

# Something Fishy at Boundary Bay: Frances Herring and the Literary Construction of British Columbia

**B**ritish Columbia's relationship to Canada has always been marked by ambivalence; from the province's frustration over the slow pace of CPR construction in the 1870s and 1880s to current articulations of "western alienation," British Columbia occupies, or at least feels that it occupies, a marginal presence in the national imaginary. Historically, Canada's westernmost province has maintained strong cultural and economic ties with California, Oregon and Washington, which were less remote than the urban centres of Ontario, Quebec and the Maritimes. British Columbia's official national and imperial affiliations often contradicted the more immediate reality of social and economic exchange with the western United States. Not only is British Columbia sandwiched between Alaska to the north and Washington to the south, but its relative proximity to Asia also promotes trans-Pacific exchange. All of these factors have influenced British Columbia's marginal position within the nation. As Geoffrey Bennington notes, "At the centre, the nation narrates itself as the nation: at the borders, it must recognize that there are other nations on which it cannot but depend" (131-22). Approaching the nation from its edge implies not only the difference between edge and centre, but also the difference between inside and outside, and the permeability of borders. However, British Columbia's isolation from central Canada complicated the province's social, economic and cultural alliances and invested the Canada-US border with specific significance.

In *The Arbutus/Madrone Files*, Laurie Ricou refers to the "western end" of the Canada/US border as "more of a site of exchange than a barrier. Or,

when a barrier, still a site of exchange” (206). William H. New refers to the border as “a synecdoche, a rhetorical part standing for a rhetorical whole” that “at once joins and divides two nation-states, permits contact, influence, choice, trade . . . and difference” (6). He also refers to borders as metaphorical, or as “*signs* of limits rather than limits themselves” (4). As synecdoche and metaphor, the border is invested with associative and symbolic meanings that suggest both division and permeability. In more concrete terms, the border between Canada and the United States is a political agreement actualized through the application of international treaties and laws that regulate the allocation of resources and the flow of people and goods between the two nations. The national border in British Columbia is a comparatively recent phenomenon. The 49th parallel divided the Canadian prairies from the American Midwest in 1818, but was only extended to the Pacific coast in 1846. The years between 1818 and 1846 were characterized by a policy of “free and open” exchange between British and American territory (Ricou, “Two Nations” 51). However, even after the extension of the national border, the trans-national flow of people and goods remained a source of anxiety, particularly in British Columbia. The discovery of mineral wealth on the Fraser River in 1858 and in the Cariboo in 1860 led to a flood of American gold-seekers in the interior of British Columbia, and the northward flow of Americans prompted panic among government officials, who perceived their presence as a threat to the integrity of the border and British cultural dominance. The colony of British Columbia was established in 1858, and united with Vancouver Island in 1866, in part as a protective measure against American interests, but the region did not become a Canadian province until 1871 (Brebner 171-72).

Frances Herring’s *Canadian Camp Life*, published in 1900, addresses the complex figuration of British Columbia’s relation to the nation and its border at the turn of the century. Herring uses a picaresque tale of holiday travel, adventure, and romance to provide detailed information regarding British Columbia’s resource-based economy, and more importantly, its complex cross-border relations and the role of gender and race in maintaining these borders. *Canadian Camp Life* recounts the Le Ford family’s summer camping holiday at Boundary Bay, on sandy beaches edging the body of water across which runs the border between Canada and the United States, just a few kilometers south of their home town of New Westminster. In spite of the explicit invocation of nation in the book’s title, Herring is

primarily interested in exploring the cultural space of British Columbia and its relation to the United States and England; British Columbia's connection to Canada is of secondary importance, reflecting the province's ambivalent position within the nation state.

This examination of Herring's exploration of the geopolitics of the 49th parallel in *Canadian Camp Life* requires some background concerning this rather obscure writer. The details of Frances Herring's life and the role she occupied in early twentieth-century literary circles are difficult to verify. Her papers have not survived; her archival traces are few; and her legacy as one of British Columbia's earliest female writers is virtually non-existent. Her name appears only occasionally in surveys of early Canadian literature and her books are long out of print.<sup>1</sup> Adele Perry's entry on Herring in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* is the most comprehensive account of Herring's life. According to Perry, Frances Herring immigrated to British Columbia from England in 1874. She married her cousin, with whom she had eight children, and worked as a schoolteacher in Langley and New Westminster, and as a journalist for the New Westminster *British Columbian*. Herring began writing fiction at the turn of the century, and published six books between 1900 and 1914, five of which were set in British Columbia.

