the conversational nature of epistolary discourse when she writes to her mother, "Sweet as it used to be, when my heart was full, to sit down and pour into my mother's bosom all my feelings, both sad and rejoicing; now, when far away from the parental roof, and thirsting for the same precious privilege, I take my pen and find a sweet relief in giving her my history in the same familiar way" (*Letters* 44). In taking up her pen, Whitman is able to address her mother as if she were sitting next to her, and to overcome, at least momentarily, the vast distance that separates her from a sympathetic listening ear.

[22] In *Epistolarity: Approaches to a Form*, Janet Altman discusses the importance of the "pivotal" present-tense within epistolary discourse, explaining that letter-writers continually return to the present in order to recreate the "tense" of intimate conversation in their letters (124, 128).

Janet Altman describes this epistolary illusion of face-to-face conversation when she writes, "imagination substitutes what reality cannot supply. The world of the lonely person, or of the person separated from lover or friend, becomes so peopled with images that when he picks up the pen, it is natural that he should engage in an immediate conversation with the image conjured up by the act of writing" (139). David A. Gerber likewise characterizes the letter as a provisional form of conversation, "the closest approximation that both parties involved in a correspondence may come to that which they most desire, but cannot obtain—an intimate conversation" (*Authors* 2). Given the letter's capacity to simulate intimate conversion, Whitman turns to letter writing to dispel the loneliness of her isolated situation, penning entries in between the constant "interruptions" of her domestic labors, writing by lamplight after the children have gone to sleep, or "attempting to write [with] half a dozen children making noise around me" (190). As a testament to the uncanny power of epistolary connection, Whitman writes to her siblings Edward and Jane, "If E. and J. would come in ... Surely solitude would quickly vanish, as it almost appears to, even while I am writing" (*Letters* 128).

Whitman's letters do not merely connect her to her addressed correspondents, however, and as I argue earlier in this chapter, letter writing allowed Whitman to participate in the national correspondence described by Bannet in *Empire of Letters* and theorized by Elizabeth Hewitt in *Correspondence and American Literature, 1770-1765*. According to Hewitt, nineteenth-century discourses invested the epistolary form with the power to mediate social union, and in the context of a nation widely-separated by geographic distance, letters were considered "one of the most powerful of the influences which hold our Union together" (7). A report on postal reform published in *The New Englander* in 1843 contributed to this dream of epistolary unity, suggesting a national network of familiar letters would "strengthen the ties that make us *one*

people" (qtd. in Hewitt 7). Through letter writing, Whitman, "left alone in our lonely house among a savage people," is able to bridge the continental expanse separating her from New England and to overcome the intervening "heathen darkness" that separates her from fellow missionary mothers in Oregon. In this way, she imagines herself part of a nation geographically dispersed but united by providential purpose, and she is able, if only provisionally, to overcome "the real contradictions—the asymmetry, the dependency, and the isolation" that Ryan argues were built into nineteenth-century conceptions of imperial domesticity (M. Ryan 114).

Just as the union between letter writer and correspondent is achieved largely "by make believe," however, the "imagined community" of a nation joined by letters was itself a species of fantasy, and harmonious images of a "Union" connected by family bonds (and by and epistolary network of "familiar" letters) concealed the ethic of rigorous exclusion upon which nineteenth-century nation-building depended. In her writing, Whitman reveals this ethic of national exclusion, first in detailing her attempts to erect boundaries keeping the Indians out of her home and, eventually, by excluding them from her letters almost entirely. As Whitman's careful descriptions of bathing practices suggest, her letters are increasingly filled with the quotidian details of domestic life. At the same time, reflecting her efforts to purge the mission home of native influence, mentions of the Indians, and the growing "Indian excitement" outside the home, become less and less frequent. Nevertheless, the literary world of her letters is haunted by their absence (*Letters* 189). According to Renée L. Bergland, the "ghosting" of Native Americans in early American writing was a literary trope that anticipated, "and at times helped to construct," the policies of Indian removal that were in full swing by mid-century (4). Joining popular myths of "the Vanishing Indian," these early American texts enacted Indians' "literary removal" by either denying Indian survival or, sometimes, by "describing them as insubstantial, disembodied,

and finally spectral beings" (Bergland 3). In this way, early American writers helped to perpetuate the idea that the eventual disappearance of the nation's natives was, while perhaps lamentable, nevertheless inevitable.[23] While Whitman's letters are free of such spectral motifs, through her increasing focus on her children and the interior world of the home, she effects her own sort of epistolary "removal," writing the Indians out of her letters at the same time that she establishes boundaries keeping them out of her home.

