Poetry and the Press:
Women’s Literary Publishing in Canadian Newspapers, 1850-1900

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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University of Toronto

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Abstract

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Doctor of Philosophy, 2012
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This dissertation explores the important role the nineteenth-century newspaper played as a vehicle through which literary women could participate in public life, and specifically how women poets used this textual space as a forum for the exercise of rhetorical power. The newspaper was a space where women writers could speak with authority on the issues that concerned and affected them – a space where they could contribute to the dialogue in which the newspaper participated and, in doing so, claim a place for themselves as authors. The poetry sections of the daily newspapers in Canada were thus far from politically neutral, and they are deserving of attention, I argue, because they illustrate the extent and complexity of women’s involvement in nineteenth-century literary culture in Canada.

In each of my three chapters I consider the rhetorical strategies women used to assert themselves in the political – and the literary – worlds. Chapter One focuses on the Halifax Acadian Recorder between 1850 and 1870 and the ways women used sentimentality in their writing as a pedagogical tool, in terms of content and form, to teach their readers appropriate modes of compassionate response to the world around them. I suggest that sentimentalism’s seeming indulgence in emotion proved a method
by which women could extend themselves beyond the confines of the domestic spaces that were their ostensible focus. Chapter Two focuses on the Montreal Star’s Sunday Reading section between 1871 and 1888 to show how women co-opted the language of religion, and specifically the language used to describe Christ, in order to link feminine moral authority to God’s spiritual authority, thereby suggesting the female poet’s message was sanctioned by God. Finally, Chapter Three focuses on the Toronto Evening Telegram between 1880 and 1900 and writers’ significant shift away from earlier models of feminine morality as they embraced the persona of the poet as spokesperson for the city, taking on municipal politics and urban affairs more explicitly towards the end of the nineteenth century than ever before. As they reached beyond the subjects that had previously defined their work, these authors also reached beyond definitions of authorship that reinforced those boundaries. Although we can see significant change over the course of the fifty years that shape my project, throughout this period the newspaper remained an essential part not just of how women accessed their audiences but how they inserted themselves into Canadian life broadly as interested and invested participants, and as authors.
Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge the funding provided by the Ontario Graduate Scholarship Program in 2006-7, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada between 2006 and 2009, and the School of Graduate Studies’ Doctoral Completion Award in 2011-12. I would also like to acknowledge the Department of English at the University of Toronto for the many ways they invested in me and in my research.

My supervisor, Professor Heather Murray, was incredibly supportive while I worked on this project. She offered clear direction and insight, but more importantly she consistently modeled careful and intelligent scholarship. She has been a wonderful teacher and mentor.

I am also very grateful to the two other members of my supervisory committee, Professor Nick Mount and Professor Colin Hill. They were generous critics and consistently challenged me toward thoughtful analysis.

Over the course of graduate school I have learned from, leaned on, and been inspired by many friends and teachers and I am grateful for the opportunity to thank some of them here: Gerald Lynch, Marlene Goldman, Janice Fiamengo, Sarah Caskey, Laura Stenberg, Emily Simmons, Marybeth Curtin, Katherine McLeod.

There is no way I would have succeeded at graduate school without the help of my family, especially my parents, Judy and Des Gibb. They were (are) unfailing in their support – a support that took so many forms and expressed itself in so many ways over the past seven years I am amazed that it hasn’t left them exhausted. I hope they realize how much of what I have accomplished comes from them.

I would also like to thank my mother and father-in-law, Ann and Bob Hart, whose kindness and good humour helped to hold me up, not just as I launched myself into a Ph.D. programme, but also as I simultaneously fumbled my way through the first years of motherhood.

For Mark, whose love and patience appear to be boundless, and who was more involved in this project than I think he ever dreamed he would be, and for Anelieke, and for Theadora: I’m so grateful to come home to you at the end of it all.
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Appendix C: Selected Poems Printed in the Toronto *Evening Telegram*
On Thursday May 7, 1895 the Toronto newspaper the *Evening Telegram* printed a poem called “The Poet’s Confession,” by an author named Judy who unabashedly describes her mercenary approach to her craft this way:

> With my nose to the grindstone of duty,
> I sing you a song for a fee,
> And though it may not be a beauty,
> ‘Twill make little matter to me.
> For I sing for the sake of the money,
> And not for the sake of the art,
> And though the songs may not be funny,
> ‘Twill still make an editor “part.” (1-8)

Within the context of nineteenth-century women’s writing in Canada, “The Poet’s Confession” is striking both for the author’s explicit rejection of Victorian models of femininity and for her transparent interest in money-matters, an interest underscored by the presence of the newspaper as the venue in which the poem is published. Read against the sentimental and didactic poetry that was also published in newspapers by her literary predecessors fifty years earlier, Judy’s poem illustrates just how transformative the years between 1850 and 1900 were for women writing in Canada: it is evidence of the remarkable shifts this period saw not just in the topics women chose to write about, but also the ways they presented themselves to the reading public. This is a study of those changes as represented in three Canadian newspapers: the Halifax *Acadian Recorder*, the
Montreal *Star* and the Toronto *Evening Telegram*. These papers, largely representative of the typical Canadian newspaper in the second half of the nineteenth century, offer insight into the various ways women positioned themselves as poets and the various methods they used to contribute, through their creative writing, to public discourse in Canada. Throughout, I want to emphasize the newspaper itself not just as an incidental backdrop to the poetry women were writing, but as importantly constitutive of the public engagement women achieved in publishing their work here.

The connection between women’s rising presence on the literary scene and their involvement in public life, including organized social reform movements, has been well documented by critics such as Janice Fiamengo, Heather Murray, and Mariana Valverde, but the extent to which women’s literary efforts coalesced around the newspaper has yet to be fully examined outside of this study. The late nineteenth century in particular, beginning with the 1880s, has received substantial attention with regard to women’s writing and women’s professionalism. Indeed, most considerations of women’s involvement in writing as a profession focus on this time period, and rightly so – it was the 1880s that saw a relative proliferation of successful women authors on the literary scene who defined themselves as professionals: Pauline Johnson, Sara Jeanette Duncan, Agnes Maule Machar, Susan Harrison, Isabella Valancy Crawford, among others. These are the women whose names remain familiar to students and scholars of Canadian literature and whose works maintain prominence in the literary canon of early Canada. Jennifer Chambers, Misao Dean, Cecily Devereux, Carole Gerson, Sabine Milz, Veronica Strong-Boag and others have done important work piecing together the oeuvres and reconstructing the careers of these and other individual authors. Much of the work done
on early women’s writing in Canada has also focused on women’s monograph publishing or on their publishing in the literary magazines that were a precarious but formative part of literary culture at the time. When the newspaper has been considered as a publishing venue for women, it has most often been considered in light of journalism and women’s non-fiction prose.

Although this study also includes the 1880s and 1890s, overall I am interested in the trajectory of women writers’ experiences from 1850 and with the newspaper press exclusively. The commercial and critical success women achieved towards the end of the century and the kinds of writing personae they embraced emerged from, I argue, a longer history of women strategically positioning themselves rhetorically with regard to both their subject matter and their readers. Although Carole Gerson has shown how the periodical press more readily accommodated women’s literary production in the nineteenth century than monograph publishing, I see the newspaper specifically as an important, although largely unexplored, part of women’s involvement in the literary culture of the day. The newspaper was similar to magazines and literary journals in terms of offering more equal rates of pay for men and women, and in offering quicker financial returns for work than book projects, but, as I will suggest, its unique role in public and political life, its daily presence in peoples’ lives, also sets it apart from other periodicals of the time.

The period from 1850 to 1900 was a dynamic one for women’s publishing in the newspaper press for a number of reasons. Prevalent ideas about maternal feminism – the

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1 Janice Fiamengo and Marjorie Lang show how even this “non-fiction” involved careful rhetorical positioning and self-creation on the part of the women who worked in this field.
ideology that considers women to be morally superior as a result of their perceived greater capacity for sympathy and compassion – saturated Canadian culture even by the 1850s and this ideology worked to support women’s involvement in public life, particularly in the areas of social and urban reform. By exploiting the assumption that they could exert positive moral influence, women found a way to justify their participation in areas that extended beyond their traditional purview of the home. And they found the newspaper to be one place where they could express themselves publicly. The newspaper appealed to women as a publishing venue both because of its increasingly popular style and because it generally reflected the attitudes, concerns, and prejudices of the day; it worked to strike the same balance between sensation and moralism that women themselves were concerned to achieve. But the newspaper was also one of the few places where women could hope to earn any money for their writing. Without the resources to finance monograph publication, many women turned to the periodical press, and the newspaper press in particular, to see quick financial returns on their literary endeavours. As Carole Gerson notes, although books offered prestige, periodical publishing more consistently offered pay (Canadian Women in Print 69). Finally, if women were writing more in the newspaper, they also were emerging at this time as a significant group of newspaper readers. Increasing competition between newspapers drove editors’ attempts to attract this new audience, and their strategies involved the inclusion of material that would appeal to women as well as writers who would resonate with them. The alignment of all of these factors helped shape the daily newspaper as a place where women writers could speak with authority on the issues that concerned and
affected them, where they could contribute to the dialogue in which the newspaper participated and, in doing so, claim a place for themselves as authors.

The three papers discussed here, the *Acadian Recorder*, the Montreal *Star* and the Toronto *Telegram*, had significant literary interests and so offer a wealth of material to inform a study of the poetry women were writing and publishing between 1850 and 1900 in Canada. In addition to the volume of women’s writing they published, they are representative of the major Canadian dailies in several ways. In his comprehensive study of late nineteenth-century Canadian newspapers, *A Victorian Authority*, Paul Rutherford shows the increasing hold the daily newspaper was gaining on cities across the country. By the late 1870s, for example, the circulation of dailies had increased by approximately 150 percent – a remarkable growth that was especially evident in the cities (66). I will discuss the relationship between the city and the newspaper more fully in my consideration of the *Telegram* in chapter three, but all three papers were rooted in relatively large urban centres. Halifax, Montreal and Toronto were cities with active political cultures, even in the 1850s, and particularly towards the later period of my study, they became centres for the social and urban reform efforts that were gaining momentum across Canada and in which women were participating in large numbers.² Politics, labour issues, reform thinking, social trends, all found articulation in the cities’ daily newspapers. The *Recorder*, the *Star* and the *Telegram* were among the principal papers of their respective cities; they had large readerships and their place in the daily lives of their readers – in the lives of most Canadians, in fact, when taken together – was

² See the studies of Christina Burr, Linda Kealey, and Wayne Roberts for full considerations of the role women played in the nineteenth-century reform movement in Canada.
profound.

Rutherford suggests we cannot underestimate the role the newspaper played in nineteenth-century Canada, a role, he argues, that had far less to do with a paper’s political affiliations than with its cultural significance (232). As was common at the time, all three papers were run by dominating owners who assumed the role of editor and who also were significant public figures. William Blackadar of the Recorder, Hugh Graham of the Star, and John Ross Robertson of the Telegram, each had his own set of interests and prejudices that influenced their papers’ shape and scope and were reflected not just in their news reporting, but, as I will show, in the literature they published too. Given the powerful role of the editor in nineteenth-century Canadian cities, we should be careful not to dismiss any part of his paper as being politically neutral. But the “power” Rutherford attributes to the newspaper press extended beyond the particular projects with which individual editors were engaged and was, instead, located in its ability to reinforce “sets of values and patterns of authority” (8) in Canadian society:

The editors, excepting a few doctrinaires, were slaves of chance, men of strong opinions perhaps but rarely of deep convictions, forced to explain the ephemeral or the transient to a mass of readers. This situation did not so much liberate the imagination as necessitate conforming to structures that had worked in the past. New thoughts succeeded by fitting into an existing philosophical framework, which intensified rather than altered the message of the philosophy. Newspapers became the champions, in whole or in part, of distinct perspectives on life and affairs which repetition made familiar, indeed welcome to their audiences. (147)

The newspaper was not, then, a harbinger of change in Canada – the views it expressed
were rarely revolutionary; instead, it reflected the particular society that produced it. The women contributing to its pages had to strike a fine balance between the novelty—and the potentially transgressive implications—of communicating their views publicly and the socially-sanctioned, often conservative, nature of those views. As I will suggest, this was a balance the newspaper itself worked to achieve overall. As women’s roles, their interests and their viewpoints began to change through the second half of the nineteenth century, the ways in which they used the newspaper as a platform shifted and changed accordingly, but the balancing act remained.

Because the newspaper was reflective of society, it was necessarily full of contradiction. This is especially apparent as newspapers in Canada increasingly modeled themselves on the popular style of New Journalism they saw in American papers – a style marked by sensation, scandal and special features that appealed as much, if not more, to working class readers than middle and upper-class readers. But papers in Canada, even ones such as the *Telegram* that arguably went the furthest in embracing popular journalism, were careful not to go too far. The press thus increasingly embraced popular material that would appeal to a broad readership, while at the same time maintaining its “emphatic moralism” (Rutherford 231). Much of the motivation for the changes the newspaper press saw at the time had to do with competition: “Competition, in short, had forced newspapers to find readers among all classes of the community. By the end of the century, the popular press was an authority that reflected and bridged the social gulf in the big city” (Rutherford 77). Minko Sotiron finds the same thing: by the turn of the century competition between papers was such that publishers placed less emphasis on politics and focused instead on increasing revenue by “pleasing audiences”: “This meant
playing up the news by sensationalizing it. For the first time the typical newspaper was exciting to read: screaming headlines, breathless stories, the latest fiction, and features to interest every member of the family” (5).

Sotiron finds that newspapers into the twentieth century had by and large rejected moral justifications for their work; in the period I study, papers’ moral projects were still wrapped up with their commercial ones. Again, this has significant parallels with women’s writing, which similarly encapsulated a contradiction between the popular and the moral. The newspaper was thus an eminently suitable space for their work: it wanted to print the popular, the sensational, the sentimental, and still claim to hold a kind of moral suasion over society. Several critics, including Ann Douglas, Glenn Hendler and Jane Tompkins have noted the link between nineteenth-century popular literature, women’s writing, and the commercial implications of both, particularly in the context of the American novel. Douglas goes the farthest in critiquing what she sees as the conflation of these things: she argues that the commercial aims of women’s writing, and the new role women themselves played as consumers in nineteenth-century culture, ensured that the literature they produced would never be more than “distraction” (307). Hendler, Tompkins and others, following up on Douglas’s argument, also see nineteenth-century women’s writing as commercial, but point out the kinds of cultural work this literature did:

Popular forms like the sentimental novel and the historical novel soothed by means of the familiar, it was claimed, and ultimately they dulled the sensibilities that art made lively by means of its ‘advanced’ and innovative configurations. But when we look back candidly we can see that often the popular forms, while
stale in detail and texture, were massing small patterns of feeling in entirely new
directions. Making familiar or making ordinary is the radical ‘work’ done by
popular forms. (Hendler 19)

I read the poetry women were writing in the newspaper in a similar vein: it did make use
of popular forms and convention, and it was very frequently intended for profit, but it
also allowed some women to participate in the world around them – and exert their
influence in that world – in significant ways.

There is no doubt that the poetry and literature sections of a newspaper played a
critical role in its commercial success and, indeed, the financial success of the paper’s
editor. Serial novels, especially, helped to sell papers and ensure reader loyalty. But the
effect of these novels and the other literature the paper printed did not end here. The
newspaper was a significant, and now underestimated, point of entry for most readers of
fiction and poetry. As Rutherford argues, “even after cheap books, periodicals, and
public libraries became commonplace, the newspaper serial remained a leading medium
of popular fiction for the classes and masses, especially the masses” (127). Although
both fiction and poetry were popular with readers, there does seem to have been an
awareness that poetry worked in a way that was different from the fiction in the
newspaper, that while it was imaginative and creative, it operated still within the sphere
of the real. The extent to which poetry was expected to speak to current issues can be
seen in the way editors would often print poems as intended corollaries to particular
articles on related topics. For example, in the winter of 1888, a debate raged in the pages
of the Montreal Herald and Daily Commercial Gazette over the function and purpose of
marriage. While many writers contributed to the debate, and many readers voiced their
opinions by writing letters to the editor, the editor chose to help the articulation of one side of the argument by printing Frances Burton Clark’s poem “Is Marriage a Failure” in which she challenges the suggestion made by one contributor that because some marriages fail, marriage itself is a failure:

Because the cake is not always light,
Nor the seasoned soup exactly right,
Because at the coffee some husbands rail,
Tell me, friends – Does cooking fail? (1-4)

The evidence here is, again, that poetry in Canada in the nineteenth century, and especially the poetry printed in the newspaper, was tied up with culture and politics generally. It was used deliberately as a tool for participating in politics and social life broadly and was recognized as such. Indeed, for many writers and readers, literature, and poetry specifically, was meant to play this public role.

There is, then, value in considering the poetry women published as part of the paper’s fuller project, and its contemporary significance can be lost if we ignore this context. For example, modern readers of Evelyn Durand’s poem “The Indian’s Story” might have a difficult time understanding the effect it would have had on readers who encountered it in Toronto’s Globe on the morning of Saturday December 19, 1885 alongside other news that included discussion and debate about Louis Riel’s uprising in the west just the previous spring and the grievances of the Métis and Plains Indians against the federal government. Published immediately beside “The Indian’s Story” in the Globe that day was a short historical piece describing the adventures of Tecumseh, an Aboriginal leader of the Shawnee and Canadian ally during the War of 1812, and another
article describing the ritual of the peace pipe, speaking to the way Durand’s poem would resonate with readers in Canada who at mid century were fascinated by Aboriginal culture. When the heated contemporary debate surrounding Riel’s rebellion and Aboriginal treaty rights are taken into account, the poem has a political edge that might not otherwise be discernible, particularly considering the general anti-Riel sentiment prevalent in Toronto. The poem’s indictment of the hypocritical “Orangeman” and the dishonest “white men” gains an importance, a pointed specificity implicating the Globe’s readers, that is lost without this political context.

In Canadian Women in Print 1750-1918, Carole Gerson describes women’s publishing pre-1918 as “a web of conflicting notions regarding relations between self and history, the private and the public, the author and text” (67). One of the locations she identifies as articulating many of these “conflicting notions” is authors’ prefaces to their poetry collections in which they are very often self-deprecating, claiming not to aspire to the status of “poet.” Gerson argues that the ubiquity of this self-diminution points towards women writers’ profound understanding of the limits placed around them:

While a few writers […] ironically noted [their] unavoidable use of the “hackneyed expressions” associated with the conventions of authorial modesty, their ubiquity also demonstrates the writers’ internalization of the social values couched in the advice offered by Robert Southey to Charlotte Brontë in 1837, when he informed the woman who was to become one of the greatest authors of the nineteenth century, that “literature cannot be the business of a woman’s life, and it ought not to be.” (50)
In considering the relationship between these prefaces and the poetry collections that follow them, Gerson questions whether we can read these “common tropes of apology and trepidation,” as sincere, especially given the kinds of moral and national claims women often made in their writing. The poems women published in the newspaper press offer a radically different reading opportunity in a number of ways: here, there are no prefaces in which a poet might explain, justify or apologize for her poetic efforts outside of the poetry itself. When she had recourse to a particular (and almost always gendered) model for her personae within the poem, it worked to buttress her position as poet, not to undermine it. We can see this in the extent to which women writers highlighted their gender as a way of confirming their qualifications for engaging with certain subject matter, for example. If, as Gerson finds, women poets ironically denied they were poets in their monograph publications, they emphatically embraced the role in their newspaper publishing. In the very different context of the newspaper, women writers gained the ability to create for themselves socially recognized identities as authors.

In the three chapters that follow I am interested in the rhetorical strategies women used to assert themselves in the political – and the literary – worlds. My discussion of the Recorder in Chapter One focuses on the early years of my study, the 1850s and 1860s. I explore how women used sentimentality as a pedagogical tool, in terms of content and form, to teach their readers appropriate modes of compassionate response to the world around them. In doing so, I engage with criticisms of sentimental aesthetics that see it as limited by interiority and so at odds with political engagement. The poetry women wrote in the 1850s and 1860s is certainly marked by melancholy and melodrama, expressing
even a morbid fascination with death and dying, but I suggest that this seeming indulgence in emotion proved a method by which women could extend themselves beyond the confines of the domestic spaces that were their ostensible focus. In their newspaper publishing at this time women also exploited the emotional weight attached to motherhood as a way of claiming a particularly gendered authority that justified their movement out of private spaces and into public ones, including the public space of print.

My study of the *Star* in Chapter Two considers the paper’s Sunday Reading section that was prominent through the 1870s and early 1880s. I use the poetry women published here to show how women co-opted the language of religion, and specifically the language used to describe Christ, in order to link feminine moral authority to God’s spiritual authority, thereby suggesting the female poet’s message was sanctioned by God. American poet Mrs. M.A. Kidder figures largely in my discussion here as I consider how the profound changes happening in religion in the nineteenth century with the advent of Common Sense facilitated women’s rhetorical agency. Even while preaching itself was increasingly influenced by the conventions of popular literature, I show how literature written by women was increasingly influenced by theology and scripture; in fact, we can see women’s poetry working explicitly as homily.

Finally, my study of the *Telegram* in Chapter Three considers writers’ significant shift away from earlier models of feminine morality as they embraced the persona of the poet as spokesperson for the city, taking on municipal politics and urban affairs in their writing more explicitly than ever before. This shift resulted from the intensification of the newspaper’s focus on the local, its endorsement of the poet’s perspective as one that articulated local concerns, as well as women’s real engagement in local politics, an
engagement not possible to the same extent at the national level. As they reached beyond
the subjects that had previously defined their work, these authors also reached beyond
definitions of authorship that reinforced those boundaries. I show, for example, how in
the last decades of the nineteenth century, women more readily acknowledged the
economic implications of their writing, foregrounding issues of professionalization in
new ways. Although we can see significant change over the course of the fifty years that
shape my project, throughout this period the newspaper remained an essential part not
just of how women accessed their audiences but how they inserted themselves into
Canadian life broadly as interested and invested participants, and as authors.

Because I suggest that women used the newspaper as a vehicle for participating in
public life and, further, as a platform from which they could express their identities as
authors, questions of agency are important. Janice Fiamengo identifies these questions in
The Woman’s Page as the “provocative questions about the extent to which activists and
persuasive writers of the turn-of-the-century period were conscious of the linguistic
horizons within which they operated” (8). In confronting them, she summarizes the two
most common positions critics have taken in response: first, women’s experiences were
determined by the ideology of the day and so women were ultimately limited in terms of
the discourses they could use; second, women were aware of the limitations placed
around them and used language and rhetoric strategically and in sophisticated ways to
escape those limitations.

In Settler Feminism: Race Making in Canada, Jennifer Henderson works to
complicate this binary suggesting that by virtue of their position as symbols of moral
authority in nineteenth-century Canada, women worked as “practical agent(s) of
government,” a liberal government whose project was moral improvement according to
its own racialized understanding of what constituted ‘proper’ ways of being (17).
Challenging the assumption that women were utterly excluded from power, she shows the
far more complicated relationship women had with the social and political forces that
determined their experiences. Ultimately, however, Henderson argues, “[c]aught in the
contradictions between liberal theory and practice – and in some cases propelled into the
public arena by these very contradictions – the nineteenth-century woman was not at
liberty to define her own subject position. This position was constructed in social
legislation in the discourse of moral reformers” (26, italics mine). Henderson largely
grounds her analysis of women’s writing in a desire to “dislodge[s] the question of
women’s agency from the sounding of a repressed voice and render[s] legible more
complicated entanglements of agency and power, freedom and subjection” (213). I think
this is important and productive. Despite her effort to do so, however, Henderson does
not, in the end, avoid the binary she seeks to escape.

For her part, Fiamengo locates her own position as critic somewhere between the
two she identifies at first:

I recognize that speaking subjects are not entirely in control or aware of the
operations of language; always there are taken-for-granted assumptions and
associations dictated by the discourse within which we are formed as subjects. At
the same time, however, it is difficult to see individuals as entirely subject to
discourse, given the evidence of variety, recognizable contradictions, fundamental
disagreements, and degrees of discursive self-consciousness exhibited by speakers
and writers in any particular period. Not all thinkers use language in the same way or make the same assumptions and associations even within the same discourse...one needs to be careful neither to impose a false uniformity nor to underestimate speakers’ and writers’ sophistication and agility. (11)

I find this approach responsible and compelling, and it is one I strive to emulate.

Studying the poetry women published in the newspaper press can furnish new ways of considering, and complicating, the question of agency. The evidence I’ve gathered also suggests that women writers in Canada helped construct, as much as their positions were constructed by, discourses of maternal feminism, moral reform, liberal Protestantism and so on. It is possible to read their participation in this discourse, then, as itself a form of agency, particularly when we can identify the ways in which their rhetorical positioning changed over time, facilitating their participation in public life in new ways.

* * *

Hovering behind this project are important but difficult questions about how and why we should read early Canadian literature and early women’s writing in general. In some cases these answers are clear and compelling, particularly when the talent of an individual author has been shown over time to stand on its own merit. In other cases, many of which make up this study, the answers are far less clear. Nineteenth-century newspapers are remarkably full of women’s writing, but many of the authors whose work appears in them frequently wrote anonymously or under pseudonyms, and many cannot be identified even when they did sign their work. Some of these women published substantial amounts of poetry in the paper; other women appear to have published only one or two poems. Even discerning whether an individual author is Canadian can be a
challenge, because although they often printed original contributions from local writers, newspapers participated in exchange systems with other papers and also frequently pirated material from other venues in the United States and in Britain. And because of the nature of the newspaper as a particular kind of literary venue – its interests in the popular, its invitation for amateurs to participate – many of the poems themselves can seem to have little aesthetic value by today’s standards.

While I do want to complicate the question of literary value, and I do this particularly in my consideration of sentimentalism in Chapter One, I also am keen to show that the recovery work my project does involves more than recovery for recovery’s sake. My aim is to present a fuller and more nuanced portrait of nineteenth-century literary culture in Canada and to complicate established ideas about women’s involvement in the publishing world. Nevertheless, issues of access and recovery have played a large part in the work I have done for this project; the biggest challenges I encountered had to do with simple (or not so simple) recovery. I had anticipated problems when it came to tracking down individual authors, but I was surprised by the difficulty even of accessing the newspapers I chose to include, given their cultural importance and their prominence during the time they were actively publishing. Accessing the *Acadian Recorder* was by far the most difficult, and offers an important example of the difficulties of the archival research that is of such value to studies of early Canada.

Much of the *Acadian Recorder*’s early years have been preserved on microfilm – from 1817 to 1869 with the years 1823-1854 missing – and are available at various libraries, including Library and Archives Canada. After 1869, extant print issues of the
paper are available at Library and Archives Canada. Locating specific runs and editions generally, on microfilm and in print, is difficult because of the three formats of the paper that were being published simultaneously. In records and finding aids, the paper is variously listed as *Acadian Recorder*, *Halifax Recorder*, *Tri-Weekly Acadian Recorder*, *Daily Acadian Recorder* and so on. However a particular run on microfilm, or a bound copy of the printed paper, might be listed, often the different versions of the paper are filmed together or bound together so that the reader might start out looking at the paper’s tri-weekly edition and find herself suddenly reading the daily edition. Again, the paper is not listed in a way that makes it clear what exactly the library’s holdings are. Runs are incomplete and information is often outdated or even incorrect: as a result of inconsistent or otherwise inaccurate call numbers and several moves in the library storage area, on my visit to Library and Archives Canada retrieval staff had difficulty at first even finding the newspaper in their storage area. The best thing for the researcher interested in accessing the print copies to do, I discovered, is to submit a request for unbarcoded issues, directing retrieval staff to Bays 16-19 in the onsite storage area.

Storing – and then retrieving – the large, fragile copies of the paper proves another obstacle. The extant print copies are bound, which helps in preserving the paper’s physical integrity, but, for example, I was unable to look at much of the early 1890s because its condition was too poor – in many places the paper was torn and disintegrating. I learned the poor physical quality of the paper may in fact be part of the reason the later editions of the paper have not been microfilmed. The issues of time and the ephemeral nature of the newspaper, then, become very real when one consults this paper. The reality of the paper as physical artifact became especially accentuated for me
when I noticed many of the poems published in the paper in the early 1870s were actually clipped out, thwarting my attempts to study them, but also, ironically, underscoring the importance of doing so. This clipping out of poems, most likely with the intention to preserve them for at least for a little bit longer, suggests the importance of the literature published in the *Recorder’s* pages to the culture of the day.

For this project, I consulted all the available editions on microfilm – complete runs of the weekly and tri-weekly edition up to 1869. For the years 1870 to 1900, I worked with librarians at Library and Archives Canada to consult as representative a sample as possible. Library policy holds that only two bound volumes of the paper can be retrieved at a time – one bound volume might contain a single year or a number of years, the daily or the tri-weekly version of the paper, or both, depending on the number of papers preserved. There is no way of knowing before one consults the actual volumes what they contain in terms of specific dates and specific editions. In the end, I accessed and examined 1870, 1872, 1873, 1874, 1878, 1879, 1880, 1881, 1883, 1886, 1887, 1890, 1891, 1895, and 1899. Unfortunately, much of the papers from the 1890s, with the exception of the ones listed above, were in too fragile a condition for me to examine in detail.

The Montreal *Star* and the Toronto *Telegram* were far easier to access because full runs exist on microfilm. The *Star*, in particular, posed no challenge because its microfilm copies are in good condition, for the most part, and I was able to read in detail every Saturday edition from 1869 to 1900. *Sunday Reading* was published, with some exceptions, on Saturdays, and so I focused my energies on the Saturday editions, although I did read samples from other days. The *Star* archives are owned by the
Montreal *Gazette* which took over the *Star*’s buildings, equipment and archives in 1979 after the *Star* folded in the wake of an eight-month printer’s strike. While the *Gazette* archives are digitized from 1878 to 1986, the *Star*’s are not.

A complete run of the *Telegram* also exists on microfilm, but unfortunately many of the microfilm reels are in poor condition and are difficult, at times impossible, to read. The years 1890, 1895 and 1899, in particular, are often too dark to access. There are also some sections of the run missing, including August 1888 to May 1889 and October 1896 to January 1897. After January 1894 the papers seem to have been filmed backwards and so figuring out pagination is difficult. It is, therefore, necessary to consult print copies of the paper for many of these years. Although the University of Toronto library catalogue as well as AMICUS, Library and Archives Canada’s catalogue of bibliographic records, indicates that print copies of the *Telegram* are housed at the Thomas Fisher Rare Book library in Toronto, in fact, the Fisher Library only has one issue of the paper. The Toronto Reference Library has an almost complete run of the years 1876–1960. They also have a number of unbound and loose issues from the 1960s and 1970s.
On October 13, 1860, a poem entitled “Make your Home Beautiful” appeared on page four of the Halifax *Acadian Recorder*. In its final two stanzas, the poem defines the unique place women occupied in mid-nineteenth-century Canada as the poet-speaker reminds them of their moral duties:

Make your home beautiful – sure, ‘tis a duty –
Call up your little ones; teach them to walk,
Hand in hand, with the wandering angel of beauty,
Encourage their spirits with Nature to talk.
Gather them round you, and let them be learning
Lessons that drop from the delicate wings
Of the bird and the butterfly – ever returning
To Him who has made all these beautiful things.

