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By DONALD ANDERSON

IN HER DUNNET SKETCH "The Foreigner," one of those four afterpieces to the original *Country of the Pointed Firs*,[1] Sarah Orne Jewett structured a ghost story that is more unsettling for the way in which the storyteller is haunted into the twistings of penance than it is for its spectral climax. The tale is delivered in such a way that the climax itself comes not as a heightening of terror but rather as a self-permitted reprieve for its narrator, Almira Todd, from her own afflicted memory. Throughout Jewett's Dunnet material, Mrs. Todd generally appears to function as an outcropping of control and capability in her coastal Maine village. While we know she has suffered her own losses—an early lover to family pressures and her husband Nathan to the sea—she nonetheless seems to function in her community with the "faculty" of the strongest New England women of her period. In "The Foreigner," however, Mrs. Todd shows susceptibilities to her own culture and her own inner world that make her appear as much adrift within her narrative as the person whose story she relates.

The story itself is simple enough: on a stormy August night, Mrs. Todd relates to her summer visitor the brief stay in Dunnet Landing of "Mrs. Captain Tolland" some forty years earlier—this following Mrs. Tolland's rescue from destitute widowhood in Jamaica by four Dunnet seamen, her eventual marriage to one of them, and her generally marginalized existence during her months in Dunnet. The episode concludes with Mrs. Todd's describing how, on the night of Mrs. Tolland's death, both she and the dying woman claim to see the apparition of Mrs. Tolland's mother. It is a ghost story in its broadest lineaments, but it is not, as it turns out, the type to leave reader or listener chilled with the unexpected or the unexplainable suddenly seizing control of normalcy. Rather, as Marjorie Pryse notes, it is a ghost story where "the final appearance of the ghost is anticlimactic" (246). Jewett instead casts the story in such a way that normalcy itself takes on the most disturbing trappings, and it is Almira Todd who finally emerges as the ghostliest presence through the way in which she delivers her tale of Mrs. Tolland.

1. The four episodes were written in the years immediately after the appearance of *The Country of the Pointed Firs* in 1896. As Paula Blanchard notes, the four sketches were presumably written in the following order: "The Queen's Twin," "A Dunnet Shepherdess," "William's Wedding," and "The Foreigner" in 1899. While the first two were published in *The Queen's Twin and Other Stories* in 1899, "William's Wedding" was not published until 1910. "The Foreigner" was first published in 1900 but not included with the rest of the Dunnet material until David Bonnell Green's *The World of Dunnet Landing* was published in 1962 (315).

Elsewhere in *The Country of the Pointed Firs,* there has been little reason to doubt that Almira Todd likes a good story, both as listener and narrator. There has been little reason to doubt she is a skilled storyteller—one able to entertain her own visiting storyteller, Jewett's external narrator. In "The Foreigner," however, Mrs. Todd—that normally "wise saver of steps" (4)—stumbles about with the material she is attempting to present: repeating herself, giving mistaken information, and exhibiting a general self-consciousness we find nowhere else. As she brings herself to the point of telling the tale, but before she has announced her intention to do so, Mrs. Todd's attitude suggests one troubled by what is about to occur. When she knows (through information delivered to her by her houseguest) that her mother, Mrs. Blackett, and her brother William are safely anchored on Green Island to ride out the storm, and that along with Johnny Bowden they will have "'a very pleasant evening'" (158),[2] Almira Todd is nonetheless restive, pensive, unable to enjoy the coziness of storm and fireplace, friend and cat. She thinks of "'all those stormy verses in the Book o' Psalms,'" and pronounces, like a psalmist herself, "'There's a roaring high overhead, and a roaring in the deep sea'" (159). She sees the elements doing battle and admits her need to sit up on a night like this: "'No, I couldn't sleep; some women folks always goes right to bed an' to sleep, so's to forget, but 'tain't my way. Well,'" she adds, "'it's a blessin' we don't all feel alike ... '" (159). The narrator has to remind Mrs. Todd that those on Green Island will have "a pleasant evening." But, clearly, the well-being of her mother and brother are no longer a primary concern for her, if they actually were in the first place. Finally, after one more "great blast" of wind and a downdraft of smoke from the chimney, Mrs. Todd says what is actually on her mind: "'This makes me think o' the night Mrs. Captain Tolland died." She says it "half to herself," as if ruminating rather than narrating (160).