While Whitman initially expresses optimism about the Indians' capacity for "reform," her increasing neglect of her "public" ministries implies an attitude of resignation to the "perishing" Indians' inexorable fate (*Letters* 67, 114). The revised scope of Whitman's ministry reflects the shifting stance of the Oregon missionaries in regards to the people they initially hoped to rehabilitate and redeem. In an 1844 letter to his mother- and father-in-law, Marcus Whitman betrays the mission's increasing complicity with federal policies of Indian removal when he writes:

> I have no doubt our greatest work is to be to aid the white settlement of this country and help to found its religious institutions…. Although the Indians have made, and are making, rapid advance in religious knowledge and civilization, yet it cannot be hoped that time will be allowed to mature either the work of Christianization or civilization before the white settlers will demand the soil and seek the removal of both the Indians and the Mission. What Americans desire of this kind they always effect, and it is equally useless to oppose or desire it otherwise. (*Letters* 174)

[23] Critical studies on the vanishing Indian myth include Walter Benn Michael's *Our Americia: Nativism, Modernism and Pluralism*, which considers the use of the trope within modernist literature, and Brian Dippie's *The Vanishing American: White Attitudes and U.S. Indian Policy*. For a look at Indian "removal" within the discursive context of nineteenth-century literature, see Lucy Maddox's *Removals: Nineteenth-Century American Literature and the Politics of Indian Affairs*.

While Whitman is implicitly critical of American land-greed, he ultimately attributes the Indians' inevitable "removal" to their own unwillingness to become domesticated Christians, writing, "Indeed, I am fully convinced that when a people refuse or neglect to fill the designs of Providence, they ought not to complain at the results…. The Indians have in no case obeyed the command to multiply and replenish the earth, and they cannot stand in the way of others in doing so" (*Letters* 174).[24] In 1840, missionary Gustavus Hines used similar language to justify the settlement of Oregon's Williamette Valley, writing, "The hand of Providence is removing [the Indians] to give place to a people more worthy of this beautiful and fertile country" (qtd. in Zucker 61).

While Narcissa Whitman occasionally joins this chorus of Manifest Destiny, in one letter suggesting the Indians have reached the brink of "extinction" and, in another, prophesying, "This country is destined to be filled," the symbolic underpinnings of the era's expansionist discourses are more powerfully illustrated in her gradual exclusion of the Indians from her letters and from her home (*Letters* 93, 182). As Whitman's mission contracts to fulfill the exclusive function of imperial domesticity (which, as I argue throughout this study, is shaped by the contradictory back-and-forth of inclusion and exclusion), she signals a departure from the more conflicted positions cultivated within the letters of Harriet Newell and Caroline Pilsbury, the subjects of the previous two chapters. In claiming and inhabiting a more expansive domestic realm, both Newell and Pilsbury model at least a provisional rejection of the home's physical and figurative boundaries, and in choosing a vocation marked by mobility and impermanence, they carve out

[24] In this same passage, Whitman echoes the rhetoric employed by Andrew Jackson in his speech advocating the passage of the 1830 Indian Removal Act; like Jackson, Whitman construes removal as in the Indians' best interest, providing them a place where they can transform themselves according to the dictates of "civilization"—and the biblical imperative to "replenish the earth"— "as fully as their ability to obey will permit" (*Letters* 174).

spheres of influence that reach beyond the traditional boundaries of the domestic realm. Importantly, this revision of domestic boundaries is paralleled by the challenge their writings pose to the cultural and racial boundaries that, increasingly, divided an expanding nation—a nation eager to define itself in an era of social upheaval and growing racial tensions. While their grandly inclusive national (even *trans*national) visions are perpetually undercut by assumptions of cultural superiority and the imperatives of boundary-maintenance, Newell and Pilsbury nevertheless construct in their letters a home and a nation whose boundaries are relatively permeable.