Herring has received considerably less scholarly attention than writers such as Sara Jeannette Duncan and L.M. Montgomery, although she, like them, addresses issues of female autonomy, first-wave feminism and imperialism in national and international contexts. *The Literary History of Canada* lists two of Herring's works in its chapter on Canadian fiction published between 1880 and 1920, but the authors erroneously refer to *In the Pathless West* as "On the Pathless West" and incorrectly list its date of publication as 1904 rather than 1909 (299). The bibliographic categorization of Herring's novels is even more misleading. Herring's works, though primarily fictional, contain elements of historical sketch and travel narrative, and are usually illustrated with photographs that lend her work a documentary quality. Although Herring draws on multiple genres, surveys of Canadian literature usually categorize her books as travel writing or history rather than fiction. Elizabeth Waterston lists two of Herring's books in her chapter on travel writing in the *Literary History of Canada* (358), and Marni L. Stanley also mentions Herring in her survey article on Canadian women's travel writing. University libraries tend to house Herring's books in the Canadian history section, and computerized search engines identify her works through the keywords "British Columbia—description and travel," "British Columbia—

women's history," and "British Columbia—social life and customs." Entering the descriptors "British Columbia" and "fiction" into library databases does not lead the researcher to Herring's work. Library searches bring up Herring's texts alongside historical, sociological, and anthropological works, thus limiting the contexts in which her books have circulated. As Foucault suggests, disciplinary categories are principles of limitation and constraint that structure our epistemological processes: "A discipline is not the sum total of all the truths that may be uttered concerning something; it is not even the total of all that may be accepted by virtue of some principle of coherence and systematization, concerning some given fact or proposition." In their recognition of "true and false propositions," disciplinary organization risks foreclosing "a whole teratology of learning" (223). Herring's novels appear to have fallen into an abyss between Canadian history, travel literature and fiction. Likely dismissed by historians because of their often lurid fictional elements, and dismissed by literary scholars because of their focus on historical and sociological detail and their often eccentric plotlines, Herring has been marginalized from studies of early Canadian women writers.

Yet Herring's writings provide insight into early British Columbian culture, and more specifically, into the symbolic position of white femininity in the formation of a British Columbian social imaginary at the turn of the twentieth century. However, I am somewhat wary of reclaiming Herring as a literary figure. Her texts are often haphazard in their composition and quality, and like many books from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they are fraught with contradictory and problematic discussions of race. Studies by scholars such as Carol Lee Bacchi and Mariana Valverde have explored the racism inherent in many first-wave feminist writings in Canada but, as Janice Fiamengo argues, "[c]ritical reassessment . . . has often shaded into outright dismissal, and in the process some of the complexities of early feminist discourse have been lost" (85). More recently, Jennifer Henderson's *Settler Feminism and Race Making in Canada* has articulated a nuanced and useful approach to the complex relationship between race and gender in early feminist texts. Notably absent from most of these studies is an extended consideration of early feminist writings from British Columbia. Because the literature of British Columbia developed slightly later than that of other regions of Canada, it tends to become sidelined in discussions of early Canadian writers.<sup>2</sup>

Historian Adele Perry has noted that British Columbia in the mid-nineteenth century "hovered dangerously at the precipice of Victorian

norms and ideals" (4) because of a scarcity of white women in the region. Canada's westernmost province was subjected to a series of concentrated social reform movements in the late nineteenth century designed to increase the population of white women and curtail the instances of mixed race relationships and homosocial domestic arrangements. However, by the time Herring wrote *Canadian Camp Life*, the urban centres of Victoria and her hometown of New Westminster were well established. Herring's books circulated primarily in England, and she seems intent on presenting British Columbia as increasingly settled, cultivated, and industrialized, perhaps to promote the region to prospective immigrants.<sup>3</sup> She notes, for example, the ease with which one can travel around the lower mainland of British Columbia, mentioning New Westminster's proximity to both Vancouver and their holiday destination at Boundary Bay. Bessie, the narrator, explains, "Accordingly, we set out in quest of a place not too far from Westminster. Vancouver, we decided, we knew all by heart for it is our sister city, and we ride or drive, go by electric tram or C.P.R. train, backwards and forwards all the time. Boundary Bay, everyone said, was exactly the place we wanted" (3). Bessie Le Ford and her family, their friends the Wentworths, and their Chinese domestic servant Ke Tan arrange to spend several weeks camping on the beaches of Boundary Bay.