Make home a hive; where all beautiful feelings
Cluster like bees and their honey-dew bring;
Make it a temple of holy revealings,
And love its bright angel with “shadowy wing.”
Then shall it be, when afar on life’s billow,
Wherever your tempest-tost children are flung,
They will long for the shades of the home-weeping willow,
And sing the sweet song which their mother sung. (25-40)³

Looking through the pages of the *Acadian Recorder* in the twenty years from 1850-1870, we see again and again poetry like this: poetry written by women that glorifies the home as a private, even hallowed space, and celebrates the mother as keeper and regulator of that space. The home here is morally and spiritually edifying when set against the world outside and beyond. It is a “hive” around which beautiful feelings cluster, a “temple of holy revealings,” and it stands as a beacon of spiritual consistency for the mother’s “tempest-tost” children. In its focus, or thematic concerns, it is typical of the poetry women were writing and publishing, not just in the *Recorder*, but in newspapers across Canada at the time. This poetry is largely sentimental, often melodramatic, and it stages its dramas in the interior spaces of women’s lives.

From its inception in 1813, the four-page *Recorder* dedicated space to poetry in almost every issue. The paper’s founder, Anthony Henry Holland, had significant experience working with newspapers in the United States before coming to Canada and the success he achieved with the *Recorder* suggests he had an effective model for its design. The *Acadian Recorder* followed from a distinguished line of newspaper ventures – Holland’s godfather had founded the *Nova Scotia Chronicle* in 1770, the second newspaper ever published in Nova Scotia. When it appeared, Holland’s *Recorder* joined three other weeklies still operating in the province and was quickly joined by a fourth, the *Free Press*, in 1815, all of them vying for space in the relatively small market of early nineteenth-century Nova Scotia. Like its contemporaries at the time, the *Recorder* was published once a week on Saturdays. Its four pages were laboriously set by hand: the first

³ See Appendix A.
page was filled up with advertisements; news, editorials and literature fill up the rest. It began issuing a tri-weekly edition in 1864 and a daily edition in 1868.

Also like its contemporaries, the paper borrowed heavily from papers in Britain, Canada and the United States, but its editorial writing was strong throughout its lifetime, anticipating a trend that would increasingly become a defining aspect of the nineteenth-century newspaper. Indeed, by 1850, editorials had a prominent place, not only in the Recorder and other Halifax papers, but in papers across British North America. Sarah Brouillette argues, for example, that the editor in many ways acted as voice for his readers and “contributed to the delineation of a role for print in public life and reader identity” (239). In his discussion of papers in Quebec and Lower Canada, Gérard Laurence suggests, “the editorial article became the choicest morsel in the newspaper, since it was the strategic piece of propaganda where ideas were turned over and over, principles recalled, abuses denounced, slogans formulated, and watchwords disseminated” (237). Again, the Recorder was perhaps uniquely prepared for the increasing focus placed on the editor: as early as 1818, member of the Halifax Legislative Assembly John Young had published regular articles in the paper on agricultural improvements under the pen name ‘Agricola’.

It was in this climate of intimacy between editor and newspaper that the Acadian Recorder’s Henry Dugwell Blackadar made his name in the Halifax newspaper business. Blackadar’s family had held joint proprietorship of the Recorder since 1837 and sole proprietorship since 1857; Blackadar himself had worked in the newspaper’s office as a young boy, became a reporter in 1863, and then editor a few years later. He was owner from 1874 until his death in 1901 and was arguably the most important editor the paper
had over its lifetime. In his biography of Henry Blackadar, J. Murray Beck suggests, “of all the Blackadars, he was probably the best editor and certainly the best all-round newspaperman” (par 8). Blackadar also had literary leanings and the success of the paper during his tenure may be explained by his combination of literary skills and printing expertise. Indeed, he found expression for his own literary talents in his regular “Truths and Trifles” column.

The Recorder thus played an important role in the literary culture of Halifax generally, but given the volume of women’s writing that appeared in this paper, it clearly offered significant opportunities for women authors specifically. A survey of the poetry by women printed in the paper shows sentimentalism to be the aesthetic framework in which these authors overwhelmingly worked. Although many critics have taken issue with sentimentalism for its indulgence in emotion and its apparent lack of political engagement, the poetry that appeared in the Acadian Recorder offers an opportunity to consider how, by exploiting the daily newspaper as a particularly public forum, women poets used sentimental aesthetics to extend themselves into both contemporary politics and the literary world. Sentimental literature was meant to elicit emotional responses from its readers. This ability to move readers in a private way became for writers an opportunity to move readers toward some kind of public action. However inward-looking sentimental poetry may appear, it simultaneously gestures outward, toward the social, and toward the national. This is true even for the melancholic poetry that appears in the Recorder in the early 1850s, which has, I will show, public implications despite its seeming interiority. This assumption of a relationship between the private and the public at the heart of sentimentalism characterizes women’s poetry from this point so that by
1870, women writers were using sentimental aesthetics to engage more explicitly with social and political issues. Again, the newspaper as publishing venue only furthered the “public” intentions of this “private” poetry.

Because it is mostly concerned with the home, and with the family, some critics have read the kinds of poetry women published in the Recorder and elsewhere as having little political relevance. Ann Douglas, in her groundbreaking work The Feminization of American Culture, suggests that nineteenth-century sentimental poetry’s intense focus on interiority, particularly feminine interiority, became a kind of narcissistic self-absorption. She acknowledges the public nature of sentimentalism, its gesture outward as I describe it, but she suggests that the private was exposed only for its commercial potential – this kind of “public” being antithetical to the political. The authors of sentimental poetry, those who published in the Recorder and elsewhere, thus guaranteed their exclusion from the political world, if Douglas’s view is correct. In fact, Douglas goes so far as to suggest that in its failure to look beyond convention, sentimental aesthetics contributed to a failure of nineteenth-century feminism generally to effect change:

Sentimentalism might be defined as the political sense obfuscated or gone rancid. Sentimentalism, unlike the modes of genuine sensibility, never exists except in tandem with failed political consciousness. A relatively recent phenomenon whose appearance is linked with capitalist development, sentimentalism seeks and offers the distractions of sheer publicity. Sentimentalism is a cluster of ostensibly private feelings which always attains public and conspicuous expression. Privacy functions in the rituals of sentimentalism only for the sake of titillation, as a convention to be violated. Involved as it is with the exhibition and
commercialization of the self, sentimentalism cannot exist without an audience. It has no content but its own exposure, and it invests exposure with a kind of final significance. (307)

More recently, critics have continued to interrogate and sometimes dismiss the political potential of sentimental aesthetics. For example, Misao Dean argues in *Practicing Femininity* that early writing by women in Canada represents a “submissive response to interpellation by bourgeois patriarchal ideology” (108). Because these sentimental texts reinscribe gender, attempts to read them as expressions or articulations of power are problematic. “Speaking,” Dean reminds us, “does not in itself grant power” (14). Amy Schrager Lang, in her essay “Class and the Strategies of Sympathy” also sees sentimentality’s recourse to gender as creating a limit to its political agency. She argues that “the narrow and highly ordered space of the middle-class home operated to contain the danger of class antagonism by providing an image of social harmony founded not on political principles or economic behavior, but on the ‘natural’ differentiation of the sexes. Nowhere is this image more clearly drawn than in domestic fiction, where the problem of class is neither resolved nor repressed but rather displaced, and where harmony – spiritual, familial, and social – is the highest good” (129). For these critics, sentimentality constituted a significant turning away from real political engagement with the world in so far as it was an ultimately conservative and, importantly, commercial diversion.

Douglas and others are not wrong, perhaps, to criticize nineteenth-century sentimentalism for its use of melodrama, its “deliberate clichés,” as Douglas describes them (9), about women and about the home. However, as other critics have argued, these
criticisms fail to take into account sentimentalism’s didactic aims. Sentimental literature works by directing readers’ attention first inward, to their own emotional response to the characters and events presented before them in the pages of a novel or in the lines of a poem, and then, necessarily, outward. This is why Janet Todd calls it a “pedagogy of seeing” – it provided a model for readers’ compassionate response to the world around them (4). In her influential response to Douglas titled Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, Jane Tompkins also places her focus here: rather than seeing sentimentalism as a distraction of “sheer publicity,” she argues that because of its public nature, sentimentalism did real cultural work in the nineteenth century. In Hard Facts: Setting and Form in the American Novel, Philip Fisher also locates sentimentalism’s power in its ability to entrench ideas of new cultural relationships in readers’ imaginations. Because sentimental fiction had goals for its readers, it used cliché and repetition precisely so that the motifs it presented would not slip away from readers’ cumulative imaginations, instead contributing to a project that had implications for public relationships in Canadian society.

Taking off from Tompkins and Fisher, I read sentimental aesthetics both as being the mode of writing in which women were expected to work and that was, therefore, potentially limiting, but also, as I have suggested, as providing women with a method for engaging with the social, political world. As Greg Hendler suggests in Public Sentiments: Structures of Feeling in Nineteenth-Century American Literature, the act of reading prepared individuals for involvement in the political sphere, and this is why he asserts that “sympathy in the nineteenth century was a paradigmatically public sentiment”

4 Towards the end of the century writers’ growing weariness and frustration with these limits becomes increasingly apparent.
(12). In *Sentimental Bodies: Sex, Gender and Citizenship in the Early Republic*, Bruce Burgett similarly identifies the political possibilities inherent in sentimental aesthetics in his insistence, in accord with Tompkins, that sentimental literary culture “relied upon readers’ affective, passionate, and embodied responses to fictive characters and situations in order to produce political effects” (15). The turn outward, its public gesture, is thus as important to sentimentalism’s project as the turn inward, a dynamic which explains how sentimental aesthetics were so successfully put in the service of reform movements in Canada.

It is important to note that in my reading of sentimentalism’s potential to do cultural “work” in Canada, I am not trying to erase complexity or simplify the varied political implications of this “work.” Sentimentalism’s ostensible aim was compassion, but its assumptions were inextricably linked with the middle-class values from which it emerged, the same values that largely fuelled nineteenth-century struggles for reform and that helped ossify categories of power and privilege. A study of nineteenth-century newspapers in Canada, however, shows that sentimentalism allowed some women to participate in public life in new ways. I argue that in the pages of the newspaper, women found a place for themselves in a changing social world as authors. Dean identifies women writers’ inability to escape gender as a problem at the heart of sentimentalism. I suggest, however, that many women authors deliberately grounded their authorial personae in their gender in order to exploit the opportunity sentimental aesthetics offered

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5 Laura Wexler makes this important argument in her essay, “Tender Violence: Literary Eavesdropping, Domestic Fiction and Educational Reform” in which she considers the racist connotations implicit in much sentimental literature and its potential negative implications for “unintentional readers” (African Americans, First Nations people, immigrants).
them to speak with authority on certain issues. They used the privileged position nineteenth-century reform movements were increasingly granting them and found the newspaper an ideal place for their literary contributions – often emphatically stressing their gender as a way of bolstering their rhetorical power.

The didactic nature of the sentimental poetry written by women, the connection between the emotional or personal and the public forged by sentimental literature, was only heightened when that literature appeared in the pages of mid-nineteenth-century newspapers such as the Acadian Recorder. Carole Gerson argues in her book Canadian Women in Print that newspapers and periodicals “were at the core of disseminating ideas and change in social, political and cultural realms” through the nineteenth century (106). The pronounced relevance of periodical publications was arguably a quality that did not hold for other kinds of publications. The unique character of the newspaper as a forum for public debate complicates an easy reading of sentimental aesthetics as limited by interiority. I argue that the public, even transitory or ephemeral nature of the newspaper, constituted a very different kind of literary consumption for readers. Initially, the separation of the private world from the public does seem to be reinforced in poetry that stakes a claim for the home as a world apart – that hive of beautiful feelings that one must eventually leave for the tempest of the real, adult world. It seems also reinforced by the Acadian Recorder’s editorial decision from the 1850s onward to move poetry into its own space on page 4 – a space that becomes discernibly feminine in its focus and in its targeted audience. As a result, it is easy to read the poetry published here as utterly removed from the real-world happenings addressed in the rest of the paper, removed even from the intent of the rest of the paper. And yet, if we look at these poems in their
context, we can interrogate the tension between the private space of women’s literary focus and the very public space of the newspaper in which they published their work. Far from being escapist, this literature gains a pointed specificity when it is surrounded by the news and events of the day.

The *Acadian Recorder* was typical of other Canadian newspapers of the period both in its dedication to publishing literature – something editors saw as an organic accompaniment to news reporting – and in its willingness to publish literature written by women. The inclusion of female voices in the paper was not remotely altruistic or accidental, however. Competition between papers drove editorial decisions, and antagonism saturated the newspaper business in Halifax as much as anywhere. In 1864, there were eight different tri-weeklies vying for readers’ attention in the city’s relatively small market, and the animosity between them is more than evident in the editorial invectives they launched at their competitors on a weekly basis. In its regular column “Talk Abut Town” on Saturday October 20, 1860, for example, the *Recorder* questions the quality of a new competitor’s content as well as the intellect and integrity of its editor:

> The talk is the latest way of ‘getting up’ a tri-weekly […] the editor who edits nothing thinks he is just the man that can do it. Then the talk is as it would overtax the tender intellect of the budding editor, to fill his paper like the other tri-weeklies; print the sheet in the biggest possible type, and haunt the purlieus of the Police Court for interesting matter for the readers of the *juvenile*, whereby a quiet penny may be occasionally turned by keeping the names of young swells out of the Police reports.


The cozy relationship between papers and political parties only exacerbated this kind of competition, which often, although not exclusively, ran along party lines. In his history of the *Halifax Herald*, William March suggests that “publishers and editors friendly to parties in power expected government contracts; they also solicited the advice of their leaders, and asserted the right to print government news before opposition journals were given the opportunity to do so” (51-2). The Liberal *Acadian Recorder*, for example, received fairly stable levels of government money through the 1860s and into the 1870s while the Liberals formed the provincial government, but when the Conservatives were voted back to power in 1878, the *Recorder* received no government support at all. The *Herald*, on the other hand, a Conservative party organ, received roughly ninety percent of provincial government contracts. After the turn of the century, some editors in Halifax would learn to be more balanced politically in an effort to expand readership beyond the confines of party affiliation, but in the 1850s and 1860s, none of them seemed interested in tempering their views or their aggressive involvement in municipal, provincial and federal politics. While not all of the poetry published in the *Acadian Recorder* was partisan – some of it surely was – the extent to which the *Recorder* and other papers were politically charged warns against reading anything that appears in its pages as politically benign or insignificant.

The climate of competition in Halifax drove editors’ decisions to intensify a feminine presence in their papers. By 1850, newspapers in Canada were aware of the economic expediency of attracting female readers. Indeed, intense competition between local papers made securing them essential, and that meant including material that would appeal to this fast-growing market. The editors of the *Acadian Recorder* were acutely
aware of the need to do so if their paper stood a chance of surviving in a marketplace increasingly dominated by the two largest papers, the Herald and the Chronicle. As early as 1855, the Recorder’s editor was conscious of these new readers: the speaker of “Fireside Hint,” which appeared on February 10, 1855, may be male, but the implied reader is, ironically and definitely, a woman:

It is pleasant to sit with one’s wife,

By the light of a brilliant taper,

Whilst one’s dear companion for life

Looks over the family paper –

And now and then reads a song or a story,

A marriage, or death, a tragedy glory.

…

Oh! Happy the man who is blest

With a wife who can tastefully read,

Who will give his newspaper no rest

Till its items have all gone to seed –

Who exclaims now and then, as she picks up the taper,

“My dear, won’t the printer want pay for his paper?”

The early awareness of female readers so evident here would grow to become a direct targeting of this group as the decade progressed.

While the paper consistently re-printed material from other publications by authors who had established literary reputations, from 1850 it also included original

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6 See Appendix A.
poetry printed under the heading “For the Recorder.” Most often these poems were anonymous, or signed only with initials, but the poet-speakers were more often than not gendered female and the poems were heavily steeped in sentimental convention that glorified women and the home. By 1860, although there was still poetry in the top left corner, page four as a whole was beginning to look like a woman’s page, noticeably turning away from the politics and business affairs addressed in the rest of the paper and filling up the space around the poetry with items that would be of particular interest to women readers. Alongside the poetry (anywhere from one to four poems on a given day) there were short anecdotes or jokes, advertisements for clothing and household products, and short stories. There were also often essays or editorials regarding such issues as rocking a baby to sleep or dealing graciously with house-guests. When the paper moved from a weekly to a tri-weekly format in 1864, it continued to maintain its literature and domestic issues on page four, despite having a new Saturday edition with its own particular literary emphasis. By 1869, a regular “For the Ladies” section was included on page four, making explicit whatever appeal it had implicitly been making to women to this point.

The bulk of the poetry published by women in the Recorder in the 1850s is strikingly melancholic. “Musings” by T.T., a regular contributor to the Recorder in the 1850s, is typical:

Those happy days are gone,

And I am lonely now,

The blighting hand of care

Is traced upon my brow;
The green woods and the bowers
Despairing, now I fly;
My tender plants and flowers
Neglected, drooping, die. (1-8)

Along with this original poem, published September 6, 1856, T.T. also published “Homeward Bound” on January 17, 1857 and “The Deserted” on April 4, 1857. These poems all share similar sentiment, an author preoccupied with love lost and speaking from a position of loneliness. The work of another poet, S.S. also appears regularly under the heading “For the Acadian Recorder,” sometimes with “Shubenacadie” and a date appearing under her name. These poems, too, are concerned with lost love and a woman’s unique position in social exchanges of a romantic kind. In “The Little Brook,” for example, published on August 2, 1856, the speaker describes a man with “pleasing mien” (20) with whom she develops a friendship. Autumn approaches, however, and the speaker is ultimately abandoned: “I called him but he never came” (42). “Lines,” published on September 1, 1855 is an extension of this same preoccupation as the speaker describes “sad tears that are yet unshed” (10) and sighs that “will be breathed from fond hearts bereft” (14). Read individually, these poems might seem self-indulgent and lacking political consciousness, to call back to Douglas’s argument, but taken together they constitute not a private display of emotion, but a collective one, and one that does important work in setting the groundwork for later, more explicit engagements with the social world.

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7 See Appendix A.
Because of the frequency with which T.T. and S.S. published their poems in the *Acadian Recorder* in 1856 and 1857, a kind of literary dialogue becomes discernible. The common themes, the similar subject-positions, the prevalence of identical autumnal images, among others, not to mention their similar pen-names, suggests that at the very least they were reading each other’s work. The paper, then, literally became a stage for both of these writers to participate in a collective display of emotion – of sadness, of loneliness – that undercuts their claim to private experience. This private experience is, in effect, not at all private. Douglas is right to suggest that sentimentalism cannot exist without an audience, but if we read this poetry as part of a continuum of women’s writing, this privileging of the feminine viewpoint and feminine interiority does significant rhetorical work. Read together, these poems illustrate that important part of sentimentality that is its invitation – to weep, to mourn alongside the authors - an invitation that makes this personal experience of emotion simultaneously public. As the decade progressed, authors in the *Acadian Recorder* worked to elicit similar emotional responses from their readers, not with regard to their own suffering as T.T. and S.S. do, but with regard to the suffering of others.

The melancholic vein apparent in the poetry of T.T. and S.S. and others in the 1850s goes a step further in the 1860s to become a fascination with dead and dying infants that could even be described as morbid. The number of poems on this topic – from a variety of authors – is striking, all of them, more or less, indecipherable from one another. In “Hope,” published December 29, 1855, the author Mrs. N---N F---E describes the moment of an infant’s death this way: “The coffin by the cradle, / Told the struggle that was o’er, / Hope whispered in the mother’s ear: / “‘Tis but an angel more’”
The author of “Sleep, Little Baby Sleep,” published on October 29, 1855 describes the same moment in similar terms: “Not in the cradle-bed, / Not on thy mother’s breast, / Henceforth shall be thy rest, / But with the quiet dead” (1-4). If the poems of T.T. and S.S. invite and indulge emotion, these poems seem to participate in an overindulgence in emotion, even a wallowing in grief – a charge typically launched at melodrama and sentiment like this. Cumulatively, however, they do a pointed kind of work in shaping our response to certain situations and shaping our attitudes towards individuals. “The Dying Infant” which appeared on Saturday, September 15, 1859 is illustrative:

Stretched on a tiny bed of down,

A sleeping infant lay;

The winds were hushed – the night was still-

His mother knelt to pray.

The placid moonrays through the pane

Shone full upon his head

And on his pale and pain-marked brow

A silver glory shed.

A happy smile around his lips

Would linger sweetly there;

His hands were clasped, as if he sought

Some heavenly rest in prayer—

Some rest from Him who dwells above,
Where pain can never come—
Where seraph voices hymn their praise
In their eternal home.

Beside his bed an angel stood
Who whispered when he smiled;
And bending o’er his trembling breath
No pain disturbed the child.
Those sleeping eyes beheld a throng
Of infant souls, as bright
As glowing noon, who longed to greet
Another child of light.

His little heart the angel touched –
His little tongue had speech—
But what he spoke was meant alone
The angel’s ear to reach.

Nor moon nor stars were in the sky—
The sun was on his way;
The dying infant still slept on,
To wake another day.
All of the expected elements are here: the evening, the quiet room, the sleeping child and, most importantly, the presence of the mother keeping vigil over her baby. Although the dying child is the ostensible focus of this and the other poems, the mother is equally important as the poem draws as much attention to her grief as it does to the baby’s death. In fact, the emotional response the author wants to evoke is only achieved when readers put themselves in the mother’s place. There is a kind of voyeurism at play in this poem that spills over into the thrill of participation with the break after the sixth line in the fourth stanza. The asterisks here call explicitly for readers’ emotional engagement by asking them to fill in this silence and insert themselves into this moment. Again, this invitation to participate is precisely the work sentimental aesthetics does. The blurring of the mother with the angel in “The Dying Infant” foreshadows the role mothers will increasingly come to play in the literary imagination. The privileging of the mother here as witness, mourner, and intercessor, anticipates how women authors will intensify their focus on the mother in a way that gives her not just a significant social role in the moral lives of Canadians, but a religious one.

Philip Fisher describes the relationship of a mother to her child as the most recognizable sentimental image of all (101). It is also, I argue, the most emotionally charged image of all, and it is thus no surprise that women writers used it to the extent they did. In 1861, for example, of the 53 poems published in the weekly Recorder, twelve of them directly address the home or the figure of the mother. As is evident in poems such as “The Dying Infant,” towards the end of the 1850s and into the 1860s, the preoccupation with and nostalgia for the home becomes a more sustained focus on the regulator of the home: the mother. The way women writers grounded their poetic voices
in their gender is well-illustrated in those poems published in the *Acadian Recorder* that were simply signed “Mother” or “A Mother.” These writers clearly understood the emotional weight attached to the idea of motherhood and used it to their advantage. A poem signed this way would signal to readers a particular kind of gendered authority that extended into the public spaces of Canadian life, just as the newspaper from which that authority speaks extended into the very real, physical spaces – both private and public – of Canadians.

The poem “Twenty-One,” published on September 15, 1857, and attributed simply to “A Mother,” offers a good example of a poem that both endorses and effects the extension of a uniquely feminine moral influence into public life:

“The looked for day’s arrived at last!”

I hear you say, my son –

“No more the tardy weeks I count,

I now am twenty-one.”

“I now am free to do, to choose!”

Then oh! Be wise, my boy!

To choose the right, reject the wrong,

If you would life enjoy.

And what is more, “I’m free,” you say,

“To vote my country’s right,

And help it swell the patriot band,
Who’d keep her honor bright!”

And may it ever be thy pride
Her freedom to defend
From cruel shafts of treacherous foes,
Who would her glory rend!

And have so many years gone by?
Is it so long, my boy,
Since you, a little stranger, came
And filled our hearts with joy?

Yes, joy was in our pleasant home,
For grateful hearts were there –
For this dear treasure Heaven had lent,
For us to guard with care.

Life’s morning sun shone brightly then,
The future promised joy;
How could I think that time so soon
Would those bright dreams destroy!

But soon it brought affliction’s rod,
And we were forced to bow –
And by the cruel stroke we felt
Our very hope laid low!

Yet why should I with sorrow’s tale,
Now blind your young heart’s joy!
Enough, that sorrow, well you know,
Made you an orphan boy.

But he who heedeth the fatherless,
Has kindly led you on –
Secure, though dangers thick were spread,
Till you are “twenty-one.”

Now while your heart beats high with hope,
As you the future view,
Let gratitude find there a place,
For all this love to you.

He speaks to-day – regard His voice
Choose Him your guide to be –
Espouse His cause, and faithful prove,
And He’ll prove true to thee!
Then when life’s pleasant morn is past,
‘Twill gild its setting sun
With heavenly rays, the happy choice
You made at “twenty-one.”

The author of this poem addresses her son as he arrives at adulthood: specifically and importantly, the age of majority at which point he can participate in Canadian politics by exercising his right to vote. The speaker asks her son to “choose the right” – a choice, she makes clear, for which he has been prepared by his upbringing. It is not insignificant that as the mother reminds her son of his “pleasant home,” she informs readers of the early death of his father. Implicit here is the message that this young man has been raised by his mother only. Although she acknowledges God’s hand in her son’s growth – “he who heeds the fatherless” – it is fair to suggest that she places emphasis on her own role in bringing him to this point of adulthood, “secure, though dangers thick were spread” (39-40). In the penultimate stanza, the speaker asks her son to “regard His voice / Choose Him your guide to be” (45-6). It is, however, her voice that speaks today; she may want her son to listen to God’s message, but she casts herself as the vehicle for that message. In a subtle blurring of the divine and the maternal, this author aligns her cause with God’s cause and with the nation’s health.

Despite its inward, domestic focus, the sentimental poetry published in the *Acadian Recorder* simultaneously gestures outward. In fact, the shift from private to public effected by and in sentimental literature is nowhere more evident than in its use of the domestic space as a focal point. This double movement – the turn inward and the
simultaneous turn outward – happens as the narrative focus closes in on the small, interior space of the home, but does not lose sight of the broader context beyond the home as it does so. The subject matter is ostensibly private, but its significance is recognizably public: as the speaker directs her readers’ eyes to the minute, the personal, the home, she also effects a glance outward toward the larger, the social, the nation. In “The Rights of Woman,” for example, a poem published Saturday, January 19, 1867, the author describes a mother’s “silent influence” and her right to guide her children in faith and even to train their intellect for “noble aim” as they move into the world of action. Raising a child, even in its day-to-day moments, becomes a weighty task for mothers who prepare their children to be good Christian stewards and statesmen in their adult lives. As Jane Tompkins suggests, this poetry does more than illuminate the interior spaces of women’s lives; it “makes the destinies of the human race hang upon domestic routines” (170). “The Rights of Woman” makes connections with the world beyond the theme of raising children, however. In the final stanza, the speaker positions herself within the wider contemporary debate about women’s suffrage that was gaining attention in the Acadian Recorder and most papers across the country: “Are these their rights? – then use them well, / Thy silent influence none can tell; / If these are thine, why ask for more? / Thou hast enough to answer for.” Interestingly, the same rhetoric about women’s positive moral influence that pervaded the campaign for suffrage is put to work on the other side in this poem as the speaker suggests that women’s influence in public life is profound enough already and that women should feel no need to agitate for more. Although the

8 See Appendix A.
poem articulates a weariness with regard to women asking for “more,” it nevertheless embraces the popular idea that women do have a role to play in the public sphere.9

The public and political imperative suggested in much of the sentimental literature the Recorder published is even more explicit in “Mother! Watch the Little Feet,” published on August 1, 1857:

Mother, watch the little hand,

Picking berries by the way,

Making houses in the sand,

Tossing up the fragrant hay.

Never dare the question ask,

“Why to me this heavy task?”

These same little hands may prove

Messengers of light and love.

Mother! watch the little tongue,

Pratting eloquent and wild;

What is said and what is sung,

By the happy, joyous child;

Catch the word while yet unspoken:

Stop the vow while yet unbroken:

9 Interestingly, “The Rights of Woman” was published in a number of versions and in a variety of places over the course of thirty years or more, including in the Montreal Star on May 8, 1880 where it was signed by Mrs. E Little. The differences between these versions shows how contemporary attitudes about popular issues can be traced through women’s literary production.
This same tongue may yet proclaim
Blessing in the Saviour’s name.10

As she watches her child building a sandcastle, it is really the building of a nation the author anticipates and is invested in. In fact, the mother provides the script for the child’s involvement in public life, thereby extending herself – her views, her moral position – into that life. The result is a validating of the private, domestic space as one that is socially and politically significant; the female poet’s voice speaks with authority in the quiet spaces of the home, but she is heard throughout the nation.

The politics of the nation are caught up in sentimental aesthetics, and vice versa. Philip Fisher, too, sees domestic space in sentimental literature as a microcosm of the nation. “The politics of the domestic order,” he argues, “reflects a national order and its transformation or improvement makes possible an imaginative refounding of democracy” (88). That the dynamic relationship between home and nation insisted upon by nineteenth-century Canadian sentimentality was an integral part of contemporary culture can be seen in the language used by reform organizations such as the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union, whose Moral Education department used as a motto, “Save the children and you Mold the Nation” (Valverde 6). This popular understanding of the role family life played in national politics – an understanding that fuelled social reform efforts and legitimized women’s involvement – was communicated to Canadians every day in the pages of their newspaper. In the poetry published in the Acadian Recorder, readers would have heard the echoes of the speeches and essays that constituted the reformers’ call to arms. In participating in the rhetoric that privileged the home, family life and the

10 See Appendix A.
mother as having spiritual importance, this literature helped reformers carve out a space for women in public life broadly, but it also opened a new and privileged space to women as authors – a space from which they could exercise their rhetorical power.

The separation of page four from the rest of the paper with the aim of attracting female readers at first glance supports critiques of sentimentalism by writers who see this literature limited by interiority. Again, both the separate space dedicated to women’s sentimental poetry in the paper, and the often private focus of the poetry itself, seem to set the home apart from public or political life. Often, however, when we read this poetry closely, we can see that it is very much caught up in the world outside the home. The subtle and oblique public engagement of domestic poetry is evident in U.K. writer Eliza Cook’s poem “The Welcome Back,” published in the *Recorder* on September 19, 1864, in which the speaker separates the home from the “frowns” and “wrath” of the world:

> Sweet is the hour that brings us home  
> Where all will spring to meet us –  
> Where hands are striving as we come  
> To be the first to greet us.  
> When the world has spent its frowns and wrath,  
> And care been sorely pressing,  
> ‘Tis sweet to turn from our roving path,  
> And find a fireside blessing.  
> Oh! Joyfully dear is the homeward track,  
> If we are but sure of a welcome back.
What do we reckon of a weary way,
Though lonely and benighted,
If we know there are lips to chide our stay,
And eyes that will beam, love-lighted?
What is the worth of the diamond’s ray
To the glance that flashes pleasure,
When the words that welcome back betray
We form a heart’s chief treasure?
Oh! Joyfully dear is our homeward track,
If we are but sure of a welcome back.

In its suggestions of death and its subtle blurring of the mother with Christ, this poem conflates home with heaven in a way that seems a final turn away from the world. In the second stanza, however, the speaker considers the quality of life for those in the world, a life which she describes as "weary", "lonely", and "benighted". The speaker then critically implicates the world of work and commerce in this condition when she asks, "What is the worth of the diamond’s ray / To the glance that flashes pleasure"? The solution the speaker offers, the peace that she suggests can be found at home, thus functions less as an escape from the grim realities of the world than a vantage point from which to critically observe those realities.