Whitman, on the other hand, embodies a domesticity that is expansive only in the narrowest sense. Once eager to extend the promises of domesticity to the Cayuse tribe and, in effect, welcome them into the national "household," Whitman's ministry becomes increasingly contracted, her hopes for Indian "reform" largely abandoned. Retreating into the carefully-maintained order of her home, Whitman instead sets about creating the idealized domestic hearth that, in the nineteenth century, came to represent the superiority of "civilization" and, as Gustavus Hines suggested, made the American middle-class "more worthy of this beautiful and fertile country" than any other.

That the virtuous good order of the Whitman family home was ultimately implicated in imperial conquest, however, is suggested by the cracks and fissures that creep into Whitman's epistolary images of domestic harmony. Indeed, despite her efforts to the contrary, Whitman is unable to keep the violence of American empire *out* of her home. Much to Whitman's dismay, the Indians persist in entering directly into her kitchen, unwilling to use their separate, "accustomed door" (*Letters* 124). A group of Cayuse, angry over the Whitmans' interference in tribal affairs, come into the mission home with weapons "concealed under their blankets"

(*Letters* 110). Others engage in "many violent acts, such as breaking our windows and troubling our animals" (*Letters* 126). Finally, in an 1846 episode that would never make it into Whitman's letters, a group of Indians (mostly Cayuse) brought the violence of the frontier directly into the Whitman parlor, brutally slaughtering Marcus and Narcissa Whitman and two of their older sons, along with ten others who were drawn into the conflict. In the outbreak of bloody frontier conflict that followed, the Whitman home, with its scrubbed floors and fine furnishings, would eventually be looted and burned, the remaining structure, its walls blackened by flame and crumbling, left as a haunting symbol of domesticity's ultimate failure to redeem its "wild" context.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

Summary and Interpretation

The story of how I came to this project begins in a virtual archive, where a serendipitous combination of search terms led me to a short abstract describing, in the most general language, the contents of a hand-bound book filled with letters, addressed to "Hannah S." and signed by "Caroline P." It was clear by the scarcity of details provided that the letters had been given merely a cursory look, and, the most obvious points of historical and cultural interest having been duly noted and recorded, the fragile documents were then filed away, in some anonymous storeroom of the University of Delaware archives. There they sat, in a box stacked among other similar boxes, until a helpful archivist retrieved them upon my request, photocopied them, and mailed them to my home (thereby reinserting Pilsbury's epistles into postal circulation nearly two centuries after they were first dispatched through the mails). The letters were therefore "readdressed," in the most literal sense, to my place of residence, and I set about deciphering and transcribing their faded (and darkly photocopied) nineteenth-century script, tediously piecing together an epistolary story that, just as easily as not, might have been lost to history.[1]

In this way, Pilsbury's words were lifted from their singular, and rather fragile, material existence to become a digital text—a new sort of cultural object that, while sharing characteristics with the original, had also undergone an essential transformation.[2] The autograph letters of Harriet Newell and Narcissa Whitman likewise underwent this transformation into print—Newell's as early as 1813, when new printing technologies were revolutionizing the

[1] William Merrill Decker speaks of published letters being "readdressed" to a new audience, in a new social context (17, 21, 24-25).

[2] Decker insists that published letters, in being lifted from their original material and social contexts, undergo an essential "transformation," at once generically distinct and similar to the original holographs (56).

production and consumption of texts, and Whitman's within the last several decades. And it is for this reason that we, as twenty-first century readers, are privy to their contents. Still, even with their uniform typeface, illuminated from behind by the glow of a computer screen or constrained within the orderly margins of a book, these texts continually betray their material histories. They do so in a variety of ways, and aside from their characteristic gestures of dating, subscription, and first-person address, larger thematic motifs within these women's writings suggest their original status as letters in the context of familiar correspondence.