The fluidity of national borders is overtly invoked through the novel's setting, since the Canada/US border bisects Boundary Bay. Bessie and her father have difficulty locating the campsite where the Wentworths await their arrival, but finally discover that their friends have set up camp a few metres over the border on the American side. Mrs. Wentworth informs Bessie, "there's Boundary Bay *and* Boundary Bay . . . You didn't find the right part. . . It's on the American side and we've been investing in stars and stripes galore, so as to have one floating over every tent, you know" (20). In spite of Mrs. Wentworth's willingness to adopt the American flag, if only for the duration of her camping holiday, she maintains a strong allegiance to England, as is shown when they visit the monument that marks the border. Mrs. Wentworth speculates on the possible unification of Canada and the United States:

"Some day we shall see them all under one government," said Mrs. Wentworth looking at daddy.

"What a grand Republic that will be!" returned he, seriously, pretending to understand that as her meaning.

"Or Monarchy!" she retorted quickly.

We all laughed and began to talk upon other subjects, for daddy always teased Mrs. Wentworth upon this point, and she as invariably took him in earnest. (103-04)

Notably, Bessie's father refers to the northern section of Boundary Bay as the "British side" (30), underscoring an identification with the British empire that overrides the identification with Canada implied by the book's title. The younger generation readily identifies with Canada. Bessie's brothers explicitly position themselves as Canadian as they cheer "Hurrah for Canada! Canada for ever!" (172). However, they also collapse Canada and Britain as "all the same" implicitly positioning Canadian nationalism at the service of the British imperial project (172). Herring depicts British Columbia as pulled between national, imperial, and regional interests that reflect shifting and often ambivalent patterns of identification.

In addition to its preoccupation with the 49th parallel, *Canadian Camp Life* is largely concerned with the civic and domestic roles of men and women in late-nineteenth-century British Columbia, providing various examples of masculinity and femininity that inflect aspects of British Columbia's cultural formation. Remittance men, the "second sons" of wealthy British families who were sent to the colonies where their behaviour was an object of much scrutiny and suspicion, arrived in British Columbia in large numbers in the late nineteenth century. Bessie offers a negative assessment of these men, implying that their actions lead to the material deprivation of their female family members: "I can't help wondering if some of those dudish, white-handed farmers wouldn't be better working for themselves, instead of sitting down smoking away their precious time, when perhaps their mothers and sisters have to go short of many things to keep these dear pets in funds" (4-5). In contrast to this demographic, Herring also provides numerous examples of diligent and hardworking young gentlemen, such as Thomas Templeton, the Cambridge graduate whom Bessie marries at the end of the book.

Herring seems more concerned, however, with the exploration of femininity and the role of women in the context of British Columbian culture; many of her white female characters exhibit traits associated with the stereotypical frailties of Victorian femininity. Bessie tells us that her mother is recovering from "la Grip," a condition that was followed by a severe bout of nervous prostration (2). Their camping holiday is the result of their doctor's recommendation, and Mrs. Le Ford appears to undergo a treatment that resembles S. Weir Mitchell's rest cure. Mrs. Wentworth is also suffering from a mysterious extended illness; she claims she reached the "verge of insanity" after the death of her daughter, and has been travelling for therapeutic reasons for the past four years (54). Mrs. Wentworth's brush with insanity is linked to her loss of official maternal status, and she serves as

second mother figure to the Le Ford children. Herring is a proponent of what Angeliqe Richardson refers to as “civic motherhood,” or “maternity as citizen making” (229). As Cecily Devereux has argued in relation to L.M. Montgomery’s treatment of maternity and female ambition, first wave feminism in English Canada is “characterized not necessarily by suffragism . . . not by the ‘new woman,’ but by the idea of woman as ‘imperial mother of the race’” (125). Devereux suggests that Anglo-imperial feminists at the beginning of the twentieth-century “increasingly capitalized on the appeal of woman as mother” (127). Herring situates women as agents of maternity and civility, charged with the task of domesticating British Columbia through their roles as wives and mothers. By symbolically linking social and geographic boundaries in the text, Herring also implicates white women in the enforcement of border regulations.