In another poem, "Rock Me to Sleep," published anonymously on November 24, 1860, the speaker is similarly critical of the outside world despite her ostensible focus on the domestic space:

Backward, turn backwood [sic], oh, Time in your flight,
Make me a child again, just for to-night!
Mother come back from the echoless shore,
Take me again to your heart as of yore –
Kiss from my forehead the furrows of care,
Smooth the few silver threads out of my hair –
Over my slumbers your loving watch keep –
Rock me to sleep, mother – rock me to sleep!

Backward, flow backward, oh, tide of years!
I am so weary of toils and tears –
Toils without recompense – tears all in vain –
Take them and give me my childhood again!
I have grown weary of dust and decay,
Weary of flinging my soul-wealth away –
Weary of sowing for others to reap;
Rock me to sleep, mother – rock me to sleep!

The rocking rhythm of the language, reminiscent of lullabies, communicates the desire to return to childhood, but this longing to turn backwards also expresses a desire to turn away from the industrial, modern world. Indeed, the poem interrogates the very idea of progress in describing the personal toll that time has had on the speaker, but also in questioning the exploitive labour in which she has been engaged that leaves her exhausted: “Weary of flinging my soul-wealth away - / Weary of sowing for others to reap.” The poem’s conclusion suggests that its interest is rooted in the difficult realities
of the modern world for working-class people: “Never hereafter to wake or to weep - /
Rock me to sleep, mother – rock me to sleep!” The speaker acknowledges here that the
world she longs for is irrevocably lost, making her yearning for escape from “the hollow,
the base, the untrue” all the more poignant.

The concern to expose the ugly side of the modern world was often expressed
through a sentimental and nostalgic glorifying of country life, an idealizing of life outside
of the city. Irish poet and novelist Frances Brown, for example, explores this theme in
her poem “Stay With Us,” printed on October 6, 1855. She regrets the hectic pace of life
in the city and calls readers to “shake off the dust of the towns” (10) and look beyond the
city walls:

We know there is trade in the city, --
We know there is war in the East,
And if neither wealthy nor witty,
We know there are taxes at least.
But morning still purples the highlands,
And suns in a golden light set,
Though our days stand like desolate islands –
Sweet Summer-time, stay with us yet. (33-40)\textsuperscript{11}

Other writers of the period also shared her preoccupation with the contrast between the
unhealthy city and the healthy country. “Cottage Door” printed September 18, 1859 and
“To A Group of City Flowers” April 5, 1856 are good examples. In “The River,” printed
Saturday February 27, 1864 the movement of the river from a “dreaming pool” through

\textsuperscript{11} See Appendix A.
the “smoke-grimed town” and back out to the sea figures a descent into sin, an encounter with corruption and with poverty – all associated with the city – followed by a redemptive re-emergence, “Like a soul that has sinned and is pardoned.” The way this author targets the city as a particular locus of sin would become an integral part of authors’ moral imperatives in the late part of the nineteenth century and is something I consider in detail in my discussion of the Toronto Telegram in Chapter 3. In the 1850s and ‘60s, however, the home and the mother in the home were consistently the imaginative touch points writers used in their considerations of all else.

The central importance the home had in Canadians’ imaginations through the 1850s and 1860s is evident even in a quick glance at the titles of the poems that appeared in the Recorder at the time: “Home,” “The Light at Home,” “The Journey Home,” and so on. Because this preoccupation with the home was accompanied by an emphasis on the Christ-like qualities of the mother, much of the poetry by women in the Recorder took on an explicitly religious significance. That sentimental literature established a “religion of domesticity,” as Tompkins describes it (170), is evident in countless poems of the period in Canada and is something I will take up more fully in my discussion of the Montreal Star in Chapter Two. “The Light at Home,” published anonymously in the Acadian Recorder on June 19, 1858 stands as a typical example of poetry that participated in the discourse of home as hallowed space:

The light at home! How bright it beams
When evening shades around us fall;
And from the lattice far it gleams,
To love, and rest, and comfort all.
When weared [sic] with the toils of day,
And strife for glory, gold or fame,
How sweet to seek the quiet way,
Where loving lips will lisp our name
Around the light of home! (1-9)\textsuperscript{12}

The author’s use of light imagery in this poem (the cottage here is both illuminated and illuminating) establishes a significant connection between Anglo-Protestant Christianity and contemporary struggles for social reform. As Mariana Valverde points out, the metaphorical idea of light as truth belongs to the rhetoric of both Christianity and social reform, and the two are brought together in this poem as they both participate in a privileging of the home that is divinely sanctioned.

As I have suggested, many of the poems that describe domestic space also reach beyond religious significance toward a more overtly political one. For example, “Home,” published anonymously on Saturday October 5, 1861, links the home – and the mother – with the nation. Here, the speaker describes a land greater than any other where “woman reigns” (19): “Where shall that land – that spot of earth be found? / Art thou a man? – a patriot? – look around – / And thou shall find – howe’er thy footsteps roam, / That land thy country; and that spot thy HOME!” (25-28). For this author, loyalty to one’s country is indistinguishable from loyalty to one’s home. For the true patriot, the speaker suggests, it is the wife and mother who, at least figuratively, rules. By using the figure of the mother at home quietly influencing her family, the reach of many of the poems published in the *Acadian Recorder* extends beyond the home.

\textsuperscript{12} See Appendix A.
“Our Island Home” by Emily Stevens, printed on Saturday November 12, 1854, prepares readers for the same thematic engagement with the home as hallowed space. Stevens’s poem, however, stands out in its explicit engagement with military affairs and offers a clear example of the link between the newspaper’s politics and the poetry that it published:

Ye statesmen, guard our island home!
Each inlet well secure!
And let it be a mighty work
That ages shall endure.
Let there be noble arsenals,
And frowning ramparts raise,
Such as shall England’s enemies
With wond’ring fear amaze.

Ye statesmen, guard our island home!
Our youths to valour train!
That they may, with true martial skill,
Their liberties maintain.
Soon would the Rifle Corps become
A credit to the land,
Such as might nobly battle forth
Against a hostile band.
Ye statesmen, guard our island home!
Enrich our naval force,
Remembering it hath ever been
Old England’s proud resource;
Let hosts of queenly ships be built
To plough the distant seas,
And bear afar the noblest flag
That flutters in the breeze.

This poem’s imperialist preoccupations are clear, and in its use of rhyme and repetition, not to mention the exclamation marks throughout, it works well as a call to arms. And yet, it still draws on the idea of protecting the home and teaching the young that was so common to domestic poetry. Stevens’s call for citizens to protect their land would have resonated for contemporary readers in Nova Scotia in the mid-1850s as they saw much of Canada’s British garrison leave to fight in the Crimean war. The importance of a volunteer militia persisted into the 1860s as tensions grew between Britain and the United States in the years leading up to the American Civil War. And, like many in British North America, William Blackadar, the Recorder’s long-time editor, became increasingly concerned about Nova Scotia’s ability to protect itself. Published alongside his repeated calls for Haligonians to organize a volunteer militia as a show of loyalty to Great Britain, Stevens’s poem goes far to reinforce this political message. Blackadar’s exasperation at the inaction with which his repeated entreaties were met is clear in his editorial for Saturday November 19, 1859:
Again we ask the citizens of Halifax if they are never going to make any movement towards getting up a Volunteer Militia Force [...] Those [young men] of Halifax neglect, or refuse to move one inch by way of response to the requirements of their country, and to the appeal of the representative of their Queen. [...] Should the Volunteer movement fail to reach the metropolis of Novascotia, as present appearances indicate, the subjects of Her Majesty elsewhere will henceforth think – and think with only too much reason, too – that it is a very, very cheap loyalty that prevails in Halifax.

Blackadar’s loyalty to Great Britain – a loyalty to empire expressed in “Our Island Home” – would later shape the paper’s intense opposition to Confederation.

Printed a year later on Saturday, March 10, 1855, Caroline A. Double’s poem, “The Voice of the Nation,” is a similar call to arms, this time directed at “Old England’s nobles.” Although Double was likely British, the editor clearly saw how the sentiment of her poem applied in a Nova Scotian context as the paper became increasingly preoccupied with war and the rising tension between France and England:

Is there a true-born British man
Who would not lend a hand
To help our brothers in distress,
Could he the power command?
Have not a nation’s acts proclaimed
Its patriotic pride,
In sending gifts to succour those
Who since from want have died?
Then rouse, ye statesmen of the land,

Let wisdom guide your power,

And prove to England’s sons your worth

In England’s trying hour. (13-24)\textsuperscript{13}

Even the line addressing the “true-born British man” likely resonated with the Recorder’s readers who would, for the most part, have considered themselves still very much British. A striking feature of this poem, as it appears in the Acadian Recorder, is the relationship between the poem’s title and the author’s name which follows. Rather than being included at the end of the poem as was often the practice, here Doubble’s name immediately follows the title: The Voice of the Nation – Caroline A. Doubble. Implicit here is the suggestion not only of a woman speaking for the nation on issues related to the military and to national loyalty, but that the nation, in fact, speaks with a woman’s voice.

Although the home is often the setting of women’s writing, through the 1850s and 60s there often is not a discernible, focused target for women writers’ concerns and criticisms. This is something that would become more common after the 1860s, as I will show in my later discussion of the Star and the Telegram. Rather, the authors writing in the Recorder in the ‘50s and ‘60s ruminate on the idea of home, of the mother, and so on, both exploiting and underscoring prevalent ideas of women’s moral superiority. In privileging their private experiences and personal concerns, women writers established a sustained sympathetic focus on the mother and encouraged readers to see the world through her eyes in a general way. By the late 1860s, however, authors do begin isolating particular issues – if still in fairly broad strokes – and poetry specifically sentimentalizing

\textsuperscript{13} See Appendix A.
the poor starts becoming more common. “The Wolf at the Door” by American author Mrs. A.M.F. Annan, which first appeared in the American Home Journal and was reprinted in the Recorder on May 26, 1861, is a notable example:

You’re tired dear mother; your cheek is quite pale;
Won’t you lay down your sewing and tell me a tale
Of fairies that sent, in the good times of old,
Rich banquets, and jewels, and purses of gold?
Not about little Riding hood crossing the moor –
Was the wolf that she met like our wolf at the door?

Shall we never walk out where the houses so tall
Have lace o’er each window, and lamps in each hall?
Where the curly-haired children play over the grass?
We might hear their gay laughter, and talk as we pass.
Must you sit here and work till your fingers are sore?
I think we might steal by the wolf at the door!

I’ll lay down your work – O, how warm it will be –
My nice little cloak! – why I thought ’twas for me!
Once, always in garments as fine I was dressed,
But I shan’t ask for this if you think ’twould be best;
Yet I can’t understand what you told me before,
That it might, for a while, keep the wolf from the door.
The clothes I have on are so thin and so worn!
I try to be thankful they never stay torn;
But I should like some new ones, with tassels and braid,
And stockings not shrunken, nor faded, nor frayed;
And a pair of new shoes – how they’d creak on the floor!
But then he might hear them – the wolf at the door!

The room’s growing dark, and I can’t see to play
By the light of the lamp that shines over the way,
And the shadows that flit o’er its gleams on the wall –
They frighten me, coming so shapeless and tall:
O, how I would beg for a candle once more,
If you thought he’d not see us – the wolf at the door!

And the fire on the hearth it has died away quite –
Won’t you kindle a new one, dear mother, to-night?
Don’t you love the soft flames, as they crackle and glow?
They would warm your poor hands that are cold as the snow,
And the kettle would sing – hark! – is that the wind’s roar?
O mother! I fear ‘tis the wolf at the door!

Well, hear me my prayers, and I’ll lie down in bed;
And while your soft arm is passed under my head,
Won’t you tell me again to be trusting and brave,
Though I march over thorns on my way to the grave?
To keep sin from my heart lest it eat to the core –
Dear mother, is sin like the wolf at the door?

And tell me of mansions still grander than those
Where the rich children play and the grass greenly grows,
Where they’ll give me bright robes and a crown for my head,
And on fruits from the gardens of God I’ll be fed.
O, mother! to think there we’ll live evermore,
And be in no fear of the wolf at the door!

The author’s use of dramatic monologue, speaking in the voice of a child, goes far in manipulating readers’ emotional response, but it also opens up a space for readers to listen to, and participate in this story. In effect, the child is speaking to the reader – the reader takes on the role of mother. In responding sympathetically to this destitute child, however, the reader is implicated in her suffering, is complicit, in fact, with the wolf that haunts her door. The reader is also, by extension, a source of succor or aid for the real children who this imaginary child represents. Again, the work sentimentalism achieves here is to evoke compassion in readers within the world of the poem, and then direct their eyes outward to the real children they see around them. Placing readers in collusion with the wolf of want, however subtly, works to inspire guilt in those who might not stop to notice.
The significant sentimentalizing of the poor evident in “The Wolf at the Door” and other poems like it became even more intense as the century progressed, so that by 1870 writers seemed to take an almost perverse pleasure in watching and describing this particular brand of suffering. In the 1850s and ‘60s writers exploited the figure of the grieving mother; by 1870 and onward from this point they exploited the figure of the starving, poverty-stricken young woman. “Dead in the street” published July 13, 1870, is one of many examples:

Under the lamp-lights, dead in the street,
Delicate, fair and only twenty;

There she lies,
Face to the skies,
Starved to death in a city of plenty,
Spurned by all that is pure and sweet.
Passed by busy and careless feet –
Hundreds bent upon folly and pleasure,
Hundreds with plenty, time and leisure –
Leisure to speed Christ’s mission below,
To teach the erring and raise the lowly –
Plenty in charity’s name to show
That life has something divine and holy.

Boasted charms – classical brow,
Delicate features – look at them now!
Look at her lips – once they could smile;
Eyes – well never more shall they beguile;
Never more, never more words of hers
A blush shall bring to the saintliest face,
She has found, let us hope and trust,
Peace in a higher and better place.
And yet, despite of all, still, I ween,
Joy of some heart she must have been.
Some fond mother, proud of the task,
Has stooped to finger the dainty curl;
Some proud father has bowed to ask
A blessing for her, his darling girl,
Hard to think, as we look at her there,
Of all the tenderness, love and care,
Lonely watching and sore heart-ache,
    All the agony, and burning tears,
    Joys and sorrows, and hopes and fears
Breathed and suffered for her sweet sake.

Fancy will picture a home afar,
Out where the daisies and buttercups are,
Out where life giving breezes blow,
Far from those sodden streets, foul and low;
Fancy will picture a lonely hearth,
And an aged couple dead to mirth
Kneeling beside a bed to pray;
Or lying awake o’ nights to hark
For a thing that may come in the rain and the dark,
A hollow-eyed woman, with weary feet,

Better they never know
She whom they cherished so
Lies this night lone and low,

Dead in the street.

The anonymous author of this poem invites readers to look in two different ways. First is
the imperative to see the grim reality of this woman’s suffering with a morbid lingering
on her body as the speaker goes on to describe her brow, lips, eyes. Second is the
invitation to a kind of seeing that allows us to witness the woman’s parents grieving – a
picture conjured by “fancy.” The speaker’s enjoiinder to stop our “busy and careless feet”
and see what hundreds pass by and ignore is essentially achieved as we read her poem.
Indeed, part of the sin this author targets is not looking, not seeing. Other titles from the
period illustrate this imperative to look or listen: “Out in the Snow,” “Another Mouth to
Feed,” “The Cry of Distress,” “Somebody’s Servant Girl” and so on. All of these poems
ask that readers see and respond to the carefully controlled images of suffering presented
before them. Almost always it is women and children who are romanticized in this way, and they are always cast as victims to ensure that our response is a compassionate one.14

Burgett’s discussion of the political possibilities inherent in sentimental aesthetics focuses on the literary culture of nineteenth-century America, but his linking of readers’ embodied response to sentimental literature and the opportunity for political change is apt in the Canadian context too, as these poems demonstrate. The characters Canadian readers encountered were literary types: for example, sentimental fiction and poetry are rife with examples of the poor, abandoned or otherwise suffering child, or the villain spiritually transformed on his deathbed and racked with guilt for the pain he has caused others, or the young mother suffering from a grave illness and worrying about the fate of her family. Through these encounters, however, readers learned how to respond compassionately to the real-life figures represented by convention in literature. In fact, literature created perhaps the best way for middle-class readers to make the necessary imaginative connections between themselves and those victims of urban expansion and industrialism they might not otherwise have noticed in the world around them. Todd’s identification of sentimentalism as a pedagogy of seeing is apt: “Literary emotions herald active ones; a theatrical or fictional feeling creates greater virtue in the audience or reader, and a contrived tear foreshadows the spontaneous one of human sympathy. Sentimental literature is exemplary of emotion, teaching its consumers to produce a response equivalent to the one presented in its episodes” (4). Middle-class women, who composed the bulk of the exploding market for sentimental fiction in Canada, thus found

14 In Chapter Two I discuss the problematic ideas, prevalent in the nineteenth century, about who “deserved” readers’ compassion and their aid, and I also take up the issue of women as victims and how this worked rhetorically for women writers.
a natural relationship between the literature they were reading and the social reform organizations in which they would increasingly participate.

If women’s poetry in the *Recorder* in the early decades of the period of my study gestured only broadly toward particular concerns – the plight of the poor, for example – into the 1870s and 1880s writers began engaging in more direct ways with social and political issues despite the persistence of the sentimentalism that marked the ‘50s and ‘60s. In the early 1880s, for example, writers in the *Acadian Recorder* turned their concern for the poor in their own city and country toward Ireland, using their poetry as a vehicle, quite explicitly, for inspiring not only readers’ compassion but also their financial contributions. In “Hush, My Darling, Do Not Weep: Song of the Famishing Irish Mother,” published on February 20 1880, the speaker asks her child to “raise your little hands in prayer” to “bless the kind hearts o’er the sea” who are sending much needed, and tangible help in the form of food. The poem “Three Little Children,” written by Lizzie Ward O’Reilly and published on March 19, 1880, is prefaced with an excerpt from the *Irish News*: “Want is rampant in this direction. It is not an uncommon thing to see a whole family of emaciated children, once plump and rosy, unable to rise for want of food, while the feeble mother wrings her hands distracted over them. If RELIEF is NOT SPEEDY HUNDREDS WILL PERISH.” This excerpt achieves the important task of linking this imaginary, almost whimsical poem about three golden-haired children, to a stark reality. Both poems work towards the same goal – getting readers to answer the broken-hearted mother when she looks at her three dying children and cries, “send succor!” These poems stand as compelling examples of the way Halifax authors could use poetry to shed light on issues that concerned them and sometimes even effect change.
Interestingly, they still, like the writers thirty years before them, used the sentimental image of the mother to achieve their goals.

Through the 1880s and 1890s writers in the Recorder continued to target specific issues and contribute to specific social and political debates. The poems they wrote speak to the particular organizations or campaigns they supported and illustrate their growing interest in social reform. For example, one reader sent in the poem “The Cat and the Kitten” with this note, which the editor published alongside the poem on Wednesday February 18, 1880: “Mr. Editor – In my childhood days – some 30 years ago – I ‘learned by heart,’ as the saying is, and used often to recite the subjoined verses. The story, you will find, is an exceedingly affecting one. Publish it as a ‘selected’ contribution to the stock of S.P.C.A. literature, and oblige BELLE.” What follows is a story – from the cat’s perspective – of abuse and mistreatment. Readers also increasingly sent in occasional poems – verses to mark special events or happening. The federal election of 1887 inspired many contributions from readers. Under the heading “The Poesy of the Campaign” on Monday February 14, 1887, the editor writes, “we are inundated with lyrics bearing on the approaching contest. The enthusiasm of the people, from the classes to the masses, is finding vent through the muse, as below.” Poems that follow, just on this one day, are “Vote Them Out,” “Party Song,” “The Boodlers Must Go,” and “To the Polls.” In my discussion of the Toronto Telegram, I consider these types of explicitly political and topical poems and the new kinds of public interventions women writers began making in the pages of that newspaper.

By 1900 the Acadian Recorder looked very different from the way it looked in 1850. There were now regular “Fashion,” “Puzzler” and “Fun, Fiction and Fancy”
sections; for the most part, the paper seemed more intent on entertaining, even in its journalism, than educating or reporting. In this, the Recorder was in line with many papers of the period, replacing its political invective with the “new” or popular style of journalism. Less concerned with politics and business, the new style was marked by sensation. One article, published in March 1899, warned readers about “Thrasher[s] of Women’s Dresses.” A large, bold headline, complete with illustrations, on October 8 of the same year, read “Sailors Eat Each Other.” The illustrations accompanying this article are a good example of the extent to which the editor’s focus had shifted away from news. Clearly, the Recorder’s priority was now on taking advantage of innovations in photographic technology and responding to the demand for images by producing a visually impressive newspaper: the special extended Christmas edition of 1895 is striking for the number of illustrations it includes. Unlike its peers, though, the Recorder was either unwilling or unable to do away with a significant amount of advertising, and this continued to take up a great deal of space, including precious space on the first page. The paper, however, maintained a commitment to printing literature and used new Saturday supplements to do so.

Taken together, the poetry that made its way into the Saturday supplements and the daily editions of the Recorder at the end of the century is more diverse in attitude and in style. Although women writers spoke out more assertively on particular issues, the focus on the mother as a figure of moral strength and as emotional touch-point remained and, indeed, seems to have been revitalized. Titles printed in the Recorder though the 1890s, for example, included “The Mother’s Vigil” “The Tired Mother,” “My Mother,” “A Mother’s Tears,” “The Buried Mother,” “My Mother’s Prayers,” among others. This
renewed focus on the mother was likely in response to the rhetoric of maternal feminism being increasingly used in the service of reform and suffrage across the country. While the mother continued to be a dominating figure in much of this poetry, the figure and role of the wife also became, at the same time, a subject of increasing consideration, humorous and otherwise. For example, in March 1886 there was a light-hearted and poetic exchange between two Recorder readers, “C.” and “N.G.” about the challenges of finding a suitable mate. As writers began unpacking gender roles in new ways, a new kind of focus on the domestic became discernible. Some writers’ attention shifted from the privilege, even the special honour, associated with the domestic sphere, to the difficulties of domestic work. And so “The Model Housewife,” published January 15, 1890, which fits with the earlier angel-in-the-house model, is followed closely by “Dan’s Wife,” a stark look at the many trials nineteenth-century women faced. “A Woman Who is Rather Tired,” published anonymously on August 1, 1890, illustrates the complexity with which women were now considering themselves and their role in Canadian society on the cusp of the twentieth century:

O, to be alone!
To escape from the work, the play,
The talking, every day;
To escape from all I have done,
And all that remains to do.
To escape yes, even from you,
My only love, and be
Alone and free.
... 

For the soft fire light
And the home of your heart, my dear,
They hurt being always here.
I want to stand up upright,
And to cool my eyes in the air,
And see how my back can bear
Burdens: to try, to know,
To learn, to grow!\(^{15}\)

The speaker’s desire in this poem “to try, to know / to learn, to grow” places her in the company of other late-nineteenth-century New Women who yearned for new kinds of experiences. Most striking, however, is the speaker’s awareness of the extent to which her roles are inescapably circumscribed by the social world – “the work, the play, the talking, everyday.” This woman’s desire to escape from socially defined roles such as “wife” suggests not only an awareness of the limitations of these roles, but also, for this writer, the awareness of the need for a new poetics, one that would allow women authors to move beyond a sentimental glorifying of the angel-in-the-house.

If there is evidence in the *Recorder* that women writers were beginning, tentatively, to leave behind a tired sentimental aesthetic entirely scripted by gender, what they were turning towards is perhaps suggested by the Nova Scotian author Sophie M. Almon (Hensley) in her poem, “Robert Browning” first published in the *Dominion Monthly* and reprinted in the *Recorder* on March 25, 1890:

\(^{15}\) See Appendix A.
I

A feeble stammerer, feeling his defect.
In all that makes words beautiful, at sight
Of one loved face, forgetting Nature’s blight
In pride of heart lifts head and form erect, –
Showing by voice and gesture – praise direct
And laud implied – his benefactor’s right.
His weakness banished by Love’s boundless might,
In one brief hour he proves a life’s respect.

So I, O Master, feeble-tongued and weak,
By Nature planned for no great deed, may bring
My untuned words, that so thy praise may sound
The louder for one note. – Though it be drowned
In grander strains I care not, so I speak
Thy honor, -- vassal-service to a King.

II

A Poet; aye, THE Poet, for thy place
Second to none may be in whom did Art
Find her full voice, display her truest part.
Philosopher, who sawst great Wisdom’s face
Clear thro’ thy searching, – as her steps we trace
Through thee even Life is understood
We start
Seeking for God and find a man whose heart
Mirrors the Father’s tenderness and grace.

Man who hast raised Humanity, no more
Liv’st thou to bless us! Is thy human day
Past and forgotten where no earthly knees
Bow to the one great Power Celestial?
Nay:

Man, Poet and Philosopher, all these
Thou still must be on that Eternal Shore.

The poem itself belies this speaker’s claim to being “feeble-tongued and weak”; by implicitly linking herself with Browning she makes an assertive gesture of presence within the literary community that speaks to a changing attitude on the part of women authors, a change that becomes very evident in the last decades of the century in the Toronto *Evening Telegram*.

Women’s involvement in literary consumption and production and their simultaneous involvement in social reform undermines the suggestion that sentimental literature was circumscribed by the drawing room only in Canada. For readers of sentimental poetry, fiction and life were intimately and importantly linked; this is no more evident than in the sentimental poetry published in the newspaper. By the very act
of publishing in the newspaper press, women laid claim to a public space, thereby
emphasizing the connection between reading and writing privately, and acting publicly.
Valverde underscores the relationship between the politics of reform and contemporary
literary aesthetics when she argues, “the methods to be followed for purity work…[were]
learned not through abstract theoretical lessons, but through parables, allegories and
poetic imagery” (4). We can see this relationship between contemporary politics and
contemporary literary aesthetics intensify as women became increasingly assertive,
drawing on religious rhetoric to bolster their authority and then, in the final decades of
the nineteenth century, engaging directly with politics and current affairs and leaving the
older models of sentimentalism behind in an effort to find less restrictive ways of making
their personal concerns public.
Chapter Two:
Sunday Reading and the *Montreal Star*, 1871-1888

In her recent *Canadian Women in Print, 1750-1918* Carole Gerson suggests, “it is virtually impossible to draw clear distinctions between religious and secular writings in most early Canadian poetry, biography, fiction, drama or life-writing” of the nineteenth century (27). While it is true that the bulk of the literature Canadians were producing at the time was imbued with a Christian ethos, much of the sentimental literature women were writing and publishing in the newspaper press is striking in the very particular and deliberate relationship it created with contemporary religious thought and practice. In *Sensational Designs*, Jane Tompkins argues that nineteenth-century sentimental literature established a “religion of domesticity” (170); this is evident in countless poems of the period in Canada, and nowhere more so than in the *Montreal Star* with its prominent and long-running *Sunday Reading* section. For example, in one poem published anonymously in the *Star* on September 28, 1869, Father Paul, a priest turned family-man insists, “Life’s holiest things are hearth and home- / Holier far than the granite wall / Of a monkish prison.” Protestant politicking aside, the special role the home plays in the lives of the nation’s citizens expressed here is an idea that was entrenched in Anglo-Protestant culture and perpetuated in its popular literature by sentimental aesthetics. Importantly for my purposes, this connection between the home and spiritual enlightenment forged in and sustained by the literature of the day does more than glorify the mother by according her the important role of regulating the home; in co-opting the language of religion, and specifically the language used to describe Christ, sentimental poetry often linked feminine moral authority to God’s spiritual authority. The female-figure in the poetry
published in the Montreal Star and elsewhere is a figure of wisdom and compassionate control, a control sanctioned by God and that could therefore extend beyond the limits of the household. With this control firmly established in the minds of their readers, women writers used the presumed pedagogical function of Sunday Reading to undergird their rhetorical agency thereby asserting themselves in public life.

Unlike the Acadian Recorder, which was a Liberal party organ, the Montreal Star had, right from the start, a self-imposed mandate to appeal to a broader reader base. The Recorder certainly worked from the 1850s onward to include women among its readers, but the Star’s target market was altogether different. Importantly, in aiming for a new audience, it also inaugurated a new style of journalism in Canada. Founded in 1869 by businessman Hugh Graham and journalist George Lanigan, the Star and other papers such as the Toronto Telegram which followed suit paved new ground in Canada by modeling themselves loosely on the style of New Journalism they saw achieving success in the larger cities of the United States. As a “people’s journal,” as Paul Rutherford describes it, the Star differentiated itself from other dailies such as the Acadian Recorder most obviously in its claim to independence. While most Canadian papers at the time were closely affiliated with one of the two national parties, the Star considered itself non-partisan and therefore more democratic. Although, as Paul Rutherford points out, the paper consistently sided with the Conservatives during election times, it balanced this preference with criticisms of the Conservative party during non-election times (Victorian Authority 224). It was not this claim to independence, however, that most distinguished it from the others: political leanings aside, the Star was markedly different and, for Canadian readers, surprisingly new, in both content and style. Hugh Graham, who took
over complete control of the paper only a year after its start, articulated a clear goal for the *Star* right from the beginning: “He decided to make a blatant appeal for the support of the lowbrow public, the masses. In this way he gave birth to ‘people’s journalism,’ an ingenious formula that successfully flouted the conventions of newspaperdom” (Rutherford, *Victorian Authority* 51). Sold for only a penny, half the price of what some other dailies in Canada cost, the paper was affordable, but it went further than this in attracting readers. Unlike the up-market dailies, or party papers, with their emphasis on national politics and editorial comment, the *Star* privileged city politics and local issues and placed less importance on the kinds of editorials in which the editor speaks anonymously and authoritatively on a particular issue. The editorializing in the *Star* was often not anonymous – this would become an important development in newspaper publishing – and was often focused on cultural or social issues, rather than political ones. It was sold in the evening to capture the attention of working-class men and women, and its pages were filled with reporting on crime, scandal, human interest, “scoops” and “crusades” (Rutherford, “People’s Press” 178). Correspondingly, its style was less formal, even at times irreverent. It contained less of what Rutherford calls the “verbal diarrhea” characteristic of the stodgy party papers (178), and it did not shy away from sensation.

It would be wrong to suggest that for all its innovation with regard to style, its reliance on sensation and scandal to sell papers, that the *Montreal Star* escaped the ethos of Victorian Canada. As Rutherford explains,

The people’s journals mirrored the passions, prejudices, and moods of their own readers. Perhaps that explains the innumerable contradictions which were so
evident in the general body of their writings. These newspapers lacked a coherent ideology which might give some theoretical rigour to their enthusiasms. True, one can detect an inchoate ideal of social democracy in their rhetoric – their demand for manhood suffrage, their denunciation of business domination, and their hatred of social snobbery all suggest this…But this reformism grew out of a simplified moral conception of the community, in which (to use the popular Gladstonian phraseology) the ‘classes’ were by nature evil and the ‘masses’ good….More to the point, the people’s press contradicted its own populist rhetoric by arguing the virtues of the bourgeois ethos. No less than their party rivals, the people’s journals lavished praise upon the whole complex of social disciplines and authorities which supposedly bound together the Victorian commonwealth. (185)

However it might have challenged the mores of Victorian Canada, however much it was at the forefront of journalistic innovation in Canada, the paper, like most papers, still very much fell in with the religious culture of the day. Its contents, whatever they appeared to be on the surface, were thus generally grounded in Christian discourse, a discourse that complemented and contributed to contemporary ideas about the home and about women. Through its “lowbrow” style and sensational content, the Star challenged the conservative moralism of its day, but it also in a seemingly unproblematic way continued to subscribe to that moralism. The result was a blend of tradition and novelty, of the popular and the pious, that is especially evident in the paper’s Sunday Reading section. And it was a contradiction that enabled women in their writing endeavors as they drew on
the conventions of popular literature while still positioning themselves as moral authorities.