Perhaps most difficult to miss among these common themes is an emphasis upon "Home." As I made my way through Pilsbury's journal-letters, which had been conveyed so long ago from a rustic "parlor" in the Maine "wilderness" to a more conventional one in Newburyport, Massachussetts, I became aware, first through the word's simple repetition, of the ubiquity of "Home" within her correspondence. Furthermore, as I began to read the writings of other missionary women of the era, I was struck by the texts' shared emphasis. Not only did the word crop up continually, in different contexts and with varying shades of meaning, but its constant invocation very often pointed beyond the home's most obvious, physical incarnation to hint at something more complex and less tangible. Specifically, I began to notice parallels between the interior spaces of the home and the larger drama of American expansion being played out on the national (and, indeed, global) stage. While this relationship has, in recent years, received some attention within nineteenth-century American studies, these two layers of "domestic" meaning—home and nation—were further complicated in these texts by the writers' shared evangelical mission, which required a willingness to rupture the emotional and physical ties of home in order to fulfill a greater, spiritual purpose (the ultimate reward of which was,

fittingly, an eternal *home*, which took on the emotional colorings of the nineteenth-century domestic realm but suggested something greater—a home more *final* and more *real*).

This intersection—of home, nation, and mission—has received decidedly less critical attention within nineteenth-century studies, and, as I argue in my introduction, missionary women have not figured prominently in the burgeoning scholarship on women, domesticity, and national expansion. Certainly, it is tempting to dismiss these women's texts as merely a reflective surface for the era's dominant narratives (and thereby capitulate to a tendency within contemporary scholarship to classify texts according to a simplistic division between "colonizer" and "colonized"). To do so, however, would be to ignore the multiplicity inherent in these women's writings—and to neglect a rich body of work with profound implications for the study of women's relationships to empire in the nineteenth century.

As the three writers of this study suggest, the journal-letter is a place where personal histories and grand historical narratives intersect, producing texts that, in their stubborn complexity and persistent contradictions, demand careful attention and scholarly patience. Certainly, the relationships Newell, Pilsbury, and Whitman construct between home and nation in their journals, letters, and journal-letters are representative of larger cultural stories about race, progress, and national belonging (and, indeed, their writing reveals the multiplicity inherent within these narratives). At the same time, however, their writing is richly nuanced by the particularities of their personal and political contexts. In fact, while their surely sincere spiritual designs are often achieved by political means according to a nationalist agenda, just as often their letters resist, challenge, or complicate the era's imperialist discourses. This is evident in Harriet Newell's rejection of an earthly home and declarations of transnational belonging as much as it is in Caroline Pilsbury's construction of an expansive national household, able to accommodate

the nation's Indians. Even in their most conventional moments, however, these women's texts illuminate the very real contradictions shaping their lives and missions. In off-hand comments or drawn-out ruminations, their letters reveal the loneliness and isolation, fear and intolerance for difference that undergirded cultural prescriptions for an expansive womanhood, able—through sheer feminine influence—to tame the various "wildernesses" of the wider world.

Finally, it is important to note that, as public figures, these women's diverse accounts were not merely reflective of cultural and political formations, but actively shaped them. In brandishing their epistolary pens, Newell, Pilsbury, and Whitman wielded influence among an extensive evangelical reading public (which, in the case of Newell at least, extended across the Atlantic). Therefore, any investigation of the relationships between women, nation, and empire in the nineteenth century would be incomplete without consideration of the women who were among the first to travel to the far corners of the globe (or the borderlands of a vast American continent) in the name of God and country. Writing from the shifting cultural and geographic borders of an expansionist nation, these women shared prophetic visions and private disappointments, building an epistolary bridge between a home-left-behind and a home-in-the-making. As twenty-first century readers, we stumble upon their letters as accidental interlopers, privy to their contents because, when they might have been discarded or forgotten, they were treasured and kept. By a serendipitous combination of chance and intention, therefore, we have access to a rich body of literature that tells the story (or stories, rather) of a nation creating itself through correspondence.

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

By design, this project is limited to the study of texts written in the first half of the century by white Protestant missionaries and women of the New England middle-class. By

limiting the project's scope in this way, however, I am uncomfortably aware of the voices that are not represented in my account. Certainly, my work here would be enriched by the inclusion of the texts and perspectives of the *missionized*, whose interests and agendas variously converged and competed with those of the white missionaries who lived—invited or not—among them.