In contrast to Mrs. Le Ford’s embodiment of the ideals of Anglo-European femininity and maternity, Herring resorts to a range of negative stereotypes to represent First Nations women, in Adele Perry’s words, as the “dark mirror image to the idealized nineteenth-century visions of white women” (*Edge* 51). From the “hideous-looking old squaw” (48) collecting cockles on the beach, to Jenny, the “virago” who abuses her husband both physically and psychologically (162), First Nations women in Herring’s text are contrasted with the ideals of Anglo-Imperial femininity. Jenny, who has recently returned to her husband Billy after temporarily eloping with a Japanese fisherman, comes looking for Billy at the Le Ford’s camp with her aunt and children in tow and beats her husband with a maple stick for leaving without her permission (177). Notably, Mrs. Le Ford manages to curtail Jenny’s rage toward her husband by giving her several gifts, including two pink flannelette nightgowns and a bonnet, as well as a promise to make her a morning wrapper like the one she herself is wearing. Here the white woman resolves the domestic conflict with gifts that represent Anglo-European femininity, and thus symbolically contains Jenny’s behaviour.

Bessie and her twin sister Josie go to great lengths to provide their frail mother with all the domestic comforts of home. Bessie describes the sanctum that she and her sister have constructed for their mother:

It was such a pretty little nook, for all the washstand was a water-washed log of wood about two and a half feet high and some three feet through, round which we had tacked a piece of bright cheap muslin. The toilet table was another of these logs treated in the same way. But, what do you think? We had forgotten to put in a looking glass! Daddy laughed heartily at the bare idea of two girls, each twenty-two years of age, who could commit such an appalling blunder. (38)

The Le Fords create a domestic sphere quite literally on the national border; perhaps not surprisingly, this overtly feminized space is soon implicated in colonial, national, and transnational politics.

In *The Location of Culture*, Homi Bhabha considers the connection, in the context of the nation state, between women, the uncanny, and boundary maintenance. He suggests that the ambivalent structure of the nation rests on the “unhomely” boundary between public and private, between things that should be hidden and those that ought to be shown (10). The domestic sphere is, of course, that which is traditionally hidden from sight. Bhabha argues that feminism makes visible the “forgetting of the ‘unhomely’ moment in civil society . . . disturbs the symmetry of private and public which is now shadowed, or uncannily doubled, by the difference in genders which does not neatly map on to the private and the public, but becomes disturbingly supplementary to them” (10-11). As the domestic becomes implicated in the geopolitics of boundary maintenance, Herring’s *Canadian Camp Life* presents a version of what Bhabha calls the “world-in-the-home” (11).

A national border is, in effect, a political agreement, but it is also a legal fiction and an inscription on the landscape that marks the contours of the nation against the backdrop of a supposedly unsignified landscape that becomes intelligible as territory through the process of boundary-mapping. Mrs. Wentworth informs Bessie that the American side of the bay is now a United States military reserve (20), but she also draws attention to Boundary Bay’s aboriginal name, “Chil-tin-um,” which, she explains, means “couldn’t see it” allegedly because of the fog that led to its accidental discovery by a “party of Indians” trying to cross Georgia Strait in a storm (20- 21). However, for Herring, “couldn’t see it” might also signify that the boundary is an invisible marker that structures and regulates the movement of the campers.

Herring suggests that the landscape upon which the national border is inscribed is haunted by its prior incarnation as an aboriginal gathering place, thus underscoring the extent to which the geographic border is a cultural fiction that cannot quite contain its own history:

The immense mounds of calcine shells, upon which maples, said to be one thousand to fifteen hundred years old, are growing, give evidence of the numbers of Indians who used to come, and of the centuries ago when these revelries were held. . . . During a storm one of the oldest of these trees was blown down last winter, and the skeleton of a man with arms and legs outstretched was exposed under its roots, which had been buried in the mound of calcined shells before the giant maple had been planted. (22)