Jewett's narrator herself realizes that Mrs. Todd's focus is elsewhere, and Mrs. Todd's "strange absent look" causes the listener to fear she would hear something "that would haunt my thoughts on every dark stormy night as long as I lived" (160). Her desire for a snug fireside ghost story has been overridden by the demeanor of Mrs. Todd and the possibility of something more threatening. She even suggests that any ghost stories might be told "'tomorrow, by daylight'" (160). It is at this suggestion that Mrs. Todd momentarily snaps into focus and repeats (this time for her listener's benefit), "'I was just sayin' to myself that this is like the night Mis' Cap'n Tolland died'" (160). Mrs. Todd tries to keep the event somewhat indefinite, however, judging it to have been sometime "'thirty, or maybe forty, year ago.'" She explains herself as one who doesn't keep "much account o' time," an odd statement coming from one who serves elsewhere as a prime historian of Dunnet Landing and

2. All references are from *The Country of the Pointed Firs and Other Stories*, edited by Marjorie Pryse, and are included parenthetically.

its environs.[3] And the narrator herself inserts her own sense of surprise: "'Tolland? That's a name I have never heard in Dunnet'" (160). And with that, we begin to realize more fully that the "ghost" story is not to be about visitations from spectral realms as much as the presence of a person whose time in Dunnet Landing was either so insignificant or so significant that she is never spoken of—even by Mrs. Todd.

The story of Mrs. Tolland will continue to unfold slowly, even as Mrs. Todd has seemed to commit to its telling. The listener will nudge Mrs. Todd out of another moment of absent-mindedness, asking about Mrs. Tolland once more "to change the current of our thoughts" (161). Clearly, Mrs. Todd's thoughts *had been* on Mrs. Tolland, and, as she begins to tell the story of the foreigner, she stumbles in ways that seem remarkable in her. Part of her difficulty may lie in her trying to protect the reputation of those Dunnet Captains—including her own father—who were responsible for the island woman coming to Maine. Several times Mrs. Todd grapples with the fact that the men were drunk: that they "wa'n't in no go-to-meetin' condition"—though they were "all respectable well-dressed men" (162). Three times she coaches her listener that the men were "three sheets in the wind" (162-63)—though she loses count of her own repetitions in her desire to explain the circumstances [she claims (163) to have "once observed" they were "three sheets in the wind," when in fact she has said it twice]. Twice she says that two of the captains were God-fearing: "'church members in good standin',"' or "'very religious, upright men'" (163). Presumably the listener is to understand that one of the two religious men was Almira Todd's own father, and her need to guard his legacy may explain part of her uneasiness. However, Mrs. Todd even redefends the two "finalists" in the negotiations among the four as to who will take the foreigner on his ship: Jonathan Bowden, who will finally withdraw his candidacy because of an inadequate ship and a "'dreadful jealous'" wife (164); and John Tolland, who, of course, will finally take her on board and eventually marry her. Once again, though, Mrs. Todd expresses an unease, a seeming need to look after the reputations of those who, as far as we can see from the rest of the story, did nothing immoral or unethical: "'I wouldn't have you think, either, that they both [Captain Bowden and Captain Tolland] wasn't the best o' men, an' they was solemn as owls, and argued the matter between 'em, an' waved aside the other two when they tried to put their oars in'" (164-65). Captain Tolland's boat offered better accommodations, she says, for taking on "the prize" (165), an odd choice of words for describing the future Mrs. Tolland forty years later—particularly given what remains for Mrs. Todd to reveal as the story unfolds.

3. Mrs. Todd's command of time is generally much more precise throughout *The Country of the Pointed Firs*. For example, during the visit of Mrs. Fosdick, and hearing of the death of Mrs. Fosdick's sister Louisa, Mrs. Todd's recollection of Louisa's first day of school is meticulous in its detail (60-61); and her account of Joanna Todd's hermitic life on Shell-Heap Island receives much of it power from Mrs. Todd's precision of recollection.

The problem for Mrs. Todd, in fact, would seem to reside not with the moral basis of the four captains' actions as much as their collective judgment. Her struggles intensify and broaden when she explains, "'Twas a real hard case, an' when them cap'ns made out about it, there wa'n't one that meant to take leave without helpin' of her. They was pretty mellow,'" she reminds, "'an' whatever they might lack o' prudence they more'n made up with charity'" (164). Shortly, she will add, "'I always thought they'd have done better, and more reasonable, to give her some money to pay her passage home to France, or wherever she may have wanted to go'" (164). And yet this wish is undercut by Mrs. Todd herself later on, when she makes it clear that the foreigner *had* no home—that all her family were dead and she had not been in France since she was six (171). As we will also learn, Mrs. Tolland's marriage to the captain will be an apparently satisfying one—that she "'was very happy about havin' him, and took on dreadful at partin' when he was down here on the wharf, going back to Portland by boat to take ship'" for his final, fatal voyage (168).