The popular or “low brow” literary style of the Star’s news reporting is no surprise given Graham’s aim with the paper: “What I want to see in the Montreal Star is the sort of news or item, or story, or article which if you saw it in some newspaper or book you would be tempted to read it out loud to the next person to you” (qtd. Rutherford, Victorian Authority 51). Because Graham energetically pursued this literary style, it is no surprise that the paper’s Sunday Reading section gained the prominent place it did for Montrealers. Sunday Reading first appeared on Saturday November 11, 1871, although it did not become a regular feature until several years later. Appearing only sporadically at first, in the early autumn of 1875 it began to appear as a large and regular installment, often alternating with other Saturday features such as Family Reading and Grandfather Whitehead’s Corner for Little Folks. By October, these others had mostly disappeared and Sunday Reading settled into its regular place on page four, becoming firmly entrenched in the makeup of the paper’s Saturday edition. Around the same time, other columns gained regular appearance as components of, or subheadings under, Sunday Reading. These included “Religious Items,” “Temperance and Intemperance,” and “Gems of Thought.” “Temperance and Intemperance” was especially consistent, always appearing as part of the broader Sunday Reading page. Everything that appeared on this page, whatever its subject matter, always fit neatly with the page’s general religious theme and moralistic overtone. This is true even of the sensational, at times salacious-sounding short stories published here whose titles at first glance would have gone far in attracting readers. A good example of this sensational moralism is the story
published throughout September 1881, “The Hidden Ring; Or, Satan Outwitted.” The paper, it seems, had hit on a model for this part of the Saturday paper that worked – the evidence is that it ran essentially unchanged in format for more than a decade in the best-selling newspaper in the country.

*Sunday Reading* illustrates the extent to which items of a domestic nature and a spiritual nature were conflated in the popular imagination in the mid to late nineteenth century in Canada. It also provides a clear example of the extent to which women authors positioned themselves rhetorically in relation to the authority of the church or Biblical precept. From the beginning, *Sunday Reading* established a consistent thematic focus on issues related to readers’ spiritual lives, including reprinted sermons by popular, often American, preachers such as Reverend John Hall and Reverend Theodore L. Cutler. It also contained a substantial amount of literature written by women including short fiction, non-fiction, and especially poetry, along religious themes. A typical day in the 1870s, for example, would contain two or three poems, one installment of a longer work of fiction and up to four or five short essays or comments which were often the work of regular contributors or columnists. These essays add to the prominence of women’s voices in the paper and, as I will suggest, they also complement the kinds of rhetorical strategies women poets were employing. Although there were some anonymous contributions, many of them were signed by female authors. Certainly, the poetry published here was not unique in the nineteenth century for its religious or spiritual preoccupations, but in the way it was framed and presented as part of *Sunday Reading*, poetry published in the *Star* became a prominent vehicle for communicating moral lessons. This conflation of poetry with religious teaching can be seen as early as 1872.
when a poem taken from the British devotional magazine *Good Words* entitled “A Bit of a Sermon” was printed on January 8. The poem essentially strings together vague clichés about good Christian behaviour, such as “help the weak if you are strong, / love the old if you are young,” but what is striking is the way its title signals a conflation of these two genres or modes of writing, the poem and the sermon. The poet-speaker wants us to read this poem as sermon. It is a model that authors would use over and over again in the *Montreal Star* through the 1870s and into the 1880s, and that women authors, especially, would exploit to their advantage.

Because it draws together secular, popular literature – presented through a layperson’s voice – and religious teaching, “A Bit of a Sermon” encapsulates the dramatic changes taking place within Anglo-Protestant religion at this time – changes that can be traced in the *Montreal Star* broadly and that were important for women and especially women writers. Many scholars have commented on the nature and effect of these changes that, while concerned predominantly at first with religion, had profound social effects in Canada. The increasing influence of the Common Sense philosophy coming out of Scotland, the rise of Darwinian evolutionism, and a new trend towards historical criticism of the Bible, which all were finding root in Canadian thought, worked together to challenge what had previously been held by Anglo-Protestants as unassailable religious truths. Canadian historian David B. Marshall suggests in *Secularizing the Faith* that the result was nothing less than a transformation of Christianity: “Christianity was refashioned into a religion that accepted the discoveries of science and principles of history, incorporated the results of reverent biblical criticism, and was very sensitive to the moral issues and social concerns of the times” (50). While all of these changes and
the philosophical adjustments they engendered contributed to the new ways Canadians were thinking about themselves with regard to their faith, the effects of Common Sense were especially significant for women. In *A Disciplined Intelligence*, A.B. McKillop explains how the tenets of Common Sense became especially entrenched in Anglo-Canadian thought in the nineteenth century through the education system. The repercussions of Common Sense were profound: in essence, it privileged the judgments and understanding of ordinary men alongside philosophers and religious leaders, opening the door to new questions about the role of the clergy in people’s lives. Philosophers centered on the University of Glasgow and the University of Edinburgh such as Thomas Reid, Dugald Stewart and Sir William Hamilton taught that because people have an innate moral sense or moral nature, “the great truths of mankind and the little truths of everyday experience…were matters of common sense: they rest within the realm of common understanding” (McKillop 27). This new valuing of the “little truths of everyday” and “common understanding” opened the door for women because subject matter traditionally pertaining to women exclusively – the home, children, daily routine – gained new and broader relevance. So too did their voices as women’s understanding and sense of the world was increasingly seen as having a respected place in public, discursive spaces such as the newspaper.

If, as I will argue, changes in religion in the nineteenth century facilitated women’s rhetorical agency, these same changes put pressure on the traditional clergy to adjust their own rhetorical strategies. In fact, these two developments had a kind of symbiotic relationship, one inextricable from the other. In “From Doctrine to Narrative: The Rise of Pulpit Storytelling in America,” David S. Reynolds explains how the new
awareness of “practical feelings” being introduced by the Common Sense philosophers among others caused a change in homiletic style in nineteenth-century America that was spurred on by the growing influence of popular fiction. Reynolds describes the way preachers battled for readers’ or listeners’ attention, an attention that was being increasingly captured by novels, periodicals and newspapers. Lamenting the decline in popularity of traditional religious periodicals, for example, American clergyman and theologian Horace Bushnell complained in 1846, “there is no instrument of power in this age, as we are just beginning to discover, that can be compared with a newspaper” (qtd. Reynolds 497). David Marshall also links this change to the increasing influence of popular culture and an emerging consumerist society. He argues that clergy in Canada felt pressure to make religion an “attractive commodity” in the face of a number of profound changes, not the least of which was “the rise of the mass media and the entertainment industry” (4): “The clergy understood that they were competing with newspapers, novels, theatre, and film for public attention, and many concluded, despite charges of sensationalism and sentimentality, that they had to preach entertaining sermons with mass appeal in order to reach an increasingly secular culture” (139). Like Bushnell, his American counterpart, Canadian minister and writer George Grant complained in his address to the Theological Alumni of Queen’s College in Kingston, Ontario, where he served as principal from 1877 to 1902, that Canadians were turning away from their Bibles in favour of the daily papers or “other scrappy literature,” as he described it (qtd. Marshall 82). The worry both Bushnell and Grant articulate about the increasing popular attention the newspaper was garnering at mid-century evidently had some grounding. Indeed, over the course of the next several decades the newspaper
would not only continue to capture people’s attention generally, but it would encroach in very real ways on the church’s territory. The inclusion of sermons in the Montreal Star’s Sunday Reading section illustrates this well.

The clergy in Canada and elsewhere, then, came to understand that in order to be effective, their sermons needed to be easily accessible to the layperson and speak to the circumstances of common life. This shift in thinking, and the application of faith to social issues it engendered, is what facilitated a dynamic coming together of theology and literature, a coming together, again, that women writers used to their advantage. American Revivalist George Whitefield acknowledged the role elements of popular fiction could play in teaching spiritual lessons: “A pointed anecdote, or vivacious illustration, while it keeps alive attention by variety and novelty, will oftentimes involve, and lead unschooled men to recognize and admit a truth, when a logical and profound analysis would be tame, dry, and far aloof from their apprehensions, and especially their practical feelings” (qtd. Reynolds 480). Members of the Canadian clergy had ample models to follow among American clergy. In fact, Marshall suggests that the extremely popular American evangelist Dwight Lyman Moody may have had “a greater impact on the Methodist and Presbyterian churches in Canada” than anywhere else (86). In 1884, Moody was invited as keynote speaker to the Methodist Church Convention, “How to Promote Spiritual Life in the Churches,” held in Toronto. The revival meetings he held at Metropolitan Methodist Church while he was in Canada were so popular that people were often turned away (Marshall 86). Even when he was not visiting and holding meetings in person, Moody’s influence on Canadian religious practice was sustained by the status he acquired in the eyes of Canadians, both clergy and laypeople. His sermons, for example,
were published as part of a cheap series by the Toronto publishing firm Hunter Rose, a series that was intended for the mass market, and that provided a model, even a formula, for others to follow. As Marshall explains, “sermons were becoming less doctrinal and more narrative in character. The Moody style of preaching was having an immense impact in Canada. His sermons were anecdotal. They featured bits of biography and graphic stories from everyday life instead of ‘dry argument and the accumulated texts.’ Whenever Moody did refer to Scripture or retold Biblical events, he did so in a fashion that made the characters and stories more contemporary” (Marshall 139).

Moody’s use of graphic stories and Whitefield’s concern for his listeners’ “practical feelings” again illustrate a cultural shift away from the intellect and towards the body, a shift sustained by the same assumption about the body evident in sentimental aesthetics – that something must be felt viscerally in order to have an effect. For example, the way the poetry in the *Acadian Recorder* lingers on the body of the destitute and suffering young woman as a way of evoking readers’ emotional responses is a good illustration of this assumption put in practice. For nineteenth-century preachers, “personal appeal” and “practical example” came to be preferred over “theological exposition” (Reynolds 485). Their use of anecdotes and stories – often sensational and always sentimental – brought sermons very much into the realm of popular fiction. Some Canadian clergy took this new approach to preaching to its logical end and did, in fact, write religious fiction. Reverend C.W. Gordon (pen-name “Ralph Connor”), for example, and other clergy like him felt strongly that fiction could be used as a vehicle for
Christ’s teachings. Not surprisingly, Gordon received part of his theological training in Edinburgh, the birthplace of Common Sense, and was particularly influenced by Henry Drummond and Alexander Whyte, who were both, previously, influenced by Moody (Marshall 141). Gordon and others like him were clearly aware of the contested ground they walked. They were accused of being too concerned with entertainment, immodest, not serious enough, pandering to low-brow readers: the same criticisms launched at popular newspapers such as the Montreal Star. In his memoirs, Gordon himself acknowledged that fiction was not widely considered appropriate reading material for Christians; he suggests that his novels “startled that vast host of religious folk who up to this time had regarded novel reading as a doubtful indulgence for Christian people” (qtd Marshall 140).

David Marshall emphasizes the point that not all clergy in Canada were comfortable with the changes they saw the church and other individual clergy embracing. He cites, for example, a sermon written by Rev. William Cochrane of Zion Presbyterian Church in Brantford in 1876 in which Cochrane bemoans the current tendency he sees in religious practice toward entertainment (96). But, in fact, Canadian Protestant clergy did embrace the new homiletics Moody and others pioneered, and many saw it as extremely effective. It is difficult not to read Marshall’s own critical position with regard to sentimentalism in his interpretation of the evocation of emotion it achieved, an interpretation that sees this emotion as essentially insincere:

The rise of this sentimental religion was a direct reflection of the languishing of true piety and the decay of vital Christianity. The idea of preaching as a form of communion between God and faithful communicants, with the minister being an inspired medium, seemed to be disappearing...It appeared that true religion was being replaced by ‘sentiment’ and ‘mere outward emotion’ was being mistaken for godly penitence and conversion. (96)

Marshall clearly sees the changes occurring in Protestant churches across the country as desperate acts indicative of the Church’s ultimate failure of its mission in Canada. Within the first few pages of his history of the Canadian Protestant Clergy, a history that spans almost a century, he declares “the clergy failed to find a gospel that an increasingly secularized society would listen to, except for one that was stripped of theological content and was based largely on sentimental emotionalism and moral platitudes. Religion became an empty shell; the church’s mission became secularized” (4). Interestingly, in linking sentimentalism with secularism and with commercialism, Marshall aligns himself with Ann Douglas and others who see sentimentalism as a mark of failure. What his study ignores, however, is the ways the social reform movement in Canada was powered in a sustained way by religious ideology generally, and, specifically, the extent to which women were empowered by the changes in religious thought that included the modernizing of Protestantism. In fact, Marshall does not consider at all the very large role women played in the church and its transformation in the nineteenth century.\(^\text{17}\)

\(^{17}\) In countering his critics, W.T. Stead of the British *Pall Mall Gazette*, a pioneer in people’s journalism, articulates a defense that echoes the same reasons the clergy gave for both their sentimentalism and sensationalism: “Sensationalism in journalism is justifiable up to the point that it is necessary to arrest the eye of the public and compel them to admit the necessity of action” (qtd Goodbody 146).
While David Marshall and David Reynolds observe the influence of popular fiction on preaching, in the sentimental poetry published in the newspapers of the nineteenth century, I discern the opposite movement: theology and scripture find their way into much of this body of work. In fact, scripture and sermons often formed the fundamental framework for the poetry women were writing. The work of American poet and prolific lyricist Mrs. M.A. Kidder, published widely in newspapers across the United States and Canada, offers the best example of the way women authors drew religious authority explicitly into their writing and, in effect, claimed the authority of the preacher as they did so. Almost weekly throughout the 1870s and into the 1880s, the Star devoted space in its Sunday Reading section to Kidder’s poetry, poetry that always engaged with an explicitly religious theme or principle. Her poems sometimes appeared on their own, but very often she would first reproduce an excerpt from a sermon by Dwight L. Moody and then follow it up with an original poem based on her understanding of the sermon and the theological issues it raises. The conflation of the female poet’s voice with the preacher’s voice in Kidder’s poetry powerfully demonstrates the way female authors could position themselves as authorities on issues of moral importance. The following example, printed Saturday March 18, 1876, is typical of Kidder’s work and illustrates how, using this model, Kidder explicitly speaks as preacher:

Are our hearts clean in the sight of God? Have we got a Christ-like spirit? If not, it seems to me it is better for us to pray for ourselves then, first of all rather than for others; then the world will see that we have been with Jesus and caught his spirit. If we do not our words will be empty. Oh, that we might have the spirit of Christ; that the same spirit which was in our Master will be in us! There is power
enough in this room to move New York if we had only clean hands and hearts. If
God opens our lips we cannot teach any error. Oh, that God would give us His
grace! A friend of mine had been preaching some time without seeing any
conversions, and he frequently cried to the Lord that his preaching might be
blessed. Weeks went on and no conversions. He said one day he knelt down and
cried out, ‘O, God! break this heart of mine; give me a contrite spirit.’ Some one
knocked at the door, and his little child, four years old, came in and asked to be
prayed for, and he said God broke his heart by love. The next Sunday he
preached, and after the service forty inquirers came forward. Oh, may God break
our hearts now and give us a contrite spirit.”—Mr. Moody’s N.Y. Sermon

Before I strive to save poor souls
Before I seek the lost,
Oh! cleanse me with the blood, dear Lord,
That my redemption cost.
I fain would lose myself in Thee
And know no will but Thine,
My pride is great, my will is strong,
Lord, break this heart of mine.

If I can rise from Thy dear feet
A victor over sin,
Then may I do my mission work
And lead poor wanderers in.
In from the paths of doubt and guilt,
In to Thy courts divine;
Dear Lord, that I may not delay,
Oh! break this heart of mine.

In view of death and judgment near,
In view of souls astray,
Oh! gird me, Jesus, for the fight
And lead me in the way.
I fain would battle with the hosts
That tempt the lambs of Thine;
My pride is great, my will is strong,
Lord, break this heart of mine.

In poetically re-working Moody’s sermon, Kidder’s poem essentially communicates the same message about spiritual contrition and humility. The differences between Moody and Kidder, though, speak to a different rhetorical position on Kidder’s part. The excerpt from Moody’s sermon gives a third-person account of his friend’s story, and his general lesson is communicated both at the beginning and at the end of the excerpt in the inclusive second person. The poet-speaker of Kidder’s poem, however, speaks in first-person, and this shift in form of address is significant. The speaker here is the one who must be humble and contrite, whose heart must be metaphorically “broken,” but she is also the one who will “save poor souls” and “lead poor wanderers in.” This is a striking
assertion of voice that has implications for action as the speaker aligns herself with Moody and with God, using both as endorsements for her poetic voice and her “mission work.” The effect Kidder achieves is a dynamic aligning of her gender, her position as author, and her role in public life.

The authority Kidder claims for herself in “Lord, Break this Heart of Mine” is further emphasized by the way her poem is framed on the page. Above everything is the large heading SUNDAY READING, followed by the title of the poem in capital letters, LORD BREAK THIS HEART OF MINE, followed after that by Kidder’s name also in capitals, and then the excerpt from Moody’s sermon. Moody’s name appears in italics after that with only the first letters of his name capitalized. Kidder’s poem, finally, appears at the end. The poet’s name, then, is larger and more prominent than the preacher’s, placed above even the sermon although her poem does not follow until afterwards. Moody’s voice, as popular and authoritative as it was for contemporary readers, is thus subsumed, both symbolically and physically, under Kidder’s and stands not a text of its own, but part of Kidder’s poetic project. Moody’s authority as preacher contributes to Kidder’s authority as author, and might even raise questions about just who is endorsing whom in the poet’s mind.

When the volume of Kidder’s work published in the Montreal Star is taken into consideration, as well as the characteristic assertiveness with which she communicates her religious messages, a self-consciousness, even a concern to justify herself, becomes apparent in her poem, “Wait A-While.” Printed Saturday January 26, 1878, this poem is on the surface a simple statement about the virtue of assertive action, a call to seize life’s opportunities. But given the rhetorical positioning of the rest of her work, it is not going
too far to suggest that Kidder, communicating through this speaker, considers herself one of the “pioneers with hearts of mettle” (9) whom she encourages to “march straight onward/toward the goal” (27-28). These “pioneers” stand in opposition to those who only “watch and wait”:

Men there are in town and country,
Laggard souls who preach of fate,
Leaden hands, and feet like marble,
Men who only watch and wait. (4-8)

The explicit gendering of the “laggard souls” as male, taken together with words such as *preach* and *souls* subtly criticizes not only religious authority, but specifically male clergy. The poem opens up a space for religious teaching of a different kind, a religious teaching led by women.

Kidder was not the only woman writer to incorporate scripture, Biblical figures, or religious precepts into her work; in fact, many authors followed this model. Taken together, they illustrate the extent to which popular literature and sentimental aesthetics worked, like the new style of homiletics Reynolds describes, to connect theology with real life. “The Shadow of the Almighty” published August 31, 1878 under the simple pseudonym “Nora” with the date and place listed underneath (“Pembroke, Ont., August 6th, 1878) follows Kidder’s lead in taking an anecdote from elsewhere, in this case about an incident involving a preacher and one of his congregation the author came across in the *Scottish American Journal*, and offering an original poetic interpretation. The poem itself is preceded by the anecdote reproduced for the *Star’s* readers and the following

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18 See Appendix B.
preface: “Lines composed by a lady on reading the following touching incident published in a late number of the *Scottish American Journal*.” J.G.’s poem, “Thanksgiving: Paraphrase of the One Hundredth Psalm” which appeared on December 4 of the same year is a poetic reworking of this psalm through the poet’s imaginative faculties. Although the poet reframes the biblical passage in her own words, the sentiment remains in the realm of abstract religious contemplation, removed in many ways from the real world:

Then let us to His house repair,
Bowing in adoration there,
Our tribute bring
To Zion’s King. (20-24)

Bettie K. Hunter’s poem, “Love Thy Neighbor,” goes a step further. Published in the *Montreal Star* on July 22, 1876, the poem takes Jesus’s words in Leviticus, Matthew and elsewhere in the New Testament and offers a poetic consideration of the implications for this lesson in action:

There are tear-washed, pallid faces,
Peering out upon the night;
There are many gloomy places
To which love would bring the light;
Shall we leave them wan and weary?
When a little word or deed
Might some bosom make less dreary,
If it kindly came in need? (17-24)\(^{19}\)

In asking readers to notice the suffering in the world around them, Hunter does not expect much, only “a little word or deed,” and certainly nothing that challenges the thinking or behaviour of those readers who take her message to heart. This is an important qualification to the argument I make about the kind of work sentimental aesthetics could achieve. As Barbara Epstein argues in *The Politics of Domesticity*, as much as they were interested in reform, women writers, very often middle-class themselves, were also contributing to the creation of middle-class standards that spoke to their own interests and values (110). What I suggest, then, is that even when it did bring Scripture into the realm of popular literature, poetry did not have to speak directly to specific public issues or social movements. The public implications for these poems and others like them have to do with the way women writers claimed Scripture, and religious or moral teaching generally, as their poetic subjects, as a way of asserting themselves in the role of author.

Some poetry, however, did make more difficult demands on readers in challenging codes of social behaviour. The anonymous poem “Magdalen” printed in June 1869 follows the same model of taking Scripture and poetically reworking it, in this case the Biblical figure of the fallen woman, but it challenges readers to reconsider social categories in a profound way:

If any woman of us all,

If any woman of the street,

Before the Lord should pause and fall,

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\(^{19}\) See Appendix B.
And with her long hair wipe his feet –

He whom with yearning hearts we love,
And fain would see with human eyes,
Around our living pathway move,
And underneath our daily skies –

The Maker of the heavens and earth,
The Lord of Life, the Lord of Death,
In whom the universe hath birth,
By breathing of our breath one breath –

If any woman of the street
Should kneel, and with the lifted mesh
Of her long tresses, wipe His feet,
And with her kisses, kiss his flesh.

How round that woman would we throng,
How willingly would we clasp her hands
Fresh from the touch divine, and long
To gather up the twice blest strands!

How eagerly with her would change
Our idle innocence, nor heed
Her shameful memories and strange,
Could we but also claim that deed!

If Hunter demands of readers only a “little word or deed,” this poet asks for a response that seems almost exaggerated in its exuberant celebration of a social outcast: “How round that woman would we throng, / How willingly would we clasp her hands.” Mary Magdalen in this poem becomes not just an object for compassion as the author asks us to extend Christ’s concern for this fallen woman to all women, but she becomes herself a model of Christian behaviour for other women. In this way the poem challenges the very categories by which women in a position to help the poor define themselves, forcing them to consider their own prejudices. The difficulty of the poem is the implicit charge of hypocrisy at its heart as it targets those readers who celebrate Christ’s compassion in Scripture, but fail to extend the same compassion to others in their own lives. There is no question that some of the poetry in the Montreal Star could let readers off easily, or that not all writers did make, or even aimed to make, fundamental change in Canadian society. But through their newspaper publishing, women writers were involved in a project that saw the extension of a feminine influence in the public sphere through the blurring of the boundaries between literature and life – a blurring that is at the heart of sentimental aesthetics.

Some of the poetry women published in the Sunday Reading section of the Star might seem like abstract contemplations about private faith, but again, when considered in the specific context of the newspaper it can be seen as integral to the paper’s overall engagement with public life. In A Victorian Authority, Rutherford describes the
enthusiasm with which the Star’s editor Hugh Graham used his paper to improve the city. Graham, Rutherford argues, became notorious for his “righteous causes”:

He and his paper always worked loudly for the betterment of Montreal: during the smallpox epidemic of the fall of 1885, not only did the Star crusade for compulsory vaccination, in the wake of vociferous resistance from the French-Canadian masses, but Graham himself also ordered out the militia and liberated the Exhibition Building for use as an isolated hospital. He was ever sympathetic to the plight of the underprivileged: the Star initiated in 1887 (following a New York precedent) a Fresh Air fund which collected money ‘for the purpose of giving working mothers and poor children a glimpse of country life and a bit of country health’ in summer. He was ingenious: In April 1888, after the Star’s failure to move city hall, he personally organized ‘The Star’s Pick and Shovel Brigade’ to clean Montreal’s streets of winter filth. (53)

Graham’s concern to expose and address the living realities of the lower classes in Montreal began long before these examples Rutherford cites from the mid-1880s. The newspaper contributed in an important way to shedding light on the very poor as early as 1876 in its large feature called “A Sunday Visit to the Poor: Scenes of Misery Want and Privation Abroad – More Help Needed”:

Yesterday morning a Star reporter, in company with the visitor of the Protestant House of Industry and Refuge, Mr. W. Watson, visited a considerable number of the poor and destitute of St. Ann’s parish…In the places visited yesterday morning the words ‘want, want, WANT,” were everywhere written in a most unmistakable manner, which was heartrending to behold. The excruciating
misery and privation endured by hundreds of poor families in this beautiful city, not one-tenth of our citizens know anything of, or have the slightest idea of the wretchedness to which so many of our fellow creatures are sunk. The scenes which were witnessed yesterday were enough to bring tears to the eyes of any one who had a heart to feel for humanity. (Monday, January 24, page 2).

The feature spans a number of pages as the reporter describes his walk through Griffintown, a poor area of Montreal largely populated by unskilled labourers, visiting families in their homes. He describes the individuals he meets and their living conditions in detail, often offering an explanation for why they have been unable to work or what has led them into poverty, and then he also often describes the kind of practical aid he leaves with them such as tickets for food or clothing. After meeting the Davises, for example, he leaves a note for clothing for “this very deserving couple.” The reporter, however, does not consider everyone he meets as deserving as the Davises:

THE VILEST AND FILTHIEST SIGHT OF ALL was to be seen next door north of the police station, occupied by R. Wheeler, wife and two children, at No. 93 Kempt street […] we had to keep the door open to be able to stand the disgusting and polluted air that met us on the threshold. The walls, ceiling and floor of the dingy room were as black as soot with smoke and filth unimaginable. The vermin that infest such a hole in summer must be to a multitudinous and fearful extent…Wheeler sat in the vicinity of the stove, and was a filthy specimen of humanity. His wife and child were equally as dirty as he, and, with their matted hair, were too repulsive to gaze upon…The visitors, after attending to the miserable creatures, beat a hasty retreat, and on reaching the pure air breathed
heavily, as they sadly reflected on the depths of human depravity, as evinced by these creatures, literally living on a level with the lowest beasts. After describing their “depravity” for which he gives no evidence beyond their perceived uncleanliness, he ambiguously mentions “attending to the miserable creatures,” but does not mention giving them any specific aid.

This editorial feature does two things: first, it suggests the way poetry in the paper would have resonated altogether differently for readers following this look at the actual living conditions of the Montreal poor. The poems’ significance for and connections to the real world, if not explicit within the poems themselves, emerge when they are read within the context of the other items in the paper such as this one. Second, “A Sunday Visit” also helps illustrate that the paper’s public concerns were both shared and challenged by the poetry women published here. Popular distinctions between the deserving and undeserving poor were prevalent in Canadian middle and upper class culture, and the Star and its readers were certainly not revolutionary in the way they conceived of the poor. The editor’s obvious sympathy for the “deserving poor” alongside his support for what Paul Rutherford describes as “harsh work regimes” suggest that these contradictions and inconsistencies were not considered problematic. Hattie Cook’s poem “Up and Doing,” printed April 8, 1876, uses the same rhetoric of the virtues of hard work that complicates the altruistic sentiment of charitable giving. Mrs. Emily Thornton’s poem “Breathe a Word of Gentle Kindness” printed February 24, 1877, also makes clear what the acceptable objects of compassion are:

Breathe a word of gentle kindness

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20 See Paul Rutherford, “The People’s Press,” page 185
To the beggar at thy door;
Cold and dreary months are coming,
Then be sure to seek God’s poor.
There is always suffering near us,
Tender *age* and *infancy*,
Drooping beneath cold and hunger,
Poor, yet worthy, they may be.
Gifts and words to soothe such sorrow,
Blessings may become tomorrow.

Age and youth, she suggests, are conditions through which one might be considered “deserving” of aid. These poems illustrate how important the ideas of the deserving and undeserving poor were in shaping contemporary attitudes towards the poor and, by extension, in shaping relief efforts.

Again, much of the poetry published in the *Star* fits in with the ethic expressed in the “Sunday Visit” feature and in Graham’s causes: on the one hand a real desire to help the poor and clean up the city, but on the other hand a reluctance to do anything that might actually overturn the social standards of the day. The reform agendas that find articulation in women’s writing of the period were thus often quite conservative. Other poems, however, suggest that some authors did have a different kind of insight, an insight similar to the one expressed by the speaker of “Magdalen.” The American poet Mrs. Mary Mopes [sic] Dodge’s poem “The Deserving Poor,” printed Wednesday February 6, 1878, asks readers to rethink the category of “deserving poor,” and in fact it challenges the logic of such a category as a way of scripting compassionate behaviour:
A dog of morals, firm and sure,
Went out to seek the “worthy poor,”
“Dear things!” she said, “I’ll find them out.
And end their woes without a doubt.”

She wandered east, she wandered west,
And many dogs her vision best—
Some well-to-do, some rich indeed,
And some—ah! very much in need.

So poor were they—without a bone,
Battered and footsore, sad and alone;
O friends, no help, “What lives they led,
To come to this!” our doggie said.

“I ought not to give to them; I’m sure
They cannot be the worthy poor,
They must have fought or been disgraced
My charity must be well placed.”

[…]

O ye who have enough to spare!
To suffering give your ready care;
Waste not your charitable mood
Only in sifting out the good.

For, on the whole, though it is right
To keep the “worthy poor” in sight,
This world would run without a hitch
If all could find the worthy rich.²¹

Like “Magdalen,” this poem takes readers to task for their self-important attitudes and challenges the arbitrary, but commonplace, assumptions about what should constitute charitable giving.

Although some were more conservative than others, women writers expressed a consistent concern for the amelioration of the lives of the poor, and they advocated for an awareness of and a compassion towards the lower classes through the Christian rhetoric of Jesus as friend to the friendless. If much of the poetry published in the Star takes an ill-defined approach to social work (Kidder’s vague reference to “mission work,” for example), there was one very specific cause that did capture the imaginations of women writers: the temperance movement in Canada both inspired much poetry and, at the same time, temperance poetry itself fuelled the movement. “Temperance and Intemperance” was a regular feature of the Saturday Star and almost always included as part of its Sunday Reading section. Even its location in the paper suggests the ways in which this issue was framed by the editor and, by extension, how it was imagined by readers:

²¹ See Appendix B.
combating the evils of alcohol was as much a Christian imperative as helping the poor. And, indeed, the contributions to the “Temperance and Intemperance” section took pains to show how poverty and alcohol were intimately connected. The section typically included the reprinting of speeches by temperance activists, anecdotes about individual struggles with alcoholism, descriptions of the physical effects of alcohol, statistics, and facts. Importantly, poetry was also very often included in the “Temperance and Intemperance” section. Although items related specifically to the temperance movement were part of this discrete sub-section of Sunday Reading, in effect they didn’t need to be. The moral tone, the Christian rhetoric, the emotional appeals, and the predominance of women’s voices are evident as much here as in the Sunday Reading section as a whole. At times, the distinctions blur to the extent that it seems the editor himself had difficulty deciding where to place a particular piece. For example, Kate Thorn’s essay “Do Not Marry a Drunkard” for Saturday January 12, 1878 did not appear under the “Temperance and Intemperance” heading, but appeared right alongside it.