The skeleton that comes to the surface at Boundary Bay signifies the return of that which was buried both literally and metaphorically; it is both the skeletal remains of an indigenous person and a symbol that the land precedes and cannot be completely contained by the relatively recent creation of national borders and military bases. Herring draws attention to the collision between the languages of the past and present, between the teleology of “progress” enacted through political boundaries and white settlements and a prior system of understanding that disrupts the contemporaneity of the present. Homi Bhabha might liken Herring’s juxtaposition to the “tension signifying the people as an *a priori* historical presence, a pedagogical object; and the people constructed in the performance of narrative, its enunciatory ‘present’ marked in the repetition and pulsation of the national sign” (*Nation* 298-99). The exposed skeleton underscores the fragility of the border. Like Freud’s uncanny, it is quite literally that which “ought to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light” (Freud 225).

The 49th parallel is one of the text’s central symbols, but Herring seems most interested in writing about the permeability of the national border. Mr. Milton Bowes, an overzealous American customs officer, suspects the Le Ford family of smuggling contraband goods and hovers around their campsite looking for evidence of suspicious activity. The Le Fords do in fact have something illegal to hide: their Chinese domestic servant Ke Tan. After the US government passed the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, Chinese men illegally entering the United States from Canada were automatically imprisoned or deported to China. Ke Tan has no choice but to sneak back across the 49th parallel to escape deportation. His departure has a profound effect on the family’s holiday. Through Ke Tan’s enforced departure, the transnational politics of immigration law directly affect the private sphere of the Le Ford’s campsite; his absence creates difficulties for the campers, who must do their own cooking and cleaning. The reference to the Chinese Exclusion Act further complicates Herring’s treatment of the nation by illustrating not only the differences between Canadian and US treatment of their Asian residents, but also the ways in which both nations are internally marked by cultural difference and shaped by strategies of exclusion. In a Canadian context, legislation such as the Head Tax and the Asiatic Exclusion Act functioned similarly to exclude Asian residents from belonging to the nation.<sup>4</sup> Herring emphasizes British Columbia’s geographic proximity to Asia when Bessie and her friends observe “one of the *Empresses* that ply between the Orient and Vancouver” (105). The sight of the ship return-

ing to British Columbia from the East configures the relation with Asia as yet another frontier and an exchange that both defines and complicates the contours of nation and region.

Herring satirizes the actions of the American customs officer, who appears to be far more concerned with maintaining national laws and boundaries than are the Canadian characters. In his formal capacity as boundary keeper, Mr. Bowes is associated with patriarchal, state, and legal authority. However, the character most concerned with upholding national trade laws is depicted as somewhat inept. Mr. Bowes pays a visit to the Le Ford family camp in search of the “contraband” Ke Tan, and in an effort to escape the loud and overbearing man, the women decide to go swimming. Accompanied by his wife and wearing a bathing costume that is described as “very abbreviated” (199), Mr. Bowes intrudes on the swimming party. Bessie recounts the event: “Poor mother hardly knew what to do. She was so insistent that we should take our dip with only the ladies of the camping parties; and here was this great, red lobster of a man swimming and diving, and showing off his aquatic powers as well as he could for the shallowness of the water. . . . Mammy then excused herself” (200-201). Later in the text, Mr. Bowes allows his appetite to override his concern over the Le Ford’s camp and the following day, accepts Josie’s invitation to consume “contraband pies, cakes, bread and so on . . . made by a contraband Chinaman” (204).

In spite of Ke Tan’s departure, Mr. Bowes continues to express interest in the Le Ford camp, as does the mysterious Mr. de Quincy, a shifty character who appears part way through the narrative and shadows the customs officer. These men are not merely interested in Ke Tan’s tasty contraband confections, they also suspect the Le Fords of opium smuggling. Mr. de Quincy has a history of involvement in cross-border drug trafficking. Mr. Templeton, Bessie’s suitor, explains the somewhat convoluted situation to Bessie:

A person living on the border must learn to keep a still tongue. It is no business of ours to interfere. As Mr. de Quincy is following the other one’s false scent, he can’t understand if you people are friends or foes. He keeps up the detective idea, which has somehow gotten about, of course; he may be one, and Mr. Milton Bowes isn’t sure if he’s being ‘shadowed’ by his department. (237-38)

Mr. Templeton suggests that Mr. de Quincy plans to blackmail the Le Fords into sharing their profit with him (238). Herring emphasizes the perceived connection between borders and duplicity, criminal activity, false accusations, and questionable alliances. In actual fact, no opium is smuggled across

the border in *Canadian Camp Life*. Early twentieth-century anti-Asian discourses frequently associated Chinese men with opium smuggling (Li 20); and Herring invites us to read the illegal importation of Ke Tan across the border in relation to these charges. Mr. Milton Bowes is obsessed with tracking two contraband goods: opium and Chinese men, both of which are, within the prevalent Anti-Asian sentiment, conflated under the sign of the “yellow peril.”