The problem, rather, may lie for Mrs. Todd not in Mrs. Tolland's [and she is never given a first name by the storyteller] coming to Dunnet as much as Dunnet's inability to receive her—a difficulty crystallized by Mrs. Todd's own patterns of response, as her confessional will bear out. Mitzi Schrag, while focusing her insightful analysis of "The Foreigner" principally on the tale's racial implications, also sees elements of the tale as being confessional—most importantly arising from Mrs. Todd's accusing herself of "failing to establish sisterhood" with Mrs. Tolland (193). While one can debate the causes of Mrs. Todd's unease while the foreign woman was in Dunnet—and as she haltingly recalls the story now—it would be difficult to disagree with Schrag that the tale as a whole "implies the need to reassess the foundations of *Pointed Firs'* community" (190). And Almira Todd, for whatever reason, places herself for both her listener and the reader in the forefront of that reassessment. Wittingly or not, she prostrates herself before the present in a way we could have little anticipated in the original Dunnet material.

We discover through Mrs. Todd that if the four captains acted in Jamaica as good Christians, many in Dunnet Landing did not. Tolland's sister Eliza, with whom he has shared a wordlessly divided house, is unreceptive to both her brother and his new bride; and Mrs. Todd says, as an afterthought later in her narrative, that Tolland finally buys her out "at three or four times what 'twas worth, to save trouble" (169). While Eliza Tolland may have had unkind things to say about her sister-in-law, and regardless that Mrs. Todd's own father didn't see "'a mite o' harm in her, ... somehow a sight o' prejudice arose'" (166). There is again a vagueness to the statement, an air in Mrs. Todd of not quite wanting to face deeper realities—even as she is about to broaden the picture of intolerance endured by Mrs. Captain Tolland. Catalytic is a get-acquainted social circle at which the newcomer tries to

assist an off-key duet by one of the Caplin girls and Mari' Harris.[4] That, and her singing and dancing at the request of Mrs. Blackett cause "'an awful scandal'" to break out in the community. Mari' Harris reproaches the saint-like Mrs. Blackett "'to her face,'" explaining, or purporting to explain, Mrs. Todd's lifelong animosity to Mari' (167).[5] Mrs. Todd looks back on the event ruefully, saying of Mrs. Tolland, "'poor creatur', it all seems so different to me now'" (166).

Still, as she continues, the *difference* seems to lie in the fact that what Almira Todd may have thought she understood then is even more difficult to understand now, particularly as she faces up to her own involvement—or lack of genuine involvement—with Mrs. Tolland. Presently, she describes Mrs. Tolland's discomfort at meeting the following Sunday, causing her to leave "'like a cat in a strange garret'" before the end of service. Again, the storyteller lapses into a vagueness of perception unusual in her:

> 'I wish she'd stayed through, whatever her reasons were. Whether she'd expected somethin' different, or misunderstood some o' the pastor's remarks, or what 'twas, I don't really feel able to explain, but she kind o' declared war, at least folks thought so, an' war 'twas from that time. I see she was cryin', or had been, as she passed by me; perhaps bein' in meetin' was what had power to make her feel homesick and strange' (167).

That Mrs. Todd doesn't "feel able" to explain may be more indicative of her spiritual state than an incapability of understanding what is easy enough to understand. For some reason, even some forty years later, her inability to articulate the reality is tellingly peculiar, particularly in the midst of her illustrating it so clearly. To attribute Mrs. Tolland's sense of being persecuted to "homesickness" feels much like wishful thinking in one for whom "it all seems so different now." As if trying to dismiss the entire incident, she mentions cursorily that Mrs. Tolland died a few months later, after Capt. Tolland had left her well off, and that Mrs. Todd's listener has no doubt "heard that story told over an' over twenty times" during her stay at Dunnet Landing.