The poetry that was printed as part of the “Temperance and Intemperance” section contributed to the overall literary emphasis of the Sunday Reading page. The poems here, however, were less often signed than they were in the broader Sunday Reading section. Much of this section was also borrowed from other papers, evidence of the international thrust of the temperance movement and the dialogue that existed between various leagues.

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22 One from Saturday July 24, 1880 declares, “Beer Makes Fat.”
23 From Saturday April 8, 1876: “A period of eight years’ inquiry has developed the statistical fact that 75 percent of the crimes committed in this country were caused by drunkenness, or vices which Liquor drinking engendered,” and from Saturday January 13, 1877: “It is a fact worth noting that among the sailors in the late Arctic Expedition there were four teetotalers, who escaped all sickness, while so many of their comrades were laid aside by scurvy.”
and organizations. For example, the poem “The Poisoned Stream” by Harriet Beavan, printed on Saturday February 22, 1879 was taken from the League Journal, the journal of the Irish Temperance League. In this poem, a squire overlooks his land on which a distillery has been built and regrets the changes he sees:

In bygone days the streamlet’s flow
Had won it crystal fame;
But now it reeks of deeds of woe,
And bears a blush of shame. (4-7)

In making judgment of a moral nature (the distillery’s implication in “shame”), this poem, like all of the temperance poems, connects its project to the broader ideology of Anglo-Protestant Christianity. Alcohol consumption becomes a sin in Christian terms as the speaker establishes a code for proper Christian behaviour.

Also like the Sunday Reading page generally, the poetry in the “Temperance and Intemperance” section put its focus overwhelmingly on women, either speaking from a woman’s perspective or framing its message through women’s experiences, and almost uniformly casting women as the victims of those who abuse alcohol. Nineteenth-century women in Canada and elsewhere certainly disproportionately suffered at the hands of the alcoholic men in their lives and so it makes sense that women activists and writers would claim temperance as an issue especially important to them, but women writers emphasized, even exploited, their status as victim in order to claim the right to speak about it. As Barbara Epstein suggests, “as drinking came to be associated with wife-beating, neglect, and desertion and alcohol became the symbol of a strain of masculine hostility to women and the family, temperance became the obvious terrain of women’s
defense of home, family, and the values associated with that realm” (114). Although, as Epstein also argues, the rhetoric used by temperance activists obscured fears and anxieties that extended beyond the dangers of alcohol abuse, their rhetorical positioning as victims of a vilified, masculine culture was a comfortable and particularly effective one:

The main arguments made by the crusaders about the victimization of women were the following: men who drank spent money on liquor that should have been spent at home; time that men spent in the saloons was that much time away from home. Crusaders and other temperance advocates believed that alcohol was addictive and debilitating and that it impoverished families by destroying men’s ability to work. Finally, they argued that drunken men were violent, likely to beat their wives and perhaps children or other members of their families as well. Alcohol, they claimed, turned gentle fathers and husbands into brutes. (102)

“Intemperance” by H.E.C. which appeared Saturday April 27, 1878, is a good example of the way women writers exploited the position of victim – again, a victim always gendered female:

Have wretched homes, and broken hearts,
A doomed and saddened life;
Tears shed in vain, and prayers so oft
Breathed by a drunkard’s wife;
Have such like miseries failed to save,
And turn men from a drunkard’s grave?” (19-24).24

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24 See Appendix B.
Women’s deliberate self-positioning as victim is complicated in temperance poetry, however. They are both objects of pity, used to inspire regret and shame, but also, simultaneously, agents of change and betterment. We can see this contradiction in the work of Caroline A. Soule, who was a prolific writer and also editor of a number of religious publications including the *Christian Leader* and *Ladies’ Repository*. Her poem, “The Cry of the Women,” which appeared on Saturday April 8, 1876, offers a telling example of the way an author could do both seemingly contradictory things at once: show women as relatively powerless, carrying the burden of suffering, and also give women an assertive role in addressing the problem. By acknowledging this same capacity for suffering, the poem ultimately grants them, through the author’s own voice, the right and the opportunity to speak:

Do you hear the cry of the women –
Of the women whose hearts are broken?
O my brothers! Listen to the wailing,
And let it be the token
Of the need there is to pray
For the dawning of a better day –
Of a day when there shall be no sighing
Over manhood in the gutter dying;
Of a day when wives’ and mothers’ sadness
Shall be forgotten in their gladness. (1-10)\(^{25}\)

\(^{25}\) See Appendix B.
Women at first seem to have no agency in this poem – their response is only a passive, emotional, even non-verbal one – “wailing,” “sighing.” In fact, the focus on women’s emotive qualities highlights the privileging of a feminine viewpoint and a feminine “extra-sensitive response.” Women, for this author, see suffering – “manhood in the gutter dying” – and because they see, they suffer too. Like the other poems I have discussed, this seeing is a fundamental step toward action in sentimental aesthetics. The speaker’s alignment of women with Christ further privileges women’s concerns and places value on their primarily emotional response as the speaker asks that we “be not ashamed of tearful eye” (38). Importantly, the poem also demands a space for women’s poetic voices as the poet-speaker explicitly addresses a male audience. In demanding over and over again that they listen to the cry of the women, the speaker implicitly demands that they hear the female poet.

Temperance, then, was an issue in which women had a real stake, but the poetry published in the “Temperance and Intemperance” columns of the Sunday Reading section illustrates the way women writers used the theme and the popular rhetoric of temperance as a way of bolstering their own rhetorical agency. In fact, Barbara Epstein suggests that temperance literature actually had less to do with temperance than one might think. She reads much of the thrust behind the movement – and women’s interest in the movement – as being more rooted in a general desire for power that started accumulating when women became increasingly involved in religious activity earlier in the century: “The reasons that the temperance movement came to be dominated by women in the late nineteenth century had more to do with the fact that middle class women had acquired the sophistication and self-confidence to take on secular issues than with any special urgency
related to the question of male drinking at that particular time” (110). The poetry women were publishing in the *Montreal Star* confirms what Epstein sees – that the temperance movement offered women, and especially women writers, an *opportunity* to express themselves in meaningful, public ways. Epstein argues, for example, that “in the context of discussing men’s drinking, it was possible for women to talk about their own isolation and loneliness” (106). In making this observation, Epstein maintains her focus on women as victims and the ways they were, through this role, able to articulate a particular set of concerns. My reading of the *Montreal Star* suggests that they also saw themselves as something more than victims, as uniquely able to cure those problems they identified. We can see this in Soule’s assertion at the end of “The Cry of the Women:” “For the world hath need that woman pray / For the dawning of a brighter day” (39-40).

The collision of literature, religious and moral teachings, and people’s daily lives that occurred in the temperance poetry in the *Montreal Star* and the other literature women contributed to *Sunday Reading* is perhaps less surprising given Hugh Graham’s own interest in social causes, but this collision, or even conflation, is even more evident when we see the appeals for aid that were published alongside *Sunday Reading*, particularly in 1877, and complementing the themes expressed in the poetry. For example, on Saturday February 10, 1877, several ads appeared for charitable ventures requesting donations including this one:

> An Appeal on Behalf of the Protestant Home for Friendless Women: The Ladies of the Committee of Management request contributions (large or small) to be sent without delay to Mrs C. Meeker, the Treasurer, at 667 Sherbrooke street. Though in the infancy of its usefulness, the Home already gives shelter to a large and
increasing number of inmates whose *personel* [sic] is constantly changing, as they go out fed, clad, counseled, and, in many cases, to respectable situations.

At the bottom, the notice is signed by a list of names: Mrs. Gavin Lang, Mrs. A Selwyn, Mrs. T.M. Bryson, Mrs. Hutton, Mrs. C.L. Meeker. Clearly, having these names attached to the advertisement is meant to lend transparency and legitimacy to both the project and its requests for money. But these names also do something else when surrounded by the names of other women essentially doing the same thing – asking for the same compassion – in their poetry. Placed together on the page, these names sketch out a community of women participating in the project of ameliorating social conditions in practical ways, such as running a house for destitute women, or in discursive ways, such as writing a poem about them. The page as a whole thus implicitly suggests that it is all part of the same work – real work in the real world, for which women were largely taking the reins.

My point here is that the work and the writing inform one another. Women writers in part drew their rhetorical power from the social work they were doing, and this same exercise of rhetorical power helped drive women’s reform efforts. And, again, informing both of these things was the place women found in a changing, and more socially-oriented Protestantism.

If women’s poetic voices in the *Star* are complemented by these moments where we can see the kinds of social work its readers were doing, they are also complemented by women’s journalistic voices. The *Acadian Recorder* similarly positioned women’s poetry nearby and among articles about home, family life and spiritual matters, but very often these articles were left unsigned, even when the speaker or author was implicitly female. In contrast, the *Star* had a number of female contributors, indeed regular
columnists, whose work is very frequently signed. Many of these columnists were actually American writers gaining prominence in the American press and were published in the Star either through syndication or through pirating. Mary Kyle Dallas and Clara Augusta Jones, who used the penname Kate Thorn, were two popular commentators from the United States whose work often appears, at times in regular weekly columns, as part of Sunday Reading. The Recorder’s columns like this are comparatively impersonal; that is, the author may be discernibly female, might even make reference to herself as such, but the subject remains relatively neutral and the speaker’s voice remains nondescript, even generic. The columnists and contributors to Sunday Reading of the Star, on the other hand, indulged their individuality and idiosyncrasies, making frequent use of humour, sarcasm and personal experience. For example, in her column on Saturday April 22, 1876, Mary Kyle Dallas humorously throws up both the absurdity of female vanity and the ethics of cosmetics advertising: “However, preach as one may, the pretty boxes and puffs and bottles stand in the windows, and pretty lies about the harmlessness of their contents are printed beneath pictures of angelic beings in the act of applying them. You may have a marble nose and gilt hair for a while, if you like, and afterward a red nose and no hair at all, and repentance.”

In an article published May 3, 1879, Kate Thorn takes aim at women who criticize other unmarried women:

We suppose a woman has a right to remain unmarried if she wants to, and it is a well-established fact that every woman has chances to marry. But if there be a woman who does not want to assume the responsibility of three meals a day, and shirt buttons to fix, and pantaloons to mend, and coats, and handkerchiefs, and
stockings to keep in order, and old boots, and pipes, and dirty collars, and blacking-boxes, and black bottles, and shaving machinery to pick up continually, together with the propagation and general and particular superintendence of half a score, more or less, of the poor man’s blessings, do, for pity’s sake, give the sensible soul the privilege of doing as she chooses, without ostracizing her, and tearing her character all to pieces because she does her hair up in a pug or otherwise. Give her an equal chance in the world with her married sisters, and if she sleeps with three cats and two poodles every night, whose business is it?

Like Mary Kyle Dallas, Thorn creates a persona for herself that allows her to make pointed social criticism through humour. Although her target here is women, these contributors did not see their audiences as always composed solely of women.

While these first examples I have cited are American writers working for American papers, some Canadian women also were publishing non-fiction prose in the Star in the 1870s, two decades before the 1890s, that period which Marjorie Lang describes as the moment when women’s journalism flourished in Canada. One woman from Montreal using the pseudonym “Canadia,” for example, appears at least four and very likely more times between 1876 to 1879. Like Mrs. Kidder’s poetry, Canadia’s non-fiction writing is explicitly moralistic and explores overt Christian themes, often focusing on, as was common, the figure of the mother and the important role the mother played in Canadian society by raising good, Christian men. Her columns generally read like guides for proper behaviour. “Thoughts for Our Youth” is one typical example, published April 1, 1876: “But you who have mothers, oh! set a high value upon the priceless treasure; wound not her loving heart by heedless disregard of her advice and wishes; pierce it not
with the thorn of ingratitude, than which the earth has none sharper.” In directly addressing male youth in this essay, Canadia imbues her voice with an authoritative quality that is communicated similarly in her essay “If it Were Not for Hope the Heart Would Break” on February 2, 1878. This essay is also addressed to an ostensibly male audience as she offers her thoughts on the economic difficulties being faced by many in Canada at the time: “The little cloud, of which I spoke a year ago, appearing on the horizon of our country’s prosperity, has spread and spread and spread until the land, far and near, is shrouded in its gloomy shade.”

Here and elsewhere, Canadia’s essays are timely, located in a particular time and place. Further along in the “Hope” essay, for example, she mentions the Young Men’s Christian Association, which she describes as “a blessed work” and expresses her wish that “in our city they may be able to help all such needy and deserving ones.” Although it has proven difficult to track down much biographical information about Canadia, evidence in her writing suggests that she was a regular columnist doing the kind of work Kate Thorn and Mary Kyle Dallas were doing in the United States. Her reference in “Hope,” for example, to an article she wrote a year earlier suggests a familiarity with her reading audience. Interestingly, her columns also often include the date on which they were written, offering an important clue, if not to her biographical details, at least to some aspect of the Star’s publishing practice and Canadia’s relationship with the newspaper. These dates show, in fact, that her essays were turned over by the editor remarkably quickly: the date recorded at the bottom of “If it Were Not for Hope the Heart Would Break” is January 24, 1878 and the essay was published February 2; the date recorded at
the bottom of another essay, “A Whisper to the Sorrowing Little Ones” is January 3, 1878 and the essay was published January 5.

I take the time to mention these non-literary or journalistic contributions to the *Sunday Reading* section to show just how saturated the page was with distinctly female voices. Mary Kyle Dallas, Kate Thorn, Canadia and others obviously had an established audience who would have looked with anticipation for their next column – we can see this in the way they connect their comments on a given day to an immediate social context, even sometimes taking another columnist from another paper to task. Pseudonyms such as “Canadia” and “Maple Leaf,” whose essay “A Mother’s Love” appeared on September 7, 1878, go further to suggest that some of these contributors had a distinctly Canadian audience, even a particular Montreal audience in the case of Canadia, as it was less likely for a Canadian author to be syndicated or pirated in American journals than the other way around. These pseudonyms also suggest that some of these writers saw themselves as both embodying and speaking for the Canadian nation.

I see the poetry that appeared as part of *Sunday Reading* operating in the same way, grounded in its social and political context, which is perhaps not obvious if it is read, as poetry so often is, outside of the context of the *Sunday Reading* section as a whole. One good example of the way the *Star*’s literary offerings could be rooted in the city of Montreal itself is M. Fairweather’s poem “The Lily’s Trial” which appeared on March 13, 1869 with this introduction from the editor: “The following poem, read by Miss Fairweather at the annual meeting of the Normal School Literary Association, is worth publication. Its rhythm is dainty and musical; and, although the subject gives but little scope for saying anything, that little is said gracefully. Miss Fairweather is to be
congratulated on the possession of womanly talent, which we hope success will not spoil.”

If page four of the *Acadian Recorder* was clearly meant to target female readers exclusively, the *Star’s Sunday Reading* was, like the paper as a whole, meant for a broader readership. This is perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of this page: it is dominated by women’s voices, but apart from the items of an explicitly domestic nature (“How to Keep House,” from February 17, 1877), these voices speak to men too. Much of the poetry and the articles and essays published on this page offer scripts for proper behaviour – sometimes ethical behaviour, sometimes just socially decorous behaviour – and they script male behaviour too. The following anonymous essay, “Trust Her,” is just one of many good examples:

Confidence is everything between husband and wife; and a woman loves and desires above all things to be trusted. She would not be ignorant of his troubles or his anxieties[…]. You may say, why should he talk to one who cannot understand or give counsel- to a being with such vague ideas of stocks and banking and speculation that she can only wonder why things have gone wrong? Well there are many reasons: The woman who holds him dear will give him more sympathy than any living being, for one thing; and he needs sympathy whether he knows it or not. And then she has her rights, for she is a partner in a firm of two, and the books should not be closed to her. She is mate of the vessel in which he is

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26 Women readers also participated in the conversations happening in the *Star* by sending letters to the editor, letters which were often printed in the paper. These letters contribute to the overall experience of the paper as being rooted in the city. In a letter published on April 8, 1882, for example, “A Servant Girl” reminds readers that “a great many Montreal ladies do not treat their servant girls as human beings at all, but as household utensils.”
captain; and surely should know what shoals are near; and, moreover, if you love her you do not want to make her miserable. Trust her. (February 24, 1877)

The essayist begins her meditation on trust in marriage at a remove, speaking in the abstract about “wife” and “husband.” Quickly, however, she begins to address a specifically male reader, anticipating his objections to her argument that he should include his wife in his affairs. She then cleverly concedes his claim to superior knowledge, while continually revealing her own knowledge – knowledge about those things not typically considered part of women’s purview, but also those things about which he is in fact ignorant (“he needs sympathy whether he knows it or not”). Canadia’s writings effect a similar extension of female morality onto male behaviour, as does Mrs. M.A. Kidder’s poem from January 8, 1878, “Work and Win.” The poem is less specific than the essays, but it draws on the masculine rhetoric of hard physical work and military glory, a rhetoric well-established in the social reform, and specifically the temperance, movement. If Kidder assumes the role of teacher here, she defines her pupils as male:

Work and win, boys, work and win,
Don’t give up till the ship comes in.
Don’t fall back for the want of pluck,
Courage stands in the place of luck.
Grasp the rope, boys, hold it tight!
Pull, now pull with a willing might;
“Hold the sail!” and don’t let go,
“Heave a-ho! ay, heave a-ho!” (1-8)\(^{27}\)

\(^{27}\) See Appendix B.
If Mrs. M.A. Kidder borrows the rhetoric of fighting so common to the social reform speeches and pamphlets of the day, Mrs. E. Little declares a winner in “Rights of Woman,” published Saturday May 8, 1880. I was immediately drawn to this poem when I saw it because of the striking similarities it bears an unsigned poem published thirteen years earlier in the *Acadian Recorder*. They both have the same title, they both address the same theme, and their first four lines are identical. The significant difference between them occurs at the end. Whereas the speaker of the *Recorder’s* poem argues that women should not “ask for more,” Little insists, “Such, woman’s right, and God will bless./And crown their champion with success.”

The rights of woman – what are they?
The right to labor and to pray;
The right to watch, while others sleep;
The right o’er other’s woes to weep;
The right to succor in distress.
The right while others curse to bless;
The right to love whom others scorn;
The right to comfort all that mourn;
The right to shed new joy on earth;
The right to feel the soul’s high worth;
The right to lead the soul to God,
Along the path the Savior trod.
The path of meekness and of love,
The path of faith that leads above;
The path of patience under wrong;
The path in which the weak grow strong;
Such, woman’s right, and God will bless,
And crown their champion with success.

Reading these two poems alongside one another is instructive because it reminds us that writers did not have to agree on any or all issues, let alone on the best role for women to play in public life. But Little’s recourse to the rhetoric of fighting at the end of her poem also shows how, over time, the social reform movement and women’s literary efforts informed one another more and more and that women writers could see the creative work they were doing as having an influence on their place in society. In declaring the woman at the end a “champion,” Little makes an important gesture that extends far beyond the literary confines of her poem. It is difficult to confirm the true author of “The Rights of Women” because it was published in a variety of versions and in a variety of places over the course of thirty years or more. The poem always begins in the same way, with the question “The rights of women, what are they,” but variations of lesser and greater degrees emerge from that point. In a version I discovered from 1907, the poem had become fully satire. It appeared in *Edgbastonia Magazine*, a monthly publication circulated in the Birmingham suburb of Edgbaston, and answers the question of women’s rights in this way:

The right her husband to obey.
The right to show forth all her life
How proud she is to be a wife!
The right, oh, noble destiny!
The daughter of a man to be.
The right to have one for a brother!
Or be first cousin to another.
The right, should fate be still propitious,
To be the wife of one – delicious!
The right, oh! Grasp it those who can,
To be the mother of a man.

The very different implications of these versions of the same poem illustrate the extent to which contemporary attitudes about popular issues can be traced through women’s literary production.

Although *Sunday Reading* was a dominant and regular section of the Saturday *Star* from 1874, usually filling up the entire fourth page including its smaller subsections, by 1886 it had virtually disappeared. This might be explained simply by the increasing secularity of the paper overall, but it seems also that people were beginning to think about the relationship between women, the home, and religion in different ways. *Sunday Reading* was characterized by its conflation of these things – women’s voices seemed, for readers and certainly for the editor, as a kind of natural and appropriate vehicle for lessons of both a spiritual and domestic nature. Increasingly this would not be the case, and, when they did appear, religious and domestic items would find their own separate spaces. Hints of this change can be seen in 1880 when the paper printed “Mother’s Special Corner,” making the items here distinct both thematically and physically from the rest of the paper. While *Sunday Reading* captured a varied audience – the preponderance of female voices did not assume a male-only readership – this “special corner” clearly
targeted one particular type of reader. Later that year in July, the section “For and About Women” began to appear, again relegating women’s issues to a separate space in the newspaper and targeting this specific audience.

*Sunday Reading* appeared less often after 1880, and when it did, it was usually when the paper produced a double sheet (eight pages rather than four), which would have allowed the editor more freedom and space for including a variety of material. As the nineteenth century approached its end, *Sunday Reading* also less frequently included literature, which had previously been one of its staples. Short essays such as the January 15, 1887 “The Unselfishness of Christ” became standard, still offering a moral or spiritual lesson, but one that was removed from women’s moral authority and their poetic endeavours. *Sunday Reading* makes an unexpected appearance on Saturday December 21, 1889, and appears a few more scattered times in the 1890s, but it was much shorter and its material almost exclusively borrowed from other sources. “Temperance and Intemperance” continued to appear sporadically along with *Sunday Reading*, but evidence of a changing social climate and inconsistencies between various temperance clubs can be seen on Saturday August 12, 1882 when an advertisement for Labbatt’s London Ale and Stout appears directly beside the “Temperance and Intemperance” column.

As another indication of the paper’s overall increasing secularity as it moved into the twentieth century, *Sunday Reading* was replaced at least in terms of size and scope with *Words for Women*, which appeared for the first time in January 1887. Just as *Sunday Reading* was a broad section that introduced the major theme and organized the page’s contents, the *Words for Women* heading acted the same way and included a number of regular, smaller headings within it such as “The Work Table,” “The
Household,” “What a Wise Woman Says,” and “The Fashions.” For example, on Saturday January 8, 1887, “The Work Table” laid out a pattern for heart lace, “What a Wise Woman Says” described how to clean kitchen waste pipes, “The Fashions” described stylish masquerade dresses, and “The Household” suggested two methods to bone a turkey. The page on this day also had biographical sketches of prominent men and women, a short description of how ghee is used in Indian cuisine, and a story about the wife of a light-keeper who had to step into her husband’s place during a storm.

Noticeably absent from all of this – and it is important to remember the section filled the whole page – is poetry or fiction written by women. Also noticeable is the lack of names or signatures. In the 1890s, the fourth page of the Saturday paper that had once been full of poetry, essays, sermons, anecdotes, illustrations and so on, became entirely devoted to women’s fashion. Poetry still appeared, but did so randomly throughout the paper and more space was also dedicated to fiction. For example, the paper on Saturday September 8, 1894 devoted four full pages to Fergus Hume’s story, “The Lone Inn: A Mystery.”

There does seem to be a reinvigoration of the rhetoric of motherhood in the late 1880s and early 1890s – this same resurgence of the mother that is evident in the Acadian Recorder. For example, “Hymns that Mother Sung” was published Saturday August 10, 1889 in which the speaker remembers fondly the relationship she had with her mother, a relationship that was structured around the mother as moral teacher:

28 A prominent but very short-running section called “Our Young People” occupied a full page, impressive in its use of illustrations and alternative fonts, from October 19 until November 16 – for a total of five weeks. The name of popular children’s author Frances Hodgson Burnett was prominently displayed as editor under the title. It included literature, poetry, science and so on that would have appealed to young readers. After this span of five weeks, however, the heading, and Burnett’s name, disappears, although the story installments from Bret Harte’s “A Waif of the Plains” do continue.
To them we owe our happy home.
Praise be to God who reigns above,
For keeping every bright and clear,
The lessons learned in love.
Outliving sorrows, bearing hope;
The dear old songs have every clung
And never can the heart forget
The hymns that mother sung. (33-40)

In “Mother’s Love,” by Susan A. Svinneu, which appeared Saturday August 2, 1890, the speaker tries to hold on to an image of her mother that is reflective of her mother’s wisdom:

So if you copy her picture,
Don’t make it look young and fair;
For I want it to look like mother,
With her smile and her snow white hair.

Notably, while both of these authors privilege the mother as a moral and spiritual teacher, they both do this through nostalgia. The mother in both poems is no longer alive, her influence now largely only an emotional one. The mother it seems, like childhood itself, belongs to a time past.

While it lasted, the Sunday Reading section of the Montreal Star illustrates the accuracy of William Leitch’s observation in 1860, “the public are receiving a theological education through the press, such as at no former time they enjoyed (qtd. McKillop 101). What Leitch leaves unexplored, however, is who it is that takes the reins of that
education. The overwhelming dominance of women’s voices in the Sunday Reading section of the *Montreal Star* and other sections like it across the country suggests that it was largely women. Philip Fisher insists the “central unit of sentimental fiction is not the individual, but the family” (101). While I think Fisher is wrong to reject the individual in his analysis – indeed, sentimentalism works the way it does because it manipulates the individual first – his identification of the importance of family to sentimental literature is accurate. If anything, however, the intense focus sentimental literature often places on the family does in effect point towards a very particular individual – the family’s emotional and spiritual guide, the mother, giving credence to Ann Douglas’s assertion that through their literary activity, women in the nineteenth century assumed clerical function. In many respects they were, to use Douglas’s terms, “housewives become ministers” (126).

Douglas suggests, however, that in their collusion with popular fiction and its publishing venues, such as the newspaper, both women and preachers lost their “practical function.” David Marshall would agree with Douglas here. David Reynolds, however, takes exception to this argument at least as it applies to preachers. He argues,

The argument made by some recent scholars that nineteenth-century American sermons were part of a “feminized” subculture which had little effect on the masculine world of action is almost a direct reversal of fact. In the South, the dramatic growth of the Methodist and Baptist churches was impelled largely by hardy circuit riders and camp-meeting revivalists whose urgent calls for spiritual rebirth were often punctuated by anecdotes underscoring the need for determined correction of everyday behaviour. In the North, the growth of reform and tract
societies reflected a confidence that individual regeneration and social change were linked and that preachers could help speed conversion by addressing topical social issues in sermons containing concrete illustrations of success or failure in common life. (485)

My reading of the Montreal Star shows that this defence of the nineteenth-century ‘story-telling’ preacher can be extended to women writers. Certainly women were caught up in the commercial ramifications and the commercial potential of their work. And yet, a study of the poetry they were writing suggests over and over again their concern with real life and with making positive social change. It would be too facile to insist that as a result of the literature they were writing, women achieved all of the tangible goals for which social reform strived. The significant gain they and their literature did make, however, was not just in carving out a space for themselves in which they could influence public life, but carving out a space for themselves in the literary world as authors.
Chapter Three:
Speaking for the City in the *Evening Telegram*, 1880-1900

In *Imagining Toronto*, geographer Amy Lavender Harris offers what she describes as a “literary genealogy” of Toronto, in which she traces “the long and interwoven heritage of writers and works engaging imaginatively with this city” (13). Although Harris makes very brief mention of nineteenth-century writers, the bulk of her focus is on twentieth-century monograph publications, and those mostly fiction. In *Toronto: A Literary Guide*, Greg Gatenby offers a remarkably comprehensive and detailed literary “tour” of Toronto that extends back to 1783, but he too focuses on those authors who published books. While the limited scope of both projects is understandable, it is unfortunate: in fact, a true literary genealogy of Toronto would more accurately be rooted in the city’s nineteenth-century daily newspaper. It was here where the city became a sustained imaginative focal point for writers and where creative renderings of the city were offered consistently and persistently. This was particularly the case for the Toronto *Evening Telegram* whose declared aims to represent Toronto and Toronto citizens, not just in its news reporting, but in its literary offerings too, is seen explicitly through the 1880s and 1890s. In her study of Toronto-based literature, Harris is interested in how writers have historically shaped and defined the city; I argue that in the latter half of the nineteenth-century, the city itself offered an opportunity for writers to define themselves as writers. The newspaper was the vehicle through which they could do this: the *Telegram*’s project was to speak for the city, and it endorsed those poetic voices that reflected its aims and interests.
The new focus on the city so evident in the *Telegram* – and the new poetic subject matter this focus correspondingly offered – was equally an opportunity for women writers as for men. Through the 1880s and 1890s, women poets whose work appeared in the *Telegram* became increasingly engaged in municipal politics and urban affairs, well before the period scholars tend to identify with the rise of urban and city writing in Canada. This shift in focus, away from domestic spaces and toward more explicitly public and political ones, corresponded with a new and significant engagement with civic issues on the part of women in Toronto. It also corresponded with a significant shift away from earlier models of feminine morality, as women writers increasingly reached beyond the subjects that had previously defined their work and, by extension, reached beyond definitions of authorship that reinforced those boundaries. Evidence from the *Telegram* in these last years of the century suggests, for example, that they were more comfortable negotiating the economics of writing as a profession, acknowledging forthrightly their desire to make money from their creative writing without recourse to traditional ideas about feminine virtue as justification for their poetic endeavors. Again, the newspaper as the space in which this happened is significant, as it was in the periodical press, in magazines and in newspapers too, as Carole Gerson, Susan Coultrap-McQuin, and others have shown, that women, especially, could hope to both establish a dedicated readership and make some money from their writing.

It was because the *Telegram* was firmly rooted in the city that it could offer such a wonderful opportunity to nineteenth-century local writers. Its unwavering focus on the local differentiated the *Telegram* from its main Toronto competitor, George Brown’s *Globe*. While the Liberal *Globe* had a significantly larger circulation, its interest was
national and it worked hard to expand its readership beyond Toronto city limits. From the Telegram’s inception in 1876, however, founder and long-time editor John Ross Robertson determined to create a Toronto-centric daily. He had no interest to reach a national audience, and his focus on Toronto, coupled with the paper’s popular style, worked extremely well in capturing a loyal readership that supported the paper long into the twentieth-century. If the Telegram was significantly different from the Globe, it had much in common with Hugh Graham’s Star. Both papers embraced the popular journalism that was emerging at mid-century in Canada; both were “penny-papers” aimed at the masses:

Robertson fed them [readers] with a rich mixture of gossip and attack. Hotel registers were combed for social notes. Citizens were named whenever they were fined the usual – $1 and costs – as common drunks. Editorials from competing newspapers were reprinted, and Sunday sermons were often printed in full in Monday columns. (Poulton 78)

A sampling of headlines illustrates the lengths to which Robertson would go to attract readers and generate interest in his paper, his material often bordering on the salacious and scandalous: “SAD OCCURRENCE: Painful Death of a Young Lady. VOMITING BLOOD” (Tuesday April 25, 1876, front page); “A DRUNKEN MANIAC: ASSAULT WITH A RAZOR. Man and His Wife Almost Killed” (Monday May 8, 1876). But in all of his attempts to attract readers, Robertson’s interests always emerged from and centered on the city of Toronto. And so, while it was typical for the paper to print colourful

29 In fact, the Telegram cost two cents at first, but quickly dropped its price to one cent in June 1877, less than a year after it issued its first edition, and, remarkably, stayed there until August 1917 (see Poulton 73).
headlines like these, it was equally common practice for the *Telegram* to print citizen voters’ lists, property values and the voting patterns of municipal officials. As Ron Poulton notes in his extensive biography of Robertson, Robertson felt especially compelled to expose corruption at city hall. He made a habit, for example, of publishing city contracts, thereby giving readers insight into how their taxes were being used by the officials who represented them (78-9). In using his paper this way, Robertson achieved remarkable political results: Poulton cites the legend that “a nod from Robertson was as good as a master key to city hall” (99).