A constellation of images and events symbolically link boundary maintenance to the regulation of race, gender, and sexuality. Although the British and Canadian characters seem less concerned than their American counterparts with monitoring national borders, the transgression of boundaries does have direct implications for Bessie and her family. The highly symbolic landscape of Boundary Bay becomes a site upon which social codes and gender norms are inscribed. Shortly after Ke Tan’s flight across the border, rotting fish begin mysteriously washing up on the beach. We eventually learn that the presence of the rotting fish is directly related to the activities of the American customs officer, who polices the bay in “a revenue cutter of Uncle Sam’s” (134) to ensure that Canadian fishing vessels do not take fish from American waters. A Canadian boat, fishing illegally in American waters, is chased back over the border and forced to release fifteen thousand dead salmon just off shore from where Bessie and her family are camping. These dead fish wash up on the beach and pollute the Le Ford’s pastoral campsite. When Bessie’s father takes his children swimming, his youngest daughter Maudie becomes frightened by the dead fish: “poor Maudie soon came running out with the skeletons of fish clinging to her bathing dress, round her ankles, and tangled in her long, fair hair” (157). The episode involving the fish skeletons clinging to young Maudie is directly followed by one of Mrs. Le Ford’s only statements in the entire text. In a speech that seems decontextualized, she informs her daughters that a “woman has fulfilled her highest destiny . . . when she has retained the confidence and regard of a good man for near a quarter of a century. No amount of success in other ways could ever content the inner heart of a true woman or compensate to her for the home life” (159). If Herring’s decision to place this statement directly after Maudie’s encounter with the fish skeletons seems bizarre, the oddity of this passage is compounded by having Mrs. Le Ford’s speech in support of marriage directly followed by another reference to the rotting fish. Bessie’s father takes each of his daughters by

the arm in a gesture that mimics walking them down the aisle on their wedding day: "Daddy took an arm of each, and pretended to march us out, and we were soon splashing and laughing, swimming and floating with the merriest. But the decaying fish were very unpleasant, touching us in unexpected places, the broken pieces clinging to us, and the very water was redolent of them" (159). By locating Mrs. Le Ford's commentary in the midst of this scene, Herring suggests a connection between the laws of marriage and those of resource extraction. The importance of marriage is first introduced in the book's opening pages when Bessie's father tells her "[a] man without a wife is like a mariner tossing at sea without a rudder. Every wind catches him and turns him this way and that; when he has a good wife, he has anchor and ballast and rudder" (7). Marriage is a stabilizing influence that brings the tumultuous life of the bachelors and remittance men under control. Here Herring brings together cross-border fishing laws that are designed to regulate the resource-based economy, and the laws of courtship and marriage that are designed to regulate sexuality and reproduction in the new and somewhat fragile culture of British Columbia.

Marriage locates sexuality and reproduction within the realm of the proper; cross-border fishing restrictions regulate the resource-based economy of British Columbia and Washington. But it is virtually impossible to police and regulate boundaries in the murky waters of the Pacific. As the fisherman involved in the chase with the customs officer explains, "Now the forty-ninth parallel is easy enough to see on a map, but where it passes through Point Roberts, amongst forest and brush and stumps, it ain't so easy to keep track of it" (167). The dead fish, which are casualties of the fishing dispute, pollute the bay on both sides of the border and serve as a reminder of the permeability of national boundaries. The dead fish unsettle the girls by touching them in "unexpected places," and are suggestive of bodily contact that falls outside the laws of marriage. Irigaray's consideration of the connection between marriage and the market economy helps illuminate this equation. Irigaray suggests that society is based on the exchange of women within the patriarchal structure of marriage, and marriage protects culture from falling back into primitivism; the social order is made possible by the exchange of women, and the so-called excess of female sexuality is regulated through the appropriation and submission of nature to labour and technology (184). If the dead fish are a sacrifice to the law of the land, women's bodies are a sacrifice to the law of the father. But it is a