4. We first hear of "that Mari' Harris" in connection with Captain Littlepage in the original version of the novel. She is his housekeeper, treating his residence, according to Mrs. Todd and "others," with "no proper sort of care" (14). Even Jewett's narrator seems to share Mrs. Todd's point of view, presumably based on external observations or prevailing attitude. In speaking at one point of the Captain's "careful precision of dress," she rejects the possibility that his appearance has anything to do with the attentions of his housekeeper: "I knew Mari' Harris to be a very common-place, inelegant, person who would have no such standards" (17). There is, however, no indication that the narrator has interacted directly with Mari'. After similar references elsewhere, however, Jewett (along with Mrs. Todd) offers a significant upgrading of opinion about Mari' Harris at the conclusion of "William's Wedding." The former "arch enemy" (221) is the only one of the neighbors who shows genuine interest rather than "cheap curiosity" about rumors of the wedding taking place that day.

5. Mrs. Blackett has been rightfully judged by Jewett readers to be an almost sainted presence in Dunnet. Schrag, for example, sees her as "a virtual diety" (194). Whether we should take this violation of Mrs. Blackett as the definitive explanation for Mrs. Todd's dislike of Mari' Harris is, however, somewhat problematic. Some, like Sandra Zagarell, even see a strain of racism in Mrs. Todd's attitude toward Mari' that might help explain some of her difficulties with Mrs. Tolland. Zagarell notes that while Mrs. Blackett "embodies an ethic of connection which overrides nationalist exclusiveness," Mrs. Todd, at the Bowden reunion, describes Mari'—"that homely old sheep"—as resembling a "Chinee" (366).

When the visitor reminds her that she's heard "'never one word,'" Mrs. Todd once again consigns that circumstance to the passage of time rather than a communal need to forget: "'Yes, it all happened a great while ago'" (168).

Almira Todd deepens the personalization of culpability as she describes her own vulnerability to public opinion, which caused her to resist her own mother's plea for charitability on the part of Mrs. Todd toward the foreigner. However, Mrs. Todd has grown pouty at the time of a meal she's prepared for her mother, a meal delayed because her mother takes extra time to walk Mrs. Tolland home. "'She's a stranger in a strange land,'" Mrs. Blackett tells her; and Mrs. Todd replies testily, "'Why, since that time she flaunted out o' meetin', folks have felt she liked other ways better'n our'n.'" It is an Almira Todd impellingly adolescent in her inability to look beyond herself, so much so that the usually gentle Mrs. Blackett flares at her daughter: "'What consequence is my supper? ... or your comfort or mine, beside letting a foreign person an' a stranger feel so desolate; she's done the best a woman could do in her lonesome place, and she asks nothing of anybody except a little common kindness. Think if 'twas you in a foreign land!'" (169).

It is a stunning glimpse into something carried by Mrs. Todd for four decades—defining for her, as it seems to have, her own "foreignness" to another and, more importantly, to her own self. It is an enormous admission from this vigorous enabler of the community—this sibyl, this enchantress.[6] But the confession is not done yet. While she admits to being "'humbled'" by her mother's statement (169), she still wrestles with her narration. She recalls going on the next day to visit Mrs. Tolland, noticing that, like her, the Captain's wife sets a table with a single dish—certainly a ready sign of solitude inviting sisterhood. But when Mrs. Tolland, out of the sheer gladness of Mrs. Todd's arrival, takes her hands into her own and tells Mrs. Todd what an "angel" Mrs. Blackett is, Mrs. Todd still tries to dismiss the power of the connection: "'When I see the tears in her eyes 'twas all right between us, and we were always friendly after that, and mother had us come out and make a little visit that summer; but she come a foreigner and she went a foreigner, and never was anything but a stranger among our folk'" (170). Again, it is a telling juxtaposition: not quite a non sequitur, but indicative of Mrs. Todd's need, still, to dismiss Mrs. Tolland as finally inappropriate to her view of things. It comes, too, in spite of what we learn next—that those herbal skills that have helped create Mrs. Todd's sibylline persona were learned *through* Mrs. Tolland, a knowledge that in turn caused intolerant residents of Dunnet Landing to ascribe witchcraft to the island woman. Mrs. Todd speaks proudly

6. Jewett, of course, regularly assigns archetypal labels to Mrs. Todd. At one point, in the original version of the novel, she is seen as "a huge sibyl" standing in the center of the braided rug in her parlor (8). As she looks another time at the outer islands, seeing a sunburst light up Green Island, she stands watching "grand and architectural, like a *caryatide*" (30). That same evening, as she provides her guest beer tinctured with camomile, she is "my enchantress" (31). On Green Island, happily in the presence of her mother, she is described as "standing before us like a large figure of Victory" (40). Later, during the same visit, as she speaks of her lost love, she is "Antigone alone on the Theban plain" (49).

