

## Paula Laverty, *Silk Stocking Mats: Hooked Mats of the Grenfell Mission.*

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missionary propaganda designed to open pockets back home, but a text which provides few balanced insights into nineteenth century Newfoundland society.

Part of the problem is that Coffman has missed a number of important secondary sources. In the key church-building period of the early to mid-nineteenth century, the central figures were the Anglican Bishop Feild, and the Roman Catholic Bishop Michael Anthony Fleming. Coffman does not cite Frederick Jones's 1971 PhD thesis (Cambridge) on Feild, nor any of his numerous articles, including an entry in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (*DCB*). Similarly, Coffman does not mention John FitzGerald's 1997 PhD thesis (Ottawa) on Fleming, nor the Rev. R. Lahey's entry on Fleming in the *DCB*. These are significant omissions, and there are others.

There is no need to labour the point. Peter Coffman has made a significant and valuable contribution to the architectural history of nineteenth century Newfoundland and Labrador. While his knowledge of the architectural context is solid and well-explained, and likewise his analysis of individual buildings, his explication of the social, economic, and political environments in which these buildings were constructed needs — as academics say — “more work.”

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Paula Laverty, *Silk Stocking Mats: Hooked Mats of the Grenfell Mission*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005, ISBN 0773525068.

SILK STOCKING MATS is a stunningly illustrated book that examines the history of “the Industrial,” a cottage industry of the Grenfell medical mission, through the prismatic lens of its most successful and noted products, hooked mats. While many other crafts were undertaken and ultimately produced throughout the Industrial's history, it is the mats that have maintained an international audience and that remain Laverty's focus here. Her interest and expertise span almost two decades during which time she has curated three exhibitions on the subject and served as a contributing author on the craft and its history for the Newfoundland and Labrador Heritage Website.

She introduces us to this project by outlining her research problematic — a series of simple questions regarding the mats: who produced them, who designed them and why, and ultimately, what was the relationship between the makers and the Mission. These questions lead to ever more complex answers as she unravels the personal stories of the makers, the myth of the founding British medical missionary, Sir Wilfred Grenfell, and the shifting images within the mats themselves. These multiple stories are then woven back together to reveal the culture and commodity production of which the mats are the material residue. Textile production has always paralleled social and industrial development and these seemingly sim-

ple domestic objects are no different. An analysis of their lineage provides a parallel to the history of Newfoundland and Labrador as it entered into Confederation and as industrialization replaced “the Industrial.”

Her introduction begins with a history of Grenfell’s call to service and his knowledge of social programming concurrently developing in the American Arts and Crafts movement. He saw the north as a land without opportunity, and its people as buckled under by poverty, enduring unfit living conditions, and yet reluctant to accept *chartiy* (7). While he developed the medical side of his project he hired New England artist Jessie Luther to establish the workplace and distribution structure that would produce handicrafts as a means of supplementing the local economy. Luther came with talent and serious credentials, having worked with American social reformer Jane Adams in her position as director of the Labor Museum at Hull House in Chicago and as an advocate of handicraft production as occupational therapy. This active stance attracted Grenfell. While Luther began by introducing weaving to her potential workers, the wives and daughters of the deep sea fishermen, she came to realize it held little interest for the women. There was no history of weaving in that area and the looms required were large and could not be used within one’s home. While the woven items were welcomed, the full success of the Industrial came with the recognition of the intrinsic and potential value of an indigenous art form, rug hooking.

While hooked rugs have existed for centuries, it is an art form born of this new land. Much like its citizens, the material required to produce the works was brought from elsewhere and reconstituted through labour to make these vivid displays of northern life. While the local custom was towards abstract geometrics in vivid colours, Grenfell would even describe them of being almost of a futurist school, the taming of the textiles into the more decorative palette of the American market would be a vital shift in the relationship between the mission and its workers (16). Grenfell neither fully recognized the skill and beauty of the rugs already being made, nor understood the pleasure the women felt in their production of them.

Laverty cautions, what is revealed is the story of a time and place, and it is important not to colour that history by judging it by today’s values, sentiments, and ways of thinking (x). Indeed, the morality of the often paternalist role the mission would play is complex and apparent even to its participants and is worthy of much more investment — but perhaps not here. What Laverty has endeavored to do is to reveal this story as polyvalent, intriguing, and very much worthy of our time and attention.

To this end, she has divided the book in two parts. First, the narrative history coupled with a much needed linear timeline, for in her desire to complete individual stories and in her care not to claim any judgments as her own, one can trip over the footnotes and lose sight of the narrative as we move back and forth between dates. It is a difficulty born of best intentions and rigour, but it weighs down the reader. Perhaps this is deliberate, as no social history flows cleanly from one line of thought, and Laverty exhibits obvious care in the construction of the entire project.

The second half is in many ways the meat of the book. Here we are told of the practical and the actual of making the mats and we hear directly from their makers. The individual voices are amplified by the presence of so many images, with each pattern built row by row, each colour newly animated by our better understanding of its hand-wrought birth. The women that produced the works may not be able to recognize which mats they were responsible for making, but they could well recognize themselves in this retelling.

The notes and bibliographic information alone make this a worthwhile addition to any collection of those interested in material culture, social histories, indigenous textile arts, or Newfoundland and Labrador. Its wealth of images make it a pleasure to view.

My questions and criticisms suggest that no one book can cover a subject so ripe, but Laverty has crafted an invaluable introduction here.

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Maxine Trottier and Nancy Keating, *Forget-me-not*. St. John's: Tuckamore Books, 2008, ISBN 9781897174241.

*Forget-me-not*, a children's book written by Maxine Trottier and illustrated by Nancy Keating, is a work of historical fiction set in 1917. The story opens with a portrait of a young girl, Bridget Keats, who spends her days by the sea watching boats through her spyglass. While emphasis is placed on what Bridget sees and what she is told, her perspective is narrated in the third person limited point of view, a mode which is often privileged in historical narratives for the focus on the objective representation of facts in the text. Trottier, however, introduces elements of subjectivity in her book by introducing fiction into her story and by telling this story in the perspective of the main character. As Kelley Griffith puts it,

“as with omniscient narrators, narrators of the third-person limited point of view refer to characters as ‘he’ and ‘she,’ and still have more knowledge of the fictional world than we do of our worlds. But they restrict (limit) their perspective to the mind of one character. This character may be either a main or peripheral character. Names for this character are ‘central consciousness,’ ‘reflector,’ and ‘filter.’ A plot device that often accompanies this point of view is the character’s gradual discovery of some truth that climaxes with an epiphany.” (Kelly Griffith, *Writing Essays about Literature*. Boston: Thomson Wadsworth, 2005, 37).

In this case, the story's narrative mode articulates Bridget's detachment from the world she is viewing and restricts interpretation to the reality and events that surround her. Trottier establishes Bridget's role as a “watcher” in the story to address unsettling and complex issues in a subtle and delicate manner. To make the story accessi-