sacrifice that Herring seems to advocate because it preserves Anglo-feminine ideals from border transgression. However, the boundaries in *Canadian Camp Life* are never quite able to contain what they seek to regulate. Like the skeleton exposed when the tree falls, the rotting fish underscore the concept of the boundary as a symbol, an arbitrary mark that the laws of nature do not necessarily obey. Herring's depiction of the relationship between sexual relations and geopolitics resonates with what Angelique Richardson refers to as "the politics of the state mapped onto bodies" (*Love and Eugenics* 8). Perhaps predictably, the novel ends with the pending double marriage of Bessie and her twin sister Josie to Thomas Templeton and John Wilbur, two family friends who have been camping nearby.

In *Canadian Camp Life*, women's bodies are implicitly associated with the resource-rich landscape, and female propriety is configured as crucial to the maintenance of the boundaries between private and public, proper and improper, and Canada and the United States. In Herring's account, sexual relations are contained and managed through marriage, and white women are valorized as wives and mothers partially because of the assumption that their reproductive capabilities can be contained through marital relations and deployed as a form of civic duty. Through the vilification of Billy's wife Jenny as a bad mother and an abusive spouse, Herring suggests that these regulatory structures are the preserve of white femininity. Jenny, through her violation of gender codes and marriage laws, is symbolically associated with the transgression of boundaries and might be read in relation to the salmon that wash up on the beach, just as Ke Tan is symbolically equated with the smuggled opium. The network of symbols related to sexuality, race, resource extraction, and cross-border trafficking in this text suggests a complex interplay of racist logic and gender anxiety in the development of British Columbia. The transnational politics of the public sphere and the sexual politics of the private sphere become mutually interdependent. The inscription of laws, regulations, and borders onto the landscape and economy of British Columbia propose a strategy of containment, but one that is never entirely successful. The Le Ford's tent, perilously pitched on the national border, becomes "the world-in-the-home" (Bhabha 11), an uncanny space continuously unsettled by the excesses of landscape, nation, sexuality, and racial difference that undermine the fixity of borders and boundaries.

#### NOTES

- 1 One of Herring's short stories has been republished in Lorraine McMullen's collection *Aspiring Women: Short Stories by Canadian Women, 1880-1999*; and *Canadian Camp Life* is archived at Early Canadiana Online ([www.canadiana.org](http://www.canadiana.org)). Herring's other works, *The People of British Columbia, Red, White, Yellow and Brown* (1903); *In the Pathless West with Soldiers, Pioneers, Miners, and Savages*, (1909); *Ena* (1913); and *Nan and Other Pioneer Women of the West* (1913) are all available on microform through CIHM.
- 2 Herring's works might be considered alongside those of Constance Lindsay Skinner, a historian from British Columbia who achieved some success writing "experiential" historical accounts of the American Frontier for Yale University Press' *Chronicles of America* series, and who later turned to fiction and poetry to write about British Columbia in *Red Willows* (1929) and *Songs of the Coast Dwellers* (1930). For a detailed account of Skinner's life and work, see Jean Barman's *Constance Lindsay Skinner: Writing on the Frontier* (2002).
- 3 When read in conjunction with her other books, most notably the short stories collected in *Nan and Other Pioneer Women of the West*, where she explicitly positions white women as agents of moral reform, Herring's interest in the role of women in the social development of British Columbia becomes more pronounced. *Nan and Other Pioneer Women of the West* is set in the mid-nineteenth century and depicts British Columbia as an unruly space in desperate need of the moral influence of what Herring refers to in her preface as the "motherhood of women."
- 4 The Anti-Chinese Society was established in Victoria in 1873, and the Canadian government passed a law disenfranchising its Chinese citizens in 1874 and introduced the Head Tax in 1885. The Asiatic Exclusion League was founded in 1907 and Chinese emigration to Canada was prohibited under the Asiatic Exclusion Act between 1923 and 1947. Anti-Asian sentiment was prevalent on both sides of the border and permeated judicial, economic, political, and social discourses. For a detailed account of the implementation of anti-Chinese policies, see Peter S. Li, *The Chinese in Canada*.

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