While the exclusion of these voices was motivated in part by the length of such a project, and my desire to devote sustained and focused attention to a small group of comparable texts, it also reflects the relative accessibility of texts written by missionaries when compared to the groups targeted by their efforts. Aside from the official histories put out by mission organizations themselves, missionaries of the nineteenth century created elaborate textual histories of their work through correspondence with mission boards and family and friends back home. These bodies of correspondence (especially those authored by men) were often carefully archived, their worth clearly acknowledged by the religious and academic institutions that preserved and housed them. On the other hand, the written perspectives of the missionized, when they exist, have often been lost to history, reflecting the selective politics of textual preservation and, sometimes, a scarcity of written documents to begin with. Indeed, in those societies that were primarily oral (and many of them were), cultural memory was preserved in the more dynamic and malleable forms of speech, performance, and artifact (which, given their relative transience, have not always survived the toll taken by brutal histories of epidemics, war, coercive assimilation, forced migrations, and economic exploitation).

The challenge posed by recovery work is no excuse for the neglect of these texts, however, and putting them into conversation with the writings of missionary women like Newell, Pilsbury, and Whitman would open up fruitful new avenues for inquiry. How might Cayuse women, for example, have responded to white missionaries' representations of native

womanhood as primitive, uncivilized, even barbaric? In what ways did native women revise or challenge these representations, perhaps using the ideology of sentimental domesticity to their own ends? And how did their responses reflect conceptions of gender, labor, and family within their own societies? While my project does not address such questions, I have attempted, when relevant, to reconstruct the cultural and political forces shaping each missionaries' reception (Newell, of course, never had the chance to be received by a host culture). While I acknowledge that my attempts at reconstruction are partial and no doubt colored by my own perspectives and agenda, I have tried to represent the missing voices within my study through extensive research in secondary source materials and through careful and critical readings of the missionary texts under consideration (paying as much attention to what is written as to the absences and omissions). In this way, I hope I have shed light on the relationships that existed between women, nation, and mission in the nineteenth century without contributing to the erasure of alternate accounts and competing histories.

The work I have done in the preceding chapters has implications for colonial studies, mission studies, women's rhetoric(s), epistolary theory, nineteenth-century diary literature, and early-American women's writing. While the linkages I interrogate in this project have only recently begun to attract the attention of scholars in American studies, the nineteenth-century mission movement has profound implications for the study of women's relationships to empire in an age of national expansion, and the multiplicity inherent in these relationships argues for further research and fresh approaches. If the essays lately compiled in *Competing Kingdoms: Women, Mission, Nation, and the American Protestant Empire, 1812-1960* are any indication, within women's missionary texts there is rich potential for future research. In keeping with the transnational "turn" in American studies, this literature—in its sheer diversity of place and

perspective—demands approaches freed from artificial containment within the boundaries of the nation-state, thereby challenging existing frameworks and traditional methodologies. Joining stories from exotic or faraway locales with the sentimental appeal and quotidian detail of the era's domestic literature, these women's writings blur generic (and national) boundaries, inviting us to explore evangelical domesticity's global reach.

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ABSTRACT

WRITING HOME AND NATION: EVANGELICAL DOMESTICITY IN THE JOURNAL-LETTERS OF HARRIET NEWELL, CAROLINE PILSBURY, AND NARCISSA WHITMAN, 1812-1847

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The American foreign mission movement was spawned in New England during the early years of the nineteenth century, in the ferment of the second great awakening. This outburst of evangelical energy and nationalist zeal was harnessed in service of a global agenda, which would be realized in part through the efforts of women. In my thesis, I explore the various convergences of home, nation, and Protestant mission in the journal-letters of three missionary women of the first half of the century—Harriet Newell, Caroline Pilsbury, and Narcissa Whitman. In a time when empire was driven by moral as much as territorial imperatives, these women were transformed into agents of imperial domesticity, expected to convert the world's "heathen" through the power of sheer feminine influence. Through letter writing, they negotiated these expectations before an emerging evangelical reading public, revealing in their texts the complex, and often-contradictory, discourses that shaped their sense of mission in an era of American expansion.