Following the model of popular journalism already established in the United States and in Canada with papers such as the *Star*, the *Telegram* eschewed the traditional editorial stance of speaking down to readers and offered them, instead, an opportunity to participate in the dialogue the paper inspired. The paper’s prominent Letters to the Editor, which appeared as “Voices of the People,” illustrates this well. This invitation for the community to participate and contribute, importantly, can also be seen in the kinds of literature the paper published. It was not atypical for nineteenth-century newspapers to print original poetry, and it was common practice for editors to highlight and draw attention to these original contributions with subheadings and additional introductions. For example, there were frequent poems published in the *Acadian Recorder* with the introduction: “Written for the Recorder,” just as the *Telegram* indicated when poems were “Written for the Telegram.” The *Telegram* stands out from the *Recorder* and other papers, however, not just for the volume of original poetry it published, but for the space it afforded regular contributors: one writer’s works would often appear again and again and so became a regular voice readers encountered in their daily reading. These regular
voices were very often explicitly Torontonian and fit well with the paper’s interests: municipal politics, local affairs, Toronto citizens. Local flavour infused every corner of the *Telegram*, including its literary offerings.

By dedicating generous space for Toronto writers, the paper supported, even facilitated, the careers of a number of writers who defined themselves as professionals: Isabella Valancy Crawford, Robert Awde, John Imrie, Robert Kirkland Kernighan. But the paper also made space for local amateurs. Its section Amateurs and the Muse, a regular feature from 1891 that showcased the work of local amateurs, or “embryo poets” as the paper described them, is a good example of the paper’s democratic approach toward journalism reflected in its approach to the literature it published, an approach, Poulton goes so far as to suggest, that had a profound effect on journalism in Canada:

Robertson’s methods and innovations caused a metamorphosis in the city’s administration, and in Canadian journalism. There was a depression, and his reporters canvassed businessmen about the economy. An heresy trial was in progress, and clergymen of every denomination were interviewed. These opinion polls were startlingly new to a public that had rarely been consulted about anything. (77)

In fact, Graham had been doing much of this with the *Star* in Montreal years before the *Telegram* entered the market, and other papers were following suit. But the combination of popular journalism and an intense focus on the local community had, I will argue, important implications for local writers who published in the *Telegram*: the paper created a community of readers, rooted in the city, who were a ready audience for the literature the paper published, but it was also an audience that had a particular set of expectations
involving the portrayal of local interests, current events and popular issues. As I will show later with regard to Crawford’s relationship with the *Telegram*, there were potential problems writers might encounter in publishing their work in the newspaper, but, nevertheless, those authors who were able to fulfill the expectations of this particular publishing venue found an opportunity to bolster their income, but especially their popularity.

The extent to which the *Telegram* opened the door for local writers can be seen in the way it quite emphatically established a public role for the poet in Toronto. Two regular poetry sections that were prominent in the 1880s and 1890s underscored both the paper’s local mandate and its view of the poet as someone who could speak for the city itself: Toronto City Idylls, and Khan’s Konceptions: Ballads of the City and the Times. The first, Toronto City Idylls, started appearing in 1882 with a caption explaining, “A series of poems on social subjects, grave or gay, by Dr. Mulvaney, written for *The Telegram.*” Often, Mulvaney’s poems took a popular story from another newspaper as prompt. The poem for Tuesday October 10, 1882, for example, is based on a story from the *New York Truth* about the death of a violinist in a circus orchestra. The second, Khan’s Konceptions, was even more concerned with Toronto exclusively. The author, Hamilton-based poet Robert Kirkland Kernighan, was well known for his poetic portrayals of rural Ontario, but in the writing he did for the *Telegram* his focus was entirely the city of Toronto. One good example is the Khan’s April 10, 1883 poem “Help for the Heathen,” dedicated to “the Presbyterian Woman’s Foreign Missionary Society,

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30 The Khan’s poetry also appeared under the heading “Khan’s Korner.”
31 Charles Pelham Mulvaney (1835-1885) was a frequent contributor to Canadian periodicals and was also a Church of English clergyman.
whose annual meeting was held to-day.” The poem on its own reads like the many other relatively abstract meditations on women’s moral authority, but the dedication at the beginning to the Woman’s Missionary Society orients readers in the city of Toronto, reminding them of the real social work with which women here were engaged.

In his most engaging Telegram poems, the Khan makes effective use of satire to expose corruption and other misdoings among elected officials. Given John Ross Robertson’s goal to do the same thing with his paper generally, and given his contempt for the railroad companies specifically, it is easy to see how a poem such as “The Grand Trunk Juggernaut,” published Wednesday April 25, 1883, underscored and reinforced the paper’s editorial position:

Might has triumphed, sound it well,
Through all the land from east to west!
To William Barclay and John Bell
Are due our grateful thanks the best.
Then sing aloud
A pean [sic] proud,
The Grand Trunk Juggernaut is king.

Right is vanquished; once again
The iron wheel will crush the life
Of guileless children, women, men,
For slaughter we are ever rife.
Then what care we,
Who’ve cash plenty.

The Grand Trunk Juggernaut is king. (1-14)\textsuperscript{32}

What was new here, and was common in the Khan’s poetry, was the explicit naming of those political figures with whom he was taking issue. The \textit{Telegram} was a vociferous opponent to what it saw as the deep-rooted corruption of the large railroad companies. Here, the Khan identifies John Bell, legal counsel for the Grand Trunk Railway, and William Barclay McMurrich, mayor of Toronto in 1881 and 1882 and a sympathetic ear to the interests of the railway company, as part of the corruption whose effects, Robertson insisted, were damaging to the city and to the country as a whole.\textsuperscript{33} The timeliness of the Khan’s poetry and the specificity of his satiric targets suggest that Ballads of the City acted in the 1880s the way the newspaper’s later political cartoons would. This section appeared frequently in the \textit{Telegram}, often several times a week, and the immense popularity of their author was evident when Kernighan gave a lecture to a packed house in Albert Hall in Toronto in 1885 (Toronto’s Daily Amusement Record, n.d.). Clearly, readers would have looked for the Khan’s poetic comment in the wake of any significant political happening in the city; Robertson wisely ensured he gave readers what they wanted.

\textsuperscript{32} See Appendix C.

\textsuperscript{33} Robertson was careful to always present his opposition in the paper as being representative of a broader Toronto community – particularly the “guileless children, women, men,” who are cast as victims in the poem. The position he cultivated for the paper as speaking for the city with regard to the railroad issue in particular could also be seen Friday April 13, 1883, when the \textit{Telegram} printed a signed petition against the railroads using the Esplanade area of the city’s waterfront and urging city councilors to step in and enforce greater control over them. The petition included thousands of names and ran through eleven columns, filling almost two full pages.
The volume of poetry published in the *Telegram* that offered comment on current issues shows just how popular a model this was. “The Fisheries Question” by Robert Awde on November 1, 1878, “The License Bill” by the frequent contributor A. on May 28 1883, and “The Sad End of Toronto Toboganner,” by G.R.K. in February 1887, are just three of many good examples. In all of them, the city is the focal point, and in expressing popular feeling about a particular issue, the poet does the work that largely defined the nineteenth-century editor’s job, particularly as Robertson saw it: exposing corruption and the foibles of city officials, celebrating local citizens of note-worthy achievement, and so on. But the role the newspaper itself played in creating this opportunity for writers cannot be overemphasized. Not only did the paper provide the poet with a ready, interested and invested audience, it also largely furnished poets with their subject material by being, already, that place where local issues were foregrounded and worked through. My argument here is that the city, the paper and the poet were, in this context, inextricable from one another. The example of the Khan is an important one: despite Kernighan’s own successes outside of his relationship with the *Telegram* – he published a number of volumes of poetry over his lifetime – it was the *Telegram* that confirmed his status, not as poet necessarily, indeed, he had already done that himself, but as poet of the city. Importantly for my discussion of the women poets who also contributed to the *Telegram*, this established the poet in readers’ minds as a particular kind of commentator, and set a significant model for other writers to emulate.

Just as it does in the paper’s editorial positions, a tension runs through the original poetry published in the *Telegram* between poets’ impulse to celebrate the city and their impulse to critique it. In this way, literature in the newspaper clearly corresponded to
contemporary thinking about the city, both the real city of Toronto and the abstract idea of the Canadian city, which figured prominently as a topic of interest and debate towards the turn of the century. In *Saving the Canadian City*, Paul Rutherford identifies the late-nineteenth century as a turning point in urban reform that was precipitated by a new sense of crisis. While he acknowledges that the concept of the “evil city” was not new in North America, he argues, “the concept of an urban crisis was somewhat different, arising out of a perception of the social ills industrialization had brought in its wake” (xv). In response to this sense of crisis, he argues, civic improvement gained new and wide attention. The new sense of urgency was complicated, however, by a simultaneous optimism about the potential of the city as a new kind of space, a “utopian vision of tomorrow’s metropolis” (xxi). Contemporary poetry was, accordingly, both celebratory and critical of the city, the poet standing in a position from which to see its potentials and its problems.

One of the places this tension found expression broadly was in the City Beautiful Movement that originated in Great Britain and the United States and gained prominence in Canada just before the turn of the century. Proponents of the movement argued for the overall benefits to health and social welfare that would result from improving the aesthetic character of urban spaces. As Julie K. Rose explains, City Beautiful advocates felt a beautiful city “would in turn inspire its inhabitants to moral and civic virtue.” In many ways, the City Beautiful arguments echoed arguments about the morally edifying qualities of poetry. For example, speaking to the Ontario Association of Architects in 1899, Walter Van Nus suggested that while art, music, poetry, can only be enjoyed by a few, “architecture, as a decorative art, is seen by all men at all times, and its silent
influence, consciously or unconsciously, affects the minds of the cultured and uncultured. The beautiful gives us pleasure; the ugly, pain, and we cannot escape the ugly buildings which disfigure our streets” (qtd. Rutherford 170). Van Nus was not alone in using beauty as a standard of judgment by arguing that Toronto’s “ugly buildings” and uninspiring landmarks were what held this otherwise first-class city back from competing with the other great cities in North America and Europe. Architects in Montreal, for example, called for the creation of a municipal board that would have responsibility for approving those building projects that contributed to the overall coherence of the city’s appearance (Wolfe and Jacobs). But, again, City Beautiful advocates were not interested in beauty for beauty’s sake, and they aligned themselves with other urban reform movements which sought the amelioration of the lives of those living in the city:

The town planning movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries represented the convergence of a number of reform initiatives aimed at ameliorating the urban squalor occasioned by extraordinarily rapid industrialization and urbanization. By the late nineteenth century, most North American cities had a league for public health reform, a parks and playgrounds association, a fledgling architectural association, usually fostering City Beautiful ideas, a municipal art movement and a lobby against corruption and illegal practices in city government. Towards the end of the century, fuelled by the ideas of the Garden City movement in Britain and the urban park movement in North

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34 Van Nus’s words here, and much of the philosophical impulse of the City Beautiful Movement, echo the precepts of the European school of Beaux-Arts which felt that artists should embrace order, dignity and harmony and reflect them on a visual level (see Rose).
America, these groups advocated town planning as a remedy for the ills they addressed. (Wolfe and Jacobs)

The idea of creating a beautiful city as a way of improving people’s lives did become a real issue in city planning, in Toronto and in other urban areas, but these discussions and debates were not exclusive to specialty groups and professional associations and, in fact, found expression in the newspaper too. For example, in the Voices of the People section for May 27, 1880 under the heading, THE BOULEVARD QUESTION, a reader identifying himself as Telegram Reader No. 2 writes, “Sir, -- I am pleased to see this question discussed, and, as almost every person reads THE TELEGRAM, it is the proper place to discuss it. […] but I should like to know who is going to spend his money in this sort of way?” The “question” under discussion had to do with the management of city boulevards and whether planting trees would be an appropriate way of spending city money. Reader No. 2’s letter is interesting for a number of reasons. First, it provides evidence that new ways of imagining the city as an urban space whose aesthetic character could be legislated had currency in Canada earlier than is typically thought.\(^{35}\) It also shows the extent to which local citizens were invested in the potential of Toronto and, as I have suggested, underscores the daily newspaper as that public space where innovative concepts, both practical and philosophical, could be introduced and debated by average citizens, that place where citizens’ investment in the city found articulation. Reader No. 2 confirms this when he identifies the Telegram as

\(^{35}\) The City Beautiful Movement is generally thought to have captured the imaginations of Canadians between 1893 and 1930 (Canadian Encyclopedia), after which time the economic conditions of the country made investing in civic beauty seem wasteful and irrelevant. Essays, letters and literature in the Telegram suggest, however, that Torontonians were engaged with the ideas of improving urban life by improving urban spaces as early as 1880.
the proper place to discuss the issue precisely because the popular paper was accessible to almost everyone.

Those authors, professional and amateur, who published in the *Telegram* participated in the dialogue too. The poem “Elm Avenue: Rosedale” published on June 20, 1885 by Crowquill, a frequent contributor to the *Telegram*, celebrates not the city as a whole, but the small community of Rosedale that had just begun residential development only twenty years or so earlier. In fact, the charm of Rosedale for this poet has much to do with its distance from downtown as with its own natural beauty: “’Tis hardly out beyond the town, / and scarcely is within: / But city crowds are here unknown, / Unheard the city din” (5-8). Subtle intimations of the darker connotations of the city are evident here, despite the author’s aim to celebrate what this part of the city has to offer. Even in the work of the Khan, arguably the most famous Toronto-poet at the time, we can see similar shades of criticism, not just of particular individuals but of the city itself. In “Whoa and Swindlin,” published Monday April 9, 1883, the speaker describes the scene on a city street this way: “T’ronto’s dirt on every dud, / All filthy lay the seas of mud. / And dark as winter was the scud / of gutters rolling rapidly” (1-4). This poem is actually about an April snowstorm that threw the city into chaos, but the idea of the unclean city with which the poem opens anticipates some of the rhetoric that became commonplace in criticisms of Toronto and other urban areas over the next two decades.

Women’s poetic contributions to the *Telegram* were equally attuned to the important question of the city and were equally wrapped up in all of the contradictions that informed urban reform movements of the period. In her discussion of the influential Toronto Women’s Literary Club, Heather Murray shows the connection women in
Toronto fostered between their literary pursuits and their reform agendas. This, Murray suggests, differentiated the TWLC from similar literary clubs and societies in the United States. The TWLC’s civic-mindedness was evident in the three recurring themes of the topics and readings set for each meeting:

First, the role of women: historically, in the present day, and as illustrated by interesting or exemplary lives. Second, civic improvement, with especial concentration on health and education as areas of municipal responsibility with which women were able to engage. Third, educational subjects in which women were likely to be un- or under-educated or inexperienced: science, philosophy, higher literary study, and foreign travel…Emphasis on writing and speaking skills, debate, and the conduct of meetings was intended – quite literally – to prepare women’s voices for more public forums. (91)

Although the TWLC is now widely known for its efforts in the fight for suffrage, in fact, Murray argues, its literary pursuits were inextricable from its other cultural and political ones. Women’s increasing interest in municipal affairs, so evident in the TWLC, was likely spurred by the real role a select group of women could play in municipal politics; although they would not gain the right to vote in wider elections for some time, by 1884 unmarried women and widows who met property and income qualifications could vote in municipal elections in Toronto. The Telegram’s preoccupation with city business included an awareness of these new voters who could be participating in the municipal election of 1885, and on Monday December 8, 1884 it printed “LADIES WHO CAN VOTE: LIST OF WIDOWS AND SPINSTERS,” including the property value held by
each woman listed.\textsuperscript{36} The city was, then, a politicized space more than any other in which women could imagine seeing tangible results of their work and influence. And, like their literary predecessors, many women continued to use poetry as the vehicle for exerting that influence.

This excerpt from A. Elizabeth Cuyler’s poem “Toronto” published Saturday June 28, 1884, is a good example not just of a writer’s interest in the city and the irresolvable tensions this interest provoked, but it is also indicative of the changing ways women poets defined themselves as they took on the city as subject.

Here seats of learning, scores on scores,
Each morn ring out their wonted peal
To summon votaries young of love
And train them for their future weal.
But most we joy that many a dome
Rears high its noble stately head
As beacon light to some blest home
Where the lone poor are housed and fed –

The poor! –God help the lowly poor!
Chill’d by the world’s hard wintry smile,
Knock trembling at that open door.

\textsuperscript{36} The extent to which the paper felt itself responsible for ensuring the proper running of municipal business could be seen following the 1885 election when it printed a list of those who had voted for mayor and asked readers to “look through the list and if you see any bogus votes – dead men – repeaters or personators send the name to this office, so that a list may be made up of the illegal votes” (January 17).
But kindness all their woes beguile;
The aged and worn, with heaving sigh,
(For ah! the prize for which he run,
Was lost) with mournful, tear-dimm’d eye,
Finds here at last his rest and home. (42-57)\textsuperscript{37}

In these stanzas and throughout the poem the city is described primarily as a place of learning and a place of religion. While the speaker acknowledges the presence of the “lowly poor,” the city is not the cause of their hardship, but an agent for alleviating the suffering they face. The poor tremble at the “open door” of the churches, but given the relationship Cuyler draws between the churches and the city itself (the contours of the city are defined by the church steeples), it seems the city that offers respit, the city itself in which the poor find “rest and home.” I think we can see Harris’s idea of how literature shaped Toronto here: Cuyler’s choice of focus – the church steeples – creates a particular kind of city, defines Toronto in a particular way. Equally important, however, is the different definition of the poet this perspective implies, as someone now whose vantage point is outside looking in. In contrast to earlier poetry written by women where the poet’s ostensible focus was consistently interior, private spaces and the poet-speaker herself looked outward from these spaces, the poet here is explicitly outside, surveying the city from a removed position. She can still see interior spaces such as the domestic and the spiritual, she has insight, for example, into the personal loss experienced by the aged figure whose eye is “tear-dimm’d,” but in this poem she is not confined to these spaces.

\textsuperscript{37} See Appendix C.
Whereas the poet in “Toronto” surveys the city at sunrise, the poet in “The Sleeping City,” a poem that appeared on Monday July 23, 1888, watches it at night. After dark, the “great city” becomes a nightmare landscape filled with “ghostly sounds,” and “gaunt specters,” a “hideous foretaste of Hades:”

…the light of day

Ne’er penetrates those living graves; grim want
Wrapped in the rags of vice lives slyly there;
And piteous things called “men and women,” flaunt
In virtue’s face their sins and dark despair…(16-20)³⁸

The author of this poem, Mary M. Shaw, was a prolific contributor to the Telegram. I have identified at least 32 poems written by Shaw between 1884 and 1888 when her work seems to have stopped appearing. In terms of volume, Shaw stands on par with other well-known Telegram writers such as Crawford, Imrie and Awde, and evidence from the paper suggests that Shaw was an active participant in the literary culture of Toronto and very popular with the Telegram’s readers. There are, in fact, significant parallels to be drawn between Shaw’s work and Crawford’s. In “The Sleeping City,” what might have been the last poem Shaw published in the Telegram, the same darker overtones that accompanied Crawford’s later work are apparent. Here, the poet’s role has shifted; it is decidedly more critical of urban life than it is celebratory of the city. The speaker’s vantage point is the same as Cuyler’s, however, as she surveys the city from a removed distance. Despite its dark tone and nightmare vision, Shaw’s poem is not entirely without

³⁸ See Appendix C.
hope for the city. In fact, the city is cast as victim, threatened by the sin and avarice that creeps out while it sleeps. We can see echoes here of City Beautiful thought. In a kind of tautological problem, Shaw’s rendering of Toronto conflates the health of the city with the moral health of its citizens.

In Cuyler’s and Shaw’s poems, the poet’s viewpoint is much like that of a painter’s as she stands apart, describing the outline and painting the contours of the city. I suggest this is significant because it speaks to the changing way these women saw themselves in the role of poet. Their vision in these poems is not constrained by the parlour-room walls as they place themselves emphatically on the outside. In other poems written by women, such as “How Burglars Are Bred,” by Minnie May and published in the Telegram on July 18, 1887, the speaker is on the inside – inside not domestic spaces, but inside the courthouse, inside the polling station and inside the council chamber at city hall. The root of the problem with the city Shaw identifies in “The Sleeping City” is one of virtue, and this is also the case in Minnie May’s poem. It is not the “burglar” of the poem, however, who lacks virtue, but the police-court judge who condemns him without compassion:

Would you know in fair Toronto

How the burglars learn their trade?

I will tell you, I will teach you

How the burglars here are made.

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“Sent down for five days, age seven years.”

“Crime, stealing a pair of shoes.”
That’s what I read in the paper tonight
Among the police-court news.

Who was the judge who sat on the bench
And gave an order so vile?
Where were the people who see justice done?
Where the boy’s mother the while?

[...] Does he rest in peace in his bed tonight?
Or dreams he of that poor child,
Who his words today may forever doom
To be hard and wicked and wild?

May God with His infinite mercy deign
To hedge that poor child about
May that judge when his time for judgment comes,
Receive what he meted out.

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This, the story I have told to you,
In The Telegram I read.
You will see I thus have taught you,
How our burglars here are bred.39

39 See Appendix C.
Shaw and Cuyler both identify in their poems negative aspects of urban life, poverty, crime and so on, but Minnie May’s poem goes further than these others in trying to identify the systemic causes of those problems. Again, it is significant that she targets not those actually criminally guilty of wrongdoing, but the system that perpetuates a cycle of crime in the lives of a particular class of citizens, exposing as she does so the irony of “fair” Toronto.

The concern Minnie May expresses for problems in the administration of Toronto can be seen in many other poems written by women at the time who engaged specifically with the business of municipal politics. “The Dreaded Nineteenth,” written by Toronto Girl and published on Saturday August 6, 1881 is a good example. The speaker in this poem offers a humorous reflection on the famous prophecy that the world would end in 1881, but along the way she makes pointed jabs at city politicians. While most people are “ordering their ascension robes” in preparation for the Judgment day, Toronto Girl suggests,

…our City Council and worthy Mayor
Are perfectly safe – it is little they care –
For a corporation had never a soul,
And as we all know that what’s true of the whole
Should be true of each part; they, lucky dogs
Needn’t bother about their ascension togs,
Indifferent they how the world may behave,
Well knowing they haven’t a soul to save. (41-48)

See Appendix C.
Again, John Ross Robertson’s and, by extension, the Telegram’s general anti-corporate position is evident here, as is the paper’s determined and relentless challenging of city council. It is not insignificant, however, that in articulating her opinions about Toronto’s soul-less mayor, this author identifies herself not only by city, but by her gender. In adopting the pen-name “Toronto Girl” she positions herself quite deliberately as a representative of the city in the same way Kernighan does in his Ballads of the City column, suggesting, importantly, that the city speaks with a woman’s voice too.⁴¹

As Poulton and Rutherford have both shown, one of the Telegram’s main agendas was to expose corruption at the municipal level. Toronto Girl’s poem illustrates this well in its suggestion of an indecent relationship between the mayor’s office and certain large corporations. The problem of corruption is addressed in other Telegram poems too, such as Mrs. L.B. Chamberlain’s poem “The Party Candidate,” published Thursday June 7, 1894, two weeks before an Ontario provincial election. Given the timing of the poem, it is fair to assume the “candidate” Chamberlain speaks of is the provincial one, but her concern with the candidate’s honesty fits with the paper’s interest in acting as a kind of moral watch-dog over elected officials:

Brothers, who labor early and late,

Ask these things of the candidate:

What’s his record? How does he stand.

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⁴¹The articulation of this female voice was particularly significant at a time when Toronto was, in fact, demographically becoming more female. In Toronto’s Girl Problem, Carolyn Strange describes the dramatic movement of single women into the city in the late nineteenth century, in even greater numbers than men, and its “extraordinary impact” on the city: “Through sheer force of numbers – impossible to ignore when hundreds of young women poured out of Eaton’s department stores or the Crompton Corset factory at shift changes – they stood out” (6).
At home? No matter about his hand,
Be it hard or soft, so it be not prone
To close over money not his own.
Has he in view no thieving plan?
Is he honest and capable? – he is our man. (29-36)

Another poem by popular American poet Ella Wheeler Wilcox, “We Want No Kings,” re-printed in the *Telegram* on November 27, 1891 anticipates Chamberlain and fits with the *Telegram*’s editorial position in taking sides with working citizens against those “false kings” who exploit their labour. Here, the speaker insists on “the right of all paid slaves to rise / Against all crowned monopolies:”

That rob the tillers of the soil
Of honest proceeds of his toil!
That steal the poor man’s flour and sack
And grind him, till he buys them back
At twice their value. Down, we say,
With these false kings, who rule to-day. (21-28)

Taken together, these poems are evidence of the significant change not just in the subject matter with which women writers were engaged, but also in the way they saw and presented themselves as poets, grounding their personae in a sense of the poet as public spokesperson for the city. And, again, the newspaper was the important platform from which they could launch their attacks at elected officials, at city hall, and elsewhere.

Isabella Valancy Crawford (1850-1887) was one very prominent *Telegram* poet equally concerned with representing the city and Torontonians’ concerns in the poetry
she wrote for the newspaper. Crawford has at various times in the 130 years or so since her death received substantial attention from literary critics who very often work to claim her as a significant national poet. More recently, Len Early and Michael Peterman have offered insight into her significant relationship with the American press. In all of this, however, we may have missed an important element of how she crafted her career. When Crawford’s oeuvre is considered as a whole, the effect of her “Toronto” poems is perhaps less striking, as they are interspersed with the many other poems she published in the *Telegram* and elsewhere. But in reading through the pages of the *Telegram* day after day, as her contemporary audience would have done, she emerges not just as a significant Canadian poet, or indeed an American one, but a significant Toronto poet. Her poems addressing local places and current issues fit very well with the general ethos of the Toronto-centric *Telegram* and they are an indication of her business acumen – her awareness of market demand and, indeed, her awareness of the particular interests of the individual publishers for whom she worked.

Most current scholars working on early women’s writing in Canada will agree that Crawford scholarship has placed undue emphasis on her one attempt at monograph publishing – the collection of poems she published at her own expense in 1884, *Malcolm’s Katie, Old Spookses’ Pass, and Other Poems*, despite the fact that this venture into monograph publishing was, by all accounts a dismal failure. In fact, the long poem *Malcolm’s Katie* received the lion’s share of critical attention in the twentieth century, despite Crawford’s large oeuvre. It is her failed attempt at book publishing that largely fuelled accounts of Crawford after her death as an “angelic mendicant” (see Wetherald

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42 She had 1000 copies printed by the Toronto publisher James Bain and Son, selling, in the end, only fifty copies at fifty cents per copy.
xx) or as being heartbroken over the public’s neglect of her work (see Lighthall xxvi), and it may also be part of what has fuelled a long debate over the literary merits of Crawford’s work. As Carole Gerson points out, “While money was often to be made from periodicals, prestige and canonicity have been conferred by books; writers of both sexes well knew that powerful rhymes seldom endure without the reinforcement of sturdy binding” (Canadian Women in Print 69). The important archival work Early and Peterman do in their 2007 Broadview edition of Crawford’s story, Winona: or, the Foster Sisters, also works to counter this misconception of Crawford as a timid and isolated artist. They remind us, for example, that by 1873 Crawford had won a national story competition, her name was included by the Montreal The Favorite as one of its leading contributors, and her work was also appearing regularly in the popular American magazine, Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper.

Not only was Crawford considered a talented writer, she was also a careful and consistent self-advocate with regard to her work. The extent to which she was determined to earn fair compensation for her submissions to various periodicals could be seen as early as 1873 when she sued the publishers of the Favorite and The Hearthstone after they failed to award her the 500 dollar prize they owed her for a story competition she had won.43 Although she had been a regular contributor to these journals, she stopped publishing her poems with them when their publishers failed to produce the agreed upon compensation. Crawford clearly was willing to work only with those publishers whom she could trust; her longstanding relationship with Robertson and the

43 See Early and Peterman for as full an account of the case as is possible based on the primary documents that remain.
Telegram suggests this was one such relationship. Although there is no remaining correspondence between Crawford and her publishers that might indicate just how much she made from her Telegram poems, given the importance of monetary remuneration to her (she had no other income than that from her writing), she must have benefitted financially. We cannot know just how much Crawford was paid for each poem she saw published in the paper, as evidence in general of what women writers earned for their literary work, especially in newspapers, is scant. Gerson suggests, however, that women writers could at least hope to achieve a level of equity with their male counterparts that they could not achieve in other fields of work: “Rates for literary products were based on reputation rather than explicitly on gender. Even though women were implicitly excluded from the academic and political networks and honours that conferred a portion of an author’s literary capital, writing offered a fairer chance to achieve economic equality than teaching, where a woman was lucky to earn half the salary of a man” (Canadian Women in Print 84). Given the immense popularity of the Telegram and Robertson’s financial success, it is reasonable to assume that the paper’s compensation for literary work was comparable to that of the literary magazines.

44 Susan Coultrap-McQuin characterizes this kind of relationship as that between writer and Gentleman Publisher and she discusses how important the dynamics of this relationship were for women writers especially.
45 Again, evidence of rates of pay largely comes from literary magazines: “the Youth’s Companion usually paid William Wilfred Campbell $10 or $15 a poem, a rate consistent with the $10, $12, or $15 paid to L.M. Montgomery, Isabel Ecclestone Mackay, and Marjorie Pickthall over the next two decades. At the Canadian Magazine, as with most periodicals, rates were variable and likely negotiable. For one year (1898-99) their highest paid contributor was Joanna E. Wood, who received $12 for each instalment of ‘A Daughter of Witches.’ However, this was less than the amount previously paid for a serial novel by Scottish author Ian MacLaren (whose ‘Kate Carnegie’ cost up to $19 per instalment, depending on length) or for John George Bourinot’s series on the ‘Makers of the Dominion of Canada’ ($16.66 per chapter), or the $25 per poem that William Henry Drummond commanded” (Gerson, Canadian Women in Print 84).
More important perhaps than what she made from her Telegram poems, was the audience they allowed Crawford to establish. Despite the failure of Malcolm’s Katie, Old Spookses’ Pass, and Other Poems, and despite her significant and persistent financial struggles, evidence from the Telegram underscores the idea that Crawford was certainly successful in terms of the reputation she held with readers. This would have been an important achievement for Crawford at a time when many writers used their periodical publishing as a way to build an audience before turning to monograph publishing.\(^46\)

Crawford published more than fifty poems in the Evening Telegram between 1880 and her death in 1887, a poetic output far greater over the course of these seven years than two of the regular “professional” male contributors, Robert Awde and John Imrie. Although they each did have careers outside of their writing (Awde was health inspector for the city of Toronto and Imrie was a printer), both men had established reputations as poets and apart from the writing they did for periodicals, both men had successfully published their own poetry collections. Crawford’s prominence in the Telegram, the paper that had the largest readership in the city outside of the national Globe, exceeds them both. Not only did the paper publish a significant amount of her original work, it printed a very favourable review of Old Spookses’ Pass, reprinted another positive review from the London Spectator and even printed a notice of a new work that was forthcoming in the Globe. The Telegram’s obituary for Crawford after her premature death in 1887 describes her as “one of the best known of Canadian writers” and suggests she had “already made her mark in the world of literature” (Monday February 14, 1887). The

\(^{46}\) Gerson uses the example of travel writer Emily Murphy and shows that women journalists, especially, used the newspaper to attract a strong following which could later result in considerable book sales.
Telegram also furnishes some evidence of readers’ responses to Crawford. Her poem, “The Rose of a Nation’s Thanks,” which first appeared June 11 1885 was reprinted on February 1887 at readers’ requests.47

Although she also published elsewhere, Toronto was a niche Crawford was intent on exploiting. As it did for Elizabeth Cuyler, Crowquill, Toronto Girl and many others, the city of Toronto could serve as muse for Crawford, especially in the early 1880s when her work first started to appear in the Telegram. “The City Tree,” published September 4, 1880 and “September in Toronto,” published September 15, 1883 are two good examples. When they are read chronologically, her Telegram poems become increasingly concerned not with landscape, the natural world, or myth, but with current events. One event in particular, the Northwest Rebellion of 1885, seems to have captured Crawford’s imagination, as indeed it captured the imaginations of the Telegram’s readers. The paper that year was replete with news of the Métis uprising in the northwest and the battles that ensued, and it punctuated its reporting with vivid illustrations and maps of Manitoba and Saskatchewan. All of this made for an attractive paper and enticing reading. Correspondingly, much of the poetry during this time also was focused on the rebellion, especially the volunteers and militia who largely made up Canada’s forces. “The Soldier’s Shield,” by Esperance (Alice Maud Ardagh) appeared on April 9, “Muster for the North-West” by Crowquill appeared on May 1, “Lines on the Northwest Rebellion” by T.H.T. appeared on May 23, “Our Volunteers” by Mrs. JW Cleveland who was, the editor’s note informs us, “at Saskatoon with the wounded,” appeared on June 8

47 An anecdote exists that after her death an anonymous reader placed a single rose on Crawford’s grave with a note attached that read “the rose of a nation’s thanks.”
and “Batoche: Charge of the Grenadiers” by G.C. appeared on June 19. All of these poems were original, written for the *Telegram*.