of her own handling of such allegations: "' ... 't was all nonsense; 'tis the believin' in such things that causes 'em to be any harm, an' so I told 'em,' confided Mrs. Todd contemptuously" (170). As an acolyte of Mrs. Tolland, and as one noted for her culinary sophistication, it is not surprising that Mrs. Todd should defend her teacher—which again makes her unease about the history of Mrs. Captain Tolland both puzzling and revelatory.[7]

As we will also learn, it is Mrs. Todd who has withheld sisterly affection until Mrs. Tolland is in her coffin—when "'it come to my heart there wa'n't no one else to do it'" (172). Even though they will share the bond of widowhood—Mrs. Todd has been a widow for a year at the time Mrs. Tolland loses her husband—the storyteller will continue to struggle with the reason *why* genuine affection should be so difficult for her. Perhaps it was Mrs. Tolland's "'child's mind'" (172), as if that might in some way make her less substantial. And yet Mrs. Todd repeats how much she learned from the foreigner—how Mrs. Tolland "'made me imagine new things.'" Nonetheless, Mrs. Todd "'couldn't get no affectionateness with her,'" another of those obscuring pronouncements, sounding as if the problem lay not with Almira Todd but with a misprint in a recipe or a flaw in a set of instructions. Moreover, this declaration comes from the same woman who seems incapable of understanding why Mrs. Tolland had needed to generate a protective mask of her own. After describing how happily Mrs. Tolland had settled into married life, she adds, "'An' she got over bein' so strange-looking to me after a while, but 'twas a very singular expression: she wore a fixed smile that wan'n't a smile; there wa'n't no light behind it, same's a lamp can't shine if it ain't lit. I don't know just how to express it, 'twas sort of made countenance'" (171).[8] In this ironic moment, as Mrs. Todd tries to peel away the mask hiding her own sense of culpability, she is unable, or unwilling, to acknowledge why the stigmatized

7. When reading some versions of these events, a more placid picture emerges that perhaps preserves Mrs. Todd from more troubling implications. *The Heath Anthology* introduces "The Foreigner" as a story of "mother-daughter love and sororal bonds" suggesting "the healing power of female friendship" (723). Elizabeth Silverthorne, in her single paragraph devoted to "The Foreigner," writes, of "Eliza Tolland, a French Catholic, who has been made to feel an alien by the natives of the insular village. Mrs. Blackett urges her daughter, Mrs. Todd, to befriend the lonely stranger. As a result, the two women become friends, and Eliza passes on to Mrs. Todd her knowledge of healing plants and herbs" (173). As it reads, one would know little if anything of the struggles Almira Todd endures in telling the story of the foreigner. Silverthorne also misnames Mrs. Tolland, giving to her the first name, apparently, of Capt. Tolland's sister, something Elizabeth Ammons has also done earlier (179). In fact, Schrag (205-06n) points out that Josephine Donovan in her *Sarah Orne Jewett* and Edward J. Piacentino make the same mistake—which Piacentino presumably picked up from Donovan since he quotes her directly (96). That Mrs. Tolland should not be referred to as a fully named person by Mrs. Todd—what Schrag refers to as Mrs. Todd's "rare inability ... in Jewett's matrifocal world" (198)—may feel so at odds with the conventional view of Mrs. Todd that it speaks as much, perhaps, of critical need as it does of critical inaccuracy.

8. While Mrs. Todd's visitor thinks of the Sidney phrase "A made countenance, between simpering and smiling," she might also have thought of Paul Laurence Dunbar's "We Wear the Mask," which came out in 1896, three years before the composition of "The Foreigner." In describing the black American experience of the made countenance, Dunbar's poem opens:

> We wear the mask that grins and lies,
> It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,—
> This debt we pay to human guile;
> With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,
> And mouth with myriad subtleties.

foreigner has had to construct one of her own. It is little wonder, perhaps, that she "couldn't get no affectionateness" with Mrs. Tolland. Unable to receive, she is consequently unable to give.

Arguably, the tale climaxes with the death of Mrs. Tolland—though it comes as no surprise to the listener after frequent mentions of the death earlier in the evening. But Mrs. Todd has brought herself to the specifics of the death in a manner similar to her descriptive handling of the foreigner's decline in health during the several months after Captain Tolland's drowning: "'at a snail's pace'" (173). At the suggestion of Mrs. Blackett—explaining it "'just as she would to a child'"—Mrs. Todd overcomes her own child's mind and sends for a priest to tend to the dying woman. Her response to the priest's arrival from "up river" is once again revealing: "'He was a kind-hearted old man; he looked so benevolent an' fatherly I could ha' stopped an' told him my own troubles; yes, I was satisfied when I first saw his face ...'" (174).[9] As if to signal she has almost reached the center of her own confessional—and as she proceeds "with unusual haste and lack of detail" (174)—Mrs. Todd pushes past the particulars of the funeral. She *does* comment that "'after all the ill will there was a good number gathered to the funeral'" (175), and she includes another detail that can be read ironically:

> 'T'was in Reverend Bascom's day, and he done very well in his prayer, considering he couldn't fill in with mentioning all the near connections by name as was his habit. He spoke very feeling about her being a stranger and twice widowed, and all he said about her being reared among the heathen was to observe that there might be roads leadin' up to the New Jerusalem from various points. I says to myself that I guessed quite a number must ha' reached there that wa'n't able to set out from Dunnet Landin'!' (175)

The irony may finally be Mrs. Todd's own—a warning about the dangers of ultranarrow perspectives; but if so, there remains the overarching irony of her own inability to see the implications of her responses to Mrs. Tolland through the lens of her own narrative. The fulfillment of her confessional still awaits her.

To reach this fulfillment, she moves to be done with her account of Mrs. Tolland's funeral in order to resurrect once again the person who has died and been buried several times already in the tale. The ostensible payoff to this "ghost" story—the visitation by Mrs. Tolland's dead mother to the death chamber moments before the foreigner's actual death—comes not as a harrowing of the living by the departed. But at the same time, Mrs. Todd seems unable to convince us fully that a bonding has finally taken place between the dying woman and herself—as much as her listener and reader might wish. We learn several important things during this final buildup, after Mrs. Todd's listener notices a surge of energy in the storyteller and "saw that the sails of

9. Contrast this with Jewett's reaction to the Reverend Mr. Dimmick during a visit to Joanna Todd on Shell-Heap Island. His insensitivity to Joanna and her situation causes Mrs. Todd to respond with incredulity during a moment of prayer: "I got so provoked I opened my eyes and stared right at him" (75). See also her depiction of other ineffectual ministers such as the Reverend Elbury in "Miss Peck's Promotion" (*The King of Folly Island*), or the local pastor mimicked by Helen Vernon in "Martha's Lady" (*The Queen's Twin.*)

her narrative were filled with a fresh breeze" (175). But rather than moving directly to the ghostly visitation, Mrs. Todd once again moves toward further unburdening first, leapfrogging the visitation itself. She recalls how she sat as watcher of Mrs. Tolland's house on the day of the funeral—observing the walking funeral moving down the hill from her and feeling sullen at having been asked by her uncle to remain behind. She wonders "'how it ever come to the Lord's mind to let her begin down among them gay islands all heat and sun, and end up here among the rocks with a north wind blowin'" (176). But she puts the question aside by considering the fact that Mrs. Tolland *is* at least dead and that "'[y]ou can't feel sorry for a poor creature that's come to the end o' all her troubles; my only discomfort was I thought I'd ought to feel worse at losin' her than I did; I was younger then than I be now'" (176). As if to underscore her struggle, Mrs. Todd experiences what may be, for her, the most unnerving moment of her tale. On the day of the funeral, as she sits watching Mrs. Tolland's house, she is "chilled ... to the bone" by the "long notes o' dronin' music" she hears coming from upstairs (176). The explanation is a natural one, the movement of the wind across the strings of Mrs. Tolland's guitar hanging near an open window. But while "'twas just what I might ha' known'" (177), the guitar—that broadcaster of Mrs. Tolland's own unique sound, her spirit, as it were—has caused in Mrs. Todd a genuine haunting. She is shaken to the point where, as we shall see, Mrs. Tolland's guitar will continue to preoccupy and challenge her later on.

Perhaps the incident with the guitar—or perhaps her youth—helps to explain Mrs. Todd's rather dismissive statement to Uncle Lorenzo when he returns to the house, as if she is trying to keep her feelings under control: "'Well, I expect it's all over now, an' we've all done what we could'" (178). However, as if to prove these feelings are not nearly enough, she finds out shortly that she is the primary heir to Mrs. Tolland's small estate. For Mrs. Todd, on hearing this, there is finally a moment of catharsis—of expiation, perhaps: "'There, I begun to cry,' said Mrs. Todd; 'I couldn't help it. I wished I had her back again to do somethin' for, an' to make her know I felt sisterly to her more'n I'd ever showed, an' it come over me 'twas all too late, an' I cried the more, till uncle showed impatience, an' I got up an' stumbled along down cellar with my apern to my eyes the greater part of the time'" (180).

The intent of Uncle Lorenzo is to search the house for a rumored chest of treasure left by Captain Tolland. But there will be no treasure—and the house will finally burn down during one of Uncle Lorenzo's futile searches for it. Mrs. Todd has received her full share of the foreigner's legacy: a spiritual as much as a financial one. She will tell her listener that she lives primarily upon the interest earned on the inheritance from Mrs. Captain Tolland, choosing for the most part not to draw upon the money left by her husband. She will tell the listener that she doesn't like to touch Nathan's money because "that's kind o' sacred money; 'twas earnt and saved with the hope o' youth, an' I'm very particular what I spend it for" (181). To touch Nathan's money may pose a problem for a woman who married not the man she loved but the hus-

band she settled for, but at the same time it may be a way for Mrs. Todd to define her own sense of self.

Momentarily, in this confessional unfolding, Mrs. Todd may have come to the realization that she is as much a foreigner as was Mrs. Captain Tolland—but that her foreignness is not that of one among strangers. Rather, it may be the foreignness of one who wishes not to be like those who are *too* like her. It is a desolating moment. And while she will bring home with her some flowers from Mrs. Tolland's garden to be transplanted into her own, she refuses to bring with her Mrs. Tolland's most personal possession: her guitar.

At the end, Almira Todd draws her chair closer to her listener, speaking "'almost in a whisper'" as she adds final shape to her confession. "'I ain't told you all,'" she says; "'no, I haven't spoken of all to but very few'" (182). She leans toward the fire, looking like "an old prophetess"—momentarily "as unconscious and mysterious as any sibyl of the Sistine Chapel" (183). Suddenly she seems the Mrs. Todd of the original *Country of the Pointed Firs.* Or is this "made countenance"? As she describes Mrs. Tolland on her deathbed, she could as well be describing the Almira Todd we have seen trying with so much effort to bring the narrative to its climax: "'The light was on her face, so I could see her plain; there was always times when she wore a look that made her seem a stranger you'd never set eyes on before.'" She considers. "'I did think what a world it was that her an' me should have come together so, and she have nobody but Dunnet Landin' folks about her in her extremity'" (183). While she sympathizes with Mrs. Tolland as "'one o' the stray ones, poor creatur,'" she is glad to think Mrs. Tolland "'didn't lack friends at the last'" (183-84). But after ceding herself the label of "friend," she comes back to the guitar once again. While it is later in her own story—and Jewett's—the event of course precedes her description of being haunted by the "Aeolian" guitar on the funeral day. It is as if she is trying to regain control of her own ghostly experience:

> 'We had the window open to give her air, an' now an' then a gust would strike that guitar that was on the wall and set it swinging by the blue ribbon, and soundin' as if somebody begun to play it. I come near takin' it down, but you never know what'll fret a sick person an' put 'em on the rack, an' that guitar was one o' the few things she'd brought with her.' (184)

She has identified the potency of that very thing she will refuse to take to her own home days later. In explaining it away, she once again reaffirms her own fear of that force most intimately connected to Mrs. Tolland: a force of creation and spontaneity.

It is little wonder, then, that Mrs. Todd professes to having seen the ghost of Mrs. Tolland's mother. Like Mrs. Tolland herself, whom she fears she will awaken into "'a poor uncertainty'" (184), the storyteller chooses to leave her listener with a sense of certitude. From her own floundering ruminations and imprecise perceptions, she will put forward the epiphany of clear perception. She alerts her listener to the possibility that one can explain away as sheer fatigue the vision she is about to share: "' ... I was real tired, an' sort o'

cramped as watchers will get, an' a fretful feeling begun to creep over me such as they often do have. If you give way, there ain't no support for the sick person; they can't count on no composure o' their own'" (184). But she is certain of what she says she has seen. She is essentially boastful that the apparition did not cause her to faint, as she emerges out of her swimming head to see the face of the mother: "'I was one that didn't know what it was to faint away, no matter what happened; time was I felt above it in others, but 'twas somethin' that made poor human natur' quail'" (185-86). She reassures her listener again that she was not asleep; and, in fact, "'I suppose if I hadn't been so spent an' quavery with long watchin', I might have kept my head an' observed much better,' she added humbly; 'but I see all I could bear'" (186).[10]

According to her account, Mrs. Todd is able to reassure the dying woman that they have shared the apparition, telling her she has seen it too: "'*Yes, dear, I did; you ain't never goin' to feel strange an' lonesome no more*'" (186).[11] At the moment of death, Mrs. Todd feels mother and daughter have "'gone away together,'" but her final comment about the specter and the dying raises its own questions. She says, "'No, I wa'n't alarmed afterward; 'twas just that one moment I couldn't live under, but I never called it beyond reason I should see the other watcher. I saw plain enough there was somebody there with me in the room.'" We assume Mrs. Todd sees Mrs. Tolland's mother as "the other watcher" and the "somebody." However, on some level, particularly in view of her difficulty with raising Mrs. Tolland to *her own* level during much of the story, Mrs. Todd's statement could once again be viewed ironically—or, at the least, sibylline, in its vagueness. The "somebody" could be Mrs. Tolland herself, suddenly raised to significance.

In what is essentially the epilogue to the tale, Mrs. Todd re-reminds her listener [it is the fourth time she has used a version of the phrase], "''Twas just such a night as this Mis' Tolland died'" (187). It is the kind of statement that could be used for gothic effect, the reinforcement of past situation by present situation: the wind, the rain. However, the reinforcement may be more unconsciously internal than external. She tries to draw a moral from her own inquietude, beginning with another repetition:

> ''Twas just such a night as this. I've told the circumstances to but very few; but I don't call it beyond reason. When folks is goin' 'tis all natural, and only common things can jar upon the mind. You know plain enough there's somethin' beyond this world; the doors stand wide open. 'There's somethin' of us that must still live on; we've got to join both worlds together an' live in one but for the other.' The doctor said that to me one day, an' I never could forget it; he said 'twas in one o' his old doctor's books.' (187)

10. Several, including Silverthorne (173) and Blanchard (294), trace the possible origins of the scene to the death of Celia Thaxter's mother in 1877 and Thaxter's conversion to spiritualism as a result of the deathbed experience.

11. The italics are Jewett's. One can only speculate as to their significance. They could be merely adding emphasis to a significant statement, or, even, signaling in an ironic way their final importance to the assuagement of Mrs. Todd's guilt as she grants Mrs. Tolland a last few moments of peace.

The joining of worlds conceptually concludes the tale as the two women sit together in Mrs. Todd's snug parlor, with the storm over and the sound of a streamer heading out to sea. The boat itself—one of those that can sound "'bewildered in thick nights in winter'" (187)—reinforces the thought of a troubled soul moving from the rough seas of this life to a place where it won't feel strange and lonesome no more. But does Mrs. Todd do so as instruction or expiation? Does she speak to an essential problem continuing to gnaw within her even as she tries to put it to rest? Is her sibylline "made countenance" in place again?[12] Do we also hear Mrs. Todd's use of the doctor's words to have a parallel implication to what she seems to be saying? Is there a horizontal application to what she envisages vertically? Heaven and earth she seems to understand. The mother-daughter dynamic she recognizes and illustrates with the sharp lines of belief. Where she flounders is with those who exist on the same plane as we do but who, for some reason, *feel* different—even *less* than us.

Marjorie Pryse, in one of the first close readings of "The Foreigner" after its years of relative neglect even among Jewett readers, suggested in 1982 that while the tale was written three years after *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, it could be viewed as an "introduction" to the original Dunnet material ("Women 'At Sea'" 244). Such an approach could, she suggests, help us to know Jewett's characters better since Jewett herself may have grown to know her characters better by continuing to write about them. If so, "The Foreigner" may take us beyond the made countenance of Almira Todd—to a person who so suddenly seems like a foreigner to us and yet seems that much more human. How the narrator feels about this we cannot be sure, since she allows Mrs. Todd the final words. The narrator has, in fact, remained wordless for the last several pages, and even with the fact that the "storm's all over," for the listener it is as if the unexpected confession continues to resonate in the silence or speak for the silence.

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12. While discussing the early story "Mr. Bruce," Margaret Roman points to it, "Miss Tempy's Watchers," and "The Foreigner" as instances where Jewett concludes a storm whereby "women are closer and have been transformed" (153). While it would be difficult to argue against such a reading of the former two, such a view of "The Foreigner" may be more a matter of expectation than reality.

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