Although the situation in the northwest might not at first seem a Toronto issue, in fact, as Peter Goheen argues, Torontonians became intensely interested in Louis Riel and his rebellion after Thomas Scott, a prominent Orangeman, was killed at Red River. Toronto in the late-nineteenth century was dominated by the Protestant Orange Order in terms of both business and politics and so, as Goheen explains, it was not surprising that an outburst of anti-Catholic feeling emerged in the city following Scott’s death, and the city came out decidedly against Riel (92). Crawford herself dedicated considerable creative energy to the Northwest Rebellion which, again, coincided with the *Telegram* readers’ voracious appetite for anything relating to the military happenings in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Between April and July 1885, at least six of these poems appeared in quick succession: “The Red Cross Corps” (April 20), “To Gladstone” (May 4), “The Rose of a Nation’s Thanks” (June 11), “Nurse Miller” (June 24), “Songs for the Soldiers” (July 17) and “The Gallant Lads in Green” (July 22). All of these poems generally reflect the popular anti-Riel sentiment of the city, but Crawford also reveals a consistent feminine viewpoint in many of them that implicitly complicates the simple hero-worship we see in poems by other writers on the same topic. In “Songs for the Soldiers,” for example, she offers the viewpoint of one soldier’s mother, one’s wife, and another’s sweetheart. All of these women wait with great pride and joy for their men to return. There is an ironic shadow cast on these sections of the poem from the beginning, however, as the speaker qualifies “Joy’s ample voice” with “holy / Grief” (12-16). The focus of the poem overall is not on the sacrifice made by the soldiers, but the sacrifice
made by the women who suffer in waiting for them to come home safely. The poem ends, for each woman, with the anticipated moment of return just a breath away, but it does not actually show the reunion – a subtle reminder of those women for whom no happy reunion would occur.

Waiting wives and mothers are also the focus in “The Rose of a Nation’s Thanks,” one of Crawford’s most popular poems:

A welcome! Oh yes, ‘tis a kindly word, but
why will they plan and prate
Of feasting and speeches and such small things,
while the wives and mothers wait?
Plan as ye will, and do as ye will, but think of
the hunger and thirst
In the hearts that wait, and do as ye will, but
lend us our laddies first!
Why, what would ye have? There is not a lad
that treads in the gallant ranks
Who does not already bear on his breast the
Rose of a Nation’s Thanks
[…]
A welcome! there’s a doubt if the lads would
stand like stone in their steady line,
When a babe held high on a dear wife’s hand,
or the stars that swim and shine
In a sweetheart’s eyes, or a mother’s smile
flashed far in the welded crowd,
Or a father’s proud voice, half sob and half
cheer, cried on a son aloud.
Oh! the billows of waiting hearts that swelled
would sweep from the martial ranks
The gallant boys who bear on their breasts the
Rose of a Nation’s Thanks! […]

In this poem we see a distinct break between two kinds of experiences: the government’s official celebrations and ceremonies are at odds with, and actually seem perverse when considered alongside, the “hunger and thirst” of the waiting women. It is important to remember the number of readers who would have scanned the Telegram to find news of their loved ones and, indeed, read with trepidation the casualty lists the paper published (see Saturday April 25, 1885, for example). Crawford’s poem “Nurse Miller” goes a step further in giving voice to feminine experience by representing those women who were, themselves, actively involved in the country’s military campaign. Unfortunately, this poem, published in the Telegram on June 24, 1885, is one of the several I have found that have yet to be included in bibliographies of Crawford’s work.

Just as her Northwest Rebellion poems can be reconsidered in terms of Crawford’s identity as a Toronto poet, so too can her many Irish poems. Crawford was of Irish descent which might partly explain her interest in the issue of Irish land reform and the deteriorating conditions in which many Irish people lived. Evidence from

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48 See Appendix C.
contemporary fiction and non-fiction also suggests that Canadians in general were concerned with the situation in Ireland. But Toronto, in particular, had good reason for this interest. By 1860, there were more people living in Toronto of Irish birth than of English birth. In fact, Goheen characterizes Toronto at this point in its history as an Irish city: “The early characterization of the town as an Irish city was to have lasting consequences in attitudes developed and long maintained during subsequent years when conditions were much changed” (89). One of those lasting consequences, up to and beyond the turn of the century, was the strong influence of the Orange Order in Toronto, an organization founded in Ireland and largely supported in Canada by those of Irish Protestant descent. The many poems Crawford published in the Telegram on Irish themes or using Irish dialect, “Erin’s Warning,” “My Irish Love,” “Mavourneen,” “My Ain Bonnie Lass O’ the Glen,” among others, contribute to our ability to read her as speaking as much for Toronto as for Ireland.

Whether she was writing about troops in the northwest, an Irish love-story or the natural world, Crawford’s work resonated with the Telegram’s readers and with other writers in the city. Mary M. Shaw’s admiration of Crawford is more than evident in the tribute she published shortly after Crawford’s death titled “In Memoriam:”

_Isabella Valancy Crawford, died February 12th, 1887._

One night a chord of full rich sound

Broke, O, how suddenly!

A shiver passed o’er all the harp –

Its music ceased to be.

No other harp, we sadly cried,
Can pleasure now afford,
To us all other music sounds
In sorrowful discord.

The sky was studded o’er with stars,
Fresh radiance each did wear,
In a clear place one shone alone,
“Bright and particular,”
Full of soft glows, exquisite shades,
And ever varied light.
But as we gazed, the star grew pale,
And vanished from our sight.

So hast thou ceased to sing, sweet bird,
Thy voice, once heard afar,
Is hushed for aye; thou hast grown pale,
Thou, O, bright morning star!
The gods hath loved thee: thou hast died
So young in thy dear fame,
Yet shall the fruits of thy sweet mind
Perpetuate thy name.
Thou’lt live for aye in memories green,
While “Malcolm’s Katie” loves
And trusts, and waits to wed her “Max,”
And “Ulnar’s Chief” removes
“Young Mary’s” fears, and clasps her close
To his broad shielding breast,
While Erin’s exile finds a home
In the far, golden West.

We’ll smile as human nature’s flow
“Old Spenses” home-made creed
We’ll follow through “Old Spookses’ Pass”
And see the wild stampede,
And hear the roar of thousand hoofs,--
The herd’s hard, lab’ring breath,
And see the ghostly midnight “pard”
Who saved them from their death!

Sleep on, fair dreamer, take thy rest,
Earth’s night is darkling still:
Sleep, with pale feet toward the dawn;
It is the kingly will.
Safe, in the master hands of God,
Around, beneath, above,
As people strew thy name with flow’rs
Of a fond nation’s love!

It is interesting, first of all, that the poet-speaker here speaks for the collective (“To us all other music sounds / in sorrowful discord”), characterizing Crawford as a musician among a group of musicians who mourn her death while celebrating her work. If she speaks for the artistic community at the beginning of the poem, Shaw gestures towards Crawford’s more public presence at the end of the poem when she talks of the “fond nation’s love.” Even more significantly, throughout the poem Shaw makes reference to some of Crawford’s individual works, referring to the names of characters or particular narrative situations in her poems. In doing so, Shaw assumes readers will recognize them, be familiar with the plot and characters of Crawford’s work. Shaw thus underscores Crawford’s position as public poet, speaking to the place Crawford’s work had in the poplar culture of the day, and, specifically in the literary milieu of Toronto.

My reading of the Telegram shows that Crawford was able to achieve a level of success through her relationship with the Telegram, but her simultaneous struggles to expand her career and her readership complicate the picture of nineteenth-century publishing in Canada and, indeed, the picture of “success.” The newspaper was, I suggest, instrumental in establishing Crawford in the literary milieu of Toronto, of generating an interested reading audience, and providing her with a venue in which she could publish her work, and receive compensation for it, relatively quickly. Although these were the significant benefits of publishing her work in the daily newspaper – and the reason the paper offered such a wonderful opportunity for so many women writers – the newspaper may also have presented limits to the way Crawford wanted to shape her career. Crawford’s ability to cater to the Telegram’s readership by writing material that
was of particular interest to them shows how well she was able to exploit the opportunities for writers made available by the newspaper press and the Toronto-centric *Telegram* in particular. She also tried to place her work in other Canadian venues. In December 1886, just two months before her death, two notices appeared in the *Telegram* advertising the upcoming publication of her new novel *A Little Bacchante or Some Lost Sheep* in the *Globe*. Robert Alan Burns suggests that Crawford’s attempt to place her material with the *Globe* was the result of that paper’s higher prestige. This might have been the case; certainly, the *Telegram* had a reputation as a penny-paper, a reputation the *Globe* did not share. Beyond the tone of the papers, the significant difference between them was the geography of their readers. Crawford may well have had her eye on the significantly larger, national audience that belonged to *Globe*, to help her expand her readership beyond Toronto.

Another challenge Crawford had to navigate in her relationship with the *Telegram* was the dual task of establishing a reputation with her peers, while also writing for profit. The *Telegram* offered some opportunity with regard to the latter, but may have placed challenges on the former. Early and Peterman suggest that “straitened circumstances affected the pattern of her writing from the beginning until the end of her career. From at least 1872 until her death in 1887, she cultivated two distinct facilities: an ability to produce short and long stories for mass-market fiction ‘papers,’ and her literary talent as a poet” (12). While I think Crawford was intent upon developing her talent and wanted to be taken seriously as a writer, I think Early and Peterman are mistaken to suggest a clear distinction between the stories she produced for the mass-market and her poetry. Again, her pattern of publishing in Canada and her relationship with *The Telegram* (few
things could be considered more mass-market than the penny-papers) show that her poetry was not any less intended for profit. In fact, given the volatile nature of the publishing world in Canada in mid-nineteenth century, her poetry publishing in Canada was likely one of the more consistent sources of income, and in an era when countless magazines and newspapers were starting and then folding almost daily, it would have made good sense for her to foster her connection with the successful *Telegram*. Crawford’s awareness of her audience, and her strategizing, are as evident in her poetry as in her fiction writing.

Whatever success she achieved through the newspaper press in Toronto, it is clear that by the time of her premature death in 1887, Crawford was not yet satisfied with her career. A letter Crawford wrote to the editors of a new Canadian journal, *Arcturus*, shortly before her death has received much traction in contemporary scholarship:

I feel that I should wish to introduce myself to your notice as a possible contributor to the pages of ARCTURUS. Of course the possibility is remote, as by some chance no contribution of mine has even been accepted by any first-class Canadian literary journal. I have contributed to the Mail and Globe, and won some very kind words from eminent critics, but have been quietly “sat upon” by the High Priests of Canadian periodical literature. I am not very seriously injured by the process, and indeed there have lately been signs of relenting on the part of the powers that be, as I was offered an extended notice of my book in the columns of the --- and the ---. This proposal I declined (I suppose injudiciously) as coming in late in the day, and at the heels of warm words from higher literary authorities.
In articulating her dissatisfaction with contemporary literary culture and her inability to this point to be accepted by what she calls those “High Priests of Canadian periodical literature,” Crawford reveals how, in the nineteenth-century, success was a relative term. Crawford had achieved popular success, but there seems another kind of success to which she aspired that she could not attain through the newspaper. Given the difficulties Crawford faced in placing her work in some of the Canadian publications she sought out, and given the complexities of, and the variety of, the models of “success” she had open to her, W.J. Keith’s dismissal of her as “someone who panders to a popular taste that she despises in the interests of personal profit” seems too dismissive (436).

What we know of Crawford’s career – her determination to make a living as an author in the city of Toronto and her assertiveness when it came to dealing with publishers – offers insight into how women writers were rethinking the traditional terms by which they defined themselves as authors. If, for much of the nineteenth century, women writers located their authority in their gender, writing about those subjects that were seen as appropriately belonging to women’s areas of expertise with little acknowledgement of the economic implications of their writing, towards the turn of the century they seemed more able and willing to explode these boundaries. Although this change becomes especially evident in the *Telegram* in the last decade of the nineteenth century, we can see the traces of its beginning as early as 1880 in Ella Shafer’s poem, “The Sword and the Pen” written for the *Telegram* and published on Friday, May 14, 1880:

The sword is feared, is mighty, when drawn with iron will;

But though the sword is mighty, the pen is mightier still.
Time was, in darkened ages, when only might made right,
When earth was filled with carnage, with chaos and affright.

[...] What would we know of hero, of martyr, or of sage?
Of life of saint or prophet, who lit some by-gone age?
Or what of men of prowess, whose names have shaken earth?
Or what of olden precepts and thoughts of golden worth?

[...] Had not the pen of genius transcribed from age to age,
And left their bright examples to glow on history’s page.
Had not the gifted poets poured forth their gifts in song,
And sent their sounding peans [sic] the echoing years along.

[...] The sword has conquered kingdoms, the world yields to the pen,
And the minds of humble poets bequeath rich thoughts to men;
Then use the pen, and rightly, ye seekers after fame,
And write but what will brightly adorn a poet’s name.49

Throughout the poem, Shafer takes for granted that the act of writing poetry is an all-consuming, even divinely inspired, occupation; the poet is a poet first and foremost.

There are no intimations, for example, that the poet is also a mother or a wife, roles which might inform her voice or her subject matter, as is so often the case in the other poems I have discussed. If anything, in fact, in aligning the pen with the sword, and in

49 See Appendix C.
listing the heroes, the “kings and princes,” throughout history that the pen celebrates, poetry is figured in masculine terms. But the definition of poet Shafer offers is still complicated. On one hand, the poet does seem divinely inspired as “gifted poets” receive “the pen of genius transcribed from age to age.” In this sense the poet is helpless in being moved to create. One the other hand, although she is careful to caution writers toward subject matter that properly befits a “poet’s name,” she acknowledges the poet’s own personal, even selfish, motivation to write when she addresses “ye seekers after fame.” Shafer thus merges two potentially contradictory definitions: the poet as someone who writes because she is inspired to do so, and the poet who writes because she is financially motivated to do so. In a significant, if subtle, justification of commercial interest, the poet who seeks fame is unproblematically placed in the line of “grand inspired writers.”

If “The Sword and the Pen” makes some justification for pursuing a literary career for its economic potential, “Judy’s” “The Poet’s Confession,” printed in the Telegram on Thursday May 7, 1895 blatantly “confesses” the poet’s interest in writing for profit:

With my nose to the grindstone of duty,

I sing you a song for a fee,

And though it may not be a beauty,

‘Twill make little matter to me.

For I sing for the sake of the money,

And not for the sake of the art,

And though the songs may not be funny,

‘Twill still make an editor “part.”
I will stir you to amorous passion,
Though chaste as Diana myself;
Or I’ll bawl in the patriot’s fashion,
‘Tis purely a question of pelf.
I will e’en sing a hymn if you’re willing,
Devoutly as any divine,
And the charge by the time is a shilling –
‘Tis cheap at a shilling a line.

When I write about wine I am witty,
But wittier still, as I think,
When I knock off a temperance ditty
In order to pay for a drink.
I can sing of the joys of the “beano,”
I can sing of the choir boy who died;
Though at these I am not very keen-o
Still I’m certain I could if I tried.

So give your poetical order,
You have not a moment to lose;
You will find me a faithful recorder
Of any emotion you choose.
With my nose to the grindstone of duty,
I’ll turn the thing out in a trice,
And if it should not be a beauty,
Well that’s the result of the price.

This speaker, coming fifteen years after Shafer, is explicit about her inspiration (“I sing for the sake of the money, / And not for the sake of the art”) and she approaches her trade just as any other worker, with her “nose to the grindstone of duty.” Judy goes further than challenging traditional, even romantic notions of the poet, and challenges the traditional ways women have defined their gender and, by extension, framed their personae as writers. When she says that she pays for her drinks with her “temperance ditt[ies],” she undermines women’s moral authority, particularly their involvement in the temperance movement, trivializes their poetic achievements (calling them “ditties”), and questions their claim to writing out of concern for the moral and spiritual lives of those around them rather than for profit – this all in one fell swoop. The newspaper framing Judy’s poem reinforces her interest in profit as, again, it was the periodical press in which women more easily found their work published and the venue that more reliably promised financial returns for poetry specifically. The “professional” poet in Judy’s terms is now that woman who writes for money, and not necessarily from inspiration.

An anonymous poem printed in the fall of 1895 complements Judy’s poem by exposing the craft of poetry, not as work that is creatively inspired, but as work that is deliberately made to fit a particular formula, and be profitable as a result:

“How to Make Poetry”

In a skit of the modern minor poet, just published in London, appear these directions: --
You take a dewy orchard
In a rhythm rather trickey.
And you fill it with the piping
Of a very fluent dicky;
You find a lawny level
Which the sunlight softly dapples,
And you gape in admiration
Of the cherries and the apples.

You whistle well and loudly
To attract your homespun Laura,
Who makes a passing pretty,
If a countrified Aurora:
Her neck is of the roundest,
And her cheeks are dearly silky;
And underneath her laces
There’s a honeyed heart and milky.

You mention Warwick woodlands
And of course the happy dairy;
And if there were not Laura
There would certainly be Mary;
You betray the maid on paper,
And dispatch to London ninnies,

Who pay for veins and velvet

The accommodating guineas. (Tuesday October 8, 1895)

The distinctions between different kinds of success, financial and otherwise, that come to light when we consider the careers of writers such as Isabella Valancy Crawford is confronted explicitly here: there is no question that the poet parodied in this poem is “minor” because of the formulaic and derivative qualities of his work; and yet, this “minor” poet clearly has much to gain financially from those “London ninnies” who reward the work with decent pay. Like Judy, this anonymous author’s attitude is tongue-in-cheek, but the fact is that many nineteenth-century writers found this contradiction frustrating and even debilitating as they worked to develop and sustain a writing career, particularly those writers who, like Crawford, had no choice but to pay attention to the “accommodating guineas.” Carole Gerson uses Crawford as an example to make the important point that women, especially, felt pressure to produce work that would pay well: “Unlike the male poets with whom she is historically grouped, [Crawford] had no recourse to the security of a civil service position like Lampman and Scott, or the safety net of teaching and/or editorial work like Roberts and Carman. Nor, like W.W. Campbell, did she have access to the political connections that, according to a prominent member of the literary establishment, constituted the only ‘road to preferment for a literary man’ in Canada” (73). Other good comparisons might be drawn between Crawford and John Imrie and Robert Awde, whose experiences perhaps more closely resembled Crawford’s. They, like the other men Gerson lists, had well-paying jobs outside of their work as poets.
The reference to “London ninnies” at the end of this poem also points towards a shift in the relationship between publishers and writers that may have had significant implications for women. These and other poems published in the *Telegram* suggest that towards the turn of the century, the act of writing as a source of income became a fact that women writers themselves were less hesitant to address; there is a new sense in this writing of the poet as a particular kind of producer and of the poem itself as commodity. At the same time, it became more acceptable for publishers to be honest about their financial motivations. Because she is able to produce what publishers want, Judy, the author of “The Poet’s Confession,” is able to get her price. But the work she performs—the product she delivers—and her reasons for doing this work, have strayed very far from her literary predecessors who rooted their poetic voices in a sense of their own moral authority that was grounded in their gender and who claimed their work for the public good. Although not explicit about it in her writing, Isabella Valancy Crawford clearly understood the business of publishing as well as Judy did and used the opportunities open to her for asserting her poetic voice.

For Crawford and for many women writers, the newspaper was one such opportunity. As I have shown in my discussion of the *Acadian Recorder* and the Montreal *Star*, women writers already had found the periodical press to be a venue that accommodated them, a place more than any other in which they were able to assert themselves as authors. The unique role the daily newspaper, and the *Telegram* in particular, played in the life of the city towards the turn of the century, allowed women new opportunities for civic engagement and for self-expression. Paul Rutherford suggests that by the 1890s (and earlier in the case of the *Telegram*) “the centre of nearly
every newspaper’s ‘map’ was the home city itself” (135). By engaging with the city in their poetry, and in publishing that poetry in the newspaper, women effectively wrote themselves onto the map of the city, reflecting the extent to which they were in real ways participating more in municipal politics and civic improvement outside of their writing. Speaking for the city in the pages of the newspaper in the 1880s and 1890s allowed some women to expand their subject matter, make some money, and, importantly, expand their definitions of themselves as authors as they did so.
Conclusion:
Change, Consistency and Community

The fifty years between 1850 and 1900 were remarkably transformative for women writers in Canada and this is nowhere more evident than in the poetry that appeared in the pages of the daily newspaper. Women embraced this particular kind of publishing at this particular time for many reasons, but the fact of the newspaper’s role in public life – its entrenched position as a forum for debate and a place for civic engagement – helped define the poetry and fiction that it printed. Reading women’s poetry within the context of the newspaper itself – with regard to the newspaper’s role in the larger publishing industry in Canada, but also with regard to the nature of the content the newspaper offered to readers – is therefore important and productive. When we read women’s literary production this way we can identify how the newspaper facilitated women’s writing careers, and we can also identify the changing ways women writers themselves considered their place in literary culture, how they conceived of themselves as participants in public discourse and how they achieved that participation. It is for these reasons, if not for the sheer volume of women’s writing that was published and printed there, that the newspaper deserves substantial consideration within the context of nineteenth-century literary culture.

Because I have been interested in tracking the changing ways women have defined themselves as authors in their literary publishing and the various ways they have accessed public discourse through their creative writing, I have necessarily put emphasis on the narrative that emerges when we read chronologically through fifty years of the *Acadian Recorder*, the Montreal *Star* and the Toronto *Evening Telegram*. But it would
be wrong to suggest, for example, that although we see women engaging in municipal politics and city life more fully in the 1880s and 1890s, as I show in Chapter Three, that there were not also women writing in these years who continued to draw on the sentimental aesthetics and the discourses of moral feminism to shape their writing and their personae that is so evident in writing from the 1850s. In Chapters One and Two I suggest that the theme of motherhood was revived in women’s writing in the 1870s, complicating any narrative that depends on discrete categories as a way of organizing literary history.

The period I study, then, is marked as much by continuity as it is by change, and one of the most significant consistencies throughout is how remarkably productive women writers’ relationship with the newspaper was. By 1900, however, the newspaper apparently stopped playing the same role for these writers it once did. Newspapers’ interest in women did not wane; if anything, strategies for targeting female readers (and consumers) intensified. And so, for example, where a page or half-page might earlier have been dedicated to domestic issues, full sections now with recipes, fashions and so on became common. Literature itself, and poetry in particular, became less prominent in the weekly editions, being moved instead to the Saturday editions. As Paul Rutherford notes, these Saturday editions looked more like magazines and were meant for leisurely reading for the whole family. Moving poetry away from the news and editorials that made up the rest of the paper arguably affected the way it was read, its apparent relevance to these other contributions became less apparent.

There are several explanations for the decline of women’s poetry in the newspaper. One is that by the turn of the century the business of publishing was
changing. Susan Coultrap-McQuin traces the unique author-publisher relationship that worked to enable many women writers in their careers, a relationship in which the publisher performed the role of “Gentleman Publisher.” It was a relationship that worked two ways: “Their emphasis on personal relationships, noncommercial aims and moral guardianship, combined with the economic prospects of the industry, made it possible for women to work comfortably in a business that some claimed was far outside their sphere” (28). As the “Gentleman Publisher” became, over time, the “Businessman Publisher,” the literary market experienced a shift towards a masculinized culture that valued, and fostered, aggression and competition in literary professionals (198). This culture was far less inviting for women, and Coultrap-McQuin suggests there is good evidence to show that in fact the shift she identifies speaks to a pattern of “edging women out” (198) that would become increasingly pronounced into the twentieth century.

If the business of publishing was changing, the newspaper itself was also changing – and in similar ways. Although the daily newspaper in Canada retained its position at the centre of public life in Canadian cities, its content and character became more implicated in business and commerce. While even in the early nineteenth century newspaper editors and publishers were concerned with profit – their embracing of popular journalism in the second half of the nineteenth-century attests to that – newspapers in the twentieth century were increasingly corporatized, a process Minko Sotiron identifies as beginning in the 1890s. He argues that by the turn of the century, the new corporatization of newspapers, which he calls the “new popular press,” saw the appearance of newspaper chains for the first time, increased commercial bias in news reporting, increased reliance on advertising revenue, less competition, as well as the
disappearance of partisanship. Both Rutherford and Sotiron point out that along with, and partly because of, these changes, the journalist began to rival the editor as readers’ primary interpreter of the events and issues communicated to them.

This rise in the importance of the journalist did have an impact on women writers. Marjorie Lang identifies the 1890s as a period of “flourishing” for female journalists in Canada. It might be that if women had less opportunity to express themselves through poetry in the newspapers, they found an opportunity to do so through journalism. Female journalists brought an attractive currency to newspapers. Lang explains, “The woman reporter could be expected to take a sympathetic view of her community, to enhance local colour and elevate the pitch of drama of ordinary events” (80). Just like the poets who, decades earlier, grounded their authorial personae in their gender as a way of justifying their poetic expression, many of the women journalists Lang discusses also used their gender as a strategy for getting their columns into print: “While male news writers were to hone their facts and write crisp copy, women journalists could indulge in ‘fine writing,’ a term of abuse in the newsroom. It was extremely rare for a male journalist to have a by-line; in contrast, newspapers promoted their women journalists’ names” (87).

Although many women writers in the late nineteenth-century were moving away from traditional discourses of femininity, ironically, the female journalists of the end of the nineteenth-century often implicitly re-engaged these discourses – or were expected to – even while they simultaneously embraced the identity of the New Woman.

In considering why and how women’s poetry had a less prominent place in newspapers in Canada after 1900, it is impossible to ignore the significant changes in literary culture that were more broadly undermining women’s writing – and women
writers – into the twentieth century. Coultrap-McQuin suggests that literary culture in the twentieth century was increasingly masculinized in terms of the business of publishing; Suzanne Clark goes further to show how literary modernism worked to gender ‘serious’ literature male while equating women’s writing with the frivolous and the commercial. On the first page of her book *Sentimental Modernism: Women Writers and the Revolution of the Word* she unequivocally articulates the implications of the advent of modernism for women’s literary history:

Modernism inaugurated a reversal of values which emphasized erotic desire, not love; anarchic rupture and innovation rather than the conventional appeals of sentimental language. Modernism reversed the increasing influence of women’s writing, discrediting the literary past and especially that sentimental history.

This is, of course, not to suggest that there were not many important female modernist writers finding success in the literary marketplace – in the United States, as Clark demonstrates, and in Canada too. And it is important to recall here that many of the women publishing their literary work in newspapers in the last decade or two of the nineteenth century were themselves moving away from sentimentality and finding new modes of expression that fit with a modernist aesthetic. But, as Clark argues, the advent of modernism did not just confirm the death of sentimentality, that mode of writing most associated with women’s literature, it also posed significant challenges for women writers through an anti-sentimentality that entailed “a contemptuous treatment of women, who had to struggle both internally and externally with that contempt” (5).

I have argued that women writers in Canada used poetry as a way of engaging in public discourse, of addressing those issues that concerned and affected them, of drawing
attention to the other ways in which they were engaged with politics and culture in the second-half of the nineteenth century. The newspaper was an effective, even strategic, way of achieving these things because it was already inextricably wrapped up with people’s daily lives and local concerns. After the turn of the century, however, modernist writers and intellectuals largely looked with suspicion on literature that was connected to the domestic, the sensible, the every day. As Clark suggests, in separating the aesthetic from the popular, “the modernist revolution turned away from ordinary language and everyday life” (3). This, again, would have serious consequences for women, such as those considered here, who were concerned to use literature precisely as a way of connecting with “everyday life.” The increased value placed on poetry that turned away from or escaped the quotidian in the modernist period may work to explain both why poetry in general occupied a less prominent place in daily newspapers and why, when they did contribute to newspapers, women increasingly did so through journalism. Again, journalism seems to have been one kind of writing in which women’s gender could still be an asset.

Rethinking nineteenth-century women’s literary publishing in the ways I have tried to do with this project suggests there is still significant work to do theorizing periodicals in general – and the newspaper in particular – as a publishing genre. As critics who work with periodicals readily acknowledge, the periodical, despite its presence through centuries of cultural history and indeed its significant role in shaping culture, has been undervalued and under-studied as a genre. Margaret Beetham suggests that this is because of the many kinds of periodicals (newspaper, journals, magazines) and because of the difficulty of defining the text when it comes to a literary work published in
a periodical. The process of history has worked to stabilize as much as possible what is characteristically un-stable about the periodical as a form: periodical fiction is turned into novels; poetry is collected into volumes. And so, for example, we read Isabella Valancy Crawford’s poems together in a collection, not individually in the newspaper in which they were first published. Beetham argues that these changes actually amount to translations:

I have already suggested that translations from periodical to volume always involve a redefinition of the text, even if – most unusually – every word is the same in the two versions. The changes of format from serialized to volume novel or from single article to collection are significant because they always signal the rescue of the text. This has two aspects: rescue into the book form, which is physically more stable, and – equally important – rescue from the periodical into a recognized genre, ie. fiction or poetry or essay. (25)

She also suggests, importantly, that “rescuing” texts from the periodical form in effect undermines the importance of the periodical itself as a literary genre (25).

Throughout this project I have worked to show what can be gained when we resist the temptation to export women’s literary production from its original context and when we, instead, read it in the pages of the newspapers as it first appeared. I argue that when we do this, we can see the extent to which women used poetry to engage with the world around them. There is something else that is revealed by reading women’s poetry this way, however, and that is an outline of a larger community of women writers working in similar ways to make their poetic voices heard. Of course, it is difficult to establish the kinds of relationships that existed between specific individual writers, but
taken together, the voices that appear in the paper suggest that these women were
engaging with one another as they were engaging with their readers. The similar details
in the poetry of T.T. and S.S. in the *Acadian Recorder* in the 1850s, the remarkable
echoes of Isabella Valancy Crawford in the work of Mary M. Shaw in the *Telegram* in
the 1880s, suggest that the newspaper was also an important meeting place for these
women themselves in terms of their creative projects. Less important than whether they
in fact knew one another personally is the opportunity the newspaper offered for them to
see one another’s work and so feel enabled by a community of women equally invested in
making their words public. Thinking about nineteenth-century women writers in this way
– as participants in a broader creative community, rather than as individual authors of
individual works – can help us see some of the ways women were inspired to write, the
support and the models they found for doing so, and how they worked together to shape a
figure of the poet that could accommodate them.
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Appendix A: Selected Poems Printed in the *Acadian Recorder*

“Make Your Home Beautiful”  
*Acadian Recorder* October 13, 1860

Make your home beautiful – bring to it flowers;  
Plant them around you to bud and to bloom;  
Let them give life to your loneliest hours –  
Let them bring life to enliven your gloom;  
Make your own world – one that never has sorrowed,  
Of music and sunshine, and gold summer air,  
A home world whose forehead care never has furrowed  
And whose cheek of bright beauty shall ever be fair.

Make your home beautiful – weave round its portal  
Wreaths of the jasmine, and delicate sprays  
Of red-fruited woodbine, with joy immortal,  
That blesses and brightens wherever it strays;  
Gather the blossoms, too – one little flower,  
Varied verbena, or sweet mignonette,  
Still may bring bloom to your desolate bower,  
Still may be something to love and to pet.

Make your home beautiful – gather the roses,  
That hoard up the sunshine with exquisite art;  
Perchance they may pour, as your darkness closes,  
That soft summer sunshine down into your heart!  
If you can do so, O! make it an Eden  
Of beauty and gladness – remember ‘tis wise:  
‘Till teach you to long for that home you are needing,  
That heaven of beauty beyond the blue skies.

Make your home beautiful – sure, ‘tis a duty –  
Call up your little ones; teach them to walk,  
Hand in hand, with the wandering angel of beauty,  
Encourage their spirits with Nature to talk,  
Gather them round you, and let them be learning  
Lessons that drop from the delicate wings  
Of the bird and the butterfly – ever returning  
To Him who has made all these beautiful things.

Make home a hive; where all beautiful feelings  
Cluster like bees and their honey-dew bring;  
Make it a temple of holy revealings,  
And love its bright angel with “shadowy wing.”
Then shall it be, when afar on life’s billow,
Wherever your tempest-tost children are flung,
They will long for the shades of the home-weeping willow,
And sing the sweet song which their mother sung.

“Fireside Hint” anonymous
_Acadian Recorder_ February 10, 1855

It is pleasant to sit with one’s wife,
By the light of a brilliant taper,
Whilst one’s dear companion for life
Looks over the family paper—
And now and then reads a song or a story,
A marriage, or death, a tragedy glory.

To feel that one’s nothing to do
But sit and philosophize gravely,
Each murderous deed to eschew—
Applauding the editor bravely
For his tact and his talent, his taste and his shears,
Now waking to laughter, now moving to tears.

Oh! happy the man who is blest
With a wife who can tastefully read,
Who will give his newspaper no rest
Till its items have all gone to seed—
Who exclaims now and then, as she picks up the paper,
“My dear, won’t the printer want pay for his paper?”

“Musings” T.T.
_Acadian Recorder_ September 6, 1856

Those happy days are gone,
And I am lonely now,
The blighting hand of care
Is traced upon my brow;
The green woods and the bowers
Despairing, now I fly;
My tender plants and flowers
Neglected, drooping, die.

But still I recollect
The old familiar strain,
And pleasures long gone by
Will yet come back again,
Imagination dwells,
On what is ceased to be:
Those happy days have gone
And thou art lost to me.

“The Rights of Woman” anonymous
*Acadian Recorder* January 19, 1867

The rights of women what are they?
The right to labor, love and pray;
The right to weep with those that weep,
The right to wake when others sleep.

The right to dry the falling tear,
The right to quell the rising fear;
The right to smooth the brow of care.
And whisper comfort to despair.

The right to watch the parting breath,
To sooth and cheer the bed of death;
The right when earthly hopes all fail,
To point to that within the veil.

The right the wanderer to reclaim
To win the lost from paths of shame;
The right to comfort and to bless
The widow and the fatherless.

The right the little ones to guide
In simple faith to Him who died;
With earnest love and gentle praise
To bless and cheer their youthful days.

The right the intellect to train,
And guide the soul to noble aim;
Teach it to rise above earth’s toys,
And wing its flight to heavenly joys.

The right to live for those we love,
The right to die that love to prove;
The right to brighten earthly homes,
With pleasant smiles and gentle tones.
Are these their rights? – then use them well,
Thy silent influence none can tell;
If these are thine, why ask for more?
Thou hast enough to answer for.

“Mother! Watch the Little Feet” anonymous
Acadian Recorder August 1, 1857

Mother! watch the little feet,
Climbing o’er the garden wall,
Bounding through the busy street,
Ranging cellar, shed, and hall;
Never count the moments lost,
Never mind the time it costs,
Little feet will go astray,
Guide them, mother, while you may.

Mother, watch the little hand,
Picking berries by the way,
Making houses in the sand,
Tossing up the fragrant hay.
Never dare the question ask,
“Why to me this heavy task?”
These same little hands may prove
Messengers of light and love.

Mother! watch the little tongue,
Pratting eloquent and wild;
What is said and what is sung,
By the happy, joyous child;
Catch the word while yet unspoken:
Stop the vow while yet unbroken:
This same tongue may yet proclaim
Blessing in the Saviour’s name.

Mother! watch the little heart,
Beating soft and warm for you;
Wholesome lessons now impart;
Keep, O keep that young heart true,
Extricating every weed,
Sowing good and precious seed;
Harvest rich you then may see,
Ripening for eternity.
“Stay With Us” Frances Brown

_Acadian Recorder_ October 6, 1855

How swiftly the bright days are going!
We dreamt of the new-opened leaves,
When some said the roses were blowing,
And now they are binding the sheaves.
On, On! sweeps the march that for ever
The roses and corn-mill restore:
To the hill side, the glen and the river,
They come—but we know them no more.

Sweet Summer-time, grant us yet longer
To shake off the dust of the towns:
Give us time to grown wiser and stronger
By studies in woods and on downs.
Let us see but your skirts in the meadows,
Your smile in the far-away blue;
Till the souls that are dwelling with shadows
Come out to the sunshine and you.

We have not grown rich without reason,
We have not grown poor without hope,
We have not made market and season
The uttermost bounds of our scope.
The lore of the wild flower and fairy
Still charms, as it charmed us in youth;
From mortals our trust learns to vary,
But never from nature and truth.

Perchance we are not what you knew us,
In haunts where the woebine yet climbs;
The cares of the world have come to us,
We have met with hard tasks and hard times.
And, oh! but the lights have waned slowly
Away from the heart and the brain.
Since they left off their faith and their folly
To look after greatness and gain.

We know there is trade in the city, --
We know there is war in the East,
And if neither wealthy nor witty,
We know there are taxes at least.
But morning still purples the highlands,
And suns in a golden light set,
Though our days stand like desolate islands --
Sweet Summer-time, stay with us yet.

“The Light at Home” anonymous
*Acadian Recorder* June 19, 1858

The light at home! How bright it beams
When evening shades around us fall;
And from the lattice far it gleams,
To love, and rest, and comfort all.
When weared [sic] with the toils of day,
And strife for glory, gold or fame,
How sweet to seek the quiet way,
Where loving lips will lisp our name
Around the light of home!

When through the dark and stormy night
The wayward wand’rer homeward flies,
How cheering is the twinkling light,
Which through the forest gloom he spies!
It is the light of home. He feels
That loving hearts will greet him there,
And safely through his bosom steal
The joy and love that banish care
Around the light at home.

The light at home! how still and sweet
It peeps from yonder cottage door,
The weary labourer to greet
When the rough toils of day are o’er!
Sad is the soul that does not know
The blessings that the beams impart,
The cheerful hopes and joys that flow,
And lighten up the heaviest heart
Around the light at home.

“Voice of the Nation” Caroline A. Double
*Acadian Recorder* March 10, 1855

Let, let Old England’s nobles weep
Above the fallen brave,
And think with grief on those true hearts
Who now sleep in the grave.
Let them all rouse with one accord,
And strive both heart and hand,
To stay the wrongs that shed a gloom
O’er this once favoured land.
And let the British soldiers be
The objects of their care,
Who bravely fought on Alma’s heights,
And won the victory there.

Is there a true-born British man
Who would not lend a hand
To help our brothers in distress,
Could he the power command?
Have not a nation’s acts proclaimed
Its patriotic pride,
In sending gifts to succour those
Who since from want have died?
Then rouse, ye statesmen of the land,
Let wisdom guide your power.
And prove to England’s sons your worth
In England’s trying hour.

Yes rouse, sleep not, repair the wrongs
That sully Britain’s fame,
And with true, wise and able hearts
Seek to redeem its name.
Let not a nation have to mourn
Still longer for the brave!
But strike the evil at the root,
While there is power to save.
Then will the people ever be
Like they of old have been,
And bless with heartfelt, honest pride,
Their nobles and their Queen.

“A Woman Who Is Rather Tired” anonymous
*Acadian Recorder* August 1, 1890

O, to be alone!
To escape from the work, the play,
The talking, every day;
To escape from all I have done,
And all that remains to do.
To escape yes, even from you,
My only love, and be
Alone and free.

Could I only stand
Between gray moor and gray sky,
Where the winds and the plovers cry,
And no man is at hand;
And feel the free wind blow
On my rain wet face, and know
I am free, not yours, but my own,
Free, and alone!

For the soft fire light
And the home of your heart, my dear,
They hurt being always here.
I want to stand up upright,
And to cool my eyes in the air,
And see how my back can bear
Burdens: to try, to know,
To learn, to grow!

I am only you!
I am yours, part of you, your wife!
And I have no other life
I cannot think, cannot do;
I cannot breathe, cannot see;
There is “us,” but there is not “me” –
And worse, at your kiss, I grow
Contented so.
“Wait A-While” Mrs. M.A. Kidder
Montreal Star January 26, 1878

Have you, friend, a prospect golden?
Does shy fortune on you smile?
Then by past experience, pray you,
Don’t agree to “wait a-while.”

Men there are in town and country,
Laggard souls who preach of fate,
Leaden hands, and feet like marble,
Men who only watch and wait.

Pioneers with hearts of mettle
Long to try the foremost mile,
While the tardy one, reproving,
Cry out, “comrade, wait a-while.”

So, the child in life’s beginning
Learns to dally with the hours,
Putting off the tasks of duty,
Loitering by the wayside flowers.

Yonder lad loves yonder lassie,
Seeks her heart devoid of guile,
But the maid, in opposition,
Pertly answers, “wait a-while.”

Have a care, my pretty triflers,
How you “put off” for a day;
Change will come, and life is fleeting—
“While the sun shines make your hay.”

While your youthful blood is leaping,
While in robust health you smile,
Full of purpose, march straight onward
Toward the goal, nor “wait a-while.”
“Love Thy Neighbor” Bettie K. Hunter
Montreal Star July 22, 1876

If we did not prize the flowers
That along our pathway grow,
Nor would waste so many hours
Seeking for the thorns below;
If we strove to help each other
Ever upward on the way,
Nor would holy feeling smother
‘Neath the ashes of decay;

If we did not judge so blindly
What we do not understand;
If our words were spoken kindly;
Lent we all a friendly hand—
Would there be so much of sorrow
Crowded in life’s narrow time?
Would not earth some brightness borrow,
From the glory-lighted clime?

There are tear-washed, pallid faces,
Peering out upon the night;
There are many gloomy places
To which love would bring the light;
Shall we leave them wan and weary?
When a little word or deed
Might some bosom make less dreary,
If it kindly come in need?

Oh! there is a holy pleasure
Welling up from fountains pure;
And it yields a precious treasure,
Which we all may here secure;
‘Tis in living for each other;
Thinking less of self and gain,
Seeing in each one a brother
Whom we find in want and pain.
“The Deserving Poor” Mrs. Mary Mopes [sic] Dodge
Montreal Star February 6, 1878

A dog of morals, firm and sure,
Went out to seek the “worthy poor,”
“Dear things!” she said, “I’ll find them out.
And end their woes without a doubt.”

She wandered east, she wandered west,
And many dogs her vision best—
Some well-to-do, some rich indeed,
And some—ah! very much in need.

So poor were they—without a bone,
Battered and footsore, sad and alone;
O friends, no help, “What lives they led,
To come to this!” our doggie said.

“I ought not to give to them; I’m sure
They cannot be the worthy poor,
They must have fought or been disgraced
My charity must be well placed.”

Some dogs she found, quite to her mind;
So thrifty they—so slick and kind!
“Ah me!” she said, “were they in need,
To help them would be joy indeed.”

‘Twas still the same, day in, day out—
The poorest dogs were poor no doubt;
But they were neither clean nor wise,
As she could see with half her eyes.

‘Tis strange what faults come out to view
When folks are poor, she said: “‘Tis true
They need some help; but as for me,
I must not waste my charity.”

So home she went, and dropped a tear,
“I’ve done my duty, that is clear,
I’ve searched and searched the village round
And not one ‘worthy poor’ I’ve found.”

And all this while, the sick and lame,
And hungry suffered all the same,
They were not pleasant, they were not neat—
But she had more than she could eat.

And don’t you think it was a sin?
Was hers the right way to begin?
No, no! it was not right, I’m sure
For she was rich and they were poor.

O ye who have enough to spare!
To suffering give your ready care;
Waste not your charitable mood
Only in sifting out the good.

For, on the whole, though it is right
To keep the “worthy poor” in sight,
This world would run without a hitch
If all could find the worthy rich.

“Intemperance” H.E.C.
Montreal Star April 27, 1878

Alas! how strange that men will yield
To poison’s deadly drink,
And sacrifice their name and worth
And sever every link
That binds them with a noble tie
To love and to humanity.

Intemperance’s way rules well the day,
Easy and smooth the track;
The difficulties one would meet
Would be in turning back;
For, entering once, the way within
Is naught beside deep depths of sin.

Why not resist, in life’s first start,
This dread prevailing curse,
Shrinking with horror from its sight
And from its maddening use?
The future which they know to be—
Want, ruin, sin and misery.

Have wretched homes, and broken hearts,
A doomed and saddened life;
Tears shed in vain, and prayers so oft
Breathed by a drunkard’s wife;
Have such like miseries failed to save,  
And turn men from a drunkard’s grave?

Oh! when will reformation come  
And spread its influence ‘round;  
Turning the tide of present blight,  
And temperance pure abound?  
Then, welcome all such joy as this,  
Reality of earthly bliss.

With patience, hope, and trust we wait  
Such future scenes to see,  
Longing for time to turn the course  
Of immortality;  
Oh, strive for this, our greatest aim,  
From drunken vice, mankind reclaim.

“Work and Win” Mrs. M.A. Kidder  
Montreal Star January 8, 1878

Work and win, boys, work and win.  
Don’t give up till the ship comes in.  
Don’t fall back for the want of pluck,  
Courage stands in the place of luck;  
Grasp the rope, boys, hold it tight;  
Pull, now pull with a willing might;  
“Hold the sail!” and don’t let go,  
“Heave a-ho! ay, heave a ho!”

Work and win! all hands on deck,  
…

…

……

…  
Man the pumps, boys, work for life!

Work and win, boys, work and win!  
Don’t give up to the fears within.  
Though we’re out the stormy tide,  
“Weigh the anchor!” “Let her ride!”  
Now the sun shines in the west,  
Soon we’ll gain the port of rest;  
Proudly shall our ship sail in,

50 damaged copy
We have worked, and we shall win!

“The Cry of the Women” Caroline A. Soule
Montreal Star Saturday April 8, 1876

Do you hear the cry of the women –
Of the women whose hearts are broken?
O my brothers! Listen to the wailing,
And let it be the token
Of the need there is to pray
For the dawning of a better day –
Of a day when there shall be no sighing
Over manhood in the gutter dying;
Of a day when wives’ and mothers’ sadness
Shall be forgotten in their gladness.

Do you hear the cry of the women –
Of the women whose hopes are weary?
O my brothers! Listen to the wailing
That comes up from homes so dreary,
And let it be an answer when they say:
“Wherefore do these women need to pray?”
NEED TO PRAY! O my strong and noble brothers!
Think of it – were YOU our wives and our mothers –
And say if you would wish to hear them sighing
Over manhood in the gutter dying!

Do you hear the cry of the women –
The women who look forward to the morrow
As a day whose anguish they can reckon
By the memories of a cruel, living sorrow?
O my brothers! Lend a helping hand
To this earnest, to this solemn Band –
Slaves to wretchedness for ever and for ever,
Unless RIGHT doth use its mighty lever
And lift manhood from its slime,
From its sluggishness and crime.

Do you hear the cry of the women –
Of the women whose true hearts are thrilling
With a Christ-like love for sinners,
And who, like the Lord, are willing
To go wheresover [sic] there are faltering souls
With not faith enough to make them whole?
O my brothers! Listen to the cry,
And be not ashamed of tearful eye;
For the world hath need that women pray
For the dawning of a brighter day.
Appendix C: Selected Poems Printed in the Toronto *Evening Telegram*

“The Grand Trunk Juggernaut” The Khan
*Evening Telegram* April 25, 1883

Might has triumphed, sound it well,
Through all the land from east to west!
To William Barclay and John Bell
Are due our grateful thanks the best.
Then sing aloud
A pean [sic] proud,
The Grand Trunk Juggernaut is king.

Right is vanquished; once again
The iron wheel will crush the life
Of guileless children, women, men,
For slaughter we are ever rife.
Then what care we,
Who’ve cash plenty.
The Grand Trunk Juggernaut is king.

Fight with weapons like our own,
The chances would be equalized,
The esplanade might then become
A thing of beauty highly prized.
But secretly
We’ve got money.
The Grand Trunk Juggernaut is king.

Night has fallen on that band
Of men who’d ne’er accept a fee.
With lists of names imposing, grand,
They journeyed from your fair city.
That’s how you won
Your twenty-one
And left the Juggernaut still king.

Light may dawn when men corrupt
Have shuffled off this mortal coil,
But who will dare to interrupt
Our onward course of schemes to foil.
Then loud proclaim
Th’ unconquered name.
The Grand Trunk Juggernaut is king.
The Queen City of the west,
Reclining on the azure breast,
Of fair Ontario’s sparkling wave:
Who asks for thee a fairer rest,
Or brighter foam thy shores to lave?
The gilded domes that rear their towers
In other lands where ocean foam
Lashes and surges rock-bound shores,
Can scarcely boast a fairer home.

For though no mountain turrets rear
Their verdant summits round this shore,
No rock bound coast sheds grandeur here
Nor billows turbid surge thee o’er;
Yet, pointing ever to the skies,
To mind us that our home is there,
Our church domes rear an hundred spires,
And chimes ring out the hour of prayer.

These dulcet notes by breezes borne,
Are wafted every morn and even’,
Far o’er on zest of billowy foam
And up to azure gates of Heaven.
Lit up by rosy morning hues,
Our crescent city sends its smile,
Quite o’er the wave, where glitt’ring dews
Besparkle all the breezy isle.

Where Hanlan, with his world famed craft,
Manipulates his magic oar,
And swifter glides than breezes waft
The scudding sails that gem our shore.
The eagle in his towering height
Might, wond’ring swoop from yonder sky,
To mark that seethe of flashing light,
That morking [sic] dares his speed to vie.

And bright the dancing merry boats
Corvetting o’er the blue waves skim
While crowds the “Woman Bathe” invoke
In a fresh cooling grateful swim.
Methinks meanwhile the winged throng,
Will catch that name, reverberate
Its echo, as it floats along
Over our bright, blue bosomed lake.

Here seats of learning, scores on scores,
Each morn ring out their wonted peal
To summon votaries young of love
And train them for their future weal.
But most we joy that many a dome
Rears high its noble stately head
As beacon light to some blest home
Where the lone poor are housed and fed—

The poor! – God help the lowly poor!
Chilled by the world’s hard wintry smile,
Knock trembling at that open door.
But kindness all their woes beguile;
The aged and worn with heaving sigh,
For ah! the prize for which he run,
Was lost with mournful, tear-dimm’d eye,
Finds here at last his rest and home.

Yon formidable, stately pile
With spreading wings and vaulted dome,
Looks grandly out on bay and isle;
Ah! think ye that a joyous home
There reason, trembling, ruined lies,
A mournful wreck. There youth and age
And beauty wail, with glitt’ring eyes,
Imbecile laugh and frenzied rage.

And oh! not least, though lost to name,
The lost in sin, misfortune’s child.
Turns loathing from her deeds of shame,
And casts one look of anguish wild
On the lov’d past, that dear lost home
So far away, yet haply near,
That childhood’s home she never more
May hope to see, yet still so dear.

Where is a refuge, friend or rest?
Some far lone cot unknown to crime.
“Hope, sister,” and her hand is prest
With gentle words and accents kind,
“Look there and see that open door!
It stands ajar to let thee in.
Now lean thy battered soul e’er more
On Him who died to purge thy sin.”

A smile, fair Queen, has lit thy brow,
Since Simcoe’s governmental sway
Held here; when deed of British prow
Were marked by many a gallant fray,
With rude log cabin for his home,
He held his councils wise and good
And made a rustic seat his throne,
While courtiers sat on ruder wood.

Now classic shades with wand’ring vines,
And verdant lawns begemm’d with flowers,
And circling path ways cross and wind
Through all the fragrant scented flowers;
Where rich vice royal honour dwells,
‘Mid fleeting grandeur’s gilded walls,
While strains of lofty music swell
And ripple down the vaulted halls.

Where’er the breezes waft thy name,
Where’er thy wand’ring waters sweep,
The noble deeds of bygone fame
Each loyal heart will cherish deep.
We view with pride the stately domes
That circle round this crescent shore;
But ne’er forget the thousand homes
Where dwelt the bravest men of yore.

And now, from o’er the crested wave,
We view from far each glittering light
That glints on billowy sparkling lave,
A crazy dream in beauty’s night;
But fairer, oh! the crescent moon
Looks sweetly down from starry heaven,
Charms all the beauties from the gloom,
And stamps thee sister, Queen of Even’.

“The Sleeping City” Mary. M. Shaw
*Evening Telegram* July 23, 1888

How solemn in the depth of quiet night
Is it to view the city fast asleep;
When stars alone give out a living light,
And God alone a solemn watch doth keep.
Oe’er all her stately piles of brick and stone,
Marble and granite, falls the darkling shade
Of senseless death! A million shadows thrown
Make the great city but a lonely glade

Of might yawning streets! Lifeless they lie
Like might things struck dead; whilst ‘mid the gloom
Silence gives out her ghostly sounds; the eye
Shrinks from gaunt specters of this living tomb.

Dark, silent forms, flitting in noiseless haste
To foul abodes, cadaverous with decay
Of crime and filth – a hideous foretaste
Of Hades, bones and skulls! the light of day

Ne’er penetrates those living graves; grim want
Wrapped in the rags of vice lives slyly there;
And piteous things called “men and women,” flaunt
In virtue’s face their sins and dark despair.

Oh! the great pity of it; yet, alone,
These do not move the heart with pitying fear;
Still, senseless forms within each stately home,
Cottage and hovel, far away and near.

All, all alike in the grand, solemn care
Of Heaven’s dread God! A shadowy thought awakes
Within the breast, that now, at least, they share
A common brotherhood, and caste forsakes

Her formal shrine, and avarice, pride and hate
Die in the calm, unconscious breasts; whilst round
Each peaceful head fair innocence doth wait
The coming dawn to quit the holy ground

Of transient trust; and so each soft-drawn breath
Wafts up to Heaven the city’s helpless plight;
Chained by the phantom sister of pale death –
Unconscious Samson shorn of all his might!

Oh! city, in thy swoon let shadows creep
And wrap thee in dark mysteries! Again
Comes sure the thought, “Except the Lord doth keep
The city Watchmen waketh but in vain.”
“How Burglars Are Bred” Minnie May
*Evening Telegram* July 18, 1887

Would you know in fair Toronto
How the burglars learn their trade?
I will tell you, I will teach you
How the burglars here are made.
***
“Sent down for five days, age seven years.”
“Crime, stealing a pair of shoes.”
That’s what I read in the paper tonight
Among the police-court news.

Who was the judge who sat on the bench
And gave an order so vile?
Where were the people who see justice done?
Where the boy’s mother the while?

I scarcely believed the words that I read,
I felt that my cheeks grew pale;
Would a man in his sense really dare
To send such a babe to jail?

I looked again, and the words were there,
Quite plainly before my eyes;
Age seven years? sent down for five days?
Oh, who was the judge so wise?

A Daniel truly to judgment come,
With wisdom beyond compare!
Or one proud of his brief authority
Too selfish to think or care.

Does he rest in peace in his bed tonight?
Or dreams he of that poor child,
Who his words today may forever doom
To be hard and wicked and wild?

May God with His infinite mercy deign
To hedge that poor child about
May that judge when his time for judgment comes,
Receive what he meted out.
***
This, the story I have told to you,
In *The Telegram* I read.
You will see I thus have taught you,
How our burglars here are bred.

“The Sword and the Pen” Ida Shafter
*Evening Telegram* May 14, 1880

The sword is feared, is mighty, when drawn with iron will;
But though the sword is might, the pen is mightier still.
Time was, in darkened ages, when only might made right,
When earth was filled with carnage, with chaos and affright.

When man warred with his brother, and precious human life
Was ta’en mid bloody pillage, and fiendish rage was rife,
Then woe to the defenceless beneath the tyrants’ brand,
Then mercy’s face was hidden, and knowledge fled the land.

Then rights of man were trampled, nor laws of God obeyed,
Then sway of evil passions, the march of science stayed.
Then peaceful arts unheeded amid unlettered men,
And then the sword was potent, while powerless the pen.

Now time war’s deadly weapons on peaceful walls hath hung,
And love of art and learning all men hath gone among.
Not bloodshed and not rapine fill all the Christian land,
And men of wit and culture their country’s pillars stand.

The student presses onward to reach the shining goal
Of that fair goddess knowledge, who ‘raps the eager soul;
Now midnight lamps are lighted to glean the sages’ lore,
And minds of men are darkened by ignorance no more.

What would we know of hero, of martyr, or of sage?
Of life of saint or prophet, who lit some by-gone age?
Or what of men of prowess, whose names have shaken earth?
Or what of olden precepts and thoughts of golden worth?

Had not the pen of genius transcribed from age to age,
And left their bright examples to glow on history’s page.
Had not the gifted poets poured forth their gifts in song,
And sent their sounding peans [sic] the echoing years along.

The rise and fall of nations: their glowing numbers tell,
Of the wealth of the mighty Egypt, of the captive Israel,
Of the Babylonian splendour, of the Orient’s gems and gold,
Of conquering Alexander, and men of kindred mould.
Of Rome, imperial city, and of her haughty lords;  
Of the Afric’s city Carthage; of the tameless German hordes;  
Of pomp, of kings and princes; of Charlemagne of France,  
Of deeds of dauntless valour in days of old romance.

The grand inspired writers, less human than divine,  
Whose names in sacred scriptures, like guiding beacons shine,  
Have told to man the story of their Redeemer’s birth,  
Whose fame goes forth to tranquil and christianize the earth.

The sword has conquered kingdoms, the world yields to the pen,  
And the minds of humble poets bequeath rich thoughts to men;  
Then use the pen, and rightly, ye seekers after fame,  
And write but what will brightly adorn a poet’s name.

But in the case of freedom, and in defence of right,  
Let not the steel grown rusty, but keep it keen and bright;  
And when the foeman threatens, then lay aside the pen,  
Then draw the sword and use it, it must be conqueror then.

“The Dreaded Nineteenth” Toronto Girl  
_Evening Telegram_ August 6, 1881

Dame Shipton said that in ‘81  
The bad old world’s wild course should be run,  
And really truly it seems to me,  
With regard to the truth of the prophecie,  
That there can’t be the faintest shadow of doubt,  
For astronomers figured the whole thing out,  
And show how Jupiter, Saturn, and Mars,  
Uranus, Venus and all the stars  
Are making a pull, and “a pull all together,”  
And plunge us all in the depths of the sun,  
In this terrible year of ’81.  
And, again, we see by the daily papers,  
Tisn’t only the stars that are cutting their capers:  
For our own little moon,  
On its monthly trips  
In this month of June,  
Has been under eclipse.

And people are doubting and sadly perplexed,  
And anxiously waiting for Sunday next,  
And, as Mr. Oliver Wendell Holmes  
Remarks in one of his humorous poems,  
Are ordering their ascension robes,  
Firmly persuaded the poor old globe’s
Going to burst and pass away,
And we’re all on the eve of the judgment day!
But what is the hurry though? Why not wait
If only to give “the Syndicate”
A chance? They’re doing their level best
Now to develop our great North-west;
And in spite of all that Mother S. may say,
I think they’ve a right to demand fair play.
And then how about Dominion Day?
It wouldn’t be right, it wouldn’t be fair
To our City Council or Worshipful Mayor,
‘Twould be nought but a fling at the civic chair,
And bring disgrace on our well loved city,
And ruin the characters of the committee
Who’re raising the funds to pay expenses;
‘Twould be getting money by false pretences;
But the City Council and worthy Mayor
Are perfectly safe – it is little they care –
For a Corporation had never a soul,
And as we all know that’s what’s true of the whole
Should be true of each part; they, lucky dogs
Needn’t bother about their ascension togs.
Indifferent they how the world may behave,
Well knowing they haven’t a soul to save.
(“A soul to be saved,” or perhaps the reverse,
Though far they may go they cannot fare worse.)
But isn’t it strange, though all things point
To the fact that this world is out of joint,
That in spite of the trouble that’s been foretold,
The same old struggle for pleasure and gold
Is still going on as it did of yore;
It’s a fact that the thoughtful should deeply deplore.
We’ve the Government ordering district camps,
And the *F.F.V.’s* with their unfilled lamps,
While Tories and Grits, not a whit dismayed,
Are getting their plans and arrangements made
To meet each other in ’81;
Then, if they are not scared, pray why should we?
For myself, I’m open to take a bet
That the end of the world isn’t comin’ yet;
I’ll bet that next Monday will find us all here,
The same as we were this time last year.
And if Gabriel’s trumpet should sound next Sunday,
I’ll pay my bet on the following Monday!

*No allusion to the “First Families of Virginia.”*
“There isn’t a better woman living!” – Capt. Clarke of the 90th.

The softer silver sounds that fail,
From the vast trumpet blown by fame,
Will whisper on thro’ time to come
The music of a woman’s name:
She … by Pity and by Strength
Rais’d up the fall’n hero’s head,
And for the lov’d and absent plac’d
A flower beside the soldier’s bed!

Peace’s dear daughter – yet she left
The placid plans of warless life;
And dauntless sought the shudd’ring shore,
Where war’d the hungry lion strife:
Tho’ in her breast the iron hands,
Of Courage and of Strength were wed –
Ah the tender soul, she n’er forgot
The flow’r beside the soldier’s bed!

Thou hast thy awful treasure, War!
The names and deeds that blaze and burn
Upon thy brow – the warrior dust
That moulders in the starved …
The stern, glad mem’ry of thy sons –
Thy joy in heroes’ blood … shed.
Peace hath her Pearl – ‘tis she who plac’d
The flow’r beside the soldier’